Introduction: Show Me the Arguments

Michael Bruce and Steven Barbone

"We are going to ruin undergraduate philosophy." That was what we told our friends and teachers when we pitched the idea of this book to them. It was our experience that for almost any given philosophy class that we took as undergraduates, there were only a handful of arguments, totaling no more than a few pages of carefully crafted notes, that we needed to know. We imagined a rolodex of arguments in front of us, which we could spin through with ease to find the argument and move on. Midterm or final examinations in one of these classes would be reduced to presenting a philosopher's argument, followed by a critique – usually another philosopher's argument. The ability to state an argument clearly and concisely, in a term paper, for example, demonstrates that one succinctly understands the material. The following arguments can be viewed as answers to such test questions and also to some of life's questions as well.

"Show me the argument" is the battle cry for philosophers. Everyone has subjective personal experiences, sentiments, and opinions, so philosophy appeals to the common ground of reason to evaluate claims objectively. Logical reasoning is independent of political and religious commitments. Put simply, an argument is valid or it is not. (Whether or not it is convincing is another issue.) When one analyzes a position in terms of its argument, one responds with a certain level of rigor and attention. Uncompelling arguments can be dismissed out of hand as absurd and forgotten; however, arguments that evoke strong reactions, often due to the potential consequences of the argument, are countered by a restatement of the initial argument, explicitly displaying the inferences, assumptions, and justifications and why the conclusions do not follow. When things become serious, one wants *just the arguments*.

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The Euthyphro Dilemma

David Baggett

Plato. *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961.

Adams, Robert. *Finite and Infinite Goods: A Framework for Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Baggett, David, and Jerry L. Walls. *Good God: The Theistic Foundations of Morality*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Antony Flew once said that the test of one's aptitude in philosophy is one's ability to grasp the force and point of the "Euthyphro Dilemma," a traditional objection to theistic ethics traceable to an early Socratic dialogue. The dilemma has long been thought to be an effective refutation of the effort to locate the authority of morality in the will or commands of God (or the gods). In the original context, the dilemma referred to the Greek pantheon of gods and what they loved and hated, whereas in more recent times the formulation is typically in terms of God and God's commands. The point of the dilemma is that God, even if God exists, does not function as the foundation of ethics. At most, God satisfies a prudential or epistemic function when it comes to morality, but not an ontological one, if the argument goes through.

About halfway into Plato's *Euthyphro*, Socrates asks the young Euthyphro a question that has come to be known as the "Euthyphro Dilemma." Expressed in contemporary and monotheistic terms, it can be put like this:

Does God command something because it is moral, or is something moral because God commands it? In the original context, Euthyphro, a firm believer in the Greek pantheon of gods, argues that the essence of holiness is what the gods love. After Socrates elicits from Euthyphro the admission that the gods, according to legend, could disagree, Euthyphro's view became that the holy is what all the gods loved and the unholy what all the gods hated. At this point, Socrates shifts gears and introduces the Dilemma, both horns of which are problematic for the theistic ethicist: for either God is merely reporting what's moral apart from God or God can render as moral whatever God's whim happens to choose.

Many classical theists find both horns of the dilemma unacceptable, because as moral realists they are unwilling to think of morality as infinitely malleable, and as robust supernaturalists they resist the notion that God is essentially irrelevant to a matter so important as moral truth. One common effort at the solution is to disambiguate "morality" between its deontic and axiological dimensions, distinguishing between obligation and value, and rooting God's commands only in the former. God's commands thus provide a way to delimit among what's good what's also obligatory, since some such mechanism is necessary because not everything that's morally good is also morally obligatory (otherwise there would no room for the category of supererogation, moral actions that go above and beyond the call of duty, a category that act utilitarians have a notoriously hard time accommodating).

A principled affirmation of divine impeccability (sinlessness) helps resolve arbitrariness and vacuity concerns, because if God is essentially good and loving, then God would never issue commands in irremediable tension with nonnegotiable moral intuitions.

A series of six additional distinctions can also be useful in diffusing the Euthyphro Dilemma. A scope distinction between definition and analysis, a semantic distinction between univocation and equivocation, a modal distinction between conceivability and possibility, an epistemic distinction between difficulty and impossibility, a metaethical distinction between knowing and being, and an ontological distinction between dependence and control collectively can enable the theistic ethicist to defend her view against the Euthyphro Dilemma. Therefore, God's commands can provide the right analysis of moral obligations even if not a definition of "moral obligation," which allows atheists to use deontic language meaningfully without believing in God. God would, moreover, retain moral prerogatives that human beings wouldn't, so God's behavior, though ultimately recognizable as moral, need not be exactly like human morality (contrary to John Stuart Mill's claim to the contrary). Although God's issuing irremediably evil commands is vaguely conceivable, it wouldn't be genuinely possible; reconciling God's commands with ineliminable moral intuitions may be difficult but

can't be impossible if it's rational to believe in God's moral perfection; and our grasp of necessary moral facts is an epistemic issue that would under-determine the metaphysical foundations of morality. And finally, the depend-ence of morality on God does not entail God's volitional control over the contents of morality to make it just anything at all; divine impeccability would rule some things out. Armed with such distinctions, the theistic ethi-cist and divine command theorist has not been shown to be irrational in light of the Euthyphro Dilemma.

> Is what is holy holy because the gods approve it, or do they approve it because it is holy? (Plato, 10a)

P1. What is moral is either moral because God commands it or it is not.
P2. If what is moral is moral because God commands it, then morality is arbitrary and vacuous.
P3. If what is moral is moral for reasons other than that God commands it, then God is superfluous from the standpoint of morality.
C1. Either morality is arbitrary and vacuous or God is superfluous to morality (constructive dilemma, P1, P2, P3).

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James' Will to Believe Argument

A. T. Fyfe

James, William. *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*. New York: Dover, 1956.

Welchman, Jennifer. "William James's 'The Will to Believe' and the Ethics of Self-Experimentation." *Transactions of the Charles S. Pierce Society* 42, 2 (Spring 2006): 229–41.

Wernham, James C. S. *James' Will-to-Believe Doctrine: A Heretical View*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987.

William James (1842–1910), in his 1896 lecture, "The Will to Believe," gave an argument for holding onto religious belief even in the face of insufficient evidence that is second in prominence only to Pascal's Wager (#5). James' stated target in his lecture is W. K. Clifford (1845–79), a philosopher who had recently argued in his "The Ethics of Belief" that "It is wrong always, everywhere and for everyone to believe anything upon insufficient evidence." James' strategy in "The Will to Believe" is first to identify what he thought would be a point of agreement with Clifford; specifically, that our two fundamental duties as believers are to believe truth and avoid falsehood. James then goes on to agree partially with Clifford that at least ordinarily, when someone believes upon insufficient evidence, he is irrational. This is because while believing upon insufficient evidence does con-

tribute to the pursuit of true belief (since the belief might be true), when someone believes upon insufficient evidence, he is usually violating his duty to avoid false belief (since he didn't wait for sufficient evidence before believing).

Where James disagrees with Clifford is on whether believing upon insufficient evidence always involves violating our duty to avoid false belief. Specifically, James argues that there exist beliefs for which the evidence of their truth (if they were true) would only become available after we believed them and, therefore, waiting to believe until we had sufficient evidence would be a self-defeating wait. To illustrate with an example, suppose that you have just finished medical school and that you are trying to decide whether to join a research team working to discover a cure for cancer. Now, to make such a substantial commitment to the search for a cure, James would argue that you must believe that a cure exists to be found. That is, you'd be fooling yourself if you thought you could make such a momentous career choice while continuing to suspend belief about the existence of the cure you're looking for. At the very least, most people would need such a belief to sustain them during the times in which their research was going poorly. That being said, sufficient evidence that such a cure exists won't be available until well into the search for one. Therefore, a belief in the existence of a cure for cancer is a belief for which the evidence of its truth (if it is true) only becomes available after we believe a cure exists.

Similar to a cancer researcher's belief in the existence of a cure, James holds that religious belief is required before evidence of its truth (if it is true) can become available. While this would seem to justify religious belief only for those who make a career of religious research, James argues that religious belief is justified even for ordinary believers in virtue of the peculiar way its evidence depends upon their belief. In the preface to the published version of his "The Will to Believe" lecture, James fills in this last step of his argument:

> If religious hypotheses about the universe be in order at all, then the active faiths of individuals in them, freely expressing themselves in life, are the experimental tests by which they are verified, and the only means by which their truth or falsehood can be wrought out. The truest scientific hypothesis is that which, as we say, 'works' best; and it can be no otherwise with religious hypotheses. Religious history proves that one hypothesis after another has worked ill, has crumbled at contact with a widening knowledge of the world, and has lapsed from the minds of men. Some articles of faith, however, have maintained themselves through every vicissitude, and possess even more vitality to-day than ever before [...]. [T]he freest competition of the various faiths with one another, and their openest application to life by their several champions, are the most favorable conditions under which the survival of the fittest can proceed. (XII)

P1. It is not rational to have religious belief without sufficient evidence if and only if having religious belief without sufficient evidence violates our duty to avoid false belief.

P2. Having religious belief without sufficient evidence violates our duty to avoid false belief if and only if I could withhold religious belief for the purpose of waiting until I had sufficient evidence.

    C1. If it is not rational to have religious belief without sufficient evidence, then having religious belief without sufficient evidence violates our duty to avoid false belief (equivalence, simplification, P1).

    C2. If having religious belief without sufficient evidence violates our duty to avoid false belief, then I could withhold religious belief for the purpose of waiting until I had sufficient evidence (equivalence, simplification, P2).

    C3. If it is not rational to have religious belief without sufficient evidence, then I could withhold religious belief for the purpose of waiting until I had sufficient evidence (hypothetical syllogism, C1, C2).

P3. Access to the evidence for religious belief requires already having religious belief.

P4. If access to the evidence for religious belief requires already having religious belief, then I cannot withhold belief for the purpose of waiting until I had sufficient evidence.

    C4. I cannot withhold religious belief for the purpose of waiting until I had sufficient evidence (*modus ponens*, P3, P4).

    C5. It is rational to have religious belief without sufficient evidence (*modus tollens*, C3, C4).

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The Experience Machine Objection to Hedonism

Dan Weijers

Nozick, Robert. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. New York: Basic Books, 1974.

De Brigard, Filipe. "If You Like It, Does It Matter if It's Real?" *Philosophical Psychology* 23, 1 (2010): 43–57.

Kymlicka, Will. *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Sobel, David. "Varieties of Hedonism." *Journal of Social Philosophy* 33, 2 (2002): 240–56.

Robert Nozick's Experience Machine thought experiment describes a fantastic machine that can simulate any kind of experience for anyone who plugs herself into it. A life attached to an Experience Machine could be full of immensely pleasurable experiences; however (as Nozick correctly notes), the thought of actually living such a life is one that nearly everyone finds unappealing.

Although Nozick originally devised the Experience Machine thought experiment to make a point about how animals should be treated, it was quickly adopted by anyone who wanted to argue for the falsity of hedonism as a theory of the good. The Experience Machine thought experiment is equally effective against any kind of theory that posits the internal aspects of our experiences as the only valuable things in a life, but hedonism is

often singled out because it is the most widely discussed exemplar of this type of theory. The adoption of the Experience Machine thought experiment for the purpose of discrediting hedonism has been extremely successful. Indeed, virtually everyone who has written about hedonism since the mid-1970s cites the Experience Machine thought experiment as a (and often the) decisive objection against it. Hedonism comes in many guises, but all hedonistic theories share the foundational claims that pleasure is the only thing of intrinsic value in a life and that pain is the only thing of intrinsic disvalue. The reason why the Experience Machine Objection to Hedonism was (and still is) considered to be decisive is because the widespread judgment that a life plugged into an Experience Machine is not appealing is thought to give overwhelming reason to reject this central claim.

As with many other arguments in ethics, the Experience Machine Objection to Hedonism presents a thought experiment and relies on the readers' agreeing with the author's judgment about it. The Experience Machine Objection to Hedonism garners near-complete agreement on the judgment that a life plugged into an Experience Machine is not something that we would choose for ourselves. It should be noted that this widespread judgment arises despite Nozick's attempts to rule out some of the possible reasons that we might not want to plug in, such as allowing those who depend on us to plug in too. Even in modern reproductions of the Experience Machine Objection to Hedonism, which tend to place more emphasis than Nozick did on that fact that the experiences available in an Experience Machine would be far more pleasurable and less painful than those of a real life, hardly anyone admits to wanting to plug in to an Experience Machine.

Despite the nearly unanimous judgment that plugging into an Experience Machine for life would be a mistake, substantial disagreement remains on the question of why we think that our current life would be better for us than a life in an Experience Machine. Many philosophers have offered different suggestions as to why we do not, and should not, choose a life in an Experience Machine. Nozick's rationale is that plugging in would deprive us the chance really to do and be certain things (as opposed merely to having the internal experiences of doing and being them). Some (e.g., De Brigard) have suggested that the feelings we experience in response to the thought of the Experience Machine are based on an subconscious fear of change, as shown by reversing the thought experiment (imagine that you have actually been living an Experience Machine life all along). Until the disagreement about why nearly all of us judge a life plugged into an Experience Machine to be so ghastly is resolved, we cannot be confident that premise 3 of the argument (below) is correct or be sure that the Experience Machine Objection to Hedonism should really be considered as decisive as it generally is.

Suppose that there were an experience machine that would give you any experience you desired. Superduper neuropsychologists could stimulate your brain so that you would think and feel you were writing a great novel, or making a friend, or reading an interesting book. All the time, you would be floating in a tank, with electrodes attached to your brain. Should you plug into this machine for life, preprogramming your life's experiences? If you are worried about missing out on desirable experiences, we can suppose that business enterprises have researched thoroughly the lives of many others. You can pick and choose from their large library or smorgasbord of such experiences, selecting your life's experiences for, say, the next two years. After two years have passed, you will have ten minutes or ten hours out of the tank, to select the experiences of your next two years. Of course, while in the tank you won't know that you're there; you'll think it's all actually happening. Others can also plug in to have the experiences they want, so there's no need to stay unplugged to serve them. (Ignore problems such as who will service the machines if everyone plugs in.) Would you plug in? *What else can matter to us, other than how our lives feel from the inside?* Nor should you refrain because of the few moments of distress between the moment you've decided and the moment you're plugged. What's a few moments of distress compared to a lifetime of bliss (if that's what you choose), and why feel any distress at all if your decision is the best one? (Nozick, 42–3)

P1. Plugging into an Experience Machine would make the rest of your life dramatically more pleasurable and less painful than it would otherwise have been (stipulated in thought experiment).
P2. Given the choice to plug into an Experience Machine for the rest of your life, ignoring any responsibilities you might have to others, you would decline (appeal to readers' judgment).
P3. If, ignoring any responsibilities you might have to others, you would decline the chance to plug into an Experience Machine for the rest of your life, then pleasure and pain are not the only things of intrinsic value (or disvalue) in a life.
  C1. Pleasure and pain are not the only things of intrinsic value (or disvalue) in a life (*modus ponens*, P2, P3).
P4. If hedonism is true, then pleasure and pain are the only things of intrinsic value (or disvalue) in a life.
  C2. Hedonism is false (*modus tollens*, C1, P4).

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Nozick's Taxation Is Forced Labor Argument

Jason Waller

> Nozick, Robert. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. New York: Basic Books, 1974.

One of the most contentious issues in contemporary debates about distributive justice concerns the redistribution of wealth. Should the state tax richer citizens in order to provide various benefits (schools, medical care, job training, cash payments, housing subsidies, etc.) to poorer citizens? The traditional distinction between the political "right" and "left" turns largely (although, not exclusively) on this question. One of the most influential libertarian arguments concerning the redistribution of wealth is offered by Robert Nozick, who argues that all forms of redistribution are morally wrong. His general strategy is to show that taxation is a kind of forced labor (i.e., slavery). The argument has been influential because it seems to turn on an uncontroversial definition of forced labor and the seemingly undeniable claim that all forms of forced labor are immoral. Nozick concludes that when the state redistributes wealth from the rich to the poor, the poor are in fact unjustly enslaving the rich. This form of slavery is, of course, quite mild by comparison to past forms, but (at least according to Nozick) it is immoral just the same.

> Taxation of earnings from labor is on a par with forced labor. Some persons find this claim obviously true: taking the earnings of *n* hours of labor

is like taking *n* hours from the person; it is like forcing the person to work n hours for another's purpose. Others find the claim absurd. But even these, if they object to forced labor, would oppose forcing unemployed hippies to work for the benefit of the needy. And they would also object to forcing each person to work five extra hours each week for the benefit of the needy. (Nozick, 169)

P1. Forced labor (i.e., slavery) occurs anytime one (i) must perform some labor under threat of severe punishment (pain, prison, death, etc.) and yet (ii) the benefits of one's labor go to someone else.

P2. All forms of forced labor are immoral.

P3. The state requires all working citizens to pay certain taxes in order to benefit the needy or face severe punishment (i.e., prison time).

P4. A is a working citizen.

  C1. If citizen A does not pay taxes, then the citizen will receive severe punishment; that is, she will go to prison (material implication, P3).

P5. If citizen A does not work extra hours, then the citizen will not be able to pay her taxes.

  C2. If citizen A does not work extra hours at her job, then she will receive severe punishment; that is, she will go to prison (hypothetical syllogism, C1, P5).

P6. Citizen A receives no benefits for the extra hours spent earning the money to pay her taxes because this money goes to the needy.

  C3. During the time when citizen A is earning the money needed to pay her taxes, the citizen is (i) performing some labor under threat of severe punishment [by C2] and (ii) the benefits of her labor go to someone else, namely, the needy (conjunction, C2, P6).

  C4. During the time when citizen A is earning the money needed to pay her taxes, she is undergoing forced labor; that is, slavery (*modus ponens*, P1, C3).

  C5. Taxing citizen A to help the needy is immoral (instantiation, P2, C4).

P7. This same argument can be made for each taxpayer.

  C6. All instances of taxation are immoral (instantiation, C5, P7).

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Charity is Obligatory

Joakim Sandberg

Singer, Peter. "Famine, Affluence, and Morality." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1 (1972): 229–43.
____. *Practical Ethics*, 2nd edn. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
Sidgwick, Henry. *The Methods of Ethics*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1981.
Unger, Peter. *Living High & Letting Die: Our Illusion of Innocence*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Most people think that it is good or charitable to give money to humanitarian aid agencies that provide food or shelter to people in need, and hence such agencies are referred to as charities. But couldn't it actually be a moral duty to give money to such agencies; that is, morally wrong not to do so? According to the present argument, most famously formulated by Peter Singer, relatively affluent people of developed countries are indeed under a moral duty to give a significant amount of their money to humanitarian aid agencies.

The argument turns on the seemingly uncontroversial principle (which can be found already in Sidgwick, 253) that it is wrong not to help others when helping is easy and cheap. Singer sometimes defends this principle by way of an example: Wouldn't it be wrong to refuse to save a child from drowning in a pond, say, simply because one is hesitant to get one's clothes dirty? The argument can be taken to exemplify philosophical reasoning in its most interesting form: going from seemingly uncontroversial premises to a largely controversial or unexpected conclusion. The conclusion is controversial because it basically requires us to – instead of spending our money on things for ourselves that we don't really need (nice clothes, coffee, beer,

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CDs) – give most of it away to people in remote parts of the world. And we are not even allowed to feel good about doing so – what we normally perceive as charitable (and thus beyond the call of duty) is really just morally obligatory. A number of slightly different formulations of the argument can be found in the literature, but we present it in its original form. All of the premises below have been scrutinized by critics in attempts to defuse the argument.

> I begin with the assumption that suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care are bad. I think most people will agree about this, although one may reach the same view by different routes. [. . .] My next point is this: if it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it. By "without sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance" I mean without causing anything else comparably bad to happen, or doing something that is wrong in itself, or failing to promote some moral good, comparable in significance to the bad thing that we can prevent. This principle seems almost as uncontroversial as the last one [. . . but . . .] The uncontroversial appearance of the principle just stated is deceptive. If it were acted upon [. . .] our lives, our society, and our world would be fundamentally changed. [. . .] The traditional distinction between duty and charity cannot be drawn, or at least, not in the place we normally draw it. [. . .] When we buy new clothes not to keep ourselves warm but to look "well-dressed" we are not providing for any important need. We would not be sacrificing anything significant if we were to continue to wear our old clothes, and give the money to famine relief. By doing so, we would be preventing another person from starving. It follows from what I have said earlier that we ought to give money away, rather than spend it on clothes which we do not need to keep us warm. To do so is not charitable, or generous. Nor is it the kind of act which philosophers and theologians have called "supererogatory" – an act which it would be good to do, but not wrong not to do. On the contrary, we ought to give the money away, and it is wrong not to do so. (Singer "Famine," 231–5)

P1. Suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care are bad.
P2. If it is in one's power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, one ought, morally, to do it.
  C1. If it is in one's power to prevent suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, one ought, morally, to do it (instantiation & *modus ponens*, P1, P2).
P3. By giving money to humanitarian aid agencies, one can prevent suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care.

C2. If one can give money to humanitarian aid agencies without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance (to suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care) one ought, morally, to do it (instantiation and *modus ponens*, C1, P3).

P4. We can give a substantial amount of our money away by simply giving up buying things that we do not really need; that is, without sacrificing anything of moral importance comparable to suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care.

C3. We ought, morally, to give a substantial amount of our money to humanitarian aid agencies (*modus ponens*, C2, P4).

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Parfit's Leveling Down Argument against Egalitarianism

Ben Saunders

Parfit, Derek. "Equality or Priority?" *Ratio* 10 (1997): 202–21. Originally published separately as "The 1991 Lindley Lecture." Lawrence: Department of Philosophy, University of Kansas, 1995. Reprinted in *The Ideal of Equality*, edited by M. Clayton and A. Williams. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

Frankfurt, Harry. "Equality as a Moral Ideal" *Ethics* 98 (1987): 21–42.
Jerome, Jerome K. "The New Utopia," in *Cultural Notes* no. 14. London: Libertarian Alliance, 1987.
Temkin, Larry. *Inequality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Almost everyone these days affirms the moral equality of persons. Egalitarians hold that this has implications for distributive justice – that people's material conditions should be equalized, at least insofar as they are not themselves responsible for being better or worse off than others. Many philosophers have explored how best to interpret these egalitarian commitments; for instance, over what goods ought to be equalized and whether people ought to be made equal in outcomes or merely opportunities. Some, however, have rejected the idea that equality *per se* is of any moral significance. Harry Frankfurt, for instance, has argued that all that matters is that everyone has enough, citing the fact that we don't feel the need to redistribute from billionaires to millionaires. He claims that our concern is not really with inequality, but only with poverty.

Frankfurt shows that we do indeed care about sufficiency, maybe more than about equality, but not that we do not care about equality as well. Derek Parfit, however, has advanced a famous argument to show that a commitment to equality has perverse consequences and ought to be rejected. He argues that anyone committed to equality must think that it is – at least in this one respect – better to bring everyone down to the same level (something he calls "leveling down") than to accept an inequality. This, however, seems perverse if no one is made better off as a result.

Suppose we think it unjust that some people are born with two healthy eyes and others with only one or none. In the absence of the technology required to perform eye transplants, there is nothing that we can do to make the blind better off. Thus, the only way to achieve equality between the blind and the sighted would be to blind those who can presently see (see Jerome's short story, "The New Utopia," which describes a dystopian future where such practices are carried out). Represented numerically, we could say that egalitarians think there is something better about a world where everyone has four units of good than a world where some have five and some have seven since, although everyone is better off in the latter world, it is unequal.

Note that Parfit is not saying that egalitarians are committed to this course of action all things considered, since most subscribe to values other than equality and think it is better for people to be able to see than not. What he is saying, however, is that *qua* egalitarians they are committed to accepting that this would be in one way good – there is some reason to do it – and he finds even this absurd. How could it be in any way good if it is, by hypothesis, worse for some people and better for none? (Temkin calls this premise, numbered P5 below, that the world cannot be better or worse without being better or worse for any individual, "the Slogan" and argues powerfully against it.)

While there are some who are completely untroubled by material inequalities between persons, no matter how large, Parfit's own positive view – which he calls the "Priority View" or prioritarianism, effectively a form of weighted utilitarianism – would be regarded by many as broadly egalitarian. Parfit thinks that it is morally more important to benefit someone the worse off he is. This view does not, however, require us to make comparisons between different people or posit that equality in itself has value, even if it will tend to have equalizing consequences in practice (because, where we can benefit one of two people, we ought to benefit the worse off until she becomes better off than the other).

> For true Egalitarians, equality has intrinsic value. [. . .] On the widest version of this view, any inequality is bad. It is bad, for example, that some people are sighted and others are blind. We would therefore have a reason,

if we could, to take single eyes from some of the sighted and give them to the blind [. . .]. Suppose that those who are better off suffer some misfortune, so that they become as badly off as everyone else. Since these events would remove the inequality, they must be in one way welcome [. . .] even though they would be worse for some people, and better for no one. This implication seems to many to be quite absurd. I call this the Levelling Down Objection. (Parfit *Idea*, 86, 97, 98)

P1. Egalitarianism implies that it is *pro tanto* (in one way) good to eliminate inequality.
P2. Inequality can be eliminated by bringing the worse-off up, and inequality can be eliminated by bringing the better-off down.
    C1. Egalitarianism implies that it is *pro tanto* good to bring the worse-off up and that it is *pro tanto* good to bring the better-off down (conjunction, P1, P2).
    C2. Egalitarianism implies that it is *pro tanto* good to bring the better-off down (simplification, C1).
P3. Simply bringing the better-off down does not make anyone better off.
P4. If no one is made better off, one state of affairs cannot be *pro tanto* better than another.
    C3. Simply bringing the better-off down cannot be *pro tanto* better (*modus ponens*, P3, P4).
P5. If Egalitarianism is true, then it is *pro tanto* good to bring the better-off down.
    C4. Egalitarianism is false (*modus tollens*, P5, C3).

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Nagel's "What Is It Like to Be a Bat" Argument against Physicalism

Amy Kind

Nagel, Thomas. "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" *Philosophical Review* 83 (1974): 435–50.

____. *The View from Nowhere*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Physicalism – the claim that everything is physical – has been the dominant position in philosophy of mind since at least the middle of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, physicalism has long been accused of being unable to account satisfactorily for the qualitative or subjective aspect of experience, for example, the reddishness of one's visual experience of a ripe tomato or the painfulness of one's tactile experience of a sharp object. Many have charged that it is difficult to see how these aspects of experience could be accounted for in solely physical terms. Focusing specifically on the experience that a bat has when using its sonar, Thomas Nagel formulated this charge in a particularly powerful way. His argument is designed to show that subjective facts about experience, which are essential to it, cannot be captured in the objective language of physicalism. Although most philosophers assume that the argument, if successful, would show that physicalism is false, Nagel himself is careful to claim only that we currently lack the conceptual resources to see how physicalism could be true.

I assume we all believe that bats have experience. After all, they are mammals, and there is no more doubt that they have experience than that mice or pigeons have experience. [. . .]

[T]he essence of the belief that bats have experience is that there is something it is like to be a bat. Now we know that most bats (the microchiroptera, to be precise) perceive the external world primarily by sonar, or echolocation, detecting the reflections, from objects within range, of their own rapid, subtly modulated, high frequency shrieks. Their brains are designed to correlate the outgoing impulses with the subsequent echoes, and the information thus acquired enables bats to make precise discriminations of distance, size, shape, motion, and texture comparable to those we make by vision. But bat sonar, though clearly a form of perception, is not similar in its operation to any sense that we possess, and there is no reason to suppose that it is subjectively like anything we can experience or imagine. This appears to create difficulties for the notion of what it is like to be a bat. [. . .]

Whatever may be the status of facts about what it is like to be a human being, or a bat, or a Martian, these appear to be facts that embody a particular point of view. [. . .]

This bears directly on the mind–body problem. For if the facts of experience – facts about what it is like for the experiencing organism – are accessible only from one point of view, then it is a mystery how the true character of experiences could be revealed in the physical operation of that organism. The latter is a domain of objective facts par excellence – the kind that can be observed and understood from many points of view and by individuals with differing perceptual systems. (Nagel "What Is It," 438, 441, 442)

P1. Humans cannot experience anything like what it is like for a bat when it is using its sonar.

P2. Humans cannot imagine anything like what it is like for a bat when it is using its sonar.

P3. If P1 and P2, then what it is like to be a bat is fundamentally a subjective phenomenon, understood only from a single point a view (namely, the bat's).

P4. Humans cannot experience anything like what it is like for a bat when it is using its sonar and humans cannot imagine anything like what it is like for a bat when it is using its sonar (conjunction, P1, P2).

C1. What it is like to be a bat is fundamentally a subjective phenomenon, understood only from a single point of view (*modus ponens*, P3, P4).

P5. Physicalism takes the objective point of view.

P6. If physicalism takes the objective point of view, and what it is like to be a bat is a subjective phenomenon understood from only a single point of view, then physicalism cannot capture what it is like to be a bat.

P7. Physicalism takes the objective point of view and what it is like to be a bat is fundamentally a subjective phenomenon, understood only from a single point of view (conjunction, C1, P5).

   C2. Physicalism cannot capture what it is like to be a bat (*modus ponens*, P6, P7).
P8. The fact that experience is subjective is an essential fact about experience.
   C3. The subjectivity of what it is like to be a bat is an essential fact about it (semantic entailment, P8).
   C4. Physicalism cannot capture what it is like to be a bat, and the subjectivity of what it is like to be a bat is an essential fact about it (conjunction, C2, C3).
P10. If physicalism cannot capture what it is like to be a bat, and that is an essential fact about it, then physicalism cannot capture all the essential facts about experiences.
   C5. Physicalism cannot capture all the essential facts about experiences (*modus ponens*, C4, P10).

Searle and the Chinese Room Argument

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Searle, John. "Minds and Brains without Programs," in *Mindwaves*, edited by C. Blakemore and S. Greenfield, 209–33. Oxford: Blackwell, 1988.
____. "Minds, Brains, and Programs." *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 3 (1980): 417–57.

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Is it possible to make a computer intelligent or give one a thinking mind just by having it run the right computer program? Strong AI believes that by designing the right programs with the right inputs and outputs, minds can be created in computers. John Searle's famous Chinese Room argument is intended to prove that this answer is wrong. Here are Searle's own words:

> Suppose that I'm locked in a room and given a large batch of Chinese writing. I know no Chinese, either written or spoken. Now suppose further that after this first batch of Chinese writing I am given a second batch of Chinese script together with a set of rules for correlating the second batch with the first batch. The rules are in English, and I understand these rules. They enable me to correlate one set of formal symbols with another set of formal symbols, and all that "formal" means here is that I can identify the symbols entirely by their shapes. Unknown to me, the people who are giving me all of these symbols call the call the [first] batch "questions." Furthermore,

they call the symbols I give them back in response to the [first] batch "answers to the questions," and the set of rules in English that they gave me, they call "the program." Suppose also that after a while I get so good at following the instructions for manipulating the Chinese symbols and the programmers get so good at writing the programs that from the external points of view – that is, from the point of view of somebody outside the room in which I am locked – my answers to the questions are absolutely indistinguishable from those of native Chinese speakers. As regards the [claims of strong AI], it seems to me quite obvious in the example that I do not understand a word of Chinese. I have inputs and outputs that are indistinguishable from those of the native Chinese speaker, and I can have any formal program you like, but I still understand nothing. (Searle, 417–18)

Searle continues by saying that if he doesn't understand Chinese solely on the basis of running the right rules, then neither does a computer solely on the basis of running the right program. And what goes for Chinese goes for other forms of cognition as well. Just manipulating symbols according to a program is not enough by itself to guarantee cognition, perception, understanding, thinking, and so forth. So strong AI is decisively proved wrong.

P1. All things or people who have a rule book or computer program that allows them to respond to questions and comments in Chinese in a way that can't be distinguished from responses by someone who does understand Chinese satisfy the Turing test for having that ability.
P2. Searle has a rule book that allows him to respond to questions and comments in Chinese in a way that can't be distinguished from responses by someone who does understand Chinese.
   C1. If Searle has a rule book that allows him to respond to questions and comments in Chinese in a way that can't be distinguished from responses by someone who does understand Chinese, then Searle satisfies the Turing test for understanding Chinese (instantiation, P1).
   C2. Searle satisfies the Turing test for understanding Chinese (*modus ponens*, P2, C1).
P3. All things or people that satisfy the Turing test for understanding Chinese are following the right rules or program for understanding Chinese.
   C3. If Searle satisfies the Turing test for understanding Chinese, then Searle is following the right rules or program for understanding Chinese (instantiation, P3).
   C4. Searle is following the right rules or program for understanding Chinese (*modus ponens*, C2, C3).
P4. Searle doesn't understand Chinese. Nothing about the situation changes this.

C5. Searle is following the right rules or program for understanding Chinese and not Searle does understands Chinese (conjunction, C4, P4).

C6. Not either not Searle is following the right rules or program for understanding Chinese or Searle understands Chinese (De Morgan's, C5).

C7. It is not the case that if Searle is following the right rules or computer program for understanding Chinese then Searle understands Chinese (material implication, C6).

P5. If Searle doesn't understand Chinese solely on the basis of running the right rules, then neither does a computer solely on the basis of running the right program.

C8. A computer doesn't understand Chinese solely on the basis of running the right program (*modus tollens*, C7, P4).

P6. If no computer can understand Chinese solely on the basis of executing the right symbol-manipulating program or following the right symbol-manipulating rules, then no computer has any cognitive abilities just in virtue of executing the right program or following the right rules.

C9. Just manipulating symbols according to a program is not enough by itself to guarantee cognition, perception, understanding, thinking, and so forth; that is, the creation of minds (*modus ponens*, C8, P6).

P7. If strong AI is true, then if there are the right programs with the right inputs and outputs, then there is creation of minds.

C10. Strong AI is false. Strong AI is refuted (*modus tollens*, C9, P7).