

*British
Journal of
Undergraduate
Philosophy*



Editor: Robert Charleston
Open University

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Journal of the British Undergraduate Philosophy Society

Editor: Robert Charleston, Open University
rc3673@student.open.ac.uk
Subeditor: Alice Evans, Nottingham University
apyyae@nottingham.ac.uk

bjup@bups.org
www.bups.org/BJUP

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This issue of the journal is dedicated to the soon-to-be-doctors:

Tom Joyce (Reading)
Mahlete-Tsige Getachew (York)
Liz McKinnell (Durham)
and above all Nick Jones (Nottingham)

It wouldn't have worked without your help. Thank you.

RC

Contents

- 5. **Editorial: Out of the dark**
- 8. **Rationality, empathy and the great moral fallacy**
David Frenk
- 15. **Could restrictions on freedom of speech be necessary for its preservation?**
Lorna Finlayson
- 22. **Time, change, cause and effect**
James Cunningham
- 29. **A note on continental and analytic philosophy**
Robert Charleston
- 34. **Does Marx want to end politics?**
Robbie Duschinsky
- 41. **A quasi-realism of (quasi-)beliefs?**
Carlos Lastra-Anadón
- 50. **The reality of fields from the view of simplicity**
Tom Deakin
- 60. **Can the rule of double-negation elimination be justified?**
Lishan Chan
- 67. **Should we be irrealist about values?**
Matthew Tugby
- 75. **On the significance of statements of identity**
Daniel Clifford
- 81. **Book reviews**
Alice Evans
Robert Charleston

- 92. **Upcoming BUPS events**
- 94. **Subscribing and submitting papers to the BJUP**

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See p.94 for details.

Out of the dark

Editorial

It's a familiar image: Focus on a run-down urban campus. In a chipped-paint lecture room a bespectacled student is fiddling with a broken OHP. A few cans of cheap supermarket lager lie warmly on a rickety table by the condensation-daubed window. They are being eyed hungrily by the only other two students in the room, both of whom have low grades but enjoy talking loudly about the existence of God and tables. One of them is surreptitiously trying to construct a roll-up under the desk. The other is playing with his newly-acquired facial hair. A single, junior lecturer hurries in, apologising for being late and not having finished the paper on Nietzsche and conflagration he is due to present. On the door a badly-handwritten sheet announces to nobody at all: "Tonight: PhilSoc drinks and paper!!!"

It's a familiar image. A cliché of the first order. Fortunately it is also a very long way from the reality of undergraduate philosophy in the UK today. Teaching pressures, the necessity of regular publication and a financial imperative to focus on money-making postgraduate students *have* forced philosophy staff to spend more of their reduced spare time on MA and research groups. The increase in student numbers, growing social life expectations on campus, and the likelihood of undergraduates now needing concurrent commercial employment to help fund their studies have hit student society membership across *all* subjects. Philosophy *is* sometimes seen by new arrivals as a 'soft' academic option. On average, a philosophy undergraduate today probably *has* read fewer texts in depth, written fewer essays, spent less time arguing one-on-one with a senior tutor than 30 years ago.

But averages really shouldn't matter.

Access to education is up. The areas of philosophical research and sheer number of people talking about, writing, publishing on philosophy have increased dramatically. Bookshops are stuffed with primers and radio has

rarely been so philosophy-friendly. People have not dumbed-down to match the television writers and print journalists notionally catering for them. A conversation overheard in a bar sums up this disparity: A friend of the storyteller had arrived by taxi and had found the cabbie in stereotypical form, happily commenting on the news of the day. A particularly unquestioning BBC report about neuroscientists analysing brain-function during religious experience elicited the comment from the driver: ‘Yeah, but correlation isn’t causation, is it? It’s all very well talking about neural states, but without a causal story it’s meaningless, innit? Must be grant-renewal time in the States, ‘cos that’s a press release not a research paper...’ Whisper it, and don’t – for Goodness’ sake – tell our national media or politicians, but contemporary British society is far more analytically adept than they suspect.

And those of us truly committed to this subject are becoming more committed, not less. Unlike our predecessors, we receive no maintenance grants, we do not – on the whole – have access to a cosy common-room community of writers, and we know that our chances of obtaining funding in the future are minimal. Undergraduate life is fast, loud, busy and staccato. But this means that the people who are pushing forwards in philosophy are not doing so because it is a comfortable profession to go into, or simply default behaviour for their peer group, or because it is easier than getting an industrial or city job. It isn’t. They are in it because they really, really want to be; because they are driven to investigate and develop this fascinating, bewildering and demanding subject. Anybody who has voluntarily written an extra paper, put themselves forward for a conference, or taken on unpaid organising work for a campus philsoc in today’s undergraduate environment has already proven themselves to be above average, to be well worth getting to know.

This is important because of the other ways the context to student life has changed. Modern communications and typesetting technology have lowered the barriers to national philosophy in a way undreamt of even ten years ago. It may be more difficult to run a serious philosophy society, or build a group of friends all committed to – and well-read in – philosophy on campus. But it is much easier to find like-minded people across the country and around the world; and to establish links with the professional philosophers who *will*

commit time and energy to taking undergraduate activity seriously. The British Undergraduate Philosophy Society is just this: a flare in the sky to catch the attention of people who want to push themselves in our subject; who *want* to read and write extra work; who relish the day-to-day experience of *being a philosopher*.

If you've made it this far, you are clearly one of them. And therefore one of us. We look forward to meeting you in person at our conferences, or hearing your thoughts online. We run the society to meet and talk to people like you.

Welcome to our journal.

Rationality, empathy and the great moral fallacy

Winner of the 2005 British Undergraduate Philosophy Conference Prize

David Frenk

New College, Oxford

david.frenk@new.ox.ac.uk

In *The Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant tells us that moral principles should apply to all rational beings equally, but I think he's wrong. Moreover, I think it is possible to show that he is wrong starting from a simple premise that Kant himself would have to accept.

This isn't a paper about Kant, however. It is a paper about the nature of ethics, and the need, as I perceive it, to radically rethink our approach to moral philosophy. I want to argue here that the majority of modern moral philosophies – be it Utilitarianism, Neo-Kantianism, Deontology, Virtue Ethics – or whatever else – are mistaken in their fundamental assumptions and methods. The essence of this mistaken approach can be summarized in the following way. By focusing too much on – among other things – rationality, moral philosophers have neglected many of the other aspects of moral life that need to be considered in order to make a moral doctrine genuinely moral. In other words, they have misconceived moral philosophy as a discipline primarily concerned with concepts like rationality, rather than with people. In this paper, I will try to illustrate this misconception, as I see it, and propose an alternative system of ethics, grounded in empathy rather than rationality. My theory is intended to take the place of those modern day doctrines that, for all the hard work that has gone into them, rarely seem to satisfy anyone but those philosophers who are determined to be satisfied at all costs. The system which I will propose starts from simple and uncontroversial premises, but proves powerful both in its philosophical scope and in its appeal to the non-philosopher.¹

¹ After all, it is surely a sign of a good philosophical argument that it convinces a non-philosopher just as much as a philosopher.

Even though this isn't a paper about Kant, I want to start by talking about Kant. It's fair to say that the great man could not have denied that ethics, in its most basic characterization, is about how we ought to live our lives. After all, Kant saw his enterprise as deriving the laws that govern morally correct behaviour. A logically equivalent statement of his project is that it is an attempt to derive the laws by which we ought to live our lives. The crucial question here is: who is the 'we' to which ethics pertains? For Kant, the answer was 'all rational beings', and his argument for this was straightforward, but fallacious. Rationality, so the argument goes, is a necessary condition of moral agency, and hence morality pertains only to those beings which are rational. This result is no doubt true, but the fallacy in Kant's argument comes at the next step. Kant moves from the true statement that morality applies only to rational beings to the stronger and, I hope to show, false claim that morality applies to *all* rational beings. For clarity, we can set the argument out as follows:

1) Morality requires rationality.

Therefore

2) Only rational beings can be moral.

1 entails 2, but it does not, of course, entail:

3) All rational beings can be moral.

And yet, it seems that Kant makes the unjustified leap from **1** to **3**:

“Rational beings alone have the faculty of acting according to the conception of laws, that is according to principles, i.e., have a will. *Since the deduction of actions from principles requires reason, the will is nothing but practical reason.*”²

The first sentence of the cited passage is a paraphrase of **1**, while the second sentence effectively states material equivalence between moral capacity (“practical reasoning”) and rationality. In other words it is equivalent to the conjunction of **2** and **3**. Thus, Kant makes the fallacious inference from **1** to

² *Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) §II, emphasis added

2∩3, where we have seen that the former entails only 2. This mistaken inference is integral to Kant's system, since he goes on to develop his whole moral framework on the basis of a conception of morality as universally binding rational laws. If the first step in his argument is fallacious, the system as a whole is undermined.

To avoid repeating Kant's mistake, let us take a step backwards, and re-examine the principle we started with. That principle, you will remember, was that morality is about how we ought to live our lives. The crucial question, we noted, was "about how *who* lives their lives?" Kant's answer was "all rational beings", and that answer, we saw, was based on a fallacious argument. My answer is "all human beings", and I shall now attempt to explain why. When an individual uses the word "we", to whom does he refer? Well, clearly this depends on the context in which he uses it. I might use the word "we" to refer to all the people in this room attending this lecture, or I might use it to refer to the broader philosophical community of which the people in this room are a small section. I might use it to refer to all the people in Durham or just the people who, like me, live in its city centre. The scope of the reference can vary dramatically. What we need to know is: what scope of reference does the moral context imply?

Well, given that we've seen already that rationality is a necessary condition of moral agency, we have two possibilities. We can take the Kantian route, and extend the reference of "we" to all rational beings; or we can draw the line at some subset of rational beings. In deciding which subset of rational beings is the most appropriate to draw the line at, it is crucial to note the following point concerning the logical structure of life:

Lives are not lived in isolation, but within a society. Society provides the conceptual and cultural backdrop against which an individual life makes sense. Without such a backdrop, an individual life is meaningless and absurd – not only on a logical level, but also on a personal level. Even the concept of a hermit only makes sense within a context of normal social interaction. Since the content and meaning of an individual's life is, therefore, determined by the society in which he lives, it follows that the reference of the word "we" when it is used in relation to questions of ultimate meaning or purpose can

only be that very society.³ When we as moral philosophers, and, more fundamentally, as human beings, ask the question “about how *who* lives their lives?” we are really asking the question “what society do we live in?” And the answer to *that* question should be clear enough: we live in a society of human beings. Consequently, the scope of the moral “we” cannot extend beyond the limits of human society before it begins to include moral irrelevancies. It is human society that determines the content and context of our lives, and is therefore human society to which we must look in framing our moral theory – our theory of how we ought to live our lives.

What implications does this have for our moral theory? It entails that any moral philosophical doctrine must deal with, above all else, people. Furthermore, it entails that moral weight and relevance derives solely from human beings: for the minute we remove people from the picture, we are no longer talking about morality, but something else entirely. Kant wanted to talk about all rational beings, and consequently, what he talked about wasn't really morality. Of course, it would be unfair to say that Kant is alone in placing moral emphasis on entities other than human beings, and therefore failing to deal with moral philosophy in the proper way. In Utilitarianism, it is not people that matter, but happiness, an abstract object. Similarly, deontological moral systems place abstract objects above people – they shift the focus of morality from human beings to these funny things called rights. Virtue ethics might seem to avoid the error of putting humanity second, as Alisdair MacIntyre has argued it does,⁴ but ultimately the concepts of *telos* and *eudaemonia* together entail too narrow a picture of human life to give people their proper place in the moral schema. For the virtue ethicist, it is not people that are considered when weighing up moral questions, but a specific *model* of a person. Once I have outlined the alternative, it should hopefully become clear just how restricting and fundamentally *amoral* this model of morality really is.

Let us recap the argument thus far. We started by saying that morality, at its most fundamental level, is about how people should live their lives. We then

³ And “how should we live our lives?” is surely as clear an example of a question of this sort as any.

⁴ Alisdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*

proceeded to examine the various ways in which incumbent moral theories replace this question about people with a question about something else, whether it be a subset of people, an oversimplified, restrictive model of people, or an abstract object such as rights or happiness. The basic point here – and it is very basic indeed, yet frequently overlooked, with disastrous consequences for moral philosophy and human history as a whole – is that since morality is about people, our moral theories must also be about people. Many philosophers go wrong here: they start theorizing about something other than people, right from the word go. Frequently, however, the mistake is not made until the next step. For, in order to frame a theory about something, we must understand what it is that we are theorizing about. And it is in trying to better their understanding of human beings that many moral philosophies make the switch from thinking about people to thinking about something else. It is common among moral philosophers to be drawn by their misconceptions into talking about a model, or definition, of humanity rather than humanity itself. A good example of this is the Rousseauian approach, which takes mankind to be a rational animal with *pity* and *self-interest* as his two basic sentiments, clearly makes this mistake.⁵ And as we have seen, the minute you stop talking about humanity itself, you are no longer dealing with moral philosophy.

In shaping our moral theory, then, we must ensure that people are the focus of attention. We must avoid the mistake of making morality about abstract objects or about *models* of human interaction – otherwise we contradict the principle which we derived in a quite straightforward way from the uncontroversial premise that morality is about how we ought to live, viz. that morality is about people. So how can we ensure that we achieve this? As we have seen, the point of departure for any theory of ethics that wishes to take human beings seriously,⁶ is to develop an understanding of human beings. Any moral doctrine claims to do this, but the crucial difference between a theory that gives people their proper moral weight, and one which does not, is that the former approaches the issue of human understanding from a human perspective, while the latter attempts to approach it from some other

⁵ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality and Social Contract*.

⁶ Which any moral theory must.

perspective, such as a 'rational' or 'analytic' one, and thus ends up dealing in abstract objects or models rather than people.

How can we approach the question of human understanding from a human perspective? As human beings, we are capable of conceptualizing the world, and our own place in it, at varying levels of objectivity. At one extreme, we are capable of devising systems of physics and mathematics, while at the other extreme, we can interact with our environment at a profoundly personal level. This whole spectrum of conceptual capability is certainly central to humanity, but there can be no doubting that our most profound human interactions occur at the personal, subjective level. Translating the insight that morality requires that we understand humanity from a human perspective into the language of subjectivity, we can see that, in essence, moral reasoning requires empathy – embracing the subjectivity of other people. For the key to understanding another human being at a personal level is to give the same subjective weight to their existence as we automatically do to our own. It is not enough to acknowledge the existence of others from an objective perspective. In order to give *full* weight to their existence as humans, which we have seen is necessary for morality, we must proceed from the subjective weight of their lives.

It is at this point that we can really begin to see a moral theory taking shape. For if we give to the lives of others the same subjective weight as we give to our own lives, there are certain things that we cannot consistently, humanly do. For in doing them, we fall into a *performative contradiction*. The very nature of such actions excludes the possibility of giving subjective weight to the life of the persons affected by these actions while we are performing them. Clearly, any such performatively contradictory action is morally wrong, for it involves an abnegation of our commitment to considering other people as people – i.e. to empathy. And empathy, remember, was the crucial component of morality. In other words, there are certain actions or courses of action the performance or pursuit of which is inconsistent with giving sufficient subjective weight to the lives of others; for, in performing these actions, we undermine our very capacity for empathy, and thus destroy the logical prerequisite of our initial characterization of the situation as a moral one.

From this basic theoretical framework of morality as empathy, we can derive two things that I hope will give this lecture a satisfying conclusion. First, we can derive a set of morally forbidden actions which, by their congruence with most of our so-called “pre-philosophical” moral intuitions, will show that the theory⁷ I have proposed has initial plausibility not just because of its simple derivation, but also through its intuitively appealing extension. Second, we can derive a framework for making moral decisions in future. Given that morality is about how we should live our lives, any theory which doesn’t actually tell us anything about how we should live our lives is not a moral one. The framework which morality as empathy entails deserves a whole paper to itself. For now, I would like to finish by discussing briefly the extensional satisfactoriness of the theory.

On a general level, the theory proposed condemns as immoral all the usual suspects. Murder, torture, rape, robbery are all actions which it is impossible to perform while giving subjective weight to the life of the victim. The frequency with which perpetrators of violent crimes admit in interviews that either they or their victim were dehumanized in their eyes while they committed the crime is no coincidence. The moral theory proposed here explains better than any other theory the agonizing nature of such moral dilemmas – if two acts each force us to abnegate our humanity, how can we humanly choose between them? Finally, let me point out that this theory is powerful on a political as well as a personal level, clearly prescribing a strong form of egalitarianism that is worth further consideration and discussion.

No doubt, as philosophers, the issues which I have mentioned briefly just now will be ones which you will want to explore in detail before giving your full support to the theory I have argued for today. It is your capacity to explore these very issues that sets you apart as philosophers. However, as well as being philosophers, you are all human beings, and I hope that on a human level, even if your assent has not yet been fully drawn, your interest in the theory of morality as empathy has at least been piqued.

⁷ Theory is perhaps the wrong word, as I feel that everything in this paper follows simply from the uncontroversial characterization of morality as being about how we should live our lives.

Could restrictions on freedom of speech be necessary for its preservation?

Lorna Finlayson

King's College, Cambridge

lf258@cam.ac.uk

In the cases I am going to discuss, the speech act of one person or group distorts the way in which another is understood. This distortion may be very slight, and have a minimal effect; but in extreme cases it could effectively silence a person or group by making it impossible for them to be understood. The question I want to address is whether any of these cases justify the seemingly paradoxical view that restrictions on freedom of speech are necessary for its preservation.

Suppose that you are acting in a play, and your script tells you to run onto the stage at a certain time and shout, "Fire! Fire!" So you run on, and by some freak coincidence spot a fire at the back of the theatre. There is nothing you can do to alert people to the danger, since the message you want to convey is anticipated by the script, which those present understand to be fictitious. This scenario is of course extraordinarily unlikely, but it shows that what we can communicate by our speech may be limited by the beliefs, assumptions and expectations of our audience. It is possible that certain widespread beliefs constitute something analogous to the script of a play, shaping popular expectations in such a way as to prevent speakers from getting their messages across.

This possibility has most prominently been discussed in relation to pornography. An argument can be advanced for the censorship or banning of pornography on the grounds that it effectively 'silences' women¹. Suppose

¹ Frank Michelman, 'Conceptions of Democracy in American Constitutional Argument: The Case of Pornography Regulation', *Tennessee Law Review*, Vol. 56, No. 291 (1989), pp. 303-4

that some pornographic material causes men to believe that women like to 'play hard to get', and sometimes say 'no' but really mean 'yes'. This is a very dangerous belief to propagate, and we might expect it to encourage sexual harassment and even rape. But the belief might also be the cause of a different type of harm. If the propagation of the belief has the effect that women are no longer free to dissent, then it is possible to argue that the pornographic material should be banned on the principle of maximising freedom of speech, bypassing the need to establish more concrete 'harms'. This reasoning has many other applications, particularly to groups that are made vulnerable by their lack of influence in society. For instance, it is a common claim of child-psychology that young people need firm guidance, and that when they are argumentative they are really just 'testing the boundaries'. Parents and teachers who accept this claim could be led to interpret any objection from a child as a disguised plea for discipline. This could make it impossible for children and adolescents to make their criticisms of authority understood *as criticisms*.

One response to these examples might be to say that, unfortunate as it may be if people are really disabled from making themselves understood, one person's speech act cannot in reality remove another's freedom of speech. Even if pornography promotes a degrading image of women, no-one is physically gagged² – women are free to express their disapproval of this image and argue against it. But the whole point of the examples I gave is that the people affected are placed in a kind of 'Catch 22' situation, where it is literally *impossible* for them to be understood. If a woman's dissent is construed as *assent*, it is no good just telling her to 'shout louder'. It might be thought that in practice, there are usually ways in which a group *can* challenge its image – feminists have been able to speak out against the portrayal of women in pornography. However, the success of feminist critiques has very probably been limited by the image of women (for which it is alleged that pornography is partly responsible), which has labelled feminists variously as 'shrill', 'masculine', 'lesbian' and 'man-hating'. Not being gagged seems insufficient for freedom of speech. To take the argument further, we need to consider how the word 'speech' should be understood.

² (...disregarding one or two possible exceptions...)

The word 'speech' captures something more complex than the mere utterance of vocal noises. It can include other forms of expression, such as the written word. It is also reasonable to suppose that it must involve an intention to communicate with others. True, we sometimes 'speak' to ourselves. But this is a different sense of the word 'speech' than is being used when we talk about 'freedom of speech'. Restrictions on speech that is heard only by the speaker would probably be characterised as 'thought policing', and so 'speaking' to oneself is perhaps better understood as 'thinking aloud'. Likewise, debates about freedom of speech are about the freedom to convey messages *to others*, not just to ourselves. In a situation where people were allowed to say what they liked so long as they were not heard by anyone else, it would be perverse to claim that they had freedom of speech. It would, I think, be equally perverse to attribute freedom of speech to people who were forbidden from expressing themselves in such a way that they might be understood. In order to see this, imagine a situation where everyone's brain is connected to some central switchboard, controlled by the Government. Whenever you attempt to speak, the Government flicks a switch that 'turns off' your audience's ability to understand English. Although you are heard, you may as well not be. Freedom of speech seems to include the freedom to be heard and understood.

So it is plausible to say that 'speech', for my purposes, is more or less synonymous with 'communication'. Communicating one's ideas to others requires that those others *understand* the ideas. Speech should be seen as having three stages: its physical expression (vocally, in writing, etc.); its detection by others (which depends on finding a platform from which to make one's opinions heard); and lastly the *uptake* of the ideas by their audience – where the speaker succeeds in making his or her ideas understood. Correspondingly, there are three main ways in which speech can be thwarted. Where a speaker is gagged, for example, her speech is thwarted at the first stage. Where she is drowned out by other speakers in a debate and cannot be heard, her speech is thwarted at the second stage. In the cases I have discussed, speech is thwarted at the third stage – the stage of *uptake*. All three stages are necessary components of speech, so where uptake has been prevented, speech is no less thwarted than where the speaker is gagged or drowned out.

Some people will fail to ‘speak’, in this sense, simply because they are so incoherent that nobody understands what they are saying. An objection might be that such people obviously do not have their freedom constrained, and so it must be a mistake to include successful uptake as a component of speech. It is true that my definition of ‘speech’ implies that extremely incoherent people do not achieve it, but it implies nothing about whether they are *free* to do so. The conditions for freedom of speech, as I go on to discuss, vary with different notions of ‘freedom’. In any case, this objection is not specific to my definition of ‘speech’. If I had equated ‘speech’ with the utterance of certain noises, an analogous objection would be that a man with no larynx cannot ‘speak’, yet surely he is not deprived of freedom of speech, any more than pigs are deprived of the freedom to fly. How such cases are viewed depends on whether we distinguish between internal and external constraints, and this depends in turn on what we mean by the word ‘freedom’.

A distinction is often made between positive and negative freedom. Isaiah Berlin explains this distinction in his essay ‘Two Concepts of Liberty’, defining negative freedom as ‘the area within which a man can act unobstructed by others’³. Negative freedom depends on not having one’s opportunities limited by others, and it makes no difference whether or not those opportunities are exploited. Positive freedom, as Berlin explains it, is more generally being one’s ‘own master’⁴. This is roughly equivalent to deciding *rationally for oneself* how to live. It doesn’t matter what opportunities we have – what is important is that our actions are determined by our rational selves. It might be thought that the notion of freedom of speech assumes a negative interpretation of freedom – we consider ourselves to have freedom of speech so long as we are free *to* speak: that is, so long as nobody else takes away our opportunity to do so. However, it is possible to understand freedom of speech as a positive freedom. To have positive freedom of speech would be to speak in accordance with one’s rational desires. My definition of ‘speech’ implies that I have this positive freedom only if I say what I rationally want to say, *and* am correctly understood in

³ Isaiah Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty*, I

⁴ *ibid*, II

saying it. If I fail to do this, then I do not have positive freedom of speech, whether my failure is due to my incoherence, to my lack of a larynx, or to the actions of others. But I can have positive freedom of speech even if I would not be allowed to say anything other than what I actually say. For example, if I live under a totalitarian regime, but agree with the government and have no desire to criticise it, I can still have freedom of speech if what I say is in line with what I rationally want to say. I am free despite the fact that I would probably be imprisoned if I *were* to criticise the government. But in this situation I do not have negative freedom of speech, since I do not have the *opportunity* to say certain things. I will not try to show which of the positive and negative concepts of freedom is better, but I want to consider what implications each has for the question of whether restrictions on freedom of speech are necessary for its preservation.

In the examples I have used, the speaker is placed in a ‘Catch 22’ situation because of a belief held by the audience, which distorts that audience’s understanding of what the speaker says. These examples are more relevant to considerations of negative freedom, since they concern the removal of a person’s *opportunity* to speak. But there could be weaker cases where although the audience’s understanding of the speaker is distorted, the speaker has the opportunity to rephrase her message so that it *is* understood. There could also be beliefs that *discourage* a person from speaking, yet the opportunity remains. In these weaker cases there is no threat to *negative* freedom of speech, but someone considering positive freedom would make no distinction between them and the ‘Catch 22’ cases. In considering how positive freedom of speech is affected by a distorting belief, the relevant question is whether the belief has the effect that the would-be speaker fails to make herself understood in saying something which she rationally wants to say. Either it has this effect or it does not, and it makes no odds whether the person is placed in a ‘Catch 22’ situation – this would only make a difference to the opportunities that were available, not to the person’s actual success or failure to speak. In the examples I have used, though, the distorting beliefs pose a threat to both types of freedom. To return to my first example of the fire in the theatre: the actor fails to perform a speech act which he rationally wants to perform; and furthermore he has no opportunity to do so. The positive account of freedom does not recognise ‘Catch 22’ situations as

significantly different from other cases of distortion, but it *can* still justify restrictions on speech in the name of freedom.

There will also be some situations where the action needed to preserve freedom of speech *will* depend on the type of freedom we are talking about. To take a mundane but plausible example, suppose that everyone rationally wants birthday presents, and that there is a popular belief to this effect. This belief incorporates the assumption that if anyone were to claim not to want birthday presents, they couldn't possibly mean it: the claim must be irrationally motivated. If they were able to say what they rationally wanted to say, they would admit that they wanted birthday presents. If we suppose that this belief is *true*, the question of whether it removes people's freedom of speech depends for its answer on the conception of freedom we are using. For in this case, people have positive but not negative freedom of speech: they perform the speech act they rationally want to perform; but they do not have the opportunity to perform another speech act – they are not free to say that they do not want birthday presents, since they will still be understood as saying the contrary. There is then the worry that something similar to this could happen on a more important scale. We might be suspicious of any theory that suggests that people say one thing but really mean another. Better to expect people to *mean what they say* – then they can always *say what they mean*.

But if freedom of speech is threatened by any speculation about how people should be interpreted, we could end up disallowing the expression of many theories, regardless of their value or truth. For example, Freudian theory identifies certain underlying tendencies that are thought to govern behaviour, and if behaviour is observed to be contrary to these tendencies, this is put down to 'reaction formation'. By this it is meant that the tendency is so firmly repressed that the behaviour exhibited seems to go against it. So if the hypothesis is that dependent men prefer women with big breasts, the usual candidate for a counter example (i.e. a dependent man who doesn't prefer big breasts) is labelled as a case of reaction formation, and thus made consistent with the hypothesis. Although the hypothesis might be true, the theory begs the question by antecedently assuming it to be so. This hypothesis, if widely accepted, could make it impossible for a dependent man to say that he prefers

women with small breasts. So a popular acceptance of such theories as Freud's could be seen as a threat to people's negative freedom of speech, whether or not the theories are accurate. These cases pose a problem for those who defend negative freedom, since the conclusion that such non-falsifiable theories could be censored is unattractive.

The distinction between positive and negative freedom, then, complicates the question of *when* restrictions on freedom of speech could be necessary for its preservation. Nevertheless, it is clear that there are some occasions when these restrictions could be necessary, so long as 'speech' is taken to include uptake. And since there are possible and perhaps actual situations where a speech act can remove both someone's negative and positive freedom of speech, this answer need not depend on choosing between the two conceptions of freedom.

The conclusion that one person's freedom of speech can interfere with that of another removes the paradox involved in restricting freedom of speech in the name of freedom of speech. My freedom of speech may be incompatible with your freedom of speech, just as my pleasure may be incompatible with your pleasure. And just as a utilitarian can sanction some sacrifices of pleasure in order to maximise *overall* pleasure, the advocate of freedom of speech can sometimes allow its restriction, precisely in order to preserve it.

Time, change, cause and effect

James Cunningham

University of Glasgow

pdjamesc@hotmail.com

McTaggart felt perfectly justified in describing the impossibility of time without change as universally acknowledged.¹ Certainly those who share this view are in good company, for it is a thesis postulated by a great many philosophers from Aristotle to Russell. Many of them advanced some form of reductivist or relationist hypothesis of temporal concepts. That is to say they argued that all talk of time could be reduced to talk of events. It is not true, however, to say that this thesis is universally acknowledged. In a paper of 1969 Sydney Shoemaker attempted to demonstrate the logical possibility of time without change.²

Shoemaker presents the following argument: imagine a universe entirely divided into three regions: A, B and C. Every third year time in region A freezes for one year. That is to say, nothing within the region will change for a period of one year as observed from regions B and C. The inhabitants of region A will of course not notice the freeze unless they happen to be looking outside their region at the time. If they are, then they will see apparently instant transformations in the regions they are observing. Perhaps it will seem that a house instantly appears in front of them, or a tree disappears. Similarly, region B undergoes a freeze every four years and region C a freeze every five years. Every twelve years regions A and B freeze simultaneously as observed from region C, every fifteen years region A and C freeze simultaneously, as observed from region B, and every twenty years regions B and C freeze as observed from region A. Every sixty years nothing observable happens.

¹.McTaggart, J. M.E - The Unreality of Time – Mind, vol.17 (1908): 457-474

² Shoemaker, Sydney - Time Without Change - Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 64 (1969): 363-381

Figure 1

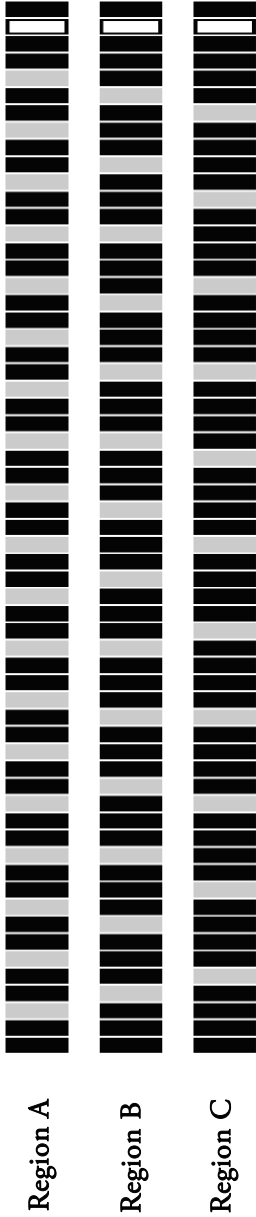


Figure 1 gives a representation of Shoemaker's imaginary universe, showing the pattern of frozen years. Each block represents one year. Light shaded blocks indicate a frozen year in that region, dark shaded blocks show a normal year. Region A freezes every three years, region B freezes every four years and region C freezes every five years. The unshaded blocks represent years of total freeze as predicted by the previous pattern. Shoemaker argues that this prediction gives us good reason to believe these are years of total freeze although there can be no direct evidence of them.

Figure 2



Figures 2 and 3 represent the different interpretations of the second imaginary universe. Figure 2 shows the first interpretation. Dark shaded blocks represent normal years, and the light shaded blocks represent the speeded up years of region A every third and fourth year. Figure 3 shows the second interpretation. Again the dark shaded blocks represent the slowed down years experienced by region B every three years. Both interpretations fit equally well with the observations of the inhabitants of the universe.

Figure 3



Shoemaker argues that the most satisfactory explanation for this is that every sixty years a total freeze occurs across all three regions. Of course an alternative hypothesis, which also fits the observable data, is that every sixty years all regions skip a freeze, however Shoemaker argues that this hypothesis is more complex and therefore less preferable to the hypothesis that the entire universe undergoes a total freeze. Thus Shoemaker hopes to show that we have good reason to think, if such a universe is logically possible, that time without change is logically possible. Obviously we may never have direct evidence for time without change but we may reason inductively from previous observation that it does occur.

Before embarking on any further analysis of Shoemaker's argument it is important to note that Shoemaker does not regard changes in temporal position, changes of age but not necessarily of any other property, so-called McTaggartian changes, as being genuine changes. To use a clichéd example, regardless of what does or does not happen tomorrow, by the end of it the death of Queen Anne will have receded another day into the past. However this denial of McTaggartian changes provides a significant problem for Shoemaker, and one that he takes some pains to address. Very simply, if the whole universe is frozen how does it thaw, when changes begin again? The thawing of a localised freeze may be accounted for by events outside of the frozen region but obviously there can be no such reason for the ending of a complete freeze. The only account for such an event is to deny the principle that if an event A is caused, then the interval immediately preceding it contains sufficient cause for A. Shoemaker calls this principle "P". It is generally regarded as logically impossible for an event at time t to be causally sufficient for an event at time t' , where t and t' are separated by an empty interval. For example, thunder is consistently heard some time after lightning is observed, yet the one is not immediately caused by the other, rather there are intermediate causes and effects, the lightning is electrical potential energy changing to heat and light, the heat causes an expansion of the air, this causes a shock wave that is detected by our eardrums and so on. This is Hume's principle that causes are contiguous with effects. Shoemaker does not deny this; rather he presents us with an alternative account of action at a temporal distance. This account requires us to assume that an event happening at time t is necessary but not sufficient part of an actually obtaining sufficient

condition of a later event occurring at time t' . While this account denies principle P it does not necessarily follow that the principle that cause and effect are contiguous must be abandoned. However, this account relies on the suggestion that McTaggartian changes may act as causes. In light of this, Shoemaker accepts that McTaggartian changes may be genuine changes. The thesis implicit in this is that in order for a change to be genuine it is necessary for it to have some causal personality, that is, it must have a physical rather than merely a temporal effect. Shoemaker maintains, however, that while the inhabitants of his imagined universe have some justification for regarding McTaggartian changes as genuine, no such justification exists for the actual universe. Nevertheless, if changeless time is a logical possibility in the actual world then it is also logically possible for actual McTaggartian changes to be genuine changes of properties.

One may, I think, make either of two arguments on cause and change, both of which pose serious questions for Shoemaker. Firstly, one may argue that all genuine changes have a cause, and are themselves causes of future effects. If this is the case then we may reasonably ask what is required for a McTaggartian change to become genuine. By this reading of cause and effect, a genuine McTaggartian change appears to be just like any of the infinite variety of non-genuine McTaggartian changes and yet have some additional causal effect. Imagine if we were to throw ten tennis balls at a wall and one, instead of bouncing off, exploded we would surely seek an explanation why. Maybe a better example would be if presented with ten identical tennis balls and told one had the potential to explode, it would seem very odd that none of the others shared this property, whilst being in all other respects identical. Another account may say that all that is necessary for a change to be genuine is that it has the potential to cause a physical effect. If this is so then the question is more straightforward: why are not all McTaggartian changes genuine, as it is logically possible that each will have an effect. While Shoemaker recognises the potential for such problems to arise if we are to allow the logical possibility of changeless time, he does not address them directly. However these questions must be answered before any question of changeless time is resolved.

I now wish to turn attention to a second but not unrelated question concerning Shoemaker's argument. I have a dictionary that defines time as "the stretch of existence in which things happen."³ This is obviously unsatisfactory given Shoemaker's assertion that time may pass in a changeless universe. Maybe then the definition should be "the stretch of existence in which things *may* happen." One may use Russell's example of time being like a row of coat pegs. Each coat peg, or instant having an independent existence regardless of whether or not it holds a coat, or an event. In fact Shoemaker does not venture any description, as such, for the structure of time but it is reasonable to assume that he did have such a concept in mind. In the light of this consider the following imaginary universe: The universe, not dissimilar to Shoemaker's example, is entirely divided into two regions A and B. Unlike Shoemaker's example however, in this world region A speeds up by a factor of two, relative to the other region, every three years. That is to say, all processes in the region take half the time and so two years pass in region A in the same duration that it takes for one year to pass in the other region. Of course, the inhabitants of region A notice no change unless they are observing region B.

While I have described this process with an obvious bias towards one explanation of the observed data, in fact, assuming a non-relationist conception of time, there are at least two. Every three years rate of change in region A will speed up relative to region B. This is equivalent to saying that every three years rates of change of region B will slow down relative to region A. For the relationist there is little of interest in such a situation, but a non-relationist is committed to saying that one or other of them will in fact be either going faster or slower, and that while one region's clocks are accurate the other region's clocks will be wrong (I will assume for the purposes of this argument that both regions start with correct clocks and that time itself is of constant rate. The example can be changed to accommodate these variations but it then becomes unnecessarily complicated). Obviously this would be an example of an unknowable truth but it would nevertheless be a truth. It is apparently logically possible, therefore, for rate of change to alter relative to time. Assuming we are unwilling to say that time itself speeds up or slows

³ Chambers Giant Paperback English Dictionary – Ed. Catherine Schwarz – Larousse, 1996

down within specific regions it seems that the rate of change in any given instant is variable.

However, if this is the case then it may leave Shoemaker on the horns of a dilemma. That is: is there a limit on the rate of change logically possible during a given instant? Or to put it another way: if time is the stretch of existence in which events may happen, do events require a definite minimum time? If not, then we are prepared to allow the possibility of instantaneous change and are therefore able to bring another interpretation to Shoemaker's universe. Rather than, for example, region A freezing for one year and regions B and C continuing as normal, region A may continue as normal while regions B and C undergo instantaneous change. Shoemaker called the thesis that change required time a truism and I doubt that anyone would seriously challenge this. If this is the case, then we are left with the alternative that each change requires a certain minimum time. This may lead one to the assumption that time must pass in discrete chunks, rather than a constant flow, so called quantized time, but this is a mistake. While it is certainly true that there will be certain change of time associated with the shortest possible event, this should not be taken to imply that an instant of time may be no shorter than that, but only that an instant of non-changeless time must be of at least that length.

However, non-quantized time does lead to a problem. Let us take two points in time X and Y, between which an event occurs. X and Y are separated by the smallest non-changeless interval of time t_i . However t_i is composed of a number of smaller, changeless instants, potentially an infinite number. This again throws up the problem of how change is to occur through these instants. Either one must abandon the principle that cause is contiguous with effect or one must accept that McTaggartian changes are genuine changes in all possible worlds. In the light of this it may seem that quantized time is necessary if we are to accept the logical possibility of time without change, but is this without its own problems? I think not, because this still requires us to accept McTaggartian change if we are prepared to allow that change may occur at slower rates. If a change would take a minimum of two instants then it seems that if it were to take longer, say four instants, then two of those instants must be empty, given all the actual change will occur in the other

two. It would be very easy to construct an example where the only additional cause at work could be McTaggartian.

I do not believe that any of these arguments are unanswerable but I do hope to show that a non-relationist theory of time, along the lines of that implied by Shoemaker certainly has some work to do if it is not quickly to become undesirably complicated and pose more questions than it resolves. It is true that I have made various assumptions, such as the necessity for a smallest change. I do not think that any of them are unjustified, but considerations of time and space prevent me from giving them the discussion they deserve. I hope to return to them in the future. Roger Teichmann⁴ has argued that Shoemaker's total freeze hypothesis is justified only if it makes sense, and whether or not it does so will be decided by other arguments. I hope I have made at least some nod in the direction of the questions that will require resolution before the problem of changeless time may be resolved.

⁴ Teichmann, Roger - Time and Change - The Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. 43 (1993): 158-177

A note on continental and analytic philosophy

Robert Charleston

The Open University

rc3673@student.open.ac.uk

How much attention do you pay to footnotes? I don't mean: 'Do you read them?' (Though it *can* be difficult to break away from the main body of a text if you are absorbed or in a rush.) I mean: 'How often do you notice what they're *like*?' It's something I've had to notice over the last couple of months. Most journals have a single footnote style that all authors have to adopt. One only allows page references, no explanation or argument. Another allows brief asides, but only references in the Chicago style. The BJUP is, as far as I'm aware, unique in allowing authors to keep their own natural footnote style. We made the decision to allow this for two reasons:

First, footnote style contributes to the flavour of an essay. Whether all branches of an argument are dealt with in the body of a text, or controlled by footnote is a personal choice. In this issue alone, Finlayson's footnotes include a sly aside for the alert reader; Deakin's are often technical elucidations or specifications that could otherwise swamp the clarity of a point being made; Chan's carry no content at all, but serve to tie her commentary into the texts as if offering evidence in a court case. To flatten all of these to a single style would be to miss out on some of the joyous individuality of these pieces of work.

Which – and this was the second reason – no longer seems necessary. Some elements of style must be homogeneous for this journal to feel like a unified entity. It hardly needs a Wittgenstein to point out the relation between resemblance and ontology. A non-comprehensive list of characteristics these essays need to share includes a common typeface, layout and English language. Otherwise heterogeneous characteristics overwhelm the papers' resemblances, and they no longer feel like *the same sort of thing*. In the past,

editors believed footnote style should be on this list of shared characteristics. I believe that our contemporary world-wide-web usage and literary promiscuity have effectively made such uniformity unnecessary. We are used to extracting information from webpages with wildly different formats, and photocopied papers from journals with completely different footnote styles. There are some conventions that need to be followed, and some that do not. This changes depending on the context of the reading public, but get it *right* and the papers have greater power, and are still recognisably the same sort of thing.

Which is where continental philosophy comes in. Most philosophy undergraduates in the UK fall within the analytic tradition. They fall on the side of a one-hundred-year-old distinction that has *modus ponens* and *tollens* arguments, necessity and sufficiency, and definitions as central features. There are plenty of others in Europe, America and British humanities and sociology faculties who fall on the other side. Their work has voices, paradoxical self-negation, multiple meanings and the concept of a *jump* – of only being able to lead to a certain point through instruction before a thinker must make their own way forwards – at its heart.

Relations between the two traditions have not always been cordial. Analytic philosophers have claimed that continental philosophy is poorly-written, relativist, Communist mysticism. Continental philosophers have retorted that analytic philosophers are mired in a set of intransigent techniques that are too limited to give any true wisdom, are oppressive and unable to see the subtleties in even their own flat prose. Both sides have accused one another of jargon-heavy fetishism and hero-worship of key authors. The two sides have largely separated. Mainstream British philosophy departments and their core courses have remained analytic at least in the essay style they will accept from students. History, sociology and literature departments have largely become a home base for postmodernists and poststructuralists who cluster around continental philosophy writers. There are separate journals, societies and conferences for the two disciplines.

Recently it has become fashionable to say you are ‘sympathetic’ to continental work – as is the case with McDowell or Dancy to a greater or lesser extent; or

to organise ‘interdisciplinary’ interaction. The problem with both these approaches is that they – intentionally or unintentionally – must fudge certain key issues. There are fundamental incompatibilities between the two traditions. Certain words – for example *différence*, *differance* – mean different things to the two sides. Absolute key assumptions – such as the principle of bivalence or the desirability of using unequivocal language in the analytic discipline – are immediately contradicted by the multiple readings of a text’s meaning that is in turn central to continental thought.

Have you ever seen a Mercator and Polar Gnomonic map placed next to one another? One is like a road map, in that there is a square grid overlay, with right angles matching North, South, East and West; but on it Greenland is represented as the same size as Africa (in reality the latter is 13 times the size of the former) due to equatorial and polar scales having to vary wildly to map a globe to a rectangle of paper. The other uses a circle rather than a rectangle to alleviate this problem, and ensures that a line drawn between any two points on it is indeed the shortest distance; but shows East and West as curves rather than simple straight-line, right-angle directions you could intuitively match a compass to, and can only show half the world on a single map. If you tried to travel around the world with an exclusively-Mercator navigator and an exclusively-Polar-Gnomonic navigator working shifts, you would get very lost very quickly. If you were a Mercator-map-follower who decided he was ‘sympathetic’ to the Polar Gnomonic system, so split the difference in degrees between the courses recommended, you would similarly find yourself going in circles. This, historically, has been the problem with splicing analytic and continental traditions together. The end result gets you nowhere you want to be; and both sides find the journey objectionable.

At which point analytic readers may be wondering: ‘Well why bother? Analytic philosophy is great. We’re not missing anything – why engage with this stuff?’ As an analytic philosopher myself who was sceptical for a long time as to the value of continental philosophy, I can offer three reasons why I have started to seriously rate some of it. The first is that the most outrageous pieces you’ve probably heard are usually the peripheral, grandstanding work. Plenty of bad philosophy gets written every year, irrespective of tradition – you have to ask someone who’s read a lot of the stuff to point you in the direction of

the really good writing. If you do so with continental philosophy, I think you may well be surprised at how different a lot of it is from the stereotype.

Second, it is not as self-contradictory or incoherent as is often claimed. What comes across as relativism or contravention of bivalence is actually often just rumination on interpretation: an enjoyment of the many different thoughts that can emerge or be sparked by a single set of words. Even here, limits are observed. The Communist Manifesto is rarely suggested to be a cake recipe or ipod instruction manual. And actually the *ladder* or *jump* is something we use in analytic philosophy all the time, but raised to a methodological axiom: a metaphor. I've used maps here, Descartes used a house to represent an epistemic edifice, Locke had his *tabula rasa*. There is a point being made in each of these images that the author has failed to describe using plain definition or clauses of necessary and sufficient conditions. This is something we already do.

Finally, there is great *insight* in continental writing. Its authors have pointed out things of great perception, whose *rightness* I can immediately see, but which I have no idea how they could be established by chains of deduction. Kierkegaard on the state of being he calls *anxiety in the world* was the first of these I found. It seems plausible to occasionally penetrate to something true directly and clearly. A rich seam of these kinds of insight runs through the best continental work. I only write analytic pieces myself, but the direction I try to travel through deduction has been changed a couple of times by the insight I have found in continental writers. There is something to be gained here for analytic philosophers. And any continental paper that does not include a fair few *modus tollens* and *ponens* moves, and draw a few bivalence-dependant conclusions is unlikely to be read more than once. I take it that continental philosophers – when they are honest with themselves – do implicitly acknowledge the great value of analytic writing. They do enough of it themselves.

But what to do about the splicing problem, then? Well, my answer is: 'Don't try.' Just as Mercator and Polar Gnomonic maps, analytic and continental arguments and analyses may be directly incompatible, *unintegrable*. But

crucially they are both identifiable about the same thing: the world. And they both yield something that is plausibly wisdom. They are both philosophy.

I am suggesting that the difference between the two to a well-read current philosophy student is far closer to that of 'style of footnote' than 'not written in English'. It may take a bit of extra thought and work if you aren't used to it, but it *is* something that insight and wisdom can be gained from. Don't read just analytic philosophy or continental philosophy, read *both*.

The BJUP requires that all essays it publishes are clear, carefully-argued and accessible to non-topic-specialists, irrespective of the tradition the author comes from. All of these are characteristics of the following, continental paper by Duschinsky. You will continue to find great examples of both continental and analytic philosophy in the journal as long as I am editor.

You *can* choose how you write your own footnotes.¹

¹ At least, that's *my* interpretation...

Does Marx want to end politics?

Robbie Duschinsky

Selwyn College, Cambridge

rd313@cam.ac.uk

The single voice running through the *Communist Manifesto* appears to argue that, inherent in the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production lie the seeds of a future egalitarian society: Communism. The proletariat, the alienated workers, called into existence by the bourgeoisie as a consequence of the division of labour, are destined to bring about the destruction of the system of private property and end the endemic class struggle that is its logical consequence. With the establishment of public ownership of the means of production, politics, the manifestation of that class struggle over property, will be superseded and both politics and the state will come to an end.¹ Yet Derrida in *Specters of Marx* problematises that answer, suggesting that there are a number of voices within the text, arguing for different things, irreconcilable things: scholarly inevitability, metaphysical messianism, and practical action (*inter alia*).² He would then ask “which Marx wants to end politics?”

The first voice that we shall consider then, *a scholarly voice*, traces the evolution of the two classes, bourgeoisie and proletariat. In the middle ages, the aristocracy lived by exploiting the work of the lower classes. However the feudal relations of property, which determined the nature of the society, became incompatible with the developing capitalist forces. The old ties collapsed in the course of the industrial revolution, and were replaced by a monetary relation controlled by self-interest; a constitution suited to the economic interests of the bourgeoisie as a class.³

The “modern representative state” is set up, a body created in order to administer in the interests of the property-owning class. The politics of representative democracy is then, in reality, just another manifestation of the historic class struggle, a means by which the proletariat are oppressed. This

possession of political power by the bourgeoisie has allowed them to dissolve all “personal worth into exchange value”, and, furthermore, has permitted them to veil this deception by the rhetoric of ‘rule by the people’.⁴ In short: exploitation under the mask of political liberty.

This system is, however, ridden with contradiction both philosophically and practically. The state is evidently lacking in legitimacy since it exploits “ninetenths of the population”, by not giving them their fair share of property. In this respect the political superstructure of capitalism, political liberalism, is pervaded by a paradox since it claims to allow for the liberty of many, whilst not providing them with the material resources necessary to be truly free.⁵ There are also contradictions within the economic base since the market of bourgeois society is too small to sell all the goods it produces, resulting in chronic over-production. The tumbling price of goods then leads to periodic crises in the market, in which capital is destroyed as “the condition of its own self-preservation”. As the capitalist forces get stronger and stronger, production continues to rise and prices continue to fall, until the system suffers from the most acute crisis and shakes itself apart.⁶ The forces of capitalism destroy themselves.

Industrialisation has also managed to bring workers together into large factories, and this has allowed them to organise themselves into Unions. They become the majority of the population, as capitalism dispossesses more and more people of property, through the use of cost-efficient machinery. This will allow them, during the height of the ultimate crisis in capitalism, to wrest political power from the bourgeoisie through revolution.⁷ Then, with the proletariat as ruling class, class distinctions themselves will disappear forever, since they were built along the socio-economic faultline between those who owned the means of production and those who were alienated from the property they were producing. In contrast, the proletariat will govern on behalf of the common good; with public ownership of the means of production, then, there will be no more politics, because political power in the form of the state is rendered unnecessary - it was only ever a tool of class interests and oppression - and thus is not needed when the proletariat has “abolished its own supremacy as a class” through the final destruction of the class system.⁸

This then is the stance of the scholarly spectre haunting the Manifesto. This Marx does indeed wish to end politics and, more, has analysed the mechanisms that will bring this about. Derrida, however, sees the prioritising of this voice in the text as extremely dangerous; he sees this process occurring in the university institutions around him, where scholars appropriate the Manifesto as a part of “our great canon of Western political philosophy”.⁹ He sees this view as a means by which the radical message of Marx is neutralised by the Establishment. It is a subtle form of exorcism of the ghost of dead Communism,¹⁰ since it claims that the Marxists were incorrect to follow Marx as an ideology, by implication of the fact that his work is a collection of texts in the philosophical cannon - thus just as fallible as his predecessors and successors in that cannon. Marx the scholar, the education institutions would say, did desire to end politics and looked at the contradictions in modernity that are likely to bring that about, but his theories are, like any argument presenting itself as science, subject to falsification.¹¹ In those (carefully and subtly reduced) terms it can come under fatal attack from theoreticians who show logical contradictions in the theory, such as Hayek’s criticism of the impossibility of the centralisation of knowledge necessary for a planned economy of public ownership, and also can be attacked on a factual basis, by the evidence of the failure of Communist regimes around the world, from the parasitic totalitarianism that emerged in Soviet Russia from the 1930s to the social and economic bankruptcy of the Israeli kibbutzim, which came to a head in the 1990s. The scholar Marx sees the end of politics as a desirable end, and, in fact, on the realistic economic horizon; yet, if taken purely on his own terms, he can be shown to be simply wrong.

However, the scholars are incorrect to see this series of logical arguments as a successful exorcism. There are still more spectres of Marx haunting them than merely the insightful scholar. The next spirit of Marx that we shall mention is *the believer in metaphysical messianism*. He sees a teleological force driving history, through the different stages mentioned in the Manifesto: the feudal, the capitalist, and the communist modes of production. At each stage Marx’s inherited Hegelian dialectic will ensure the supersession, the overcoming, of each set of contradictions within the economic system, and the becoming of a new historical stage that will solve those problems while creating new ones, thus beginning the process again. Marx suggests that, since these problems are

the inevitable result of the conditions of the ownership of private property, the final synthesis that will bring about the end of political struggle will occur when public ownership is instituted, when that negation of human freedom, property-ownership, is itself negated. This system of dialectical progress suggests that the “victory of the proletariat [is]... inevitable”, if only we just look and see the world in the correct, dialectical, way.¹²

Another element of this Marx’s voice is his ontology. He writes of capital possessing “a social power” because it has been created by “the united action of all members of society”. Yet this social power is made alien from the worker through the mechanism of private property, which stops the individual from objectifying his or herself in the world, and thus giving meaning to their life; the bourgeoisie appropriate the essence given to the product by the worker, and sell it on for profit. Possible objectification becomes unfortunate alienation and mankind is tragically separated from its own species-being, what it means to be human. Though not made explicit in the Communist Manifesto, the Hegelian ontological reasoning is necessary to explain why the collective ownership of the collectively-made products should be the inevitable and desired end of history, as Marx and Engels suggest, and why it should be capable of suiting everybody.¹³

Derrida finds both the teleology and the ontology which underpin the argument of this spectre to be extremely problematic since “this onto-teho-archeo-teleology locks up, neutralizes, and finally cancels historicity.”¹⁴ An example of this is the idea of species-being, from which we are led to assume that there exists a common good which a Communist society can administer. However this metaphysical concept is problematic since it assumes the possibility of a collective social subject, self-present to itself. In contrast, once this notion of the ‘common good’ has been unpacked, the nature of political decisions is shown to be such that the effects of them can never benefit every member of a society equally.

Derrida does not explicitly deconstruct Marx’s metaphysics in *Specters of Marx*. The above is, then, my extrapolation. However, I justify it in light of the fact that Marx all but argues himself headlong into it in ‘Critique of the Gotha Programme’, since he is forced to distinguish two phases of

Communism by the fact that he cannot envision a system of equality that achieves the aim of benefiting everyone “according to his need”. He is thus forced to assign this realisation of the species-being to the second stage of post-revolutionary history, about which he cannot speak concretely.¹⁵ My argument is further supported by Derrida’s later article ‘Marx and Sons’, in which he suggests that the failure of institutional Communism (of party, state etc.) was caused by this welding of ontological assumptions on to political bodies. The ontological “single meaning” in Marxist thought, fixed rigid out of fear of the ghost of Marx, lead to the totalitarianism of Communist institutions out of a lack of respect and reverence for the political other.¹⁶ Thus the messianic aspect of Marx does wish to end politics - he even sees it as inevitable. Yet this spectre, which still possesses the body of the Left today, is self-defeating since it can easily become *itself* the source of oppression.

Although he takes issue with much of the Marxist legacy, Derrida urges us that we cannot escape the spectres of Marx, we must learn to “live *with* ghosts... To live otherwise and better”.¹⁷ This short remark is the key to what Derrida sees as the political message that we should take from Marxism today. This is a voice that does not believe in the desirability of an end to politics, a voice that cannot see the realisation of the metaphysical ideal, or any ideal, as a logical possibility, but which insists, nonetheless, on the need for critique and for action in order that we can improve on how things are now. Refuting the spectre of the scholarly Marx, it claims that social science must be more than merely descriptive - it needs to be prescriptive and critical. This, Derrida calls the “spirit of the Marxist critique”, a voice, he believes, we must distinguish from the philosophical system, from dialectical materialism, from the Communist Party and from the Communist State.¹⁸ This voice is certainly evident in the Manifesto, as illustrated by Marx’s injunction for “Communists everywhere [to] support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things.”¹⁹ This is a call for a generalised critique, even against Communism, were it to ever itself become a forces for conservatism, as Derrida suggests it sadly has.

This voice permits Communism to be seen as the *deferred* (from the present) and the *different* (from the present) – difference - a negative model of an ideal society that we can use to critique our existing social surroundings, but which

is always unattainable, and recognised as such. There must always be an element of messianism in this, since Communism is the “promise” of the immanent need for justice to be brought about,²⁰ however, in order to avoid self-contradiction, it must be shorn of its metaphysical fleece, to reveal nothing grander, but nothing less, than a certain child-like hope and a call to make changes in our world. Thus there are two elements of Marxism that we should inherit: critique (even of Marxism itself, even of *critique* itself), and action. The latter is embodied in the “manifest” nature of the injunction of (the) Manifesto: we must constantly attempt to ‘Manifest’ our radicalism in practical action - an inherently *political process*, and one *with no end*.²¹

Thus Derrida shows us that Marx’s texts, such as the Manifesto, are necessarily equivocal and, reading them, we must perform a “hauntology”, a search for the different spectres inhabiting the text. Of these, there are indeed those that wish to end politics by the overcoming of class-struggle and the establishment of a Communist society, whether through metaphysical mechanisms (as is more apparent in the early Marx, reacting against Hegel), or through complex economic calculations (which are given greater prominence in the later Marx, reacting against J.S.Mill). However, these spectres are unable to end politics - the scholar, because he can be denatured by claiming his theories as refutable scientific facts; the idealist, because he is unable to bring about a convergence between the material and the ideal because of the spectre of his dead master, Hegel, still haunting his conception of the latter. These are but two of many possible spectres in Marx’s work, but they indicate the way in which the desire to end politics can become self-defeating or self-contradictory.

In contrast, there is a spirit of Marx, the spirit of eternal critique, which is the one Derrida proposes is the one still valuable to those who value justice today. This is the spirit which demands that we dive headlong into politics - through debate and effective political action. This is the spirit which sees politics, not as a problem to be overcome, but as the only way in which our problems can ever be addressed.

I would like to thank Peter Hutchinson and Barbara Miller for their infectious love of politics - theoretical and practical - and for their encouragement over many years; this essay is a product of their influence on me.

Notes:

1. David McLellan (ed) (1977) *Karl Marx: Selected Writings, The Holy Family*, p134-5.
2. Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, p30-34.
3. *ibid.* *Communist Manifesto*, p225-6 and p223
4. *ibid.* p223-4
5. *ibid.* p223
6. *ibid.* *Grundrisse*, p387 and *Communist Manifesto*, p226
7. *ibid.* *Communist Manifesto*, p227
8. *ibid.* p 237-8
9. Jacques Derrida, *op. cit.*, p32.
10. *ibid.* p50 and p52-3
11. *ibid.* p67-8 Derrida makes this critique very explicit regarding Fukuyama; logically it should be applicable to the scholarly Marx as well.
12. David McLellan (ed), *op. cit.* *Communist Manifesto*, p230-1, *Grundrisse*, p370 and *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, p81-9
13. *ibid.* *Communist Manifesto*, p232 and *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, p108
14. Jacques Derrida, *op. cit.*, p74. See also p88-9
15. David McLellan (ed), *op.cit.* *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p565-70
16. Derrida, 'Marx & Sons', in *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida's Specters of Marx*, (ed) Michael Sprinker, p221
17. Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, introduction, p.xviii
18. *ibid.* p68
19. David McLellan (ed), *op. cit.*, *Communist Manifesto*, p246
20. Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, p31
21. *ibid.* p102

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A quasi-realism of (quasi-)beliefs?

Carlos Lastra-Anadón

Merton College, Oxford

carlos.lastra-anadon@merton.ox.ac.uk

Simon Blackburn has advocated the metaethical view he calls quasi-realism, which in his own words “is trying to earn our right to talk of moral truth, while recognizing fully the subjective sources of our judgements, inside our own attitudes, needs, desires, and natures”. (Blackburn 1984: 197). To me and others, this is a very attractive project since it grounds our moral thinking ultimately in the way we human beings happen to be without the need for an external source for morality, while at the same time avoiding relativism. However, I am less than convinced by Blackburn’s insistence that the states of mind that are at the bottom of the project, the building blocks which allow his construction are (moral) attitudes, or in other words, emotional or evaluative. This is taken to be in the sense that they are states of mind that are rather different from cognitive states (e.g., beliefs), states whose function is typically to describe the world to ourselves¹.

Consider two true sentences, one of moral content and one that has none:

- (A) “The idea that the sun spins around the earth is wrong”
- (B) “Killing babies for fun is wrong”.

Blackburn’s theory implies that although the surface grammar of both sentences may be similar in both cases, what they express is very different at a deeper level and the reason why we label them both “true” is also very

¹ Throughout the rest of the paper I will take “attitudes” to mean *moral* attitudes. This is a notion that Blackburn does not believe profitable to define explicitly (1998: 13-14), but is understood to include states of mind such as emotions, desires or dispositions. It is, for him, to be distinguished from cognitive states such as beliefs, which are not the states of mind that are central to practical life.

different. Briefly, A is a representation of how the world is which corresponds to the way in which the world indeed is – and so is true. B, however, manifests a certain attitude of repulsion towards killing babies, and one that would belong to the best possible set of attitudes that human beings can have and so, is also true (Blackburn 1984: 197-202). The surface similarity of moral language to ordinary language (the similarity of A and B) is explained by the quasi-realist as a projection in the form of statements about the world of what are – at the deepest level of analysis – expressions of attitudes. In particular, we can construct a notion of moral truth, an explanation of what we do when we say that “B is true”, which is not a realist notion. To utter “B is true” is tantamount to uttering “B”, which if said after careful reflection is merely to declare that the content of B is part of the best possible set of attitudes that one can have (Blackburn 1998: 79)². We can legitimately talk in realist terms, but this is merely a useful cover for a system of attitudes together with a notion of moral improvement.

In this paper I want to take issue with this way of looking at things and propose a re-interpretation of quasi-realism that saves what I think is a valuable part of Blackburn’s proposal, by using cognitive states as building blocks. I shall argue for this by firstly pointing out that all moral judgments do indeed have a cognitive side and that this is an essential part of them. I shall then try to show that if we take the content of moral judgments to be beliefs (or something very similar to them) the “good” side of Blackburn’s proposal is preserved. But the reason why I favour this view over his will become clear at the end, where I argue that moral judgments and non-moral ones cannot be that dissimilar after all. Crispin Wright has thus made it clear that a unified account for the moral and the non-moral case is needed. I believe I provide one while I do not think Blackburn can.

The first thing to note is something highlighted by Smith (2001: 94): moral judgements always have a representational content, even if arguably this

² The role of moral language in unasserted contexts also requires explanation (this is the so-called Frege-Geach problem). Blackburn does this in 1984: 189-196 and in 1998: ch.3 by developing a logic of attitudes that is supposed to provide an account of the use of sentence-functors (such as “and”, “or”, “if... then”) in moral contexts. For why I believe this account is fundamentally unsatisfactory please see below.

cannot exhaust all there is to them. When I sincerely utter something like B, not only am I expressing my repulsion towards the action of killing babies. If I am sincere and rational, I will also be revealing that killing babies for fun is the kind of thing I find worthy of contempt and repulsion, that I will adopt an attitude of scorn of anyone who kills babies for fun and so on. What could be more descriptive than this? It describes my state of mind in a rather similar way to the one arising when I say “I dreamt of going to the beach last night”. I do not think this can easily be taken to be a statement revealing attitudes; and so, if it is taken to be descriptive, it must be acknowledged that there is something descriptive or representational about all moral judgements.³

Admittedly, under Blackburn’s quasi-realism talk of cognitive states regarding moral judgements is made legitimate: it is just a feature of the way we are that we choose to speak thus, perhaps in search of a uniform way of speaking, but any such parlance is ultimately just a (convenient) paraphrase of an attitude. Thus, for example, Blackburn tells us that “believing that X is good or right is roughly having an appropriately favourable valuation of X” (1998: 70). So, even if we use the very same word (believe, or something sounding equally cognitive), the content of what we are saying is still very different. This is what Smith (and I) want to dispute: it is not enough to make it legitimate to use the word “believe” in ethical contexts, while this has an entirely different meaning from the ordinary (representational) case. This is because part of the content of moral judgments is purely representational even at the deepest level of analysis. This should be enough for showing that any non-cognitive position that neglects any consideration of a cognitive side to moral judgments must be unsatisfactory.

A resort that seems *prima facie* open to non-cognitivists is to accept that there may be a cognitive side to any moral talk but that this is purely incidental and secondary to what is essential about moral judgements: its non-cognitive side⁴. This seems like a rather difficult claim to evaluate: once we

³ This argument is crucial for the rest of the paper. For a more careful exposition than I can provide here, please see Smith’s own work (2001).

⁴ Something along these lines seems to be implicit in part of Blackburn’s discussion, see for example his 1998: 7.

acknowledge that they are both present, it is not easy to estimate their different weightings. But I believe there are two main ways in which it can be defended.

The first one revolves around the idea that ethics is different from any descriptive activity in that it is essentially practical. That is, the role of our moral judgements is to guide our action: if we really believe the content of proposition B⁵ then we will have at least some motivation towards refraining from killing babies⁶. The idea coming from Hume is that a mere belief is not enough for generating this motivation and that we need on top of it a desire, an essentially practical mental state. This desire would be, strictly speaking, what motivates us to act. Hence, the essential part of moral judgments must be what makes them lie in the realm of morality, namely the fact that they motivate us – and this is not their cognitive part.

However, Wedgwood (2004) and Smith (2001) show us that there is no reason for thinking so. To take up just Wedgwood's suggestion a bit further than he does, there is no reason for thinking about beliefs as completely inert, incapable of motivating us. Properly understood, cognitive states must have some normative content that we can take to be Fregean modes of presentation⁷. In typical cognitive states (think of the belief that A) this involves at least certain predispositions that we may call logical. For instance, towards finding what follows from the content of these cognitive states and adopting these conclusions or towards reassessing any argument that we deem valid and has true premises and not-A as a conclusion. The upshot is that even what we would have been inclined to consider typical cognitive states

⁵ Since B is just the name of a sentence, I should, strictly speaking, say something like “if we really believe the proposition that is expressed by B”. For the purpose of clarity and since there is no risk of ambiguity, in this and similar cases I will write the simpler “if we really believe B” from now on.

⁶ This is the view that is often called Moral Judgement Internalism (or, when taken to be about general normative statements, Normative Judgement Internalism) and which is often taken to be analytic. See for example Hare (1952) or Blackburn (1984).

⁷ This view takes Wedgwood's insight further since it states that *all* cognitive states have normative content and not just those which are normally expressed by uttering sentences involving words like “ought”. I think that the extension to the more general case is quite natural from Wedgwood's argument and see no obvious reason why it cannot be carried out.

must have some normative content that in many senses motivates. This would just happen analogously in the case of *moral* judgements. To be sure, this cannot lend any support to the thought that moral judgments are not essentially cognitive states, for cognitive states are indeed capable of motivating.

Smith's view is, if we like, more conservative, in that it preserves a distinction between inert cognitive states and attitudes. However, if we have the relevant belief that we unquestionably have when we make a moral judgment, absence of practical irrationality and in particular a tendency towards mental coherence is enough for granting that we will have the relevant desire towards acting accordingly. Of course, in this case, this desire can at most be said to be a by-product of what really is crucial – the cognitive state.

The second main argument is about how we can talk about ethical truths “without entering the troubles of metaphysics and epistemology” (Blackburn 1984: 220). This is the old problem signalled by Mackie (1977: ch.1)⁸. The trouble lies in finding room for moral truth-makers in our ontology. In the intuitive picture, typical beliefs are made true by correspondence to the way the world is, the facts of the world. My belief that A, i.e. my belief that “the idea that the sun spins around the earth is wrong” is a true belief since it is a fact of the world that the sun does not spin around the earth. No similar fact can easily be found that would make my belief that B a true belief. This is because beyond the arguable queerness of such facts that Mackie was concerned about, there is something more fundamental that is problematic: as Blackburn puts it and I agree “ethics seems to fit badly into [the] world” (1998: 48). It is the feeling that ethical truth stems from the way we are, rather than corresponding to something in which we play no part that rightly motivates Blackburn's project⁹. But I think once we acknowledge that there *is* something cognitive about all moral judgments and that this could in fact be essential to them it would be odd to think that that feeling suffices for taking attitudes to be at the bottom of moral judgments. In other words, even if we

⁸ Blackburn makes this problem explicitly his in *How to be an ethical anti-realist?* (reprinted in Blackburn 1993).

⁹ “Nature itself may be heartless and free of desires but amongst the creatures it has thrown up are some which are not heartless and not free of desires.” (Blackburn 1998: 50)

reject that there may be moral facts out there in the world, that need not commit us to a non-cognitivist position. I want to consider what would happen if we took beliefs to be at the bottom of such judgments, in the way that Wedgwood does. Can we still make sense of a quasi-realist construction?

If we follow Smith as above in identifying what the content of these beliefs would be, we can readily see that they are good enough candidates for being moral judgments. Moreover, crucial to the success of quasi-realism is its capacity for accounting for the fact of the use of moral talk in unasserted contexts, which we use all the time. These are often cases where we cannot straightforwardly be said to express an attitude at all. Granted, it may be that “gambling is wrong” manifests a particular attitude of repulsion towards gambling. However, if we consider “if gambling is wrong, then you should not get your little brother to gamble” this does not seem to express any particular view about gambling, and so we do not even seem to be able to comprehend it if we take the content of those utterances to be exhausted by considerations of attitude. In the view I am defending here, the problem is swiftly solved, since the case is analogous to any other non-ethical one in which such unasserted contexts appear – and presumably we understand those cases. Both assertions of “P” and of “if P then Q”, where P and Q are uncontroversially descriptive statements, involve the proposition that is the content of P. This proposition is of course as harmless as it is inert. But the relevant explanation must be analogous in the ethical case, as moral judgments are ultimately similar to non-moral ones.

Blackburn, instead, has to deny that the content of moral judgments can be straightforward propositions, but rather attitudes, and so in order to make sense of such unasserted contexts, it comes as natural to his viewpoint to regard them as expressions of second-order attitudes¹⁰. For example, an utterance of “if gambling is wrong, then you should not get your little brother to gamble” is to be understood roughly as showing an attitude of disapproval towards anyone who disapproves of gambling and at the same time approves of someone who gets his little brother to gamble.

¹⁰ This is developed in more detail than I can provide here in Blackburn 1984: 189-196 and Blackburn 1998: 68-77.

This is the strategy that is to be pursued in general and which, on the face of it, again exploits a big divide between the usual understanding of descriptive statements and that of moral ones. But Crispin Wright (1988) rightly protests that this is an artificial divide: we should be suspicious of any understanding of statements of the form “if P then Q” that provides a different account depending on whether P and Q are moral or not.

Let us think for a moment about what I have, I hope, clarified so far. It appears quite difficult to be a die-hard non-cognitivist, the best we can hope for is making the claim that even though both beliefs and attitudes are involved in moral judgments, attitudes are what is crucial and distinctive about them. But this seems like a rather difficult task, given that, as I have shown, we can make sense of a quasi-realist construction based solely upon beliefs. In order to be able to do this, however, we have had to perhaps loosen our conception of what a belief is and what its implications are: either, in Wedgwood’s version, these beliefs involve some special (practical) mode of presentation; or in Smith’s version they readily bring about, in the absence of practical irrationality, a relevant desire. In short, a full-strength “cognitivism” about moral judgments which takes the relevant beliefs to belong fully to the realm of reason and to be essentially inert is not plausible either.

Any good candidate for a theory of moral judgments will have to account for both the cognitive and a non-cognitive side to them¹¹. But still, does this make moral judgments special in any way? I dispute, first, that there is any cognitive state that we may call “purely representational”, in that it is completely removed from the realm of action. Indeed, when I believe that A, that the idea that the sun spins around the earth is wrong, I must have at least some attitudes: to be suspicious of anyone who is convinced that not-A, to reconsider any argument we think valid and sound and has not-A as its conclusion, to try and explore the logical implications of A, and so on. There is nothing “purely representational” about this. Moreover, I think that awareness that these attitudes are held can explain Blackburn’s logic of

¹¹ This is why I do not wish to talk about moral judgments being beliefs, since this seems to have connotations of them being entirely inert, and not capable of motivating, as Wedgwood acknowledges they must be. Partly to mimic Blackburn’s own way of using the language, I prefer talking about “quasi-beliefs”. But I do not attach much importance to this.

attitudes. For any statements P and Q, if I believe “if P then Q”, I will have an attitude of disapproval towards anyone entertaining the beliefs that P and not-Q. Wright demanded a uniform account: here it is, even in the uncontroversially cognitive case, attitudes are in place. In any case, asserted or unasserted, there is a purely representational side to our state of mind and a practical one.¹²

There is a subtler way, in the light of Blackburn’s proposal, in which moral judgments can be said to be special, and that is the conception of truth that applies in each case. For typical judgments of the sort “I believe that A” their content, on the intuitive picture, is made true by corresponding to a fact of the world, something external on which we have no influence. On the moral case, however, it is the way in which we are that allows us to construct a notion of truth by considering how livable, unfragmented, developed, consistent and coherent alternative systems of attitude are (1984: 197). A certain judgment would be true if it belongs to the best such system.

Without going into much detail, I think that we can extend this conception of truth to any other truth-apt judgment in a way that is more satisfactory every time than a correspondence theory. Consider a straightforward belief: for example, the belief that A. For that belief, just how we could be in a position where we could evaluate whether a correspondence with the facts of the world holds, and so whether the content of such judgment is true or not, I really do not know. However, I think we could more easily say that we can take it to be true that “the idea that the sun spins around the earth is wrong” since this is what fits best with the rest of our picture of the world, which has proved extremely useful in allowing us to have a certain success in our life in it. It is one of the beliefs we no doubt would have in the best possible system of beliefs we may have, given our nature.

¹² Blackburn (1998: 80-83) briefly discusses the stronger view that “evaluation should not be thought of as distinct from representation”. He insists that if we do this, then we would do so by having to reject the representative side of our judgments of all kinds. If this happens, his emphasis on attitudes would only be reinforced, so his ethical project would be unshaken. However, here I am concerned with the relation between moral and non-moral judgments and must assume, at least at the point of departure, that there is a representational side to cognitive states of mind.

So, I suggest we rethink whether there is any sharp distinction to be made between moral and non-moral judgments and hence, whether non-cognitivism in ethics, or for that matter cognitivism, can be given full support. A full justification of the shaky nature of this distinction would take us far away from the purpose of this paper and into the realm of the philosophy of language, and hence cannot be provided here. But my own view remains that a modified version of the quasi-realist proposal that takes into account this vanishing distinction presents a good candidate for an explanation of what we do when we do ethics and, in particular, how we can talk about moral truths.

I am indebted to Dr Ralph Wedgwood, Dr Kent Hurtig and an anonymous reviewer for extremely helpful comments on drafts of this paper and conversations on metaethical topics.

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The reality of fields from the view of simplicity

Tom Deakin

University of York

tom.deakin@gmail.com

The postulation of real fields motivates the simplest theories for the explanation¹ of physical phenomena involving so-called ‘action at a distance’. Such phenomena exist on all scales: from the uniform motion of the planets in our solar system in elliptical orbits around the Sun on the astronomical scale, to the levitation of a weakly magnetic body in the vicinity of a superconducting magnet on the ‘laboratory’ scale, to the attraction and repulsion of charged particles on the microscopic scale. In this paper, I will attempt to justify the opening statement, favouring the reality of fields, beginning with an argument from spatiotemporal locality, followed by fitting aspects of field theories to a model of simplicity and using the criteria for simplicity as suggested by Swinburne. While simple theories often lead to explanatory gaps, I will argue, however, that in the case of a realist interpretation of fields, the simplest explanation is the most fruitful when faced with trying to establish a justification.

§1. Why do we need fields?

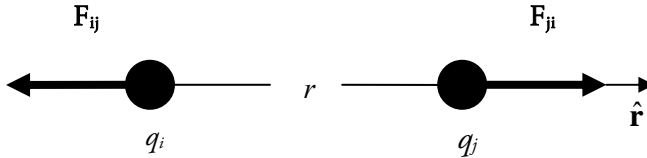
In the physical world, if a cause C leads to an effect E , then C is said to be *spatiotemporally local* to E , i.e. in a causal chain of events, the direct effects of each cause occur *locally* to each cause; these effects are local in both space and time². For examples of ‘action by contact’, such as in the conservation of momentum between two colliding bodies, such a proposition is hard to deny.

¹ By ‘explanation’, I am primarily referring to inanimate explanation, rather than personal explanation.

² See Lange’s *Introduction to the Philosophy of Physics* for a detailed discussion of spatiotemporal locality.

However, occurrences of so-called ‘action at a distance’ appear to violate spatiotemporal locality.

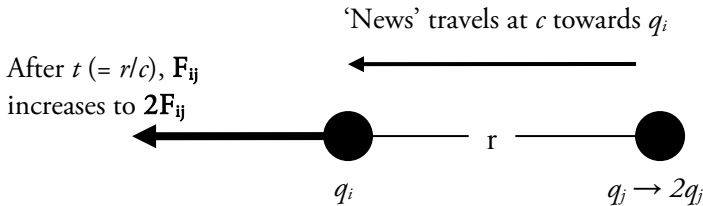
Consider the following case:



Two charged particles, q_i and q_j , are separated in space by a distance r and are at rest in some inertial frame S with respect to an observer O . An electric force, \mathbf{F} , is said to be exerted by each charge on the other (repulsive in the above case, for like charges), as determined by Coulomb’s law:

$$\mathbf{F} = \frac{q_i \cdot q_j}{4\pi\epsilon_0 r^2} \hat{\mathbf{r}} \tag{1}$$

In the apparent absence of any spatially intervening complete causes between q_i and q_j , q_i acts at a spatial distance from q_j , and vice versa, owing to the fact that the charges are separated by a spatial distance r . Additionally, if, say, the charge on q_i increases, then the force felt by q_j will consequently increase accordingly.



Owing to the finite limitations imposed by the speed of light, c , q_j will not ‘feel’ the increased force instantaneously; it will take a time equal to r/c seconds. Therefore, with no clear temporally intervening causes between the

charge increase on q_i , and the subsequent increased force felt by q_j , the change acts at a temporal distance of r/c . The same applies for gravitational forces between masses, as illustrated by Cavendish's famous experiment to determine Newton's gravitational constant, G^3 .

In this situation, the need for an explanation of forces seemingly acting at a distance becomes clear, and has led to the postulation of force-transmitting fields. The apparent violation of spatiotemporal locality in the above cases may be explained away on the assumption that fields are real entities.

Due to such a strong assumption, it is clear, therefore, that we require a *justification* for the belief that fields are real. The upholding of spatiotemporal locality cannot be used as a direct justification, since we need, or rather are trying to establish, a justified belief in this. Empirical justification⁴ is also not possible; we cannot directly observe the actions of fields (and, furthermore, we would only be led to form an inductive conclusion based on evidence from prior events); the only observational information we can reliably claim is counterfactual, for example in the claim that 'if a test charge q_i were placed in the vicinity of a radial electric field generated by another charge q_j , then it would experience a force \mathbf{F} as determined by Coulomb's law'. This latter fact of there being no physical evidence for the reality of fields may lead to the conclusion that such a supposition is explanatorily otiose. Realist and anti-realist interpretations of 'field talk' lie on an equal par, for we can make the same predictions of the behaviour of charged and massive bodies if we accept or deny the existence of fields. All that is needed to determine the forces acting on a system of charged bodies is the magnitude of their charges and spatiotemporal locations.

³ Henry Cavendish's experiments of 1797/8 demonstrated the attractive force between bodies possessing finite mass. The experiment used two sets of spheres of two sizes, the larger (lead spheres weighing 350lb.) being fixed on a frame and the smaller (two-inch diameter lead spheres) mounted on a rigid rod and suspended by a fine fibre (creating a 'torsional balance'). When the smaller spheres were released from their rest position, a torque was measured as they became attracted to the larger spheres, thus demonstrating the gravitational attraction acting between them. As in the electrostatic example, the force seemingly acts at a spatial distance.

⁴ That is, a justification based primarily on experiment and observation.

A semantic anti-realist would conclude that there is no fact of the matter concerning the existence of fields, since there is neither good physical evidence nor good non-physical evidence – that is, evidence available to us – to provide justification for their existence; there is no clear ground for asserting whether or not fields exist. The pragmatist would reach a similar conclusion, on the basis that there would only be a fact of the matter concerning the existence of fields if some practical consequences arise from whether fields exist or not. Since the existence or non-existence of fields does not have any bearing on our predictions concerning the behaviour of charged or massive bodies, such practical consequences appear to be lacking. Therefore, for the pragmatist also, there is simply no fact of the matter concerning the existence of fields. Sentences concerning ‘field talk’, therefore, are neither determinately true, nor determinately false, resulting in a failure of the principle of bivalence⁵.

If, then, there is no fact of the matter concerning the existence of fields, then why do physical theories rely so heavily on them? I believe that hope for fields may be found by appealing to the notion of *simplicity*. The next two sections of my argument will endeavour to show that where any attempt to give a complete physical explanation fails, turning to the notion of simplicity in fact provides a reliable justification for an explanation and does not cause the theory any disadvantage.

§2. Simplicity and theory choice

In his article, *Einstein’s Philosophy of Science*, Don Howard remarks that:

...simplicity is the criterion that mainly steers theory choice where experiment and observation no longer provide an unambiguous guide. (Howard, 2004, p.9)

Such a statement is important in the case of theories incorporating fields. We have already seen that there are a number of ways in which the truth of ‘field

⁵ I.e. a sentence such as ‘There are electric fields’ is neither determinately true nor determinately false.

talk' can be interpreted, leading to a degree of ambiguity and the failure of bivalence according to two accounts. With this in mind, I argue in this section and the next that it is the simplicity of the explanation that provides the main driving force in deciding which theory provides the most adequate explanation of the phenomenon in question.

In the opening sentence of *Simplicity as Evidence of Truth*, Swinburne makes the claim that:

...other things being equal – the simplest hypothesis proposed as an explanation of phenomena is more likely to be the true one than is any other available hypothesis. (Swinburne, 1997, p.1)

Taking this idea, I feel that the reality of fields provides the simplest explanation of physical phenomena concerning 'action at a distance' (as well as solving the violation of spatiotemporal locality as outlined in §1), and that this assumption is, therefore, more likely to be true than other possible explanations. I aim to show this first through the application of field concepts to the model for simplicity that Swinburne lays down, followed by demonstrating how a realistic interpretation of fields rises above the rival anti-realist position in terms of giving the best, and, therefore, more likely to be true, explanation.

How can the simplicity of a theory be determined? Swinburne proposes six facets that need to be considered in the formulation of a simple theory. The first of these facets is the number of things that the theory postulates, the motivation being that the more things a theory postulates, the less simple it is; this facet is simply the application of Ockham's razor. In the case of fields, there is a single 'thing' – a field – that may be used to transfer forces between bodies, be it electrical forces between two charged bodies, or gravitational forces between bodies having some finite mass.

This facet leads directly to the second, the number of *kinds* of thing. With the phenomenon in question, this translates to the number of kinds of field, which arise from the different kinds of forces found in nature. It is readily

accepted that there are four⁶ fundamental forces of nature that cover the complete range of magnitudes: the gravitational force, the electromagnetic force, and the weak and strong nuclear forces. The two forces of most interest to the present argument are the gravitational and electromagnetic forces, since the weak and strong nuclear forces act over a very short range and are carried by exchange particles⁷ (W and Z bosons, and gluons respectively). There are then, if the reality of fields is to be accepted, at most only a small number of kinds of field – electric, magnetic and gravitational – that cover forces over forty orders of magnitude.

This second facet of simplicity is perhaps of the most significance in the case of fields. For over a hundred years, physicists have attempted to unify the separate fields in order to establish a unified field theory (UFT), thus reducing all phenomena concerned with fields to a single set of field equations. The successful unification of electricity and magnetism, first by Maxwell in the mid-nineteenth century and later improved upon by Einstein during the start of the twentieth century, under the envelope of a single electromagnetic field, is a prime example of the simplification process. Work is still ongoing to unify gravitation, in the form of Einstein's General Theory of Relativity, with electromagnetism in an attempt to establish a single, fundamental field. The advent of quantum theory in the 1920s, and its apparent incompatibility with gravitation, has hampered progress somewhat. However, the great success in unifying electricity and magnetism is a key example of how simplicity can triumph without leaving any explanatory gaps in a theory.

On the issue of terminology, the third facet of simplicity, the more understanding that is required of the terms that make up a theory, the less simple it becomes. The 'rule' Swinburne suggests to follow is:

...do not postulate underlying theoretical properties, unless you cannot get a theory which yields the data equally well without them. (Swinburne, 1997, p.26)

⁶ For the purposes of my argument, I have split the unified 'electroweak' force into its component parts.

⁷ Gravitons, the predicted exchange particles for gravitational interactions, have yet to be observed

Are we now faced with a problem trying to justify the existence of fields? The lack of physical evidence to support the hypothesis appears to suggest that it makes no difference to our predictions whether or not fields exist; on both accounts, the data may be yielded equally well. I believe, however, that a solution may be sought to this problem by returning to the issue of the violation of spatiotemporal locality introduced in the first section.

If, say, I decide to come up with a theory to explain the actions of the forces of nature without appealing to the existence of fields, I would need to split the theory into two: one part offering an explanation of forces acting locally (i.e. forces involving some sort of ‘contact’) which obey the conditions of spatiotemporal locality, and another part to explain instances of forces acting at a distance, in which case spatiotemporal locality is violated. Such a theory would, on Swinburne’s account, be *less* simple than a theory incorporating the reality of fields as an explanation for why some forces appear to act at a distance and which simultaneously solves the violation of the spatiotemporal locality condition, on the grounds that a higher degree of understanding is required of the former theory.

The issue of the number of laws that constitute a theory is also of importance. In the case of classical fields, the governing laws are the force laws: Coulomb’s law in the case of interacting charged particles and Newton’s gravitational law⁸ for interactions between massive bodies. The existence of fields is supervenient on the existence of forces and, ultimately, the existence of charges and masses; that is, a field’s existence is ontologically dependent on bodies possessing those properties. In the case of electric fields, the field is related to the force by the simple relation,

$$\mathbf{E} = \frac{\mathbf{F}}{q} \quad (2)^9$$

⁸ Newton’s gravitational law is similar to Coulomb’s law in respect of it being an ‘inverse square law’: the force between two bodies being inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them.

⁹ This relation holds for the electrostatic case, for ‘point’ charges. The laws governing more complex situations, such as Gauss’ Law and charge distribution, are still relatively ‘simple’ in both appearance and utility.

The electric field strength at a point is simply the force ‘felt’ at that point divided by the magnitude of the charge q producing the field. Tied in with this is the fifth facet: the number of variables that a theory relates. The laws that govern electromagnetic and gravitational interactions contain only a small number of variables, primarily the magnitudes of charge and mass, and the separation of the bodies. The number of laws and the number of variables such a theory relies on, therefore, is small and so complies with this simplicity condition.

Finally, the sixth facet of simplicity is that of mathematical simplicity¹⁰. Once again, I feel that the hypothesis for positing the reality of fields meets the requirement for simplicity in this case; a good example of mathematical simplicity can again be found in Maxwell’s equations that link the fields and potentials associated with electric and magnetic phenomena. Maxwell brought together the whole spectrum of electromagnetic theory and presented it in the form of only four equations¹¹, the concept of a vector field being central to their successful implementation to explain electromagnetic phenomena. As another example, Einstein’s development of the General Theory of Relativity was motivated by the desire to find the simplest set of field equations that satisfy a specified set of constraints.

It is clear, therefore, how the development of field theory has matched the numerous facets required of a ‘simple’ theory. I now turn to how simplicity can give rise to the best explanation and the consequential benefits that are brought to the case of postulating the reality of fields.

¹⁰ In this paper, I have taken ‘mathematical simplicity’ to be that as defined by Swinburne, which is based around the notions of the simplicity of the number of terms and the mathematical entities employed in the mathematical equations that form part of a theory. Whilst I feel that this use of the term ‘mathematical simplicity’ is not strictly correct, it fits well into the arguments being presented here. My paper, ‘Mathematical Simplicity and Elegance’, which is currently in development, aims to address some of the surrounding issues.

¹¹ Pulkington has since shown that the four Maxwell equations (commonly presented in Heaviside’s differential form) can be reduced to only two through the use of the electromagnetic field tensor, F_{ij} : $F_{ij, j} = \mu_0 j_i$ being the combination of Coulomb’s law and Ampère’s law, and $F_{ij, k} = 0$ being the combination of the law prohibiting the existence of magnetic monopoles with Faraday’s law.

§3. Simplicity as the best explanation

Swinburne highlights four main criteria which should be satisfied in order to lead to the best explanation (and therefore the one more likely to be true) between competing theories. These fall into both *a posteriori* and *a priori* criteria, the former consisting of to what degree data may be yielded and how well the hypothesis fits in with already established background knowledge; and the latter concerned with the notions of content and simplicity.

In the case of the existence of fields, the only data that may be obtained is the effect of forces on bodies; as such, it is hard to reconcile how it is possible to conclude their existence from such data since, as we have already seen, our predictions turn out to be the same whether we postulate the existence of fields or not. However, a realist interpretation of fields still has a set of data available to it (the effects of forces on the behaviour of charged, magnetic and massive bodies); the only problem lies in the fact that an anti-realist interpretation, such as the 'absorber-emitter' theory first proposed by Feynman and Wheeler in the 1940s, has the *same* set of data and so, on the first criterion, the two rival interpretations are matched. Therefore, we need to look towards the other three criteria to see where a realistic interpretation has the edge.

The concept of fitting in with established background knowledge is linked with the concept of yielding data, in that the background knowledge surrounding both the realist and anti-realist positions is at essentially the same level, namely knowledge of the forces and charges, etc. Consequently, the two rivals still lie on the same footing.

On the basis of content, Swinburne asserts that the more content an explanation is furnished with, the less likely it is to be true. I have already touched on the concept of content in the previous section with the belief that taking fields to be real reduces the content of an explanation for forces acting at a distance, in that more understanding would be required in an explanation (theory) that is forced to differentiate between forces that obey spatiotemporal locality and those which do not.

We are therefore left with simplicity; I have attempted to show in detail that an hypothesis such as ‘fields are real entities that explain action at a distance’ meets the criteria of a model of simplicity. Through a process of deduction, the main criterion that supports the existence of fields is simplicity (with the issue of content supporting to a lesser extent, but which is, ultimately, tied in with the notion of simplicity); postulating the existence of fields provides the simplest explanation for phenomena involving forces ‘acting at a distance’, as well as solving the apparent violation of spatiotemporal locality. It is for this reason that an hypothesis assuming the reality of fields supersedes an anti-realist stance, giving the best and more likely to be true explanation.

Indeed, as theoretical physics continues to move into a realm further from experiment and observation, it is simplicity that is becoming the prime mover.

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Can the rule of double-negation elimination be justified?

Lishan Chan

University of York

lishan.chan@gmail.com

This paper is concerned with the question of whether or not Double-Negation Elimination (henceforth referred to as DNE) can be justified in logic. I look at two different logics: classical logic which justifies DNE, and intuitionist logic as advocated by Michael Dummett, which rejects DNE. The underlying reason for such a rejection comes from the differing theories of meaning, where the former holds truth-conditions as central to meaning, while the latter holds provability conditions as primary to a theory of meaning. I argue that one can either reject the former truth-functional approach to meaning, and still defend a version of classical logic, or reject Dummett's intuitionist alternative and defend a truth-functional approach to logic. Either way, classical logic and the justifiability of DNE can be argued for on epistemological and pragmatic grounds.

Double-Negation Elimination in mathematical logic is simply the understanding that $\neg\neg P$ entails P . In the classical sense, DNE is justified by way of *reductio ad absurdum* (RAA)¹. This method is to assume $\neg\neg P$ and to show that it leads to the conclusion that $\neg P$. If so, then there is a contradiction and we reject $\neg P$ as false. Since $\neg P$ is false, we conclude that P by RAA. The idea is that both $\neg\neg P$ and P share the same truth-value (proof by truth-tables). If $\neg P$ is false, then $\neg\neg P$ is true, as P is true. Thus, $\neg\neg P \vdash P$. As we have seen, the presupposition here is that truth-values are tied to the sentences being expressed. I refer to this as the truth-functional approach. According to this approach, the notion of negation is one that expresses the incompatibility of P

¹ Dummett, M (1978) *Truth and Other Enigmas*, (GB: Gerald Duckworth & Company Limited)

and $\neg P^2$. Consequently, classical logic supports the principle of Bivalence, which holds that $P \vee \neg P$. From this, it is only a step away from saying that DNE is justified.

DNE appeals to our commonsense. It is intuitive to agree with Frege's metaphor of negation as a kind of "outer-wear", and just as a man can wear two layers of outer-wear, a proposition P can be "wrapped" up in double negation. Now, as far as application goes in mathematics and numerical languages, this has been relatively uncontroversial. In our everyday practices and contexts, we also use the notions of truth and falsity as tied to our sentences, with the exceptions of societal conventions such as sarcasm or irony. Generally, we use negation in our reasoning and thinking, and we convey our thoughts to others who implicitly have the knowledge of negation. Communication involves the underlying knowledge of some basic logical operators, even if one is not conscious of this and even if this is not described at a meta-level.

The Dummettian criticism that DNE is unjustifiable has its basis in a concern with the adequacy of truth-functional approaches to thinking clearly. In thinking clearly, we evoke a more rigorous setting which aims to clarify complex issues and arguments. As such, it is important to distinguish between sentences which have yet to be proved and are hence not asserted from sentences which have been proved and are being asserted. We should only say that a sentence is true if it is justified, but the tying of truth-values to sentences is liable to confuse us as we superficially cannot tell the difference between sentences in a state of bivalence and sentences which have been verified.

What happens when we take a non-truth-functional approach such as an intuitionist approach? Intuitionist logic emphasises the primacy of using provability conditions over truth conditions in determining the meaning of sentences. Thus, $\neg P$ is not that P is false, as it means in classical logic. Rather, $\neg P$ expresses the thought that P cannot be proved. If so, then $\neg\neg P$ is a weaker sentence than P and as such, $\neg\neg P$ and P cannot be argued as strictly

² Price, H (1990) Why 'Not?', *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 99, No. 394, pp. 221-238

equivalent. This leads to an expansion in the usage of negation. Any statements which hover in an ambivalent state of $P \vee \neg P$ under classical logic are now expressed by $\neg P$. In this way, an intuitionist, non-truth-functional approach has the virtue of accommodating a wider range of ordinary language sentences into logical reasoning.

The differing interpretations of the Dummettian response have given rise to two main lines of thought pertinent to our discussion. The first argues that DNE should only be used in mathematical and computer sentences, and that other kinds of logic (such as the intuitionist approach) have more applicability to other types of languages. However, I would like to concentrate on the second line of interpretation, which is concerned with the justification of DNE in mathematical logic. This is because Dummett's aim is not to strictly argue that all forms of logical reasoning must be replaced by the intuitionist conception of logic. Rather, his concern is limited to the scope of mathematics, where he argues that we must "replace the notion of truth as the central notion of the theory of meaning for mathematical statements"³. From here, I propose to show that DNE is justifiable both epistemologically and pragmatically.

The epistemological approach:

If we can show that DNE is justifiable using a non-truth-functional approach, then we can defend a version of classical logic while taking Dummett's comments into consideration. This approach takes the best of both worlds. Ian Rumfitt, who shares Dummett's concerns, has brought attention to Dummett's failure to justify his views on the distinction between assertibility and deniability conditions. When this distinction is made, we can interpret $\neg\neg P$ in two ways. It means either that we assert that there is no proof that P is unprovable, or that we deny that P is unprovable. Since intuitionist logic only holds the former as true, it needs to provide an account of why we should see negation as assertion rather than as deniability. To do this, it needs to formulate a procedure in which we can differentiate the appropriate and

³ Dummett, M (1978) *Truth and Other Enigmas*, (GB: Gerald Duckworth & Company Limited) pp. 225

inappropriate conditions for assertion and deniability for propositional sentences. In Dummett's theory, although $\neg\neg P \vdash P$ must be abandoned, the inverse $P \vdash \neg\neg P$ can be proved. If there exists proof that P , and we agree that $\neg(P \wedge \neg P)$, it entails that it is appropriate to deny $\neg P$. As such we can conclude that $P \vdash \neg\neg P$. In addition, $\neg\neg\neg P \vdash \neg\neg P$ is justified since it involves denials and not assertions.

The issue at hand is why we should reject asserting a statement when it has not been proved, but allow the denial of a statement when it has not been proved. It is evident that Dummett's argument is correct if we have not introduced an element of time into the picture. Thus, we can deny a statement at the point when it has yet to be proved, because this is just not as strong as to make an assertion that it is false. But before we make such a strong conclusion as to the applicability of such assertion and denial conditions, we need to take into account the element of time and its relation to the level of proof information we can have at any one point. Since we live with imperfect information, there is always the possibility that a statement can one day be proved, so why should it be expressed in terms of negation? If so, then we must reject that a sentence must be a denial of P , or an assertion of $\neg P$, since it could very well be neither. If there are no objective grounds for asserting the statement, then we should not assert or deny it. From this angle, it then seems perfectly reasonable to accept the principle of bivalence in logic, and its usefulness when applied to reasoning.

In this case, DNE can be justified as follows: If it is appropriate to assert $\neg P$, then it is appropriate to deny P . Inversely, if it is inappropriate to deny $\neg P$, then it is appropriate to assert P . Thus $\neg\neg P \vdash P^4$. The negation operator functions as a kind of "logical switch" which shows the appropriateness of asserting or denying a statement. The virtue of this is that it preserves the classical logic essence of DNE while not using truth-functional values. As such, even for propositional negated statements which do not contain embedded negations, we can prove DNE.

⁴ Rumfitt, I (2002) Unilateralism Disarmed: A Reply to Dummett and Gibbard, *Mind*, Vol. 3, Issue 442, pp. 305-322

The pragmatic approach:

On the other hand, one could respond that an alternative is to reject the rejection of truth-functional approaches to logic. The difference between classical and intuitionist logics, as gestured at by the acceptance and rejection of DNE, is rooted in their differing conceptions of negation. Rumfitt's argument accepts the intuitionist assertion that a truth-functional approach to logic must ultimately fail.

Richard Kirkham argues that justification conditions are insufficient for any theory of meaning to hold, and that any theory of meaning must involve not simply the implicit knowledge of justificatory rules, but the implicit knowledge of truth-conditions⁵. He describes a thought experiment where there is someone who knows only justification conditions but not truth conditions. This person would have the outward signs of understanding and interpreting propositions correctly. For example, if the person knows that $P \vee Q$, and $\sim P$, she concludes Q . Yet, this form of logical reasoning already takes truth conditions as implicit. However, Kirkham's emphasis goes back to empirical applications and could be dismissed by the intuitionist computer scientist.

Still, we should take Kirkham's criticism in the right spirit. In context, it lies in his wider concern to address sceptical approaches to truth and meaning – and Dummett holds one of the most influential anti-realist positions of the 20th century. Kirkham wants to argue that justification conditions are inadequate for a theory of meaning to hold. One way of putting this would be to argue that justification conditions are dependent on truth conditions in sentences, which is what Keith Hossack has done in a paper on intuitionist negation. This is because a language based only on the former requires an infinitely on-going chain of meta-languages. To prevent this, it falls back on assumptions which are axioms of truth-functional classical logic. If this is correct, then intuitionist logic cannot claim to reject entirely truth-values as tied to sentences, and the argument against the justification of DNE falls. It is important to note that one can work out a defence of Dummett using a weak

⁵ Kirkham, R L (1992) "Davidson and Dummett" in *Theories of Truth* (USA: MIT Press)

interpretation of the intuitionist role in mathematical logic. However, in this paper I take the strong interpretation which holds that intuitionist logic is primary and perhaps solely needed in mathematical logic. This interpretation has been taken by both Kirkham and Hossack.

Hossack's argument is set out as follows:

A person who uses intuitionist logic must know what it is for a sentence to be considered as proved. If they have a conception of what it is for a sentence to be proved, then they also have a conception of what it is for a sentence to not be proved. Secondly, as in classical logic, the intuitionist assumes that P is incompatible with $\neg P$. However, this knowledge remains implicit, because it is contradictory to describe it.

If we say that $\neg(P \wedge \neg P)$, this just means that $P \wedge \neg P$ cannot be proved. Dummett stipulates that we have a proof of $\neg P$ when we have a proof of $P \rightarrow 0=1$. Thus, using the language of intuitionist logic, $\neg(P \wedge \neg P) \rightarrow 0=1$. The problem is that we can prove this proposition, and we need to convey the idea that $0=1$ is impossible, without using the language of truth and falsity. If we say that $0=1$ cannot be proved, we have $\neg(0=1)$ or $(0=1) \rightarrow 0=1$. However, this simply means $P \rightarrow P$, which is trivial. From this, we conclude that $\neg(P \wedge \neg P)$ or the knowledge that P is incompatible with $\neg P$, is something that has to be expressed by a meta-language, which is distinct from the language of intuitionist logic itself⁶.

Given this argument, we can see that the intuitionist conception of negation is insufficient to be used independently of the classical conception of negation. The classical conception of negation has the advantage of encapsulating both the idea of incompatibility of $P \wedge \neg P$ and the conditions in which we can express P or $\neg P$ (truth/falsity). Since the intuitionist version needs to have a meta-language in addition to its logical language, it has the disadvantage of being less elegant and less simple than the classical version.

⁶ Hossack, Keith G. (1990) A Problem about the Meaning of Intuitionist Negation, *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 99, No. 394, pp. 207-219

More significantly, if we agree with Hossack's paper, then Dummett has failed to show why intuitionist logic should be preferred over the classical approach. If so, then we should accept that DNE can be justified in mathematical logic.

Making sense of logic must at the end be an attempt to clarify our understanding of the tensions between elegance and the actual messiness of reality, simplification and complexity, as well as clarity amidst chaos. As such, a logic without DNE has the correct aims towards reflecting our increasing consciousness of our uncertain epistemology, but at the end fails to achieve the practical and pragmatic functions of logic.

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Should we be irrealist about values?

Matthew Tugby

University of York

mwtugby@yahoo.co.uk

Mackie observed that our experience of values is such that it is natural to consider values as being part of the fabric of the world¹. This seems a plausible characterisation of many kinds of values such as aesthetic and moral values². When we are confronted with an object and judge it to be beautiful, our experience is such that beauty seems to be something that resides in that object. That is, it would be natural to say of that object that *it is beautiful*.

This kind of argument, one that exploits the phenomenology of value experience, is one that counts in favour of the value realist. It counts in favour since the value realist wishes to maintain that values exist out there in the world, independently of the minds that experience them. The argument from phenomenology suggests that since we seem to find beautiful things *in the world*, such values must be objective. However, this is only a convincing argument if we can show that the phenomenology of value experience *accurately* reflects the way things are.

From Mackie's point of view, it does not. We might call Mackie a value irrealist; he wished to maintain that values do not exist independently of the mind. He therefore claimed that the phenomenology of value experience does not reflect how things are. For Mackie, the appearance that values exist in objects themselves is an illusion. This illusion occurs because, as sentient beings, we naturally *project* certain values onto the world when confronted by certain objects and certain states of affairs. But the fact that we ourselves

¹ See Mackie, 1977

² 'Personal' values such as being funny, being hip, being profound and so on may also be included here. There may be a sense in which these are kinds of aesthetic values, but the question of categorization does not concern me here.

project values onto the world is not obvious to us at the phenomenological level. This is why the argument from phenomenology can lead us to erroneous realist conclusions. In short, for Mackie values are mind-dependant, but the illusory nature of our value experiences is such that we think and speak (erroneously) about values as if they really exist in the world³.

The principles behind value irrealism

McDowell highlighted that Mackie's irrealist conclusions are motivated by a conception of reality that involves a particular construal of what it means for something to be objective, or in other words, real. Mackie assumed that our conception of the mind-independent world must be one in which we describe it without reference to its effects on sentient beings. In other words, for Mackie, something is objective, or 'out there in the world', if and only if in describing it, we can *transcend* the local perspective of a perceptive mind. McDowell likened Mackie's approach to that of Williams. Williams claimed that we can only reveal the true nature of reality by constructing what he called an 'absolute' conception of reality⁴. Such a conception would be one that uses 'concepts that are not peculiarly ours, and not peculiarly relative to our experience'⁵. Given this requirement, it is not difficult to see why value realism cannot get going. How can we describe beauty in an object without describing how the object looks to us? How can we describe the cruelty of an action without describing human concerns and the negative effects that cruelty has on a subject's feelings? This seems to put the value realist in a hopeless position.

However, there remains a problem for value irrealists like Mackie. Can the absolute conception of reality give an adequate account of why we experience values in the way that we do? For it seems that when we ascribe certain values to certain objects or states of affairs we do so because the world provides *reasons* to do so. But if values do not really exist in the world, what reasons could we have for ascribing values to objects and states of affairs *in the world*? Given this worry, value ascription can look to be a somewhat mysterious

³ See Mackie, 1977

⁴ See Williams, 1978

⁵ Williams, 1978, P. 244

enterprise. But given that we seem to understand value ascriptions perfectly well, such a suggestion is certainly not felicitous; when we assert that an action is morally noble, it seems we do so because the circumstances provide *good reason* to believe it is.

The disentangling manoeuvre

How might the value irrealist account for the rationality of value ascription? McDowell highlighted that they could attempt to do this using what he described as the disentangling manoeuvre⁶. This manoeuvre would attempt to show that our evaluative attitudes are, *in part*, motivated by certain aspects of the world *as it really is*. By appealing to aspects of the world as it really is, we can make room for the fact that evaluations are grounded, or in other words are, to an extent, constrained by reality itself – even though values themselves consist in subjective projection. Roughly, the strategy would be to claim that when we competently apply a certain evaluative concept to an object, the process we go through can be disentangled into two components. In the first instance, we are sensitive to an aspect of the world as it really is, and second, we are disposed, from our anthropocentric perspective, to form a certain attitude towards that aspect of the world. In forming this certain attitude we assume a non-cognitive state which constitutes a perspective from which the world *seems* to be endowed with the value in question. In other words, the point at which we form our evaluative attitude is the point at which we *project* the value in question onto the world.

Imagine that we view a snowflake under a microscope and then ascribe beauty to it. We might describe this activity as, in the first instance, sensitivity to the symmetrical shape of the snowflake. We can consider the symmetrical shape of the snowflake as a feature that it *really* has – something that the object has independently of our perception of it. The second component of our evaluation is our propensity to react to the symmetrical shape in a certain way. That is, humans have an idiosyncratic disposition to find symmetrical shapes pleasing to look at; this compels us to form the attitude that the snowflake is beautiful and in doing so we assume the perspective of seeing the snowflake *as* beautiful.

⁶ See McDowell, 1981

McDowell claimed that ultimately the disentangling manoeuvre cannot do the work it is intended to do⁷. It seems that in attempting to disentangle value ascriptions, the philosopher is put into the shoes of a Martian, devoid of anthropocentric sentience, trying to master the value concepts used by a particular human community. For the value irrealist, it seems it would be quite possible for a Martian to predict in which circumstances a moral concept (for example) would or would not be applied by observing the kinds of *natural* features that correlated with previous applications of that concept. That is, the Martian would be able to construct *rules*, external to a perspective from within the human community, which would give a rationale for predicting the correct application of various value concepts within the community. It is thought that in this sense the rationality behind value ascription could be accounted for. This, it is thought, can all be done without even attempting to understand the sentience that motivates the application of value concepts.

Does the disentangling manoeuvre really provide us with an understanding of value concepts? It is not plausible that it does. Once we lose sight of the anthropocentric motives for applying value concepts, we seem to lose sight of the very content of those concepts – to understand something to be beautiful is to see it as beautiful. To put the point another way, the only thing beautiful things have in common is that they are beautiful. The relations between an object's natural features and its beauty are so complicated and unpredictable that it is unlikely an alien would ever be able to pin certain value concepts down. An object may be symmetrical, as is a snowflake, but because of other factors it may, unlike a snowflake, not be beautiful.

Vertigo

So why might value irrealists be adamant about the possibility of disentangling value ascriptions in this way? In McDowell's words, they seem to suffer from 'vertigo'⁸. By this McDowell referred to a fear of the idea that the confidence we have in the correctness of certain assertions – value ascriptions in our case – is grounded by nothing more than human practice.

⁷ McDowell, 1981, p. 144

⁸ McDowell, 1981, p. 149

The apparent unwillingness to accept the relevance of human practice is perhaps why an absolute conception of reality and the explanatory power it claims to have can seem so appealing. The worry inherent in ‘vertigo’ can, it seems, be alleviated by holding onto the dogma that value ascriptions *must* be governed by rules revealed by something like the disentangling manoeuvre. Rules, that is, that can be understood externally to our own anthropocentric perspective. For the value irrealists, this is a way of showing how value ascriptions are rational and justified. But as we have seen by filling the shoes of our alien visitor, our position begins to look untenable.

Given this untenable position, McDowell began constructing a conception of the objective world that does not have to transcend the human perspective: we can then, unlike the value irrealist, offer a way of becoming immune to ‘*vertigo*’ and remove the force that Mackie’s arguments can seem to have. We can become immune by suggesting that it is a myth that we must justify our value ascriptions by attempting to appeal to *external rules* that are meant to govern their application. The more general point is one that Wittgenstein famously made using his rule-following considerations⁹. For Wittgenstein, the application of any concept can be said to be correct just in case it is consistent with the common practices of the community in which it is applied. Common practices, in turn, are dictated by nothing more than shared tradition, sharing similar interests and sharing the same anthropocentric sentient qualities – all of which ultimately dictate the way in which we respond to the world around us. However, an intuitive response to this picture may be this: ‘I don’t care if I go against shared practices and no-one else agrees with what I say, for surely it is possible that they are all wrong and that I am right’. Such a response is motivated by the plausible thought that mere consensus cannot make a belief correct¹⁰. But that is not what is being suggested. Of course a belief can only be correct if it is true. But the crucial point is that our confidence that certain beliefs are true is grounded in nothing external to our practices as human beings. In other words, it does not make sense to suggest we need to get outside of our own heads in order to validate the correctness of a belief.

⁹ Wittgenstein, 1963

¹⁰ This line of thought was explored by Blackburn, 1981, p. 173

Wittgenstein's observations of mathematics

These conclusions were strikingly suggested by Wittgenstein's observations of mathematics. Of all the beliefs we hold, those relating to mathematics are the ones we doubt the least (especially at the level of arithmetic). But what is the nature of a mathematician's confidence that he applies mathematical concepts correctly? Does it consist in some kind of intentional brain-state that exerts a compulsion for competent mathematicians to apply particular concepts in the correct way on all relevant occasions? For Wittgenstein, this is not what we are referring to when we assert that someone has mastered the use of a concept. It seems, for example, that it would not be impossible for someone who seemed to have a clear grasp of the concept of addition to give an incorrect answer to a particular sum and deny that she was wrong. Let us imagine that as a bizarre joke Gillian's schoolteacher had instilled in her, at a young age, the habit of answering all addition sums containing the number 37 with 0. Gillian trusted her teacher and she took the belief on board quite naturally. Perhaps the teacher even told her an inventive story which offered a plausible reason why mathematicians answer these kinds of addition sums with 0. Now as a twist of fate, nothing that ever happened to Gillian in the next 40 years conflicted with her odd belief about certain kinds of sums. But on one particular day, Kathleen notices that her reaction to a sum is wrong, to which Gillian replies 'how dare you?! I've been getting sums correct for 40 years, so I certainly know how addition works!' How could Kathleen, who was not aware that a bizarre maths teacher had played a trick on Gillian, get her to accept that her answer was wrong?

It seems that because Gillian was rational and had every reason to believe she was correct, *the only way to convince her she was wrong would be to show her that everyone else would disagree with her particular answer*. It would seem then that our confidence in the correctness of a reaction is grounded by surrounding practice, since any number of stories can be contrived in order to make certain reactions appear perfectly rational. This is why McGinn wrote 'We don't find the basis for this distinction [between normal and abnormal responses] where we're inclined to look for it – in the rule itself...'¹¹. For as

¹¹ McGinn, 1997, pg 102

our story shows, the rule that Gillian was using made perfect sense to her. Of course, the rule she was using *was* wrong, because, as we all know, $37 + 5$ *does* equal 42. But that she was wrong could only be validated by the fact that other people in her society were shown to be baffled when she was adamant that sums involving $+ 37$ equalled 0. Of course, eventually Gillian would come to realise that her teacher had misled her. We may assume he was a joker, but maybe not; perhaps his teacher had misled him. The upshot seems to be that the link between a rule and the way it should be applied lies in nothing more than the fact that there is an accepted practice of using particular concepts.

The thrust of the rule-following considerations

To summarise, we have attempted to show that even our beliefs about mathematics – the paradigm of rationality – can only be validated by agreement with others who have a shared practice of applying mathematical concepts in a certain way: that is, we do such validation from a *local, human perspective*. *But crucially, that should not preclude us from claiming that $2 + 2 = 4$ is objectively, or really, correct*. If one cannot see that it is objectively correct, then one has either had an odd upbringing in some respect or has deficient conceptual capacities (or has had a twisted teacher). And so the argument runs for value ascription. Throughout this paper we have seen how the value irrealist's conceptions of objectivity and in what evaluation consists seem mythical – a myth motivated, mostly, by what McDowell called 'vertigo'. This seems to cause value irrealism to fail to capture the true nature of values. Hence, McDowell suggested, in line with Wittgenstein, that the only intelligible way of understanding and validating the application of value concepts is to keep our human perspective and allow our common practices to scrutinise the correctness of value ascriptions. Of course that does not mean we must not question our common practices. We can scrutinise the directions in which our common practices are going, for they continually evolve. Large-scale debate seems to be the significant cog of our self-critical machinery. This is especially the case in science. But crucially, it seems that in making such judgements, we do so as a community with a background of similar upbringings and similar conceptual capacities. That is, in passing judgements, we do it (and can only do it) from a human perspective. My snowflake *really is*

beautiful if I (and other members of my community), in utilising the concept of beauty, pass a thoughtful and critical judgement that affirms this to be the case. Given our Wittgensteinian insights, this realist conception of values opens up the possibility for us, as competent users of concepts, to trust our experience of the world. We have seen that if we do not do this, and become victim to ‘vertigo’, we do not seem to succeed in accounting for the rationality behind value ascription – indeed we seem to lose the very content of value concepts. If we follow McDowell’s realist approach we are in a better position to give an adequate account of the nature of values and our experience of them.

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On the significance of statements of identity

Daniel Clifford

University of Southampton

djc302@soton.ac.uk

In this essay I will be defending the idea that identity statements are neither true nor false, but rather are part of our framework for understanding and speaking about the world. In order to do this, I will begin by briefly explaining what an identity statement is, and why it has been argued that they have no literal significance. I will then consider two objections to this view, as they are put forward by Colin McGinn in *Logical Properties*. I will then go on to answer these objections, and consider the status of identity claims in light of these arguments. I will conclude that identity statements function in a way more similar to rules or stipulations on the way in which we should think and speak, and less like statements of fact about the world.

When we talk about identity in a philosophical context, we are talking about the notion of numerical identity. As Leibniz stated through the law of the indiscernability of identicals, for x and y to be numerically identical, they must share all of their properties. However, this makes numerical identity an extremely specific relation, as two separate objects can never share all of their properties. Even if we find two objects which are exactly similar in appearance, they will still differ in certain respects. They will both occupy different places in space, and stand in slightly different relations to objects around them. Hence, an object can only be, and must necessarily be, numerically identical with itself at any given point in time. Hence the reason why, in philosophy, we must be careful to distinguish between mere similarity and identity. Two objects can be exactly similar, but numerical identity can only hold between an object and itself.

At this point the problem with numerical identity already begins to emerge. If identity is a relation which only holds between an object and itself, and

never between two distinct objects, what does it add to our understanding of the world? It seems as though it is purely a logicians tool, and something which has no bearing on the way we actually understand the world. Moreover, identity statements will only be able to tell us what we already know, namely that a given object is the same as itself.

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein formulated his objection to the law of identity in the statement: “Roughly speaking, to say of *two* things that they are identical is nonsense, and to say of *one* thing that it is identical with itself is to say nothing at all.” (Wittgenstein 2001 : 63) This is not an unfamiliar thought in the philosophical world. It is fairly clear that Hume would class identity statements not as matters of fact, but rather as the relations of ideas. In other words, we do not need to understand anything about the world to see that the statement $x = x$ is true, we just need to have a grasp of the symbols involved. For this reason, we can never impart new information to someone through the use of an identity statement, unless they do not have an adequate grasp of the symbols we are using, and the objects to which they are related. When we are faced with a matter of fact, its contradictory must always be possible. For example, it is a matter of fact that the sun will rise tomorrow, hence it is perfectly possible, though perhaps not very likely, that the sun will fail to rise tomorrow. Yet it is impossible that an object could fail to be identical with itself. Therefore, identity statements tell us nothing, as they do not tell us which of two or more possible situations are true, rather they just tell us that something is necessarily true merely because of the terms involved.

It is for this reason that Wittgenstein called identity statements pseudo-propositions, meaning that whilst they have the appearance of a meaningful statement about the world, they are in fact merely tautologies. Moreover, the only reason they arise at all, according to Wittgenstein, is the inadequate nature of our language, and the fact that we use two distinct symbols to represent the same thing. In an adequate symbolism, the need for identity statements would be eliminated by a consistent symbolism in which only one symbol is used to represent any one object.

However, as has been rightly pointed out by McGinn in his book *Logical Properties*, this account of identity does not match up completely to the facts

of the matter. McGinn puts forward two perceptive criticisms of Wittgenstein's account in the *Tractatus*, which I will re-iterate and attempt to answer in turn.

McGinn's first criticism of Wittgenstein relies upon the notion of distinctness. Any two separate objects are distinct. In fact, any x and y which are not numerically identical are distinct. Distinctness is, according to McGinn, the flipside of the identity coin. In other words, identity and distinctness are the opposite of each other, like concepts such as wrong and right or rational and irrational, and hence an understanding of one requires an understanding of the other. The concept of distinctness in nothing more than the negation of the concept of identity. Hence, if identity is a pseudo-concept which only generates pseudo-propositions, then the same must be true of diversity, as the two concepts are so co-dependant. The negation of a pseudo-concept must itself be a pseudo-concept.

However, to say that distinctness is a meaningless relation seems far less plausible than to make the same claim about identity, as it seems to be a meaningful concept which we can employ in our everyday lives. It certainly does not seem meaningless to say that Plato is distinct from Aristotle, or that the table is distinct from the chair. However, on closer inspection, this philosophical concept of distinctness, conceived as the negation of identity, does turn out to suffer from the same problems as the philosophical concept of identity. In fact, the Wittgensteinian maxim quoted earlier can easily be reversed to apply to distinctness, reading : roughly speaking, to say of *one* object that it is distinct from itself is to talk nonsense, to say of *two* objects that they are distinct is to say nothing at all. To elucidate, take the statement "These two objects are distinct". The second half of this sentence adds nothing to the first half. Once we have established that there are two objects, we already know that they *must be* distinct. Once again, in a symbolism more precise than English, there would be no need to state that two objects were distinct, this would be clearly *shown* by the symbols used.

McGinn's second objection relies upon the fact that some identity statements can add to our knowledge of the world. To take a couple of examples, it might well come as a surprise to someone unfamiliar with astronomy that the

morning star *is* the evening star, just as someone who had not studied the history of literature might not know that George Orwell is Eric Blair. Identity statements would only be uninformative, according to this objection, if we were omniscient about identity. The same could be said of any type of statement - if we knew everything about which objects had which properties, then all true predicated statements would be uninformative. However, we are not omniscient about the properties of objects or about identity, so both types of statements can convey genuine meaning to others around us. This objection is closely related to Frege's explanation of how meaningful identity statements are possible in *On Sense And Reference*. Names of objects have both a sense and a reference according to Frege, and meaningful identity statements occur when two names have the same referent, but different senses. To explain this more fully, I shall return to a previous example, namely the statement that "The morning star is the evening star." Both the terms involved, namely "the morning star" and "the evening star", have the same referent, in that they both refer to the same star in the sky. Yet, they both have different senses. A sense, in Frege's terminology, is akin to a mode of presentation, almost a description of how we might pick out the referent of the word from all the other possible referents it might have. So, the sense of the term "the morning star" might be something like "the star which appears at this point in the sky between these times in the morning", whilst the sense of "the evening star" would be a suitable equivalent. Hence, a meaningful identity statement is possible here, as one might understand the senses of both words, but not yet know that they share the same referent. In other words, in this instance it is possible to understand both of the terms involved, but not yet know that they are numerically identical.

This is one dominant account of how a meaningful identity statement might be possible, which gives extra force to McGinn's second objection. However, this objection can be answered using a distinction from Wittgenstein's later philosophy, namely the distinction between grammatical and material propositions. On this account, a material proposition is one which conveys a genuine fact about the nature of the world, and hence must be capable of being true or false. If I say, for example, "My glass is on the table", then I have uttered a truth-evaluable statement about the world, which could well have been otherwise. Therefore, we have an obvious case of a material

proposition. Grammatical statements, on the other hand, work more like rules for the correct use of language, and as such are neither true nor false. So, if I say “A square has four sides” I have not made an assertion about the nature of squares which could have been true or false, rather I have made explicit what was already an implicit rule about the correct use of the word “square” in our language. Rather than being similar to a statement like “A car has four wheels”, it is closer to one like “Bishops only move diagonally in the game of chess”. This statement is not true or false. There is no method by which we could try and establish the truth of this statement. Nobody had to investigate the nature of bishops to confirm its truth. Rather, it is a stipulation about the correct use of bishops within the game of chess, something which is posited to make chess possible. Identity statements, along with other logical propositions, are grammatical propositions. They do not tell us about the constitution of reality, but rather they enlighten us about the workings of our own language. When we say “George Orwell is Eric Blair”, we are not learning about a contingent relation between two distinct objects, rather we are learning that, in our language, these two words refer to one and the same person.

At this point it is worthwhile to mention that this view does not relegate identity statements to an inferior role in language. The claim being made here is not that identity statements mean nothing at all. Rather, it is saying that identity claims are not discoveries which we make about the world, but rather they are part of the framework we need to begin making any sort of statements about the world whatsoever. Moreover, just because they are no longer denizens of the realm of truth or falsity does not mean that they are arbitrary. These rules have been formulated and kept alive because they are *useful*, not because they are true. Whilst identity statements are not objectively true, they are also not merely subjective assertions that could have been otherwise. It is true that we have created these rules ourselves, and hence in a certain sense they are subjective. However, we cannot just randomly choose which rules are useful and which are not, and the law of identity is a rule which has proven essential to our understanding of the world.

This is a view which can be found both in Wittgenstein, and in other recent figures such as Nietzsche. The law of identity is not something which *could*

be discovered. Maybe when we see one object, there are actually four similar objects occupying exactly the same space. The law of identity is part of our interpretation of reality, one of the limits we set to meaningful discourse about and investigation of the world. Identity statements, and other such grammatical propositions, are conceptually prior to the statements we earlier labelled material propositions. Certain rules must be in place before we can start to talk about the way the world is. Yet, as has already been mentioned, this need not be seen as a critique of the notion of identity. Rather, it is a re-classifying of its role not only within our language, but also within our understanding of the world in general.

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Book reviews

Breaking the Abortion Deadlock

Eileen L. McDonagh, *OUP*

Alice Evans

University of Nottingham
apyyae@nottingham.ac.uk

The abortion debate has reached stalemate. In an attempt to break through the existing entrenched positions, McDonagh asserts that foetal personhood can strengthen, rather than weaken, the pro-choice argument. Reframing the controversy, she focuses on the relationship between a woman and the foetus in her uterus.

McDonagh maintains that consent to sexual intercourse does not entail consent to pregnancy; that consent is a prerequisite to bodily intrusion from born and unborn persons alike; and that the state is obliged to protect individuals from all forms of involuntary invasion. Cessation of support for a foetus only constitutes a breach of duty if such a duty has previously been voluntarily acquired. A pregnant woman's duty of care is thus contingent upon her consent to pregnancy. Without consent, the foetus imposes quantitative and qualitative harms upon her body and liberty, perhaps even the absolute harm of death. The foetus thus imposes a non-consensual pregnancy relationship upon the woman. McDonagh denies that the woman has a duty of care but rather a right to self-defence in response to foetal injury.

Even if we concede that consent to sex does not entail consent to pregnancy, which is itself a moot point, we must examine whether lack of explicit consent to the latter relationship determines the morality of abortion. We can then explore the validity of McDonagh's argument.

Contrary to McDonagh's reasoning, even if we view non-consensual pregnancy as an assault, this hardly entails a woman's right to abortion. The

right of self-defence is an entitlement to self-preservation against those who threaten our well-being. In assessing whether abortion fits this mould, we must consider the type of harm faced, the nature of the aggressor and whether these warrant retaliation. Two issues arise: the 'attacker's' lack of aggression and the question of consent. It might be argued that a woman cannot claim self-defence in this situation, since she has consented to self-sacrifice. Perhaps consensual intercourse entails an acquired duty to bear the foreseeable fruits of that relationship, thereby relinquishing one's justification for subsequently acting in pure self-interest. Moreover, even if we agree to McDonagh's self-defence claim, perhaps we need not admit that a woman is entitled to third-party assistance.

Strictly speaking, abortion does not fit our intuitive conception of self-defensive action, whereby blameless, innocent victims spontaneously respond to unforeseen harms from intentional assailants. Although the foetus is technically guilty of causing harm, it as yet lacks agency. It is not morally culpable¹. When both parties are morally innocent, as McDonagh maintains is the case here, one wonders whether there can be any relevant grounds for preferring the 'victim's' survival over that of the accidental assailant.

Furthermore, even if we sympathise with an individual's natural attempt at self-preservation at the expense of another, this does not necessarily justify third-party intervention. McDonagh's recognition of foetal personhood seems to entail that both parties have equally strong claims to life. In justifying a woman's self-defensive action against a foetus, McDonagh could be interpreted as invoking a principle of 'agent relative permission'. This does not seem to be generalisable to third-parties, since it relies on privileging personal interests. A bystander cannot justify intervention merely by invoking one of the parties' (equal) preferences for continued survival, as such a criterion also equally justifies intervention on behalf of the other party.

Furthermore, appeals to self-defence are intuitively more acceptable when 'victims' do not bear responsibility for their predicament. Sympathy diminishes if the victim's circumstances are due to personal negligence,

¹ Davis, Nancy, "Abortion and Self-Defence" in *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 13, No. 3. (Summer, 1984), pp. 175-207.

culpable ignorance or apparent misadventure in knowingly putting themselves at risk. Many pro-lifers maintain that the claimant has voluntarily exposed herself to risks. Reckless persons have a less evident entitlement to preserve their own lives at the cost of others. To voluntarily engage in a practice with known risks is to consent to being at risk of known consequences. If those foreseeable events occur, it seems that the victim has consented to them and should thus bear some responsibility. Perhaps the reckless gestator has forfeited her right to self-defence, and owes the foetus certain duties.

Against such claims, McDonagh argues that voluntary intercourse is not synonymous with voluntary pregnancy. Indeed, the acceptance of risks of foreseeable harm cannot be viewed as a commitment about future actions, and certainly not as consent to self-sacrifice. Although playing hockey increases the likelihood of physical injury, the victim is not directly responsible for their own harm. A voluntary dribble, with awareness of the possibility of attack, does not constitute a willingness to be attacked. Even when one's actions make one overwhelmingly likely to be harmed, one retains one's right not to be harmed because the two are not synonymous. Similarly, McDonagh argues that although sexual intercourse is a prerequisite for pregnancy, pregnancy does not automatically follow from unprotected sex. So the two cannot be equated. Consenting to the first cannot be seen as consenting to the second².

Building on our intuitive sympathy for the somewhat analogous sports victim, a woman has an even stronger argument available to illustrate her non-consent to gestation. The sportsperson agrees to play with those on the field, not anyone else. Similarly, the woman gave her consent to a man. Given that this consent is not transferable to a third-party, she cannot be said to have consented to the foetus. If she has not consented to the foetus, perhaps she has no acquired duty towards it. McDonagh maintains that voluntary intercourse only amounts to consent to the first relationship (with the man) not to a relationship with any third party that may or may not arise (i.e. with the foetus).

² A hypothetical average woman has a twenty eight day menstrual cycle, with about five fertile days and only two or three with a high chance of pregnancy. The average risk of conception, at any given time, is thus less than one in ten: www.pregnancy-info.net/ovulation_facts.html

Rather than accept Roe's appeal to bodily integrity, McDonagh invokes legal argument to illustrate the necessity of consent. Legitimacy of action requires consent. Consent is a necessary prerequisite for the joy of sex, or else it becomes rape; for gardening, or else it becomes plantation slavery; and so by analogy must be a necessary prerequisite for pregnancy. McDonagh contends that sexual intercourse, albeit consensual, is not the legal cause of pregnancy and so does not amount to consensual gestation. No man can act as a sufficient cause for pregnancy, his ejaculation of sperm is merely a prerequisite, not in itself constituting pregnancy. Pregnancy may well be contingent upon sex but given that it only occurs upon the fertilised ovum's implantation, causing a change in state, the latter alone is the legal cause of pregnancy. Similarly, in the case of the hockey-pitch assault, the offender, being both the necessary and the sufficient cause, is thereby the legal cause. Given that the woman cannot give consent to the legal cause of pregnancy, consent cannot pass transitively from one to the other. She thus cannot consent to gestation.

Short of consenting to continued pregnancy, the woman has acquired no greater duty to bear an unwanted foetus than any other person has to care for Thomson's violinist³. The woman cannot be specifically responsible for the foetus (i.e., more liable for the care of that foetus than anyone else) unless she does something to assume that responsibility. If risking pregnancy is insufficient to assume that responsibility then self-sacrificial gestation is an act of kindness, not a duty. Non-consensual pregnancy is not an acquired duty, thus cannot be incumbent upon a person⁴.

One might contend that although the woman does not explicitly consent to the second relationship, with the foetus, she has run the risk of such an outcome and thus owes a duty to gestate. In rebuttal, McDonagh shows that we intuitively accept that we do not consent to an injury (such as pregnancy) even if we know that our actions (such as sex) increase the probability of such an outcome. We accept that smoking cigarettes, living in an area known for hurricanes, or walking in a forest of grizzly bears do not entail that the

³ Jarvis Thomson, Judith, "A Defence of Abortion", in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* Volume 1, Number 1 (Autumn 1971): pp. 47-66.

⁴ Notably, no man who consented at conception is held liable to give bone marrow

individual consents to lung cancer, the destruction of their property or becoming a bear snack. Having tapped into our moral intuitions, she urges us to support the idea that consent-to-sex does not entail consent-to-pregnancy.

One contention might be that after initial agreement women can no longer 'back-track' on consent. However McDonagh argues that gestation requires ongoing consent to the ongoing changes in a pregnant woman's bodily condition. The woman has made no binding promise to the foetus, so has no duty towards it. This is analogous to marriage- or employment-consent being revoked if changing conditions render the relationship unsatisfactory. McDonagh recognises that the right to withdraw Samaritan support does not entail a right to enforce foetal death; if viable then the foetus should be given alternative artificial aid.

It is clear that one's right to self-defence against a particular harm diminishes with consent to that harm, if such a right persists at all. But moreover, contrary to McDonagh, lack of consent need not entail a right to self-defence. Even if we accept that pregnancy is not consensual, and its responsibilities not acquired through consenting to sexual intercourse, this merely shows that a woman has not given up her right to self-defence, *not* that such a right now applies. Perhaps we can manoeuvre around this deficit in McDonagh's argument. By invoking agent-relative permission for self-defence, a woman can justifiably perform her own abortion. But this requires a determination of what is self-defence. Faced by an assailant, many would accept the right to protect one's arm, for instance. The right to protect one's limbs is recognised in virtue of the alternative negative impact upon emotional well-being. Thus self-defence is granted in virtue of concerns for emotional harms. So perhaps agent-relative permission could also justify the defence of one's personal identity when facing an unwanted pregnancy. But McDonagh's assertion that the right to self-defence entitles one to kill others to avoid personal inconvenience or discomfort has distinctly unfortunate consequences: namely that our own right to life is insufficient to protect us from being killed by those who would experience discomfort otherwise. To avoid this unfortunate consequence it seems we must limit those who can be killed in self-defence to persons threatening one's life, rather than those who are merely inconvenient or annoying.

The traditional pro-choicer would contend the assumption that we are dealing with two persons with equal rights-claims. The orthodox argument, not espoused by McDonagh, maintains that one party is merely a potential person with a lesser claim to life than sentient persons with established interests. Abortion need not wreak havoc upon society at large then, since the rights-claims involved are asymmetrical. Once we recognise that the foetus suffers no harm upon death and that the foetus's potentiality is vastly outweighed by the mother's immediate losses, it does not matter what specific reason the woman has for aborting. She did not consent to pregnancy and thus has no duty to continue this course of action. She is quite simply defending herself against a parasitic intruder⁵. Her lack of consent denies any acquired duty to the foetus.

If we agree to the traditional pro-choicer's evaluation of mere potential personhood we need not invoke the principle of agent-relative permission. But this interpretation has led to a stalemate in the abortion debate. For religious and ethical reasons, many perceive the foetus as a person and so reject pro-choicers' claims. Hence my interest in McDonagh's contribution⁶. McDonagh has conceded foetal personhood, yet argued that such an admission strengthens, rather than weakens a woman's claim to reproductive rights. Granting the anti-abortionist premise enables McDonagh to treat the legal cause of this non-consensual harm as any other mentally incompetent individual. In such cases, the state's duty is to protect the victim from the bodily intrusion made by such private parties, even if the aggressor is innocent and not morally culpable. McDonagh argues against according the foetus greater rights than those of developed persons, so transforming the debate.

But even if we accept McDonagh's interpretation of non-consensual pregnancy as an intrusion, this seems to entail unpalatable consequences, as highlighted by Beckwith and Thomas⁷. Suppose a doctor finds his

⁵ Sumner, L. *Abortion and Moral Theory* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981. p.121

⁶ Though arguably it is a mere extension of Jarvis Thomson's concession

⁷ Beckwith, F. J. and Thomas, S. D. , "Consent, Sex and the Prenatal Rapist: a brief reply to McDonagh's suggested revision of *Roe v. Wade*" in *Journal of Libertarian Studies*: 17 (3): 1-16.

unconscious patient some weeks pregnant. Secondly, suppose it seems that she was unaware of gestation; her friends profess ignorance and it fails to get a mention in her diary. If we follow McDonagh in interpreting her non-consensual pregnancy as akin to rape, the doctor is thereby obliged to terminate the imposition of the intrusion, just as the state ought to protect us from rapists. One might object that the doctor should withhold treatment, until she regains consciousness, until she is able to decide whether she wants to continue gestation. Yet this seems inconsistent with the analogous case of permitting the rape of a comatose patient, then inquiring upon waking! Desire for consistent reasoning seems to ensure that McDonagh's argument entails somewhat counter-intuitive implications.

Intuitively we want to maintain the pregnancy for her to decide upon later, but forbid the rape. Given that McDonagh's argument makes the two so analogous, it seems that we cannot do both. This objection can be quashed by analysing consent. McDonagh espouses the necessity of consent on the grounds that the individual's subjective experience of a denial of autonomy constitutes a harm. Lacking consciousness, she lacks the ability to perceive any such harm. The harm of non-consensual acts is contingent upon being realised, thus only applicable to those conscious. Given the patient's lack of subjective appraisal, McDonagh's argument does not entail that the doctor is obliged to intervene against the foetal invader.

This reply appears to permit the patient's rape. Unaware of such happenings, she is incapable of being offended. However, should she regain consciousness, the patient may be somewhat distressed by the thought of such invasion and so we ought to protect her integrity. Yet, analogously, she might also be distressed by foetal invasion and so perhaps the doctor really ought to intervene, for the sake of her future self. However, given that the woman might concede to gestation, often a difficult condition to obtain, we thereby ought to preserve her pregnant state, until she can consent to it. Beckwith and Thomas's analogy fails to defeat McDonagh, for it is inappropriate; misinterpreting lack of consent as being necessarily non-consensual. The patient's pregnancy is not non-consensual, but rather she is incapable of deliberation and thus we must wait until she can consent. Though she might likewise concede to sex with the aforementioned party, our intervention need

not impede her later chances. McDonagh's argument thus accommodates our intuitive response.

Building on our intuitive recognition that bodily intrusion requires consent, McDonagh introduces the notion of the foetus as the cause of pregnancy and completes the abortion jigsaw. Even if, indeed especially if, we acknowledge foetal personhood, McDonagh's arguments provide compelling justification for reproductive rights. This book is original, provocative, thorough; definitely recommended; and a fascinating read.

The Creative Mind: Myths and Mechanisms

Margaret Boden, *Routledge*⁸

Robert Charleston

The Open University

rc3673@student.open.ac.uk

Put four or five people interested in philosophy in a room together, provide a few drinks, wind the clock forward a few hours, and just as regret follows sambuca, the talk will eventually turn to God, tables, or art. Maggie Boden's *The Creative Mind* is primarily a provocative and accessible study of the latter topic, but also features cameos from the former two.

Boden's angle is notably different from the well-worn and somewhat stale 'What is Art?' (also known in its modern Young British Artist form as 'What can I get away with selling to art collectors?'). Rather than retread the familiar streets of family resemblance, idealism, and institutionalism, Boden takes the premise that the interesting thing about Art is actually its cognitive origin. In this she immediately puts Art (in the capital 'A' sense of Fine or Modern Art) into exactly the same category as Science (as in Chemistry or Physics). What

⁸ This review first appeared on the BUPS-DIS discussion list

interests her in this book is not the presentation or nature of external texts such as sculptures, paintings, machines or scientific research papers (though there are incisive comments on all of these) but rather the *internal* processes of the minds that originate them. Hence the title.

The first step in Boden's argument is the denial that creation is ever creation *ex nihilo* – from nothing. Using case studies from the journals of Friedrich von Kekule (discoverer of the structure of benzene) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (from when he was working on the brilliant but abortive poem Kubla Khan) she demonstrates that all great creative acts have as a background a serious amount of quite conventional, rote consideration. They always involve pre-existing materials and theories. And they never truly occur just in a momentary flash of brilliant realisation, though this is characteristic of an essential stage of the process: the creative *jump*.

To mark the difference between the ordinary day-to-day exploration of familiar ideas and almost mechanical thinking that we undertake when doing anything from the washing up to mathematics, and the fundamental transformation that occurs when somebody has a truly creative thought that 'breaks the rules' of day-to-day cognition, Boden introduces the idea of *creative space*. It is this that distinguishes Boden's theory of creativity from postmodernist 'grammars of creation' (to borrow George Steiner's phrase). It is a common postmodern trope that creativity amongst humans is simply a rearranging of what has come before, a shuffling of the cards rather than a new game. Boden argues that this is true of day-to-day 'exploration' of what is possible within the rules of art or science that we inhabit. So Dickens was pushing at the boundaries of Victorian literary creative space when he took adjectival description about as far as it could go in describing Ebenezer Scrooge as 'a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner.'

However *true* creativity occurs when somebody questions, changes or eliminates an existing rule, or shows that something previously thought fixed might be variable. This transforms the creative space in which the artist or scientist works. All of a sudden there is a new direction to explore, existing directions are given a new lease of life by their association and relation to this

'extra dimension', and a new set of rules for everyday working is established. This is what occurred when Kekule came up with the idea that molecular structures may include rings of atoms rather than just straight lines, when the Florentines developed perspective so that paintings could have realistic depth, and when Schoenberg realised he could write music that no longer respected the rules of tonality.

As a philosopher of cognitive science, Boden analyses the ability to work within rule sets, and the ability to transform them, in terms of cognitive algorithms. In other words the rules that you follow in thinking, and the rules that you question, depend in turn on what rules are inside your cognitive apparatus. This discussion proceeds within a functionalist framework, so the exact details required in the brain are deliberately left open. Her position on this is one that most people would empathise with. Leaving aside the question of what exactly mind *is*, just as the question of what Art *is*, allows us to focus on the conditions that make creativity in the arts and science more likely. This is a refreshingly modern break from the focus of most philosophy of art and science. Furthermore most people will identify with Boden's claim that acquisition of new thinking rules makes a transformational difference to our lives as thinkers. Learning the 'rules' of analytic philosophy (validity, bivalence, logical forms, and so on) leads most people to re-evaluate their pre-existing views and see debates that they have considered before in a completely new light. The effect of your 'rules for thinking' being changed can be felt.

However Boden's central idea has a couple of consequences that people may be less happy with. The first is that since artistic and scientific output are so often about exploring creative space rather than transforming it, computers can be pretty much as good at it as we are. She uses extensive examples from computer science and artificial intelligence to back this up – from the artistic program AARON which can draw and paint acrobats and jungle scenes, to the 'postmodernism generator' (available at <http://www.elsewhere.org/pomo>) which can generate literary criticism on demand, to systems that come up with new scientific hypotheses and mathematical proofs, computers can create texts that look increasingly like human creative output. But this may be good news for the less creative of us. If the ability to explore and transform creative space really is about rules, then the rules for challenging rules (heuristics such

as 'consider the negative' which encourages you to look at each of your premises in turn and consider whether its opposite being true would make a difference) can be studied and even taught. We could perhaps be taught to be more creative artists and scientists.

But then, if this works, we would have to be aware that computers could be taught the same rules, so would fairly soon be catching us up again. Boden's argument is levelling – creativity is not something elite, there is nothing different about Mozart over the rest of us, other than the heuristics he had tacit access to. But it is also somewhat humbling – we must recognise that just as great geniuses of the scientific and artistic world are basically the same as us, so computers are also capable creators. This is troubling since we have often used creativity to define humanity itself.

Boden's prose is lucid and mercifully jargon-light. Her examples are, save perhaps one about necklaces, intuitive and clear. This is an overview and 'big ideas' book rather than a closely-argued thesis. Whether this is a shortcoming or not depends on what you are looking for. As an introductory book with ideas it is excellent. As a formally-rigorous piece of deductive reasoning it falls considerably short: creative space is given no definition in necessary or sufficient conditions; the metaphysical and particularly ontological claims underlying Boden's conception of mind are not examined in any detail; and it is unclear whether this is supposed to be a model of creativity or a necessary, empirical, functionalist theory about the inner layout of minds. But it is also a fascinating read, rich in references to real-world cases and computer systems that will make you think and reconsider your views on creativity, art and science. I think I can go as far as saying this book transformed my own creative space on the subject, and so thoroughly recommend it.

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Keynote: Professor Robert Hopkins (Sheffield)
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Friday 7th - Sunday 9th April

BUPS Philosophy Skills Conference, University of Nottingham
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Friday 30th June - Sunday 2nd July

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(Goldfish...)

Issue 1(1) - December 2005

Rationality, empathy and the great moral fallacy

David Frenk

Could restrictions on freedom of speech be necessary for its preservation?

Lorna Finlayson

Time, change, cause and effect

James Cunningham

Does Marx want to end politics?

Robbie Duschinsky

A quasi-realism of (quasi-)beliefs?

Carlos Lastra-Anadón

The reality of fields from the view of simplicity

Tom Deakin

Can the rule of double-negation elimination be justified?

Lishan Chan

Should we be irrealist about values?

Matthew Tugby

On the significance of statements of identity

Daniel Clifford



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