

Julia Driver: ‘A Consequentialist Theory of Virtue’

So, the issue Driver is concerned with is: what makes a character trait a virtue

So, remember Hursthouse on this last time: many virtue ethicists nowadays give some independent specification of *eudaimonia* and say that virtues are those character traits necessary to achieving that

How do we think that Aristotle would answer this question in the abstract?

Basic view: value of all ‘virtue’ traits resides ‘in their tendency to produce good consequences’

She is first interested in: what makes a trait a virtue; Hume seems to have been of the view that a virtue is just a trait which, when we think about it, pleases us

And, she thinks Hume is moving towards a consequentialist theory of virtue because, for the most part, he thinks we find certain traits pleasing *because* we think their consequences are beneficial

So, in the abstract, the question is: we view generosity as a virtue? Why? Because we think generous acts and generous people lead to better outcomes?

Now, here’s the question: if we learned that actions we typically labeled as ‘generous’ actually had bad outcomes, what would our reaction be?

- Think the generosity is no longer a virtue
- Think that we were wrong as to whether those actions were generous?
- What?

‘As long as the trait generally produces good, it is a virtue’

Important distinctions:

- Objective vs. subjective consequentialism
 - MVs=character traits that systematically produce more actual good than not
 - SC=whenever one faces a choice of actions, one should attempt to determine which act of those available would most promote the good, and should then try to act accordingly; basically, criterion of right action is *expected* utility
- Evaluational internalism vs. externalism
 - Internalism: Moral worth determined by features *internal* to agency: will, motive etc.

- * Kant is arguably an evaluational internalist: for him, moral worth attaches only to the quality of the will; the person is insulated from the capricious intervention of the external world; less subject to luck
- Externalism: external to agency (but can be internal *to the agent*)
- Direct vs. Indirect consequentialism
 - Direct: thing to be evaluated is evaluated in terms of its own consequences
 - Indirect forms hold that the thing to be evaluated is evaluated in terms of the consequences of some related item.
 - * Moral quality of action is determined by consequences of the character trait that produces the action
 - * So, for example, if someone acts from a malicious character, but just so happens to save a bunch of people due to external mishap, the action is still deemed bad, since it came from a character whose consequences tend to be bad

So, on thing that's important is the Driver thinks her account better captures intuitions about hard moral cases: her view is Direct Externalist Objective Consequentialist

The Sheriff: has to choose between saving one innocent man or allowing twenty innocent people to die in ensuing riot

- Indirect would say: action is wrong, because it would stem from a vicious character trait (willful disregard for human life)
- Direct: right, but we could have questions about the character of the agent who could do it—Direct captures the ambivalence

She thinks this captures our often split evaluation of situations: we can recognize that good people can do bad things; and, in fact, can do bad things *because* they are good

Also respects agent/character distinction: act is right but, since it is typically wrong, the agent feels qualms

Her view is not maximizing: for a trait to be a virtue it doesn't have to maximize the good

She thinks that this captures the idea that virtues tend to promote good consequences but sometimes have bad outcomes: seat belts save lives (that's their virtue), but not always, sometimes they lead to death (e.g. exploding on impact)

There is some tension here that relates to the 'however circumstances' and 'ideal circumstances': she wants to say that the virtues are those character traits that would lead to good outcomes

But, it would seem that we can re-jig circumstances such that what seem to be pretty gnarly character traits do that

HOW DOES LUCK FACTOR INTO VIRTUE ASRIPTIONS AND EVALUATIONS?

It would seem that Objective Consequentialism is particularly subject to luck objections

But, by distinguishing character from action; and understanding virtues dispositionally, we can get around this problem