REVIEW

Practical syllogisms are arguments for moral value judgements—claims that certain actions (value objects) have a certain moral value (as given in the value term—e.g. unjust)

Practical syllogisms involve three types of premises:

1. **Empirical**: These state the (morally relevant) empirical facts in the case we are considering:

   e.g. Mary (the purchaser for A) accepted a large gift from Mark (the sales rep of product X for B). The gift was intended to get her to purchase X regardless of her duties to A; Mary authorized A's purchase of X largely because of Mark's gift.

2. **Conceptual**: These link the concepts or vocabulary used to describe the empirical facts to concepts used in the value principles.

   e.g. Accepting a large gift from someone so that this gift causes one to act for that person instead of those one has promised to represent is ***accepting a bribe.***

3. **Value principle**: These ascribe a moral value to certain types of actions.

   e.g. Accepting a bribe is morally wrong (breaks one's promises to be a faithful employee, etc.)

Putting together the argument:

1. Mary (the purchaser for A) accepted a large gift from Mark (the sales rep of product X for B). The gift was intended to get her to purchase X regardless of her duties to A; Mary authorized A's purchase of X largely because of Mark's gift.
2. Accepting a large gift from someone so that this gift causes one to act for that person instead of those one has promised to represent is ***accepting a bribe.***
3. Accepting a bribe is a morally wrong action.
4. Mary's action in accepting a bribe was morally wrong.

We want our practical syllogisms to be sound—valid with true premises

Problems can arise if the empirical facts are mistaken (we won't worry about this in this course); or, the conceptual claims are wrong (which may make the facts ***irrelevant*** for the value principle)

Problems for soundness can also arise if

(a) more than one value principle applies to the facts, yet these lead to conflicting conclusions (about whether the act is morally right or wrong);

or (b) the value principle is mistaken.

We can check (b) by using principle tests

Evaluating value principles (from "Value Reasoning")

Role Exchange Test:

Would we judge an action or policy the same way (even) if we were the ones most hurt by it?

"How would you like that done to you?"

Careful: The question is ***not*** whether you would ***like*** the action to be taken against you, but whether you would ***regard it as right*** if also done to you. That is, would the action or policy be *fair* for *any person* hurt by the action or policy (*including me*)

e.g., I might not *like* getting a ticket for speeding, but might still agree that ticketing any speeder, *including me*, is the *right* thing to do.

The steps in the role-reversal test are:

(a) Identify those significantly affected by the action or policy being evaluated.

(b) Imagine what it would be like for *you* to experience the consequences of the action.

(c) Consider whether it would be *right* for the other person to take the action if *you* received the consequences.

(d) Reconsider your original judgement if you cannot accept it as right after (c) above.

(d) is based on a logical point. If your original argument for a value conclusion was based on an incorrect principle, this does not necessarily mean the conclusion is false

Perhaps the conclusion is right, but for other reasons

Universal Consequences Test: This test can be stated in many ways:

"What would happen if everybody did that?"

"If everybody did that, the consequences would be disastrous."

"How would you like it if everyone did that?"

This reasoning is based on:

(i) we think an action is wrong if it has bad consequences. So,

(ii) if the consequences of everyone's doing an action are bad, then *not everyone* has the right to engage in the action.

Note: It *may* be all right for *some* people to perform the action *sometimes*.

When?

Kant's principle of respect for persons (Ch. 7 & 9) requires that we are not arbitrary: Everyone should be treated the same, *unless there are good, moral reasons for treating them differently.*

Thus the Universal Consequences Test says that, where not every person has the right to act in a certain way, then no one has the right to engage in the action, *without good reasons or justification* that would themselves apply to everyone in the *same* situation

The UCT is often used in situations where one person tries to gain an advantage over others

New Cases Test: This test considers whether the value principle we are applying in a given case is one we can use to judge *all relevantly similar cases*.

We can accept a principle only if we can accept everything it implies.

e.g., Suppose the principle is: "People should *never* steal." Then we should be able to apply it in these new cases to see whether we are willing to apply it consistently.

New case: Chris's baseball glove has been stolen and Chris needs one for the championship match. Chris steals one from a local sporting goods store.

Practical syllogism:

1. Chris's baseball glove has been stolen, Chris needs one for the championship match; Chris steals one from a local sporting goods store. (EP).
2. People should never steal. (Tested VP)
3. Chris shouldn't have stolen the glove. (VJ)

Does the principle work for this case?

New case: A student had been ill but needed to pass an exam in order to graduate. She stole a copy of the exam questions.

This case?

New case: To get the enemy's battle plan, a spy stole the plan.

New case: To get free music, Janet downloaded 500 of her favourite songs through the Piratebay.

New case: A starving family was able to survive only by stealing food.

If the principle applies in all the cases, then we have a *consistent standard*.

If the principle does not apply to one or more of the above cases, then the principle has to be rejected or modified.

For example, if stealing is justified when one is starving to death and can get food in no other way, then another principle is being used to restrict the scope of the no-stealing principle—to keep living is more important than not stealing

Used for the food-stealing case:

(a) Our propose value principle: "One should never steal."

(b) A challenging case for the principle: A starving person who can only feed themselves and family by stealing food; this person steals a loaf of bread.

(c) Was it truly wrong to steal the food *in such a case*?

(d) Is there another reason why the person shouldn't have stolen the bread?

If not, then the judgement is wrong.

If so, perhaps because the person they stole it from had no other food, accept the judgement, but for a different reason

Subsumption Test: A value principle is acceptable if it follows logically (can be deduced) from another, more basic value principle**,** which is itself acceptable.

If our value principle is ***inconsistent*** with a more fundamental value principle we also believe, then this reveals a problem in our reasoning.

Example: I say that, in business, I accept the principle that one may cheat any customer who isn't "smart enough" to look after their interests. Caveat emptor, I say.

You point out that I also accept the more basic principle that one should treat others the way one would like to be treated by them, and that I clearly would not like to be cheated by other sneaky people who can fool me.

In effect, you are saying that my business principle is *inconsistent* with my more basic principle of morality, and so that I have a problem in my moral reasoning.

In other words, if one should always treat others the way one would like to be treated by them, and one would not like to be cheated by others, it follows that one may ***NOT*** cheat any customer who isn't "smart enough" to look after their interests.

There are three ways for a value principle to fail the subsumption test:

(a) The more basic principle from which the value principle derives is itself *unacceptable,* in that the person making the value judgement cannot accept this basic principle; or

(b) the judger can give no reasons for holding the value principle, and so has no higher-order principle from which it can be derived.

(c) The more basic principle is *inconsistent* with the proposed value principle, and so the value principle can't be defended by it.

Regarding (b) our text covers a number of basic principles such as the principles of utility and of respect for persons.

Most people don't use these higher order principles explicitly. But if someone challenges your value premise, you need to offer a more basic one.

EP: If I kill one villager, I save 19.
EP: If I don't kill one, all 20 will die.
Value conclusion: I should kill one villager.

Add a plausible value principle to make this argument valid?

"One should try to prevent as much loss of life as possible, even if some lives are lost."

We get:

1. If I kill one villager, I save 19.
2. If I don't kill one, all 20 will die.
3. If one can only save many people by killing a few, then one prevents as much loss of life as possible in this way.
4. One should try to prevent as much loss of life as possible, even if some lives are lost (VP)
5. I should kill one villager. (Value conclusion)

If someone challenged the value premise by arguing, e.g., that killing is *always* wrong, then you would need to defend the value premise.

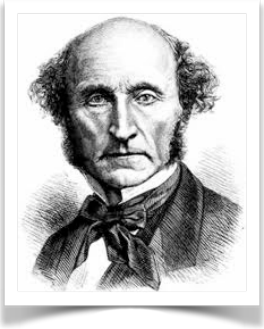
A **more basic principle** that could defend this value premise is the ***principle of utility***: "For all those affected by an action, the action is right if it causes more pleasure than pain, and wrong if it causes more pain than pleasure."

Those who disagree might try to challenge the higher order principle (here, the principle of utility).

Notice that you cannot defend a basic principle by the *subsumption* test, since the principle is basic.

You will often encounter situations where someone challenges your value premises. So, you will need to learn how to appeal to and defend higher order principles.

Act Utilitarianism: John Stuart Mill: "…actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By 'happiness' is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by 'unhappiness' pain, and the privation of pleasure" (Text, 24)



Permanently vegetative patient example:

One friend's view: We should not "pull the plug" and let "Bob" die, because …?

Bob's utilitarian friend's view: We should pull the plug because:

(a) It will cause Bob no pain;

(b) Bob will lose nothing (e.g.future experiences/happiness, etc.)

(c) Bob's parents will be happier: there's no difference to them between a comatose or dead son, and keeping him alive costs a lot of money

(d) Bob's friends have nothing to gain from a comatose but not dead Bob

Analysis of Mill's value principle

First, we must distinguish *generic* from *concrete (specific)* actions

Every concrete action is a case of many generic actions

e.g. my walking to class today is an instance of:

(a) *walking*

(b) walking with a computer

(c) walking with a backpack

(d) *walking with clothes on*, and so on

Mill is talking about *concrete* acts

EVALUATION OF NORMATIVE STATUS

Three types of moral evaluations: *obligatory, permissible and forbidden*

Permissible actions: those actions neither required nor forbidden.

Obligatory actions: "*a* is obligatory =df. it is not permissible to fail to do *a*" (25)

Forbidden actions: "*a* is forbidden =df. it is not permissible to do *a*" (25)

These are all clearly *interdefinable* terms

So how, e.g. do we define, e.g. "obligatory" independently?

We want a condition, *C*, such that every obligatory action has this condition, and everything with that condition is obligatory

That is: "An act is right if and only if it satisfies *C*" (26)

MILL'S THEORY OF *C*

"…actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By 'happiness' is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by 'unhappiness' pain, and the privation of pleasure"

One odd thing about Mill's theory is that he suggests that acts are right or wrong by *degrees*, though we ordinarily describe things as right or wrong, without qualification

Another unusual feature (for concrete actions): a right action "tends to promote happiness"

It makes sense to say of certain *types of* actions that e.g. they usually promote happiness, but weird to say of a particular action that it *tends* to do this

Reformulation of Mill: "U_2: an act is right if and only if it causes pleasure and the absence of pain" (27)

But how does an act cause the absence of (all) pain?

Reformulation: "U_3: an act is right if and only if it causes pleasure and does not cause pain" (27)

But we know that, sometimes the right action does cause pain, that is, sometimes we must choose "the lesser of two evils" e.g. a scraped knee vs. a rattlesnake bite

Also, it's very common for generally pleasurable actions to produce some pain

Example: picking one's teeth with a fossil bone from the ancestor of the dove: caused the student pleasure, no pain to professor (didn't find out)

What makes the act wrong, then?

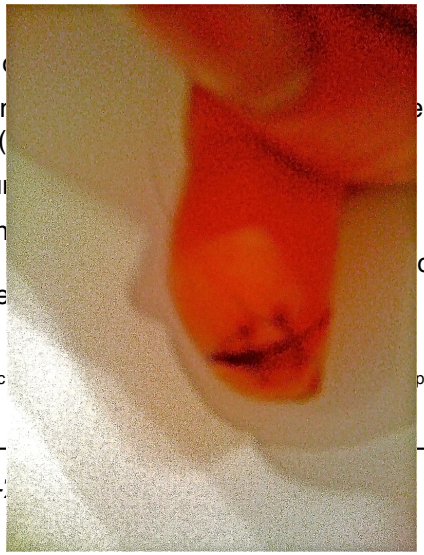
We need to be able to *compare* the amount of pleasure or pain caused by *alternative* actions

We also need to rank acts according to *total* pleasure or pain caused

UTILITY

Assumptions

1. Pleasure ar ...'s a standard unit of pleasure (
2. Standard u
3. Hedons an ... can be added and subtracted ...on, one dolor = one negative he



Slicing pinky Teeth c ...presso Good movie Teaching

-300 ... 200 300

Micromorts: a unit of risk measuring a one-in-a-million probability of death (from micro- and mortality) (Wikipedia)
see also https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VLmBJ4_5eG4

Given people's normal behaviour regarding risk, they are willing to pay about $50 to increase their safety by one micromort (caution: nonlinear)

Ron Howard

Risky activities by one micromort:

- Diving 15meters
- Drinking 0.5 liter of wine (cirrhosis of the liver)
- Smoking 1.4 cigarettes (cancer, heart disease)
- Living 2 months with a smoker (cancer, heart disease)
- Eating 100 charcoal-broiled steaks (cancer from benzopyrene)
- Travelling 6 miles by motorbike (accident)
- Travelling 17 miles by walking (accident)
- Travelling 10 miles (or 20 miles) by bicycle (accident)
- Travelling 230 miles (370 km) by car (accident)
- Travelling 6000 miles (10,000 km) by jet (cancer from background radiation)
- Travelling 12,000 miles (19,000 km) by jet in the United States (terrorism)

4. We can make sense of the idea of hedons and dolors as a consequence of actions

"D_3: The utility of an act is the result of subtracting the sum of the doloric value of all the episodes of pain that would occur as consequences of that act from the sum of the hedonic values of all the episodes of pleasure that would occur as consequences of that act" (29)

Some more mistaken formulations of the principle of utility:

U_4: An act is right if and only if its utility is greater than zero.

Why won't this work?

U_5: An act is right if and only if its utility is very high.

Problems?

Recall that we want people to choose those actions that produce more utility than alternatives.

U_6: An act is right if and only if its utility is higher than the utility of any other act the agent could have done instead.

Problem for U_6: What happens when an agent's top two choices have *exactly the same utility*?

Buridan's Ass

	Act	Utility
1	Drink water	+5
2	Eat hay	+5
3	Do nothing	0

The most plausible formulation of *act utilitarianism*

U_7: An act is right if and only if there is no other act the agent could have done instead that has higher utility than it has (30)

U_7 is both *consequentialist* and *hedonistic* (criticisms next class)

Two more faulty versions of Act Utilitarianism

U_8: An act is right if and only if it produces the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

The main problem with U_8 is that the properties "greatest happiness" and "greatest number" can pull in different directions:

i.e., they are "independent variables"

So, e.g. suppose an action causes 1000 people to each get one hedon, but an alternative gives 150 each to 10 people

Which action would be required by U_7?

U_8?

e.g. we can sometimes produce greater happiness by benefiting fewer people, and vice versa

Another formulation that won't work:

U_9: An act is right if and only if it causes more pleasure and less pain than any other act the agent could have done instead. (32)

Again, we have two independent variables (*more pleasure* & *less pain*)

But there may be no single act that does both (maximizes pleasure and minimizes pain)

e.g. an act might produce maximal pleasure but also a lot of pain, or

an act might produce minimal pain but also only a little pleasure

"All Animals are Equal" discussion

1. Turn in answers to Singer questions.
2. Discuss Singer's claim that human beings generally have no good reason to eat meat.

   Your discussion should first explain Singer's reasons for his view

   It should explain what he means by equal moral consideration

   Can you think of a justification for eating meat that is able to answer Singer's points? Explain. If not, why not?

Next Week:

1. Second logic quiz in first 40 minutes of class.

2. Read: Ch. 3: Act Utilitarianism: Arguments Pro and Con
Ch. 4: Problems for Act Utilitarianism

- Putting a Price Tag on Life
- Mother Jones' Pinto article
- Famine, Affluence, and Morality