Readings

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Reading 2.1 EXERCISE 6

From: page 9 of The Empiricist Background, Chapter 1 in *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy and other Essays* by Putnam, H., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.

A Distinction is not a Dichotomy:

The point of view concerning the relation between "facts" and "values" that I shall be defending in this book is one that John Dewey defended throughout virtually all of his long and exemplary career. Dewey's target was not the idea that, for certain purposes, it might help to draw a distinction (say, between "facts" and "values"); rather his target was what he called the fact/value "dualism." It is one of a great many such philosophical dualisms that Dewey was concerned to identify, diagnose, and exorcise from our thinking. A misunderstanding that his work always tends to provoke (as I have learned by teaching it) is the misunderstanding that when Dewey attacks what he called "dualisms" he is thereby attacking all allied philosophical *distinctions*. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Reading 6.4 EXERCISE 3

Extract from: Williams, B. (1985) *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy.* London: Fontana Press/Collins, page 23.

The writers' note of urgency suggests . . . that what will happen could turn on the outcome of these arguments, that the justification of the ethical life could be a *force*. If we are to take this seriously, then it is a real question, who is supposed to be listening. Why are they supposed to be listening? What will the professor's justification do, when they break down the door, smash his spectacles, take him away?

Reading 13.14 EXERCISE 16

Extract from: Van Fraassen, B.C. (1999). To save the phenomena. In *The Philosophy of Science* (eds. R. Boyd, P. Gasker, and J.D. Trout). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 187–194 (Extract pp 187–8).

After the demise of logical positivism, scientific realism has once more returned as a major philosophical position. I shall not try here to criticize that position, but rather attempt to outline a comprehensive alternative.

I

What exactly is scientific realism? Naively stated, it is the view that the picture science gives us of the world is true, and the entities postulated really exist. (Historically, it added that there are real necessities in nature; I shall ignore that aspect here.) But that statement is too naive; it attributes to the scientific realist the belief that today's scientific theories are (essentially) right.

The correct statement, it seems to me, must indeed be in terms of epistemic attitudes, but not so directly. The aim of science is to give us *a literally true story of what the world is like*; and the proper form of acceptance of a theory is to believe that it is true. This is the statement of scientific realism: "To have good reason to accept a theory is to have good reason to believe that the entities it postulates are real," as Wilfrid Sellars has expressed it. Accordingly, all antirealism is a position according to which the aims of science can well be served without giving such a literally true story, and acceptance of a theory may properly involve something less (or other) than belief that it is true.

The idea of a literally true account has two aspects: the language is to be literally construed; and, so construed, the account is true. This divides the antirealists into two sorts. The first sort holds that science is or aims to be true, properly (but not literally) construed. The second holds that the language of science should be literally construed, but its theories need not be true to be good. The antirealism I advocate belongs to the second sort.

II

When Newton wrote his *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* and *System of the World*, he carefully distinguished the phenomena to be saved from the reality he postulated. He distinguished the "absolute magnitudes" that appear in his axioms from their "sensible measures" which are determined experimentally. He discussed carefully the ways in which, and extent to which, "the true motions of particular bodies [may be determined] from the apparent," via the assertion that "the apparent motions . . . are the differences of true motions."

The "apparent motions" form relational structures define by measuring relative distances, time intervals, and angles of separation. For brevity, let us call these relational structures *appearances*. In the mathematical model provided by Newton's theory, bodies are located in Absolute Space, in which they have real or absolute motions. But within these models we can define structures that are meant to be exact reflections of those appearances and are, as Newton says, identifiable as differences between true motions. These structures, defined in terms of the relevant relations between absolute locations and absolute times, which are the appropriate parts of Newton's models, I shall call *motions*, borrowing, Simon's term.

When Newton claims empirical adequacy for his theory, he is claiming that his theory has some model such that *all actual appearances are identifiable with (isomorphic to)* motions in that model.

Newton's theory goes a great deal further than this. It is part of his theory that there is such a thing as Absolute Space, that absolute motion is motion relative to Absolute Space, that absolute acceleration causes certain stresses and strains; and thereby deformations in the appearances, and so on. He offered, in addition, the hypothesis (his term) that the center of gravity of the solar system is at rest in Absolute Space. But, as he himself noted, the appearances would be no different if that center were in any other state of constant absolute motion.

Let us call Newton's theory (mechanics and gravitation) *TN*, and $TN(v)$ the theory *TN* plus the postulate that the center of gravity of the solar system has constant absolute velocity. By Newton's own account, he claims empirical adequacy for $TN(0)$; and also claims that, if $TN(0)$ is empirically adequate, then so are all the theories $TN(v)$.

Recalling what it was to claim empirical adequacy, we see that all the theories $TN(v)$ are empirically equivalent exactly *if all the motions in a model of* $TN(v)$ *are isomorphic to motions in a model* $TN(v + w)$, for all constant velocities v and w. For now, let us agree that these theories are empirically equivalent, referring objections to a later section.

Reading 26.3 EXERCISE 4

From: Davidson, D. (1980a). Actions, reasons and causes. In *Essays on Actions and Events*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 3–19. (Extract pp. 11–17).

IV

In order to turn the first 'and' to 'because' in 'He exercised *and* he wanted to reduce and thought exercise would do it', we must, as the basic move,[1] augment condition C1 with:

C2. A primary reason for an action is its cause.

The considerations in favour of C2 are by now, I hope, obvious; in the remainder of this paper I wish to defend C2 against various lines of attack and, in the process, to clarify the notion of causal explanation involved.

A. The first line of attack is this. Primary reasons consist of attitudes and beliefs, which are states or dispositions, not events; therefore they cannot be causes.

It is easy to reply that states, dispositions, and conditions are frequently named as the causes of events: the bridge collapsed because of a structural defect; the plane crashed on takeoff because the air temperature was abnormally high; the plate broke because it had a crack. This reply does not, however, meet a closely related point. Mention of a causal condition for an event gives a cause only on the assumption that there was also a preceding event. But what is the preceding event that causes an action?

In many cases it is not difficult at all to find events very closely associated with the primary reason. States and dispositions are not events, but the onslaught of a state or disposition is. A desire to hurt your feelings may spring up at the moment you anger me; I may start wanting to eat a melon just when I see one; and beliefs may begin at the moment we notice, perceive, learn, or remember something. Those who have argued that there are no mental events to qualify as causes of actions have often missed the obvious because they have insisted that a mental event be observed or noticed (rather than an observing or a noticing) or that it be like a stab, a qualm, a prick or a quiver, a mysterious prod of conscience or act of the will. Melden, in discussing the driver who signals a turn by raising his arm, challenges those who want to explain actions causally to identify 'an event which is common and peculiar to all such cases' (87), perhaps a motive or an intention, anyway 'some particular feeling or experience' (95). But of course there is a mental event; at some moment the driver noticed (or thought he noticed) his turn coming up, and that is the moment he signalled. During any continuing activity, like driving, or elaborate performance, like swimming the Hellespont, there are more or less fixed purposes, standards, desires, and habits that give direction and form to the entire enterprise, and there is the continuing input of information about what we are doing, about changes in the environment, in terms of which we regulate and adjust our actions. To dignify a driver's awareness that his turn has come by calling it an experience, or even a feeling, is no doubt exaggerated, but whether it deserves a name or not, it had better be the reason why he raises his arm. In this case, and typically, there may not be anything we would call a motive, but if we mention such a general purpose as wanting to get to one's destination safely, it is clear that the motive is not an event. The intention with which the driver raises his arm is also not an event, for it is no thing at all, neither event, attitude, disposition, nor object. Finally, Melden asks the causal theorist to find an event that is common and peculiar to all cases where a man intentionally raises his arm, and this, it must be admitted, cannot be produced. But then neither can a common and unique cause of bridge failures, plane crashes, or plate breakings be produced.

The signalling driver can answer the question, 'Why did you raise your arm when you did?', and from the answer we learn the event that caused the action. But can an actor always answer such a question? Sometimes the answer will mention a mental event that does not give a reason: 'Finally I made up my mind.' However, there also seem to be cases of intentional action where we cannot explain at all why we acted when we did. In such cases, explanation in terms of primary reasons parallels the explanation of the collapse of the bridge from a structural defect: we are ignorant of the event or sequence of events that led up to (caused) the collapse, but we are sure there was such an event or sequence of events.

B. According to Melden, a cause must be 'logically distinct from the alleged effect' (52); but a reason for an action is not logically distinct from the action; therefore, reasons are not causes of actions.[2]

One possible form of this argument has already been suggested. Since a reason makes an action intelligible by redescribing it, we do not have two events, but only one under different descriptions. Causal relations, however, demand distinct events.

Someone might be tempted into the mistake of thinking that my flipping of the switch caused my turning on of the light (in fact it caused the light to go on). But it does not follow that it is a mistake to take. 'My reason for flipping the switch was that I wanted to turn on the light' as entailing, in part, 'I flipped the switch, and this action is further describable as having been caused by wanting to turn on the light'. To describe an event in terms of its cause is not to confuse the event with its cause, nor does explanation by redescription exclude causal explanation.

The example serves also to refute the claim that we cannot describe the action without using words that link it to the alleged cause. Here the action is to be explained under the description: 'my flipping the switch', and the alleged cause is 'my wanting to turn on the light'. What relevant logical relation is supposed to

[1] I say 'as the basic move' to cancel any suggestion that C1 and C2 are jointly *sufficient* to define the relation of reasons to the actions they explain. For discussion of this point, sec the Introduction and Essay 4.

[2] This argument can be found in one or more versions, in Kenny, Hampshire, and Melden, as well as in P. Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science*, and R. S. Peters. *The Concept of Motivation*. In one of its forms, the argument was of course inspired by Ryle's treatment of motives in *The Concept of Mind*.

hold between these phrases? It seems more plausible to urge a logical link between 'my turning on the light' and 'my wanting to turn on the light', but even here the link turns out, on inspection, to be grammatical rather than logical.

In any case there is something very odd in the idea that causal relations are empirical rather than logical. What can this mean? Surely not that every true causal statement is empirical. For suppose '*A* caused *B*' is true. Then the cause of *B* = *A*; so substituting, we have 'The cause of *B* caused *B*', which is analytic. The truth of a causal statement depends on *what* events are described; its status as analytic or synthetic depends on *how* the events are described. Still, it may be maintained that a reason rationalizes an action only when the descriptions are appropriately fixed, and the appropriate descriptions are not logically independent.

Suppose that to say a man wanted to turn on the light *meant* that he would perform any action he believed would accomplish his end. Then the statement of his primary reason for flipping the switch would entail that he flipped the switch—'straightway he acts' as Aristotle says. In this case there would certainly be a logical connection between reason and action, the same sort of connection as that between, 'It's water-soluble and was placed in water' and 'It dissolved'. Since the implication runs from description of cause to description of effect but not conversely, naming the cause still gives information. And, though the point is often overlooked, 'Placing it in water caused it to dissolve' does not entail 'It's water-soluble'; so the latter has additional explanatory force. Nevertheless, the explanation would be far more interesting if, in place of solubility, with its obvious definitional connection with the event to be explained, we could refer to some property, say a particular crystalline structure, whose connection with dissolution in water was known only through experiment. Now it is clear why primary reasons like desires and wants do not explain actions in the relatively trivial way solubility explains dissolvings. Solubility, we are assuming, is a pure disposition property: it is defined in terms of a single test. But desires cannot be defined in terms-of the actions they may rationalize, even though the relation between desire and action is not simply empirical; there are other, equally essential criteria for desires—their expression in feelings and in actions that they do not rationalize, for example. The person who has a desire (or want or belief) does not normally need criteria at all—he generally knows, even in the absence of any clues available to others, what he wants, desires, and believes. These logical features of primary reasons show that it is not just lack of ingenuity that keeps us from defining them as dispositions to act for these reasons.

C. According to Hume, 'we may define a cause to be an object, followed by another, and where all the objects similar to the first are followed by objects similar to the second'. But, Hart and Honoré claim, 'The statement that one person did something because, for example, another threatened him, carries no implication or covert assertion that if the circumstances were repeated the same action would follow' (52). Hart and Honoré allow that Hume is right in saying that ordinary singular causal statements imply generalizations, but wrong for this very reason in supposing that motives and desires are ordinary causes of actions. In brief, laws are involved essentially in ordinary causal explanations, but not in rationalizations.

It is common to try to meet this argument by suggesting that we do have rough laws connecting reasons and actions, and these can, in theory, be improved. True, threatened people do not always respond in the same way; but we may distinguish between threats and also between agents, in terms of their beliefs and attitudes.

The suggestion is delusive, however, because generalizations connecting reasons and actions are not—and cannot be sharpened into—the kind of law on the basis of which accurate predictions can reliably be made. If we reflect on the way in which reasons determine choice, decision, and behaviour, it is easy to see why this is so. What emerges, in the *ex post facto* atmosphere of explanation and justification as *the* reason frequently was, to the agent at the time of action, one consideration among many, *a* reason. Any serious theory for predicting action on the basis of reasons must find a way of evaluating the relative force of various desires and beliefs in the matrix of decision; it cannot take as its starting point the refinement of what is to be expected from a single desire. The practical syllogism exhausts its role in displaying an action as falling under one reason; so it cannot he subtilized into a reconstruction of practical reasoning, which involves the weighing of competing reasons. The practical syllogism provides a model neither for a predictive science of action nor for a normative account of evaluative reasoning.

Ignorance of competent predictive laws does not inhibit valid causal explanation, or few causal explanations could be made. I am certain the window broke because it was struck by a rock—I saw it all happen; but I am not (is anyone?) in command of laws on the basis of which I can predict what blows will break which windows. A generalization like, 'Windows are fragile, and fragile things tend to break when struck hard enough, other conditions being right' is not a predictive law in the rough—the predictive law, if we had it, would be quantitative and would use very different concepts. The generalization, like our generalizations about behaviour, serves a different function: it provides evidence for the existence of a causal law covering the case at hand.[3]

We are usually far more certain of a singular causal connection than we are of any causal law governing the case; does this show that Hume was wrong in claiming that singular causal statements entail laws? Not necessarily, for Hume's claim, as quoted above, is ambiguous. It may mean that '*A* caused *B*' entails some particular law involving the predicates used in the descriptions '*A*' and '*B*', or it may mean that '*A* caused *B*' entails that there exists a causal law instantiated by some true descriptions of *A* and *B*.[4] Obviously,

[3] Essays 11, 12, and 13 discuss the issues of this paragraph and the one before it.

[4] We could roughly characterize the analysis of singular causal statements hinted at here as follows: '*A* caused *B*' is true if and only if there are descriptions of *A* and *B* such that the sentence obtained by putting these descriptions for '*A*' and '*B*' in '*A* caused *B*' follows from a true causal law. This analysis is saved from triviality by the fact that not all true generalizations are causal laws; causal laws are distinguished (though of course this is no analysis) by the fact that they are inductively confirmed by their instances and by the fact that they support counterfactual and subjunctive singular causal statements. There is more on causality in Essay 7.

both versions of Hume's doctrine give a sense to the claim that singular causal statements entail laws, and both sustain the view that causal explanations 'involve laws'. But the second version is far weaker, in that no particular law is entailed by a singular causal claim, and a singular causal claim can be defended, if it needs defence, without defending any law. Only the second version of Hume's doctrine can be made to fit with most causal explanations; it suits rationalizations equally well.

The most primitive explanation of an event gives its cause; more elaborate explanations may tell more of the story, or defend the singular causal claim by producing a relevant law or by giving reasons for believing such exists. But it is an error to think no explanation has been given until a law has been produced. Linked with these errors is the idea that singular causal statements necessarily indicate, by the concepts they employ, the concepts that will occur in the entailed law. Suppose a hurricane, which is reported on page 5 of Tuesday's *Times*, causes a catastrophe, which is reported on page 13 of Wednesday's *Tribune*. Then the event reported on page 5 of Tuesday's *Times* caused the event reported on page 13 of Wednesday's *Tribune*. Should we look for a law relating events of these *kinds*? It is only slightly less ridiculous to look for a law relating hurricanes and catastrophes. The laws needed to predict the catastrophe with precision would, of course, have no use for concepts like hurricane and catastrophe. The trouble with predicting the weather is that the descriptions under which events interest us—'a cool, cloudy day with rain in the afternoon'—have only remote connections with the concepts employed by the more precise known laws.

The laws whose existence is required if reasons are causes of actions do not, we may be sure, deal in the concepts in which rationalizations must deal. If the causes of a class of events (actions) fall in a certain class (reasons) and there is a law to back each singular causal statement, it does not follow that there is any law connecting events classified as reasons with events classified as actions—the classifications may even be neurological, chemical, or physical.

Reading 27.2 EXERCISE 3

From: Malcolm, N. (1958). Knowledge of other minds. *Journal of Philosophy*, 55. (Reprinted in Rosenthal, D (ed.) (1991). *The Nature of Mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 92–97. (Extract pp. 92–3).

I believe that the argument from analogy for the existence of other minds still enjoys more credit than it deserves, and my first aim in this paper will be to show that it leads nowhere. J. S. Mill is one of many who have accepted the argument and I take his statement of it as representative . . .

Suppose this reasoning could yield a conclusion of the sort `it is probable that that human figure' (pointing at some person other than oneself) `has thoughts and feelings'. Then there is a question as to whether this conclusion can *mean* anything to the philosopher who draws it, because there is a question as to whether the sentence `That human figure has thoughts and feelings' can mean anything to him. Why should this be a question? Because the assumption from which Mill starts is that he has no *criterion* for determining whether another `walking and speaking figure' does or does not have thoughts and feelings. If he had a criterion he could apply it, establishing with certainty that this or that human figure does or does not have feelings (for the only plausible criterion would lie in behaviour and circumstances that are open to view), and there would be no call to resort to tenuous analogical reasoning that yields at best a probability. If Mill has no criterion for the existence of feelings other than his own then in that sense he does not understand the sentence `that human figure has feelings' and therefore does not understand the sentence `It is *probable* that the human figure has feelings'.

There is a familiar inclination to make the following reply: `Although I have no criterion of verification still I understand, for example, the sentence `He has pain'. For I understand the meaning of `I have pain' and `He has pain' means that he has the *same* thing I have when I have a pain.' But this is a fruitless manoeuvre. If I do not known how to establish that `someone has a pain' then I do not know how to establish that he has the *same* as I have when I have a pain. You cannot improve my understanding of `He has a pain' by this recourse to the notion of `the same', unless you give me a criterion for saying that someone *has* the same as I have. If you do this you will have no use for the argument from analogy; and if you cannot then you do not understand the supposed conclusion of that argument. (pp. 92–93)

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