Zig Zag Education

Religious Studies

A Level Year 2 | AQA | 7062

Course Companion

for A Level Year 2 AQA Religious Studies (Component 1B)

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Contents

Teacher's Introduction

This course companion is written for the AQA (7062) A Level Religious Studies specification, specifically Component 1B: Religion and Ethics (Year 2), and is designed to offer students a comprehensive introduction to the material within that section of the course. The sections and topics, therefore, mirror AQA's specification headings, and every care has been taken to help students not only to understand the key concepts and ideas within the course, but also sharpen their critical thinking skills.

Topics include: Introduction to Meta-ethics, Free Will and Moral Philosophy, Conscience, and Bentham and Kant.

Alongside the main bulk of the writing there are also a number of other features to help students with their learning and revision. Self-guided and group activities are included throughout the writing to better engage students with the material, and I have also provided glossaries, textual references and information on key thinkers where appropriate.

I hope you enjoy working through this resource and that it benefits both you and your students throughout the academic year.

, January 2021

Introduction to Meta-ethic

Meta-ethics	A branch of philosophy that looks at the nature, form … moral statements).
Normative Ethics	A branch of philosophy that lo… t what moral princ… follow and people ough… …n.
Applied Ethics	A branch of philosophy that looks at the application o… ma… dilem…as and issues.
Mora… …m	…e view that there are objective moral facts that exis… beliefs or feelings.
Moral Universalism	The view that the truth of moral facts applies to any n… background, culture or context.
Moral Relativism	The view that the truth of moral facts is relative to the… of a moral agent.
Moral Nihilism	The view that there is no such thing as moral value an… the moral worth of any action.
Ethical Subjectivism	The view that moral truths are subject to, or depende…
Divine Command Theory	The view that what is good is equivalent to what God …
Euthyphro Dilemma	A philosophical problem that q…ons the relationsh…
Naturalism	The view that mo… pr…erties are simply natural pro… statem…ts …h reduced to a natural, descriptive sta…
Fallacy of Equi…m	A …r of reasoning that occurs when a person hold… within an argument to possess one meaning, when in … multiple meanings.
Is–Ought Problem	A philosophical problem that asks how one can move … prescriptive statements without a leap or error in rea…
Naturalistic Fallacy	A philosophical problem introduced by G E Moore, wh… explain the property of goodness in terms of natural p…
Open Question Argument	An argument put forward by G E Moore which attemp… to meaningfully reduce the property of goodness into …
Non-naturalism	The view that goodness is a non-natural property.
Intuitionism	The view that what is good can be known through use…
Prima Facie Duties	A term W D Ross used …e…s…e basic, self-evident d… through prop…f one's intuition.

Free Will and Moral Responsi

Free Will	The ability to choose one's actions free of coercion or
Causal Determinism	The view that all events are co[illegible]tely determined b of affairs.
Compatibilism	The vi[illegible]e will can be reconciled (or is compat
Incom[illegible]sm	The view that free will cannot be reconciled (or is inco
Hard Determinism	The view that free will does not exist due to determin
Libertarianism	The view that the world is to some degree indetermin meaningful free will as a result.
Indeterminism	The view that not all events are completely determine of affairs.
Psychological Determinism	The view that all human behaviour is determined by p affairs, borne out of interactions between the brain a
Theological Determinism	The view that all events are completely determined o
Reduction	The process of describing the behaviour of an object v phenomena.
Behaviourism	The view that tal[illegible]m[illegible]al states is not meaningful a substit[illegible]h[illegible]k of behaviours.
Behavioural Psyc[illegible]y	[illegible]e psychological study of human behaviours; how th influences them.
Oper[illegible]l Conditioning	The view that living behaviours are developed and str being rewarded or punished for their actions in routin
Self-forming Action	Kane's proposal for a 'free' action under his libertaria where a person is free to choose a course of action.
Liberty of Indifference	The freedom to act free from causal constraints.
Liberty of Spontaneity	The freedom to act according to one's will or desires, or control.
Justice	A concept that requires that people be treated fairly,
Retributive Justice	The view that justice should b[illegible]used on (often phy have committed crime[illegible]or m[illegible]oral acts.
Therapeutic Punishment	The vie[illegible]nment should be focused on curin [illegible]th[illegible]led them towards committing crimes or in
Restora[illegible]tice	[illegible]approach to justice and punishment which focuses between the offender and victim with the hope of ge understanding about the causes and effects of crime.

Conscience

Conscience	An internal sense of right and wrong that is thought to
Natural Law	A system of normative ethics which holds that moral l observation of, and reasoning on, the natural world.
Practica Ratio	Practical reason, a faculty of the mind, for Aquinas, w real life situations and dilemmas.
Synderesis	For Aquinas, is the innate ability of the human mind to
Vincible Ignorance	Ignorance of a situation or dilemma that could be ove one's reason.
Invincible Ignorance	Ignorance of a situation or dilemma that could not be of one's reason.
Neurosis	A mild mental illness that often involves symptoms su does not cause a proper loss of contact with reality.
Ego	The organised rational mind, which mediates betwee socialised values of the superego.
Superego	A moral voice or conscience that reflects the internali ideals taught to us by our various parental and cultura
Id	A disorganised, unconscious aspect of the mind which drives. It is the source of our instinctual desires and imp pleasure-seeking activities.
Defence Mechanisms	For Freud, the various ways human beings rationalise with the id.
Internalisation	The process by which human beings gradually come to from external sources as part of their internal mind.
Repression	For Freud, the various ways the ego pushes down the
Death Drive	An innate urge towards death and nothingness, prese
Authoritarian Conscience	For Fromm, the aspects of the conscience governed b punishments by authority figures.
Humanistic Conscience	For Fromm, the aspects of the conscience governed b integrity and flourishing.
Sociology	The study of collective human behaviour, culture and
Collective Conscience	A sociological concept introduced by Durkheim that re and values of a particular society.

Bentham and Kant

Utilitarianism	This is an ethical theory which holds that the right act **principle of utility**, by which one should seek to maxi one performs.
Hedonism	The view that what is g[illegible] is equivalent to what is ple
Consequentialism	T[illegible] view that the goodness of an action is dependent
Act Util[illegible]sm	A version of utilitarianism which holds that when a m do, they should perform the action which results in th
Hedonic Calculus	Bentham's method for calculating the pleasure and p action.
Impartiality	The treating of all individuals fairly and not preferring another.
Deontological Ethics	A system of normative ethics which holds that the goo on whether it adheres to moral laws.
Maxim	A statement which expresses a general moral truth or
Duty	A moral obligation.
Hypothetical Imperative	A statement of the form 'if x t[illegible]'; the truth is conc prerequisites are met.
Categorical Imperative	A univ[illegible]nent; its truth is non-conditional and
Universal[illegible]	[illegible]ant's method for working out whether a particular m with the categorical imperative.
Humanity Formula	The second formula of the categorical imperative, wh should be treated as ends in themselves.
Perfect Duty	A duty that a moral agent is always required to adher
Imperfect Duty	A duty that a moral agent is not always required to ad flexible duty.
Summum Bonum	The highest possible good for Kant, where happiness i the will.
Postulate	Something that is assumed to be true or existent for t or discussion.

Introduction to Meta-ethic

What you will learn in this section:

The philosophical discussion around the nature and meaning of ethics, including

- Divine command theory and its issues, including the Euthyphro dilemma.
- Naturalism, with reference to utilitarianism and its issues, including the is–o naturalistic fallacy.
- Non-naturalism, with reference to intuitionism, and its issues.
- The advantages and disadvantages of each of these meta-ethical positions.

Starter activity

Pick one of the normative ethical theories you studied in Year 1. What does it m ethically true in this theory and what implications do you think this has when th morality? Write down a few notes and compare them with your studies throug

Key Thinker	
Name	Karl Barth
Born	1886
Died	1968
Key text	*Church Dogmatics*
Why are they important?	Barth is one of the most well-known and influential twentiet who put forward a Christocentric approach to the religion w and favoured an ethics based upon following God's comman
Did you know?	Barth was a key figure in Church opposition to the Nazi Party 1930s, helping create the Barmen Declaration, which he ma

Key Thinker	
Name	G E M[illegible]
Born	[illegible]
Died	1958
Key text	*Principia Ethica* (1903)
Why are they important?	Moore was a key figure in twentieth-century philosophy, part His criticisms of naturalism paved the way for many realist an continue to be discussed today.
Did you know?	Moore has his own paradox named after him, which draws a assert truth and disbelief at the same time, such as 'it is sno it is snowing'.

Introduction

Throughout your studies in Year 1 you will have covered a considerable array of theories. From deontological ethics to utilitarianism and virtue ethics, there is p philosophical discourse around how these **normative ethical systems** can be app various moral issues and what are considered to be good and bad actions under systems. Yet it is always possible to delve a little deeper and ask what exactly w when we say an action is good or bad. Are we taking different positions on what heart a set of objective principles? Or is any system of ethics just an individual's or a individuals' subjective opinion? Such questions are in the realm of **meta-ethics**. studies the nature of morality itself, asking how we can tell what is good from w and, perhaps more importantly, what meaning ethical language itself might have

Meta-ethics will occupy most of your Year 2 studies, yet it should still be noted t controversial field. Some philosophers hold that meta-ethics should be consider

philosophical distraction from more pressing concerns in normative ethics. None across the last century has provoked considerable debate and influence of the st while normative ethics and meta-ethics ultimately share various concerns, meta- reaching implications for how we think about morality itself and even for how w

Moreover, although the field of meta-ethics is much younger than normative eth philosophers put forward ideas concerning the origins of [illegible]lity; whether this [illegible] source such as human reason or nature. These di[illegible]s[illegible]n, as we shall see in the often illuminate why a philosopher holds [illegible] action to be good or bad ar what is good or bad. Naturally, [illegible] contact between meta-ethics and norm philosophers to hold that [illegible] metaphysical account of morality is necess evaluate th[illegible] of normative ethics. For wouldn't it be a bit odd to [illegible] moral laws [illegible]anded down by God directly?

Part of the issue with meta-ethics, however, is that giving an accurate metaphys difficult. Any discussion is naturally very abstract; we can't exactly point towards same way we would any other physical object! Thus, any arguments about the n to come from observations and reasoning upon how we utter them, what unique intuitively possess, and questioning how we commonly justify their use in our ev such a broad scope of debate, there are a few key positions worth noting before ethical discussion:

- **Moral realism** – This is the view that moral judgements refer to **mind-indep** of, the world. This means that what is right and wrong is not just a matter o moral propositions which are objectively true or false. On the other hand, n suggests, is the view that moral judgements do not refer to mind-independe the world. This might be due to moral judgements simply being matters of s **theorists** suggest, it may simply be that all moral [illegible]nts are false in na
- **Cognitivism** – This is the view that moral [illegible]d[illegible]em[illegible]s are truth-evaluable; th express propositions that can be [illegible]ge[illegible] be true or false. This is in contra holds that moral judgem[illegible] do not express genuine truth-evaluable propo hold that moral [illegible]s typically represent underlying attitudes, emotio disapp[illegible]hu[illegible] also making them moral anti-realists! Throughout this sec cogniti[illegible]a-ethical theories, but it is useful to know that there are some characterisation completely.
- **Moral universalism** – This is the view that systems of ethics apply **universal** moral judgements applies regardless of an individual's background or cultur forms of moral realism, although divine command theory, as we shall see, is exception! Moral universalism can also be contrasted with **moral relativism** moral judgements has to be assessed in relation to a particular norm, wheth religion. Therefore, there is not a single standard by which the truth or falsi assessed. Finally, there is **moral nihilism**, the view that nothing can be asse Simply put, there is no moral value in any action, and we should not judge t according to any independent moral standard.

Now, all of the meta-ethical theories we will study in this [illegible]on are **cognitivist** some kind of **moral realism** and **moral universali[illegible]m**. However, it is useful to not philosophers who are also **non-cogniti[illegible]t[illegible]anti-realist**, with questions about knowledge of moral judgemen[illegible]ll influencing the discussion about the right wa actually is. With that in [illegible], we can turn to the first theory we will examine in **command [illegible]**

Discussion Activity

What meta-ethical position would you tend towards holding? Realist or anti-re cognitivist? Universalist or relativist? Discuss in pairs or small groups.

Divine Command Theory

Divine command theory is a religious meta-ethical theory which holds that the goodness of a moral judgement is determined by whether it adheres to God's commands. In other words, what is good is what is commanded by God and wha bad is what goes against what is commanded by God. It's an intuitive way of understanding religious ethics in light of a supreme deity because, if God is who good and powerful, surely anything he commands cannot be immoral? Yet divin command theory, although a very traditional meta-ethical theory about moral judgements, is not universally adopted by theists and, as we shall see in this section, although divine command theory has its advantages, there are also diffi questions about whether it provides a coherent picture of ethics as a whole.

Now, typically divine command theory is interpreted to be a **subjectivist theory**, to some independent feature of the world but is *subject* to the commands of Go supporting divine command theory are not strictly **moral realists**. This is in cont some kind of a **natural moral order**, where moral judgements do refer to mind-i separately from God. The important distinction here between these two views i equivalent to God's commands, it is possible for what is morally good to change However, if there were some independently existing moral order, this change co

As we shall analyse later when we come to discuss the **Euthyphro dilemma**, the existing moral order can be viewed as inconsistent with God's **omnipotence**. In divine command theory usually centres on its plausibility when considering the t omnipotent, omniscient and benevolent creator of the universe. For, if God is ar not be sensible to assume that God created what is morally good and bad also? details of divine command theory, it is worth looking at how this meta-ethical vie nature of God himself.

The Nature of God and Divine Commands

Taking Christianity as the primary example when discussing divine command the elements of Christian Scripture which seem to support God determining what is concerned with imparting the correct moral rules for human beings to follow, an Commandments, these rules are often known through God himself revealing the that moral rules in Scripture are, at least in part, reflections of divine will or com when considering figures such as Jesus in the Gospels. If one considers the ortho Jesus is fully God and fully human in one person, it can be argued that any moral throughout his ministry are also effectively divine commands. So if this is the ca normative ethical discussion? Does not divine command theory end the need fo

Well, potentially, but most Christians don't believe that human beings are **infalli** connection with God through humankind being created in God's image (see Gen between the creator and created beings is not absolute. Humankind shares som limited in intellect and can only partially understand God's commands. Thus, the interpretations of God's commands depending on the ethical dilemma, and also which commands should take precedence over other or even whether there ar commands. It is important to note, therefore, that divine command theory isn't normative ethical problems. It is simply a way of understanding the origins of re

Moreover, for many theists, divine command theory is not meant to make moral are rooted in God's benevolence and omnipotence, and what is right or wrong attributes. God is often perceived as the ultimate source of goodness, meaning originate from this source and be good themselves. The purpose of human life is think is right or wrong based on features of the world but to work towards unde commanded and seek to obey his commands throughout our life. For an examp practice, we can turn towards the renowned German reformed theologian **Karl B**

Karl Barth and Divine Command Theory

Barth throughout his theology regularly criticises **natural theology**; a field of the God's nature and will through observations of, and reasoning upon, the world. H ultimately fallible such that any normative system of ethics developed from our unreliable or mistaken. The same is even true of religious activity; if God is trans meaningless task to try to understand his being from our finite perspectives. Wh human ethical activity should instead be rooted around understanding what God times he has revealed himself to humanity throughout history. For Barth, this pr interpretation and understanding of the life and teachings of Christ. But the cen sovereign and the source of what is good and right, then human ethical life shou what God commands, not on conclusions drawn from studies into the natural wo

Barth partially inherited his views from a much older Reformed theologian John Calvin, whose theology you will have encountered if you have studied Christianity. Both Barth and Calvin ultimately hold that if God's power and transcendence is absolute, then he must be the source of morality also. For many Christians, this can seem a little radical, but Barth's meta-ethical view makes sense when one considers the vast distance between a transcendent, omnipotent being and the finite, fallible human person. Moreover, for many theists subscribing to some kind of divine command theory, ethics is not merely a case of living one's best life. Following God's commands leads to salvation and, as such, divine command theory is often linked to important theories of **soteriology** (study of salvation), which attempt to explain how adherence to God good actions but eventual union with God himself. Thus, when evaluating divine not to overlook the religious aspects of its meta-ethical views. For many theists, understanding what morality is, but how it connects to other important spiritual

At this juncture, it is easy to see some of the clear advantages of divine comman

- grounds ethics and morality in beliefs about the existence of God. For theist foundation to their ethical views.
- provides clear guidance of how one can come to know what is right and wro simply one which follows God's commands.
- potentially provides a foundation for **moral universalism**. If God's command moral rules or principles do not vary according to background human elemen

However, there is one very clear issue, which we briefly mentioned earlier. If wh dependent on what God commands, does that not make ethics overly arbitrary? beings to do something that seemed intuitively immoral? Such concerns are the commonly termed the **Euthyphro dilemma**, which will be the focus of the next p

The Euthyphro Dilemma

The Euthyphro dilemma was put forward by Plato in his book *Euthyphro.* There title character '*Is the pious loved by the gods because it is pious or is it pious beca* Although this question was originally addressed in the context of Greek polytheis has continued for thousands of years. Namely, is something morally good becau will those things which are already independently morally good?

Now this might seem a tad abstract, but, breaking it down, either possibility raise implications. Say we take the rejection of divine command theory as the first ho

1. **God commands those things that are good**
   Now this horn of the dilemma holds that there is in fact an independent mo is not so because it is commanded by God but because God's commands ad

order. In other words, the second horn of the dilemma rejects the **ethical s** theory in favour of **moral realism**. But why might we be against this view re advantages of divine command theory we already noted? Well, most comm because it means rejecting, at least in part, the sovereignty and omnipotenc independent moral order to which God is subject, this implies that God's po not turn something considered to be evil into something good. Moral realis constraints or restrictions upon God's power such th[illegible]e classical theistic directly challenged.

This is perhaps most easily s[illegible]uppose that God does not exist. If su in this world, then m[illegible]ould continue to exist. We could continue to exister[illegible] God [illegible]g meaning or importance to such actions. This is perh the sec[illegible]rn for theists to stomach as it seems to make the existence of human beings. God, at best, simply transmits the law to human beings. De there are still plenty of theists who explicitly or implicitly favour this positio not discuss the Euthyphro dilemma in his works, many commentators have of **natural law** places him closer to the second horn of the dilemma to the fi natural moral order which human beings can discover through observation

But what if we wanted to continue to assert the classical theistic conception just assert the second horn of the dilemma instead? Let's take a closer look

2. What is good is so because God commands it

This view represents the classic meta-ethical position taken by divine comm highlighted briefly at the end of the last part, this position has a few troublin commonly presented is that it effectively endorses an *anything goes* positio no moral standards other than what God wills th[illegible]h[illegible]ically any action co it is commanded by God. Taking this to the l[illegible]gic[illegible]xtreme, if God comman murder, genocide or any other in[illegible]rong actions, divine command th these actions as good. W[illegible]m o[illegible]ckham even noted that God could comm himself and this w[illegible]e l[illegible]ogically consistent state of affairs under divine this ho[illegible]he [illegible]emma, despite the protests of theists, seems to make mo whims [illegible] and nothing more.

But didn't we note previously that God is benevolent and omnipotent? Wo problems? The answer is potentially 'yes' in this world, but the fact that Go omnipotent doesn't prevent the problem of arbitrariness. In fact, it subtly s that our fortunate state of affairs is based upon luck; the chance that we do rather than a hateful one. Moreover, it implies that there is still some exter judging God by. For why would we consider ourselves lucky to have a bene one if all God commanded had to be considered good and right? The seven Cudworth makes this point succinctly, arguing that if God's goodness is a m for God to be good is that he follows his own commands. Under the first ho becomes a mere despot.

One final point to note is that if divine comm[illegible]nd th[illegible]ory is correct, and there logically follows that morality also d[illegible] exist. This sentiment is echoed novel *The Brothers Karam[illegible]v*, w[illegible]re the phrase '*If God does not exist, eve* attributed. While [illegible]s may seem a startling state of affairs to some second[illegible]of [illegible]emma being adopted instead.

Discussion Activity

Which horn of the Euthyphro dilemma do you believe is right? Discuss in pairs

Solving the Dilemma

Part of the reason this dilemma still exists is that there is no easy solution. Many retain God's omnipotence while avoiding the 'anything goes' implications of divi problem of arbitrariness is difficult to shake. While it might be tempting to hold prevents divine commands from being arbitrary, one can still ask the question of goodness possesses. For we can simply ask, in a style similar to the Euthyphro di possesses the property of goodness or is the property of goodness in fact good b logic of the arbitrariness problem is not easily shaken off, even when one seeks t between God's nature and his commands.

Perhaps more plausibly, the first horn of the dilemma, moral realism, is no why should we be concerned that there is an independent moral order separate that our definition of omnipotence as 'power without limit' is potentially mistake aware of the internal problems of such a definition when the **paradox of omnipo** redefine omnipotence as **maximal power**, for example, we might avoid many of coexistence of God and an independent moral order.

In fact, many modern philosophers hold that it is not necessary to choose one ho that there is both an independent moral order to which God's goodness is gover which govern what is good. For example, certain moral laws that govern the beh one another such as 'do not murder' may well be independent moral facts. But may well be due to God's commands, for they are dependent on the existence o theologian Richard Swinburne presents a view similar to this, arguing there is a c moral truths – fundamental truths which affect human beings regardless of God' moral truths, which are derived from the commands of God and are authoritativ sustainer of the universe.

Nonetheless, even if such a mixed solution to the Euthyphro dilemma is possible problem for divine command theory as a meta-ethical theory, since any independe will still require an explanation beyond God. This means that divine com comprehensible, arguably, one is willing to accept all its ramifications. It u 'anything go' issue with divine command theory is just an acceptable conseque dilemma is not the only issue we can explore, and, in the final section, we shall l divine command theory.

Other Issues with Divine Command Theory

Moral Knowledge

While we've primarily looked at issues of **ontology** so far – what morality is in lig God's existence – there are equally pressing **epistemological** concerns with divin command theory. These cover how we come to know moral truths if they are equivalent to divine commands. Now this might not be an issue if human beings direct access to knowledge of God's will. However, unless one takes a scriptural source to be the guaranteed Word of God, then it is difficult to discern how divin command theory encompasses a good epistemological account of morality. For, regardless of individual religious beliefs, we live in a world where there are numerous conflicting religions, each of which presents different moral truths dep religion believed in. In short put, how can we gain knowledge of moral truths whe God's comm

Now this is not to suggest the issue of moral knowledge does not rear its head fo fact, we shall come to see the problems it poses for naturalism and non-naturali Christian theologians today recognise that the Bible may well be an incomplete g and that not all the Bible may reflect God's commands. Moreover, if there is son

human beings and God such that the former cannot understand the will of the la
divine command theory is correct, human beings can never gain working moral k
in a world which contains a plurality of religions. In other words, the issue is not
the right ethical principles but that agreement will never be possible in the first p

Thus, while divine command theory might be able to provide a basic account of l
know God's commands through revelation, there are no [illegible] accessible tools fo
revelations should look like and how to translate these revelations into working
possible that divine command theory could [illegible] in a world where God never
humankind. The fact there is no [illegible] moral order means that moral kno
what information God [illegible], but also subject to the limited capacities of huma
information [illegible] may be an unsatisfactory conclusion for both theist

Benevolence and Divine Commands

We explored this issue in part when discussing the Euthyphro dilemma, but it is
divine command theory in and of itself. Gottfried Leibniz was among the first ph
divine command theory it becomes difficult to meaningfully understand God's be
about the nature of goodness and morality, God's goodness simply becomes a m
commands. Moreover, we can ask whether this idea of God commanding himse
benevolent being have to command himself to perform certain moral obligations
character-based concept of good, such as virtue, this problem isn't resolved, for
disposition to follow his own commands.

What this issue perhaps strikes at, however, is that the idea of essential goodnes
is not an external standard of goodness which God's nature could come to repre
springs from God's commands, then it becomes difficult to meaningfully compre
could mean for the being issuing the commands. But now what would this exte
like if it did not arise from God's commands? We [illegible] one answer to this issue,
world itself and the meta-ethical vi[illegible] as **naturalism**. This will be the foc

Naturalism

Naturalism is the view that there are objective moral facts which can be discovered through empirical observation and reasoning upon the natural world. This means that terms such as good or bad can be reduced to descriptions of natural properties and don't possess any unique properties in and of themselves. Naturalism is often seen as quite an attractive meta-ethical theory for this reason, for wouldn't it be ideal if we could detail what is right or wrong with reference to an agreed upon set of observations and ideas based on our everyday experience? While it will inevitably lead to debate about the right kind of normative ethics, it ultimately means that moral disagreements are, at least to some degree, resolvable through reference to agreed-upon experiences and observations. Moral statements cease to be abstract, special judgements, and instead become similar to any other statement we might make about the world.

To clarify further, when we think of moral statements, we typically identify them
statements about what ought to happen in a particular situation or context. Pre
contrasted with **descriptive** statements, which don't express any *ought* and simp
case. Now, [illegible] the difference, philosophers have often drawn a boundary be
prescriptive, or [illegible] descriptive statements. David Hume is perhaps the most famo
shall analyse later. Yet, if naturalism is correct and moral properties can be redu
in an important sense, our prescriptive statements about the world can also be r
statements. In other words, we can derive what ought to be the case from what

Exactly how this derivation occurs varies among philosophers. **Utilitarianism**, a
ethical theory, holds that moral statements can be reduced to comparative desc
pleasure and pain (or, in some cases, other phenomena). **Virtue ethics**, on the o
statements can be reduced to descriptions of behaviour, dispositions and charac
understanding of virtue. Finally, **natural law** is perhaps the most well-known rel
ethics, holding that there is a natural moral order which human beings can obser
from. In each case, through analysing and understanding the natural world, we
moral knowledge.

Thus, naturalism is also potentially very attractive as it provides a way for phi
moral progress might naturally occur. Learning about the natural world does no
knowledge but also knowledge that enables successive generations of hu
their prede[illegible]. Moreover, it provides an intuitive understanding of how **mo**
facts are simply the correct expression of certain natural facts. Despite this foun
whether naturalism supports **moral universalism** in the same way. Depending o
moral facts, it can be argued that there must be some kind of **relativism** in play w
naturalism. For example, although we might base our moral system on the natu
experiences of human beings on Earth, what about potential alien species who e
environments? Would these natural facts be relevant for those alien species?

Such questions have led to some questioning whether naturalism accounts are t
Much, however, hinges on how we define these terms. It may be that moral rea
with human-relative naturalist views of meta-ethics. Regardless, it is useful to fi
system of ethics and see how it attempts to reduce moral properties down to na
to a brief investigation into **utilitarianism**.

Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is a normative ethical theory that, in its original form, proposes tha
produces the greatest amount of **utility** for the greatest number of people. The
person throughout their life should seek to maximise utility, which, for the orig
as Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, was equivalent to **happiness**, which in t
and the absence of pain. Good actions are those which generate the most happ
pleasure and minimising pain. Just like **situation ethics**, which you studied in Ye
utilitarianism is a strongly **consequentialist** system of ethics. Good is directly me
is produced by an action.

However, in equating utility with pleasure, utilitarianism is also a **hedonistic** syst
we are most interested in when discussing meta-ethics. For one can easily see h
system of ethics when it directly equates what is good with what produces happ
statement can, in effect, be reduced to a statement about pleasure, pain or happ
Therefore, when one makes a statement about an action being good, one is reall
results in happiness, and, more importantly, that happiness is what makes that a
terms happiness and good in utilitarianism are **synonymous**; they can be exchan
loss of meaning.

Now there certainly are different ways of calculating pleasure in utilitarianism, a
about whether what is good can be reduced to what is pleasurable or painful. B
provide a meta-ethical argument for their naturalism that at heart roughly takes
1. All human beings desire happiness.
2. What is happiness for human beings is, therefore, what is good for human b
3. One therefore ought to act so as to produce the greatest amount of happine

Now, obviously this is a simplified version, and we shall look at Mill's more comp
what is key to note is how utilitarian philosophers seek to move from a universal
a prescriptive statement about what human beings ought to do. It is taken as a n

human beings do desire happiness and consider it good. If this is the case, then argue that human beings should, therefore, act to maximise pleasure and minim short, since human beings are primarily **motivated** by pleasure and pain, these p be appropriate foundations for any ethical theory. Thus we arrive at the **princip** forward by Mill in his well-known text *Utilitarianism*:

Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that acti[illegible]are right in propor happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the rev[illegible]of happiness. By happines absence of pain; by unhappiness is intend[illegible], and the privation of pleasure.

Yet Mill did not simply [illegible] assume the truth of this principle based on basic c call 'human nature'. Instead, he offered a 'proof' of utilitarianism, which can be
1. Each p[illegible]n so far as he believes it is attainable, desires his own happine
2. Since people desire their own happiness, for each person it is a good to ther
3. Therefore, general happiness is a good to the aggregate of all persons.
4. Happiness is the only good end of human conduct. All other ends are pursu
5. Therefore, what is good is what promotes the greatest happiness for the gre

Now, Mill's proof has come under great criticism over the years, but the particul focus on is whether it commits what is often termed the **fallacy of equivocation** particular term or word within an argument to possess one meaning, when in fac If we examine premise 2 in the proof for a moment, we can notice that Mill jump happiness to saying that happiness is a good to them. Why is this an issue?

Well, the philosopher G E Moore held that Mill here is guilty of an error in reason desiring their own happiness, we are making a **descriptive claim** about what the desire a lot of things. In fact, we could conceivably make the claim that it is logic desire anything within reason. But why does this mean human beings *ought* to d human beings desire their happiness is not the same thing as happiness being *de* maintain the original descriptive claim throughout Mill's argument, the most he might desire the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people, not that a prescriptive claim would the remit of Mill's observations.

So Mill is potentially guilty of the fallacy of equivocation by holding that 'what pe 'desirable'. But, as we have seen, the former is a purely **descriptive** use of desire **prescriptive.** Yet, as we explored originally, all naturalistic systems of ethics do h the two. In the case of Mill's proof, this connection is perhaps not robustly estab between the two without giving ample reason to suggest why the fact we desire *ought* to desire them. Yet this fallacy in Mill's proof potentially highlights a much naturalistic ethics, one we shall explore by first looking at an issue often termed

Activity

In your own time, research another example of a naturalistic ethical theory, su natural law. How do these attempt to prove that their respective moral prope to natural properties? Write down a few notes and [illegible] the ethical theory in cover in the next sections.

The Is–Ought Problem

The is–ought problem is a meta-ethical issue originally outlined by David Hume i
work *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739). There he describes it as such:
In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remark
that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and
establishes the being of a God, or makes observations co[illegible]ing human affairs;
when of a sudden I am surprised to find, that inst[illegible]d of the usual copulations of
propositions, ***is,*** *and* ***is not****, I meet with n[illegible]sition that is not connected with*
ought*, or an* ***ought not****. This ch[illegible]ge [illegible]nperceptible; but is, however, of the last*
consequence. For as this ought or ought not, expresses some new relation or
affirmation, it [illegible]ce[illegible]ry that it should be observed and explained; and at the sa
time that a [illegible]should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how
new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it.
(*Treatise of Human Nature* Bk III Pt I Section 1 – emphasis own)

In short, Hume notes that there is a gap of sorts between sentences which descri
the world and those which prescribe action. For why does any fact about the wo
necessarily impel us to act in a certain way? The fact that cats enjoy have their f
to argue that people ought to stroke their fur. Thus, if we attempt to move from
world to prescriptive statements about what we ought to do, we are making an

The potential ramifications of this gap can easily be seen. If Hume is correct, the
a flawed premise: that prescriptive statements are derivable from descriptive on
whether human beings can ever possess moral knowledge, for there is no way o
do based on our observations. For many philosophers, this is evidence both for s
and for a **non-cognitivist** interpretation of ethics. In fa[illegible]his is what Hume hims
morality was closer to expressions of emotion [illegible]han it was to a system of moral fa

However, one philosopher [illegible]urther with Hume's observation and used it to
entirely, conte[illegible]ding [illegible]e they were are all guilty of the **naturalistic fallacy**.

The Naturalistic Fallacy

The naturalistic fallacy is an extension of the is–ought problem put forward by G E
possible to reduce moral properties to natural properties without making an erro
reasoning. He sought to demonstrate this fallacy primarily through what we calle
the **open question argument**. This he viewed as a simple but devastating objecti
to naturalistic ethical theories such as utilitarianism which sought to equate what
good with properties such as happiness.

The form of the open question argument is simple but can be a little difficult to
grasp, as it questions naturalism based on the **semantics** of moral language. The
way we use terms such as good and bad, and the meaning [illegible]y appear to posses
shows that they cannot be directly reduced to nat[illegible]properties. To demonstra
we can present the summarised form of M[illegible]'s [illegible]ument followed by its
application to utilitarian ethics:

1. If 'x' is equivalent to '[illegible]asking 'is it true that x is good?' is meaningles
2. Asking '[illegible]good?' is not meaningless.
3. Theref[illegible]s not equivalent to good.

Let's delve into this a little further. Now, hopefully you recall that if naturalism is ri
and bad with talk of natural properties. In the case of utilitarianism, this might be r
happiness, such that we could easily make the claim that 'happiness is equivalent t
correct, we could reasonably replace every instance of the term good with corresp
any loss of meaning. As we stated before in the previous part on utilitarianism, goo

However, what Moore notes in premise 1 of his open question argument is that
question 'is it true that happiness is good?' would be meaningless. We would in
true that happiness is happiness', since happiness is equivalent to good. Such a
true by definition and pointless to utter. Would we ask the question, 'is it true th

Yet, on reflection, the question 'is it true that happiness is good?' isn't really mean
Moore terms an **open question**, for the answer to this que can't be derived fr
or not one believes happiness is what is good, the two things are conceptually diff
each other. Thus we arrive at the core of the naturalistic fallacy: just because we c
and good to the same things, this does not mean they actually attribute the same
attempts to highlight through an open question argument is that any attempt to e
properties is flawed because the ability to ask open questions about this equation
properties as different. Moreover, this difference, for Moore, as we shall not
naturalism, indicated that the property of good must be something very different

But, for the moment, let's substitute our original example of utilitarianism back i
argument we presented earlier:

1. If happiness is equivalent to good, then asking 'is it true that happiness is go
2. Asking 'is it true that happiness is good?' is not meaningless.
3. Therefore, happiness is not equivalent to good.

Can you see any issues here? If Moore is correct it does appear to be a serious s
Nonetheless, Moore's analysis did not spell the end for naturalism, and in the fin
explore some responses to both the is–ought problem and the naturalistic fallac

The Origins of Naturalistic Ethics

So far we've noted that there does seem to be some strange difference between
and prescriptive calls to action. Yet a question that should be asked wh
ethics is: does this difference even matter? Is there really a philosophical proble
'is', or is our analysis of what is good and bad instead just too simplistic? In studi
took utilitarianism as our primary example of a naturalistic system of ethics, but
to happiness. Goodness instead is a complex property that can be broken down into an
beliefs? Moreover, as beings in the world who regularly exhibit **goal-directed be**
basic survival needs or towards more complex activities, such as the building of a
easily craft prescriptive statements that are directed towards various goals. As s
such a leap to say that we ought to do actions that move towards completion of

Here, we can refashion ethical statements in terms of **hypotheticals**, such we ca
agent 'if person *x* wishes to achieve goal *y*, they ought to do action *z*'. *Oughts*, in
special kinds of statement but simply occur whenever we possess certain goals (
is characterised by the pursuit of various goals). The natural difficulty is nonethe
statements could be crafted in light of the myriad of goals human beings possess
back the naturalistic fallacy, for we can always ask what makes a particular goal
becomes to explain what makes a moral ought instead of a non-moral one. Neve
that the is–ought problem isn't simply an agreed-upon philosophical reality; ther
disagreement over the possibility of crafting meaningful prescriptive statements

There is also an important difference between what moral oughts are (whether
virtue, etc.) and whether moral oughts can be explained in natural terms. Even i
be strongly **naturalistic** and not **universal**, this still indicates that the is–ought gap
such as Hume and Moore attempt to show is not that we disagree about the nat
thinking, but that **morality** is something that fundamentally cannot be defined in
Moreover, beyond looking at how oughts might arise out of goal-directed behav
straightforward reasons to question the validity of Hume and Moore's argument

The Problems with the Open Question Argument

Take a look back at the original summary of Moore's open question argument or
The key element of his analysis centres on the idea of 'meaningfulness'. More in
terms are equivalent, any analysis is meaningless. But why is this assumption po
Moore's argument here rests on the more precise belief that **analytic equivalen**

Analytic statements, as you may well be aware, are those which are regarded to
meaning of the terms involved. Thus, for example, if happiness and good are equi
meaning, then we should effectively know what is good by also knowing what ha
were equivalent, any question which equates the two should be **closed** as **tautol**
from knowing the meaning of the terms involved. The fact we cannot shows the
that terms such as good and happiness possess different meanings.

But are all analytic statements meaningless in this sense? This is a much broade
important for discussion of Moore's argument. Take mathematics, for instance;
true by definition yet we still develop novel mathematical ideas and knowledge.
that (2 + 2) is equivalent to (1 + 3)?', this seems to fit Moore's definition of a mea
hesitate to call it so. What this seems to show is that **analytic equivalency** is not
is meaningful. It may be that happiness could be analytically equivalent to good
equivalency could still be meaningful.

What this example addresses is that the appeal of Moore's argument rests on w
analysis'. For the assumption about analytic equivalency Moore makes effective
definition of concept will appear meaningless, for the definition effectively beco
a strange way to think. Certainly, if good is defined simply as one other concept
question argument seems to retain some force, but if we define good as a compl
be strange to regard such a definition as equally meaningless. For we would hard
say that complex definitions of other terms are meaningless themselves!

Let's look at this problem from another angle. The German philosopher and logi
important distinction between two different aspects of a term's meaning: its **sen**
reference is the object to which the term refers, while its sense is the way that th
distinction is important because there is a difference between the sense of a ter
use it in our everyday language) and the thing or things to which that term refers
H_2O and water. Both have a different sense; one is the scientific term for the co
itself is a colloquial term used to describe a material we commonly observe arou
the *same reference*; they refer to the same thing.

Why is this important? Well, despite these two terms being equivalent as to wh
substituted into Moore's open question argument. Thus, if we ask the question,
doesn't exactly seem to be a closed question despite the two terms fundamenta
That is because the equivalency claim 'H_2O is water' is not analytically known. In
equivalency through empirical investigation (**a posteriori**). But, of course, once i
logically impossible to claim these two terms aren't equivalent for they refer to t
seems that Moore's assumption about analytic equivalency is perhaps mistaken.

This second issue is particularly important for naturalists as it suggests that we co
through **a posteriori** means. While we are unsure what the good is currently, th
world it may be possible to learn what natural properties are in fact equivalent t
is made, determining good according to these natural properties. Naturally, this is a co
possibility that could occur, and, so long as it is a possibility, it demonstrates tha
argument isn't quite as decisive as he makes it out to be. The idea that good cou
posteriori identity claim in the same manner as 'H_20 is water'.

The Issues with the Is–Ought Problem

We've noted already how the is–ought problem may be overcome by analysing e directed behaviour. But it is worth exploring this idea a little further, especially b utilitarianism we have analysed throughout this section. In particular, we can ta referred to as **thick** ethical concepts, most notably virtues.

Virtue ethics is a normative ethical system you wi ha e studied in Year 1. Key t at various behaviours of human beings a u ing whether they accord to a par action is said to exemplify that i tue, a u if not, then it is judged to be vice-like. philosopher Philippa Fo h te s that in any discussion of virtue one is naturally descriptive es ve elements. The combination of these elements is wh concept as d to a term such as good, which is generally prescriptive and n

The easiest way to understand this idea is through an example. If one states 'Ed taken to mean that Edith has displayed or does display behaviours that are chara the truth. In other words, to assess this sentence, we have to employ descriptive or disconfirm it. However, since honesty is a virtue in the eyes of many, in statin I am also naturally asserting that Edith is of good character or her actions are go further prescriptive element. Even if we don't regard honesty as a virtue, it is ha way, thick ethical concepts might pose a difficulty for the is–ought problem: ther descriptive and prescriptive statements; both are contained in our use of the ter

Now, it might be that if we broke down virtues further, we might once again find an honest woman' might just be a shorthand for 'Edith always tells the truth' an virtue ethicists can easily contend that such a reduction misp esents what virtue certain moral principles but the cultivation of moral c a ter that manifests itse could well be honest but may not always tell t e ruth, or example. Either way, an oversimplification of how moral s me s work. The moral life of human be declaring things to be good a d b d o er and above our descriptions of the worl intertwined in our r l positions, goals and behaviours as human beings.

Nonetheless e is still an alternative to naturalism that needs to be explored. defining good as a natural property, maybe it is worth exploring the possibility th This was the position of G E Moore himself, and we shall analyse it in more detai **naturalism** in meta-ethics.

Discussion Activity

Do you believe there is a satisfactory answer to the naturalistic fallacy and the naturalistic ethical theories? Discuss in pairs or small groups.

Non-naturalism

In the last section on naturalism, we looked at G E Moore's open question argum moral properties such as good could not be meaningfully reduced to natural pro discussion on the strengths and weaknesses, we didn't ask the obvious question moral properties aren't equivalent to a natural property or a set of natural prope Moore held that the answer was equally obvious: moral properties were simply n good and bad mean, they are not terms which have a natural equivalent and statements about the natural world.

This is a little strange to think about at first, but to say a property is non-natural is Moore compares the concept of goodness to the concept of colours. For we can't the colour red, we can point out the various ways it exists in the natural w arises, but our understanding of what colour is rests in a kind of awareness beyond while we can perceive the colour red, it is not a real feature of the world (unless or interactions between light waves and our visual system, which may be overly redu comparison is not to draw an exact analogy, but to point towards how we can app reduced to natural properties. Goodness and badness are simply novel instances

However, you might be able to see how this comparison also makes things a littl don't come to knowledge or understanding of goodness through natural means gain knowledge about goodness at all?

Intuitionism

This is a valid question. If the property of good is **simple**, **non-natural** and **indefi** there must be some special faculty by which human beings are able to grasp it. **intuition**. This is a difficult idea to define and, as we shall see critics of **intuition** contemporaries came to hold, often drew attention to the fact that proponents exactly what intuition was. Is it a kind of mental state, a belief or a special form issues for the moment, we can gain some understanding from Moore's 1903 wo outline the nature of these intuitions, if not exactly how they function.

Of perhaps more importance is the idea that moral intuitions are **self-evident**. T they are basic statements that resist being proved or disproved. They are justifie understanding of the concepts involved. One comparison that some intuitionists made was with mathematical truths such as '2 + 2 = 4'. These kinds of mathema proof, but human beings can **intuit** its truth regardless. What's important to not evident, intuitions do not require inferring from some prior belief. Nor is intuitic process or sense, for this would give intuitions a natural explanation.

Despite the strange character of moral intuitions, G E Moore's intuitionism is a fi of the potential strengths of intuitionism is that it potentially provides an answe avoiding a non-cognitivist or anti-realist view of ethics. Moreover, it appeals to a of what morality is. Many human beings, including maybe even yourselves, do b beliefs are inherently good or bad, and intuitionism gives a simple explanation fo moral beliefs. It may even explain to a degree how **conscience** naturally manifes certain moral principles (e.g. do not murder) that often appear to be universally

However, you might also easily argue that this exposes weaknesses in intuitionism evident to human beings, why is there so much moral disagreement? Furthermo paints morality as such as good to be indefinable is quite an ironically useful considering the difficulties philosophers have faced when attempting to describe might be an attractive simplicity to intuitionism, from another perspective can lo underdeveloped meta-ethical account of what morality is. Thus, in the next part closer look at the disadvantages of intuitionism compared to the meta-ethical th

Philosophical Issues

At first glance, intuitionism can almost seem too good to be true. It is an appealin grasp self-evident moral truths without falling foul of the naturalistic fallacy. How Pandora's box of quite difficult philosophical questions. The first we can ask is, w word often thrown around in philosophy, generally referring to the way we comm ideas. Yet, it is clear that intuitionists require this concep[illegible] a little bit more a with novel moral ideas, not just provide access to [illegible]anding ideas we might h observation. This perhaps is the most [illegible] hurdle intuitionists faced and o

G E Moore himself also [illegible] a full account of what intuition was, often callin reveals self[illegible]t [illegible]. The problem is, such a sort of awareness doesn't really way human[illegible]come to know things. In the case of experience, we can easily mental states and processes. With Moore, we're pushed into talking about intuitio faculty of the mind which generates such an intuitive awareness of moral truths. Y special faculty located and how does it arise? If we talk about this special faculty i biological or psychological descriptions, we arguably risk slipping into naturalism. this special faculty isn't defined, then intuitionism appears incomplete as a meta-e

This problem caused somewhat of a split among those supporting intuitionism. intuitionists had to be committed to some special faculty of the mind, while man undertake this commitment, with some maintaining it was unnecessary. Despite bullet and defined intuition as a kind of psychological, mental state or even **mora** moral truths can be known through experience, though they do not require justi are self-evident in the same way that many of our other perceptions might be, s

Moral Disagreement

We've mentioned this issue previously, as one clear difficulty that intuitionists f explaining why people [illegible]herent ethical beliefs. For if all individuals can evident mo[illegible]th[illegible]o we arrive at very different systems of normative et be argued t[illegible]ecial kind of intuitive awareness or moral sense should provid significant moral consensus. There are two parts to this issue, though. The first the last problem we discussed, in explaining what intuition is, as proponents are required to explain how we intuit moral truths but also how we intuit contradict differing moral principles from this faculty. In other words, why does our moral

However, the second part is a more epistemological issue. It asks whether, if int truly resolve moral disagreements. For instance, if one person, Smith, claims tha intuition that 'murder is wrong' and Jones claims they have a self-evident intuitio we pick one side or the other? The naturalist may refer to descriptive facts abou to these claims, but intuitionism cannot do that. Instead, it would have to talk a wrong and another's is right. But, as we already know, moral truths are self-evi So it appears there is no way of discerning who is right and [illegible]o is wrong.

This is another difficult issue for intuitionists [illegible]andled in a number of differ argued that intuitions could not [illegible] guidance on actions. All they reve concepts we ought to pu[illegible]e was, therefore, a **consequentialist** when it held that int[illegible]ed that we simply ought to pursue certain self-evide truth or jus[illegible]ends. However, others, such as W D Ross, believed that intuit truths and p[illegible]ples, which we shall explore later.

Discussion Activity

Is moral disagreement particularly troubling for intuitionism? Or is it a problem theories equally face? Discuss in pairs or small groups.

Rationality and Simplicity

There are two further issues it is worth exploring when discussing intuitionism. T
moral truths; whether they are non-natural and known intuitively. If moral truth
experience of the world, this arguably means they must be *a priori.* While this is
that are known through reason alone, intuition arguably must function similarly
is separate from sense experience. Yet, if moral truths are known a priori, this cr
empiricists, such as Hume, have often claimed that a priori facts are simply relati
do not convey relevant information about the world, and, even if this is not who
moral truths are a priori, they fail to impart any meaningful knowledge about the
are just abstract ideas which are difficult to connect to everyday moral decision-
in with the [illegible] issues we studied with moral disagreement. Intuitio
battle in exp[illegible] what status moral truths possess if only known through intui
moral guidance if so.

The second issue concerns the simplicity, or lack thereof, of intuitionism. We no
seems to provide a straightforward answer to the naturalistic fallacy. But, on ref
into a bit more, it seems as if there are a significant number of problems facing i
actually precisely describing both what intuition is and what a self-evident moral
when compared to the naturalistic thesis that morals arise from everyday descri
becomes somewhat overly complex. This can be seen clearly if one applies **Ockh**
should not multiply entities beyond what is required. In the case of intuitionism,
necessary to invoke a completely new faculty, a kind of moral truth and non-nat
the naturalistic fallacy. Could not Moore simply have made a mistake with his op

This last criticism is not damning but becomes more pressing in light of intuitioni
we end this section, it is worth exploring a final intuitionist philosopher, and, by
seeing how intuitionism's problems can be tackled from another angle.

Refining Intuitionism

For an alter[illegible]viewpoint on intuitionism, we can turn to W D Ross, a contem
forward quite a different version of his meta-ethical system. Ross held that, as w
main problems intuitionism faced was detailing a coherent account of how mora
particularly when an individual is presented with conflicting moral obligations or
be some kind of absolute moral principles that can never be broken or some exte
how one decides between different obligations. Thus, if someone is faced with a
more moral principles could apply, there is some resolute way of obtaining clear

While this possibility does not completely remove the issue of moral disagreeme
the strength of intuitionism if such guidance can be given. For one problem with
doesn't exactly offer clear routes to ethical decision-making. So Ross took a diffe
intuition, one can arrive at what he termed **prima facie** moral duties. Prima faci
Ross held these kinds of duty to be self-evident and clear to any individual pursu

So what does Ross propose these prima facie duties are? Well, he never claimed conclusive list but he offered seven key examples: fidelity, reparation, gratitude, maleficence, and self-improvement. The idea is that all of these duties incur obli lives but ultimately are also flexible. As such, certain duties may be sidelined if a higher or more important duty at a particular time. For example, fidelity or truth order to fulfil the duty of beneficence, in caring for someone's welfare. Thus, Ro **deontological pluralism** with **flexible duties**. Intuition ca[illegible] tell us what kinds following, but equally does not demand that we f[illegible] absolutely.

The clear upshot of Ross's system is that there is potentially, at least in principle, disagreements or conflicts [illegible] there is not a complete solution, one can pote importance [illegible] prima facie duties with another who also has some intuiti Nonetheless, [illegible] have still criticised Ross's intuitionism for still being unsystem ethical decision-making. For, ultimately, there is still no external standard from w are more important than others, and the flexibility means that one could potentia his system. Nonetheless, it provides an important alternative and counterpoint t shows how non-naturalism can give rise to a variety of different ethical and meta

Quick Quiz

1. What is divine command theory?
2. Explain the Euthyphro dilemma.
3. Name one thinker who supports divine command theory.
4. What is naturalism?
5. What natural property does utilitarianism hold good is reducible to?
6. What is the open-question argument?
7. Who first put forward the is–ought problem?
8. What is ethical intuitionism?

Free Will and Moral Responsi

What you will learn in this section:

The philosophical discussion around the conflict between free will and determini
for understanding moral responsibility, including:

- The philosophical conditions required in order to mea gfully hold human
their actions.
- Different theories that attempt to re he ee will / determinism conflic
determinism and compatibili .
- How each of these di e ories influences philosophical discourse on r

Starter ity:

Do you think that punishments for crimes are fair in the UK? And do you believ
rewarded for the work they do? Write down a few notes on your opinions surr
punishment and compare them with your studies as you progress throughout t
changed at all in light of the philosophical debate around free will and determi

Key Thinker	
Name	David Hume
Born	1711
Died	1776
Key text	*An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748)
Why are they important?	Hume is perhaps one of the most well-known British philosc extensively on nearly all major philosophical issues and is pa within epistemology, religion and s.
Did you know?	Hume was also a well-kn vn hist an, writing a six-volume and even detail e ory of science, writing short biogr the seven th and eighteenth centuries.

Key Thin	
Name	B F Skinner
Born	1904
Died	1990
Key text	*Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (1971)
Why are they important?	Skinner is a very important figure in experimental psychology form of behaviourism that emphasised how beings were conc above all else.
Did you know?	Skinner also wrote political works and viewed his psychologi important insights for wider political and social issues, partic technological advances.

Introduction

The debate over whether human beings have fe w stretches back to the earli
long occupied the minds of thinkers s s world. Part of the reason for its l
free will is so difficult to pi What does it mean to be truly free when the
pulling upon and co ing the human person at any given time? Moreover, w
possess fre s te of these forces? For when we consider how we make o
instinct tow elieving that we have genuine agency over our actions. Even if
recognise that human actions could be predetermined, it is much harder to appl
thinking on a day-to-day level.

This tension is particularly revealed when it comes to thinking about moral respo
around free will can seem to be an abstract issue, it has important meta-ethical a
ramifications. If human beings' actions are predetermined, could it ever be fair t
their actions? In fact, beyond our beliefs about moral responsibility, much of soc
of justice which, in order to be morally right, require that we believe human bein
transgress the laws of the state. If human beings do not possess meaningful free
for a very different interpretation of crime and punishme[illegible]e that potentially
circumstance as much as those who they commit [illegible]es against.

But before we delve into the appl[illegible]at[illegible]f the debate around free will, it is wort
are required in order for [illegible] and a strong understanding of moral responsib
we believe [illegible]er [illegible] attribute praise or blame for a particular choice or a

The Conditions of Moral Responsibility

Now, we noted in the introduction that one of the main sources for our beliefs a
introspection. When we turn our thoughts inward to the choices we make in ou
have different reasons and motivations influencing how we act. Moreover, we h
where these reasons and motivations are considered before we begin to enact o
vague ideas don't necessarily reflect what free will actually is and how it justifies
responsible. For how do we know that this selection process isn't just an illusion
physical processes that are predetermining any choice we make? What ultimate
human beings possess genuine **power** or **agency** over their choices, such that wh
past, there is good reason to believe that we could have acted otherwise.

The philosopher Harry Frankfurt sums up this idea in what he terms the '**principl**
simply states:
PAP: A person is morally responsible for what [illegible]he [illegible]ha[illegible]done if they could have

It's an intuitive way of under[illegible]ing [illegible]eedom (although one Frankfurt himself r
will, there is no reas[illegible]o [illegible]eve that our choices or actions could have only gon
general en[illegible]a[illegible]ommodate circumstances where we might hold that a per
constrained [illegible]as hypnotised into performing a murder, we would hardly say
otherwise, even if normally I might well possess free will.

Yet, although this principle seems simple, in practice it is highly controversial. Fo
individual become truly unfree? And should our freedom simply be measured by
many different physical and psychological factors that influence our choices and
could truly have acted otherwise is an incredibly difficult dilemma. However, the
dismiss these concerns. It may well be that we can accommodate mitigating circ
a person still ultimately made a free choice. If you think of the structure of many
charges people can face and how punishment is calculated, there are many ways
thinking on moral responsibility accommodates different environmental and psy
principle aims to acknowledge is the idea that beyond these factors, there is som
grants them power over the choices and actions they ma

We've made this point already, but it is [illegible]mp[illegible]t[illegible]nt to reinforce. The mere existen
physical constraints is not an a[illegible]gume[illegible]t against the existence of free will. Rather
idea that physical even[illegible]s [illegible]r [illegible]an action **necessitate** its occurrence, such that
possibility f[illegible]a[illegible]n[illegible]gs to exert genuine power over their choices. This nec
means that [illegible]on could never have acted otherwise regardless of the situatio
is meaningless to try to ascribe praise or blame. Every event in the universe cou
occurred one way, including those involving human choices.

But why would we be inclined to think this way? Well, we can go deeper here an
at the heart of this section: the conflict between **free will** and **determinism**.

The Extent of Moral Responsibility: Free Will a

At the end of the last section, we noted a curious problem with believing that it i act otherwise than the way they do; every other being or thing is not usually tho When we investigate the natural world, we typically assume that any state of aff previous causes. The movement of a billiard ball is explained by the interaction chemical reaction is explained by the atomic interactions between different mol In fact, unless investigation uncovers a comprehensive explanation for an event affairs, we typically hold it to be incomplete.

The assumption behind this method of investigation is typically known as **determ** are completely determined by previous causes or states of affairs. For most, it a principle of cause and effect. If this principle universally applies, there cannot be causes. Thus all events must be able to be explained by prior causes, and, more necessitate future events. This means that when most philosophers talk about c talking about **causal determinism**, for, as we shall note later, there are different manifest itself in the world.

The problem with any kind of determinism, however, is that it suggests (as we n section) only one course of events is possible within our universe. However the was a starting set of physical conditions which set off a chain of causes and effec world as it is today. Moreover, determinism suggests that if we had complete kn physical conditions then it would be possible to accurately predict every event th

As you may well easily see, this poses a problem for the concept of free will. Det the kind of physical necessity that prevents genuine power or agency over our ac discussed, free will seems to require that we could have acted otherwise. Deter suggests that only one course of events is possible. Thus, if determinism is true, acted otherwise in any situation. Similarly, if we somehow did have complete kn conditions prior to any human choice or action, we could predict what a person way for human beings to meaningfully pick one course of action over another. If actions we perform are, in an important sense, beyond our control.

Now, it might seem as if there is a reasonably easy solution to this conflict betwe Shouldn't we trust our observations of the world over introspection and deny th power and agency over our actions? Well, that certainly may be one solution, bu complex than it initially appears. Determinism, when outlined precisely, is more scientific law. Human beings have only observed a tiny fraction of all the events universe; certainly not enough to establish that all events are wholly determined we still only have a very limited understanding of the foundational physical proc have suggested, for example, that certain problems in quantum mechanics poten perspective on certain quantum-level molecular interactions. What this means i cannot be taken for granted, even if many philosophers accept it as an accurate

Moreover, the conflict is also made more complex by the lack of prior agreemen Although we noted that a basic understanding of free will could be found in the **possibilities**, could we not simply amend our laws on free will in light of determ is true, the concept of free will plays an important part in the lives of human bei we think about the world, including how we hold individuals morally responsible philosophers generally divided themselves into two different camps: **comp**

Compatibilism and Incompatibilism

Compatibilism is the view that when looked at in the correct way, free will and d
with each other. The central idea behind compatibilism is that when one looks a
freedom of action in the right way, the conflict between free will and determinis
metaphysics doesn't really have anything to do with how we judge an action as b
freedom being a purely **psychological state** or, as we shall see in the case of Dav
is simply being allowed to exercise one's wills and desires without constraint. Ne
of compatibilist views, each of which takes a different perspective on fre
meaningful in a deterministic world.

On the other hand, **incompatibilism** is the view that free will and determinism ca
those in the incompatibilist camp adhere to either **hard determinism**, which hold
will, or **libertarianism**, which rejects determinism in favour of genuine, meaningf
incompatibilism, as opposed to compatibilism, tend to argue that metaphysics is
about free will. In the case of libertarians, many philosophers contend that at th
there is an indeterminism which enables the possibility of genuinely unpredictab
for hard determinists, if human beings are akin to any other physical being, they
of the billiard ball being struck that we described earlier. In particular, the princi
often invoked as a demonstration of human beings' lack of free will. If we have n
of our actions, then it is meaningless to say we had a free choice in the first place

Now, the arguments for either camp are often subtle and abstract. As you can s
compatibilism are more typically open to altering our idea of free will; using key
perceive and act to develop a meaningful idea of freedom in the face of determi
favour compatibilism are against such alterations, either because, in their eyes, t
firm and robust concept of free will or because they don't properly acknowledge
being true. When evaluating the different positions we will come to examine, it
a full understanding of the concepts being discussed. One philosopher's idea of
another's and it is important to not criticise a **straw man** (a different argument)
advantages and disadvantages of a particular view.

With that in mind, we can begin to take a look at the first of the three main posit
this section: **hard determinism**.

Discussion Activity

What position on the free will / determinism conflict are you intuitively drawn
think is correct? Discuss in pairs or small groups.

Hard Determinism

As we explored in the last part, hard determinism holds that if determinism pert
meaningful free will. Typically, this view encompasses **causal determinism**, altho
explore **theological determinism**. Many view hard determinism as quite an extr
that human beings possess any meaningful free will, then we equally deny the m
responsibility. This effectively means that the hard determinist rejects ethics, fo
someone ought to do something if they do not possess the power to bring about
Highlighting this connection, however, is not to suggest that hard determinism
previous section on meta-ethics, if one takes an **anti-realist** perspective on mora
with a hard deterministic perspective.

Nonetheless, it is important to look at what a hard determinist perspective theor
be evidentially supported. We've noted before that there is significant scientific
events are determined by prior causes and events. However, the hard determin

this idea in a way that the compatibilist is perhaps not. Of prime importance is t talking about physical events, including human actions. Reduction is the process phenomenon through reference to lower-level parts, laws and processes. For ex rust forms through the reaction between iron and oxygen molecules. Reduction explanation. As our knowledge of the world increases, learning about how lowe the things we see is often viewed as important for gathering a deeper, more nua

Importantly, if determinism is true, then we shou[illegible] to explain human ch reduction to the underlying physical inte[illegible]s within the brain, whether this b neurons, or even the more funda[illegible]olecular interactions that govern their explanations are beyond [illegible]human beings can currently know, but central to t that even th[illegible]es [illegible]olecular interactions obey deterministic laws, and if knowledge [illegible]e interactions, one could predict human behaviour. More so t will, the hard determinist requires that the universe is physically deterministic to comes to **causal determinism**.

Skinner and Psychological Determinism

For an example of how we might seek to apply such ideas we can look towards t psychologist B F Skinner. Skinner was a strong advocate of **behaviourism**, the vi of mental states is erroneous and should be replaced by talk of behaviours inste Skinner also proposed, in contrast to his contemporaries, a much more radical ve behaviourism that placed a strong emphasis on **operational conditioning**. This v that behaviour as a whole could be satisfactorily explained via reference to diffe that reinforce or punish particular actions. As such, environmental influences be understanding why human beings acted as they did in different situations. Acco throughout his life, Skinner developed experiments that sho[illegible]ed (generally in an largely governed by these environmental stimuli and [illegible]d mechanisms, with t *decision-making acted along similar lines.*

Now, Skinner's behaviouris[illegible]ir[illegible]ing talk of mental states, meant that intro guide to how h[illegible]ma[illegible]s make choices. In fact, whatever we generally reaso behind our [illegible]s should be translated into purely talk of behaviours and physic is no intuitiv[illegible]ument for free will; our choices are purely understandable by t our brain, our bodies and the environment. If Skinner is correct, then there are upholding hard determinism, but potentially scientific ones also; we can begin to is a sort of psychological state and begin to recognise human behaviour as entire between the environment and particular reward mechanisms.

In this way, Skinner proposes a kind of psychological determinism. Free will is ar about things, and, instead of looking to our own mental states for clues about ho instead look towards the evidence from psychology and other studies of behavio view is potentially weak precisely because we know so little about the physical in and the world. Experiments on animals potentially don't reflect how humans th problems behaviourism faced was that our **cognitive** languag[illegible], which is based ar choices and desires, generally turned out to be very u[illegible]n[illegible]xplaining human b behaviourism! Yet, if the hard determinist see[illegible]s [illegible]o e[illegible]ntially support their po human choice to physical or behavio[illegible]n[illegible]actions is arguably essential.

Activity

Watch th[illegible] below showing some of Skinner's experiments on pigeons tha surroundin[illegible]perational conditioning. Is this evidence that human beings are this make them significantly unfree? Write down a few notes and compare the throughout this section.

Skinner and Operational Conditioning: **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I**

Theological Determinism

One different perspective on hard determinism comes from theologians such as had predetermined all events upon creation, a doctrine often termed **predestina** determinism arose primarily from reflection on the nature of God himself. If Go omniscient, God would possess knowledge of all future events. This led also to a interpretation of the doctrine of **election**, and Calvin argued that God possessed saved and who would be condemned. Naturally, this m[illegible]at human beings will as they could not change the outcome of the[illegible]s.

This kind of theological determ[illegible]sm [illegible]ontentious, even within Christian circles. Although many Christi[illegible]d that God can foresee who might be saved, most are a[illegible]he[illegible]ea that God also foresees or determines who will be condemned. ideas effectively trivialise Jesus' ethical message in the Gospels. However, theological determinism is useful also for acknowledging hov the concept of **fate** is potentially incorporated into hard determinism. If all events are determined by prior causes and human beings have no possibility of changing the outcome, the hard determinist has the potential problem of explaining why human beings should do anything at all. Why go outside each da or educate oneself when nothing is of one's own volition?

Hard determinism, whether theological or causal, doesn't necessarily encompass However, when we consider the issue of moral responsibility, we are arguably ta concept than just what we ordinarily consider to be moral actions. The hard det why individuals should be held responsible for any of their actions, which include affect others, as well as those that directly affect them.

The Problems with Causal Determinism

Now, leaving aside the possibility of indet[illegible]sm (which we will look at later), draw on scientific evidence for de[illegible], whether it be through the regular c the success of **reduction** [illegible]entific disciplines. Reduction is simply the p behaviour of [illegible]e fundamental entities or processes. For example, v iron by the [illegible]n between iron atoms and oxygen atoms. It's a process which thinking, yet [illegible]one that is not often considered properly when thinking about c accept that all behaviours of objects have reductive explanations? Could we, in talk of subatomic particles? The truth of causal determinism in the end does see viable to some degree for all interactions in the universe.

And this is where the difficulties come when discussing free will. For the hard de viability of some instances of reduction as evidence for causal determinism. Rat the non-existence of free will is guaranteed by determinism, and this is potentiall so far let on. Even if human beings have no control over the consequences of th abandon free will altogether and not just modify our understanding of it? The h the lack of control over our futures is the complete absence of freedom. This is a are many other metaphysical aspects of the world which do properly affect th Furthermore, as we noted with both psychological [illegible]ological determinism, entails changing our very language and und[illegible]ar[illegible]ding around human behaviour for our own actions. Such change[illegible]or easily theorised about than implem everyday talk about freedo[illegible]e will potentially possess a certain internal

Moreover, [illegible]d determinist is required to defend a very specific view of free requires hu[illegible]beings to be able to change the outcomes of events (as per the possibilities). Yet, when we commonly think about free will, it is usually in the co face of the unknown, not outcomes. In other words, free will might be more of a **metaphysica**l one. It refers to how we make choices in light of a lack of knowled are no direct, observable physical constraints. This is one vein of thought that p

(or soft determinism) instead, and the hard determinist faces a struggle in expla different perspective on free will instead of rejecting it entirely. We will naturall arguments for compatibilism later.

But first, taking another angle on this problem, we can look at **Frankfurt cases**, s put forward by the philosopher Harry Frankfurt. These are counterexamples to t possibilities which aim to show how free will and moral r sibility can exist d being fixed. Take a moment, therefore, to analys cases below:

Smith is traditionally a member of the Freedom Party and is considering voting fo upcoming election, unles thinks about their record on taxation prior to the vo representati th Freedom Party, wants to ensure that Smith does vote for th Jones plant ce in Smith's head, unknown to Smith, that will trigger upon th record on taxation. If it does trigger, it will force Smith to vote for the Freedom P device, Smith does not think about taxation in the lead-up to the election and, of Freedom Party.

Now, there has been much debate about Frankfurt's original case presented in 1 given above. Many new presentations and forms have been given, but all genera responsibility does not seem to be contingent on outcomes. In the case of Smith physically vote for any other party other than the Freedom Party, it appears as if to a degree since he still chose them in spite of these physical restrictions. Frank show that the **principle of alternate possibilities** is fallacious, despite being intui not have physically performed any other action is not always a barrier to holding in turn suggests that free will is not centred on outcomes.

Indeterminism, Really?

The last point we can make about hard dete ni m is that, despite the scientific principle, the belief that the world is d rr n istic through and through is still m justified belief. Despite our n derstanding of the world pointing towards ca to potentially d ub th of determinism. Certain interpretations of quantu issue comm rn d the **measurement problem**, propose that, at the quantu fundamenta **obabilistic** in nature. There is no reliable way of predicting wha one's knowledge of prior states of affairs, and this makes the world fundamenta particularly when it comes to **complex systems**.

These proposals are highly abstract but potentially plausible, and some thinkers evidence that complex systems we observe on Earth (such as the brain, perhaps) Moreover, if we accept the argument that metaphysics (in terms of necessity of discussions on free will, the possibility of indeterminism does undermine the har Nevertheless, even if this possibility is plausible, it is still very unclear how indete could give rise to free will in the human person. It may be that such proposals ar compared to the widespread evidence for determinism on larger scales.

Libertarianism

So far, we have accepted the fund truth of determinism, but what if we noting how hard determi difficulty replacing our conventional talk of ch why not insta os human beings do genuinely possess free will and dete position of **ianism**, an incompatibilist position that asserts that free will is determinism, but that free will exists whereas determinism does not.

While throughout the history of philosophy, libertarian views of free will have tr years they have notably decreased in popularity as more scientific perspectives Nonetheless, there are still many thinkers who argue for libertarianism, particula

although it might conflict with determinism, it is difficult to reject that libertarian
Introspection on our actions does often reveal competing wills or motivations fo
answer why we can reflect on our choices without talking about some power or
person possesses.

Nor does libertarianism require rejecting much of our evidential analysis of huma
of libertarian free will are happy to accept that much of human choice and actio
whether they be in the environment or in the human person. To deny this would
amount of scientific research that shows how human beings are conditioned by
our natural dispositions. Moreover, it could be argued that complete free will is ar
freedom would potentially lead to **moral paralysis**, since human beings enco
each day the decisions largely on a reflexive basis rather than a thoughtful on

Nonetheless, there is a difficult task for the libertarian in identifying precisely wh
Does free will manifest itself commonly throughout human lives, or very rarely?
change the course of deterministic events work? These questions are an uphill s
have to show not only why libertarian free will is plausible but also how it is poss
potentially difficult to detect. Nonetheless, we can explore one side of this discu
where libertarianism is commonly upheld: theistic meta-ethics.

Free Will and Religion

Libertarianism has been traditionally associated with dualistic theories of the mi
mental or spiritual substance, then this is a potentially easy route to explaining h
the power to change the course of the physical world. The mind or soul is simply
consciousness and free will. Moreover, such an idea slots neatly into a religious
Christian theologians and philosophers hold dualistic beliefs and put forward tha
will, with the human soul or spirit being the seat by which human beings influenc

However, this position is not likely to be persuasive to those who are not religiou
whether God exists, how can we make sense of a mental or spiritual substance a
Should this influence not be transparent when studying human behaviour and ac
advocate substance dualism have often faced an issue in the **mind–body** interac
non-physical substance can influence physical substances. For the evidence for
observing how physical systems interact with each other, and there is no intuitiv
identifying how a separate mind might interact with the body.

In this sense, free will might be just as much an article of faith as God. If the ans
body interaction problem are simply positing the influence of God, it becomes di
libertarianism on its own merits. So it is worth looking at how a non-religious ar
might proceed.

Robert Kane and Self-forming Actions

We've noted that libertarianism is committed to some kind of **indeterminism** du
That means that somewhere along the process of a person making a choice, ther
where the physical conditions prior to the event do not fully cause or explain the
is naturally difficult to point out, especially if it takes place on a microscopic leve
macroscopic level, actions do look as though they have fully determinate causes if thes
microscopic shifts are inaccessible to observation. Yet we noted when looking at
that indeterminism at the microscopic or quantum level is potentially plausible. S
a firm philosophical position on libertarian free will?

Robert Kane is a philosopher who is perhaps one of the most prominent modern
However, he argues that the principle of alternate possibilities is not a satisfacto
action has occurred. For it is certainly possible that alternate outcomes might be
indeterministic events which human beings are not in control of. Rather, he pro

he terms **ultimate responsibility**. In short, this holds that a free action must req
for the reason or cause of it. This means that the agent in some way voluntarily
taking place, either through some inner power or omission.

This contribution, moreover, takes place in what Kane calls **self-forming actions**. These are key moments of indecision when a person might experience conflicting wills, reasons or motivations when choosing from a selection of potential actions. Importantly, they are also moments where we can identify the possibility of 'choosing otherwise'. Furthermore, these self-forming actions are also key instances where the human character develops and influences our future decisions and actions. In this way, Kane attempts to highlight how libertarian free will might manifest itself. Importantly, these self-forming actions aren't typically common in everyday life. We will go through most of our day acting according to deterministic causes, but this doesn't prevent key indeterministic moments in decision-making when different parts of

Issues with Libertarian Free Will

Kane's ideas about free will are plausible and do to a large extent match up with
about the key choices we make throughout our lives, especially in moments of d
ultimate responsibility arguably provides a stronger foundation for thinking abou
alternate possibilities, as it prevents the objection that a change in outcomes cou
the influence of an agent. If Kane is right, it does seem as if we can endorse a str
responsibility, as key choices throughout people's lives will be the result of their
physical factors beyond their control. Yet, there are also reasons to question wh
justify belief in libertarian free will and whether they might simply collapse into c

For a start, although Kane identifies the point of true self-forming actions,
these points enter the decision-making process in human beings or how they are
itself. In fact, Kane has expressed a certain degree of scepticism about whether
ever be located, considering various experimental restrictions on directly ana
during decision-making. This makes it somewhat difficult to assess actual eviden
Dennett, for example, notes that, under Kane's libertarianism, it is still plausible
experience indeterminism-forming actions throughout their lives. Yet, even if this were
way of distinguishing this unfree individual from one who has experienced self-fo
forming actions are **undetectable** in this way is deeply questionable. Why shoul
no way of measuring or determining the truth of its premise?

This issue highlights the primary difficulty with libertarian theories of free will. A
intuitive, there is significantly more empirical evidence for determinism than the
special indeterministic powers or mechanisms. It may simply be that our ability
actions is illusory or serves a wider natural purpose than we might previously ha
Some thinkers have also contended that Kane's libertarianism, when fleshed out
determinism. For, regardless of the possibility of indeterministic events, there is
deterministic history leading up to self-forming actions and proceeding afterwar
forming action is a result of some will being enacted according to a person's reas
there is, in fact, some natural, physical mechanism underlying this decision. In o
responsibility may just boil down to a person acting according to their character,
indeterministic mechanism in the brain. This, we shall see, is very similar to a fo
by the philosopher Daniel Dennett and suggests Kane's libertarianism is more a diff
in theory.

Discussion Activity

Is libertarianism still viable as a theory of free will when there is so much evide
Discuss in pairs or small groups.

Hume and Compatibilism

As we previously noted, compatibilism puts forward that free will and determinis that once one properly defines the two concepts, there is no longer a conflict. C increasingly popular position in modern philosophy, both due to the evidence fo belief that, perhaps ironically, it is difficult to make sense of the concept of free w how can we make sense of choices, reasons and motivations for action without c beings occupy some special place in chains of cause and effect in comparison to inanimate objects?

At the same time, there is also the issue that when we consider ideas about free lives, we rarely draw on metaphysics at all. Consider a typical court case as an ex metaphysics. Is evaluating whether a person acted freely upon committing a reasons, motivations and actions when holding them responsible? Similarly, take liberty as another example. Do we talk about metaphysics in cases of oppressio Instead we talk about direct or indirect physical constraints that prevent someon

So why is free will thought to be a metaphysical concept? Moreover, considerin person and the natural world, why do we hold outcomes to be of prime importa when we can't even predict them reliably ourselves? All these aspects suggest t at odds with free will. What freedom is instead is a kind of **epistemic** notion, rel an unknown situation. Or maybe it is a sort of **psychological** state, which occurs actions are obscured either by our own competing motivations or by our physica

These were the kinds of possibilities that David Hume considered when developi compatibilism. Hume contended that the confusion around the conflict betwee much more to do with a lack of clarity around what freedom actually was, rather abstract metaphysical problem. Philosophers, as such, have perhaps tended to t rather than try to come to a coherent consensus on what it means to be free. In discussion of free will by talking about **necessity**.

Necessity & Free Will

Now, we noted that the central problem with determinism is that it seems to su possible course of events. If events are wholly determined by prior causes, it see **necessitated** by prior causes. Yet Hume holds that there has been some confusi this kind of necessity in cause and effect is not a **logical necessity**. Instead, it is a accompanies what we typically consider to be **natural laws**. Determinism is a ke necessity, for, although we hold it to be true, it is not a logical truth that all even causes. We can easily conceive a situation where this is not the case (hence the

Hume connects this idea to his overall treatment of the **causal principle**, which h **a posteriori**, through observation of the constant conjunction of like causes and to free will? Well, Hume observes that the same kind of constant conjunction is human character and behaviour. In fact, Hume argues that it would be hard to n we didn't observe regularities in their character based on factors such as age, cla so on. These regularities enable us to draw inferences about the causes and mo behaviour which are the very basis of human social life. Without this consistenc would our social lives be ur[illegible]al, but also religion, morality and moral respo commitment to forming ideas about reward and punishment is based o fundament[illegible] bad actions of their own volition. More often than not, they beyond thei[illegible]rol.

In this sense, Hume kind of flips the free will argument on its head. Instead of holding that determinism imposes a necessity that conflicts with free will, he argues instead that the weaker necessity determinism imposes is essential for a proper understanding of how moral responsibility connects to human behaviour. While we theoretically might wish we had a freedom of will that enabled us to change outcomes at a whim, such a freedom makes little sense when we consider how we observe and understand human behaviour and morality. What is thus important when considering free will is not the nature of the **causal relation** between the event and its causes, but the nature of the **cause itself**; who is causing the event, and why.

Freedom as Liberty

So, as we've looked at in the previous part, Hume is keen to move away from a mechanistic view of free will. In fact, he makes the important distinction between what he terms **liberty of indifference** and **liberty of spontaneity**. The former concerns freedom from causal necessity but, as we already noted, this is an absurd notion that makes our ordinary inferences about character and the world impossible. Indifference is practically akin to pure chance. However, liberty of spontaneity is the ability to act according to their own wills and desires, unhindered or unconstrained by external forces. This freedom is what Hume ultimately claims free will consists of; the ability to enact what our character wishes.

Naturally, as you can see, it is a less expansive idea of free will but one that still fits with our outlook. Hume is not saying that our wills or characters are not causally determined, but when we get down to what it means to be free, it's the ability to follow our will and desires. It's your birthday and you want to go downstairs and eat your birthday cake. However, unbeknownst to you, your mum has put a microchip in your brain that makes you fall asleep each time you open your bedroom door. When we look at what we consider to be freedom here, Hume says we don't consider such things as a lack of free will, just the physical things such as the microchip that prevent us from enacting our will. To some extent, this is intuitively right, for if I'm stuck in my room wanting cake I'm not overly concerned with the metaphysics of the situation (I'm not all the time).

The point Hume makes is that, in practice, metaphysics doesn't really come into our judgements of free will, so philosophers who attempt to make free will about metaphysics are misguided. However, reconciling metaphysics with free will brings some intuitive advantages, for it allows us to consider aspects of our person and environment that limit our free will. For example, we might consider the case of a smoker who wants to quit their 40-cigarettes-a-day habit but is too addicted to do so. There are potentially many cases where someone's will or character is affected by external factors that limit their control which play into the ways we consider their actions to be free or unfree. Thus, Hume's compatibilism opens up the debate about free will, reward and punishment to a wider scope than a metaphysical picture might not grant.

Altogether, though, Hume's view represents what is often called **classical compatibilism**. The key of this collection of views is that an accurate view of free will is established by differentiating between what a person could have enacted if they had willed it and those which could not have been enacted even if they willed it. Classical compatibilism in this way seeks to clarify the circumstances in which we say that people have free will and what moral agency they do not and use this as a basis for a rich understanding of free will.

The Problems with Compatibilism

The main trouble with the classical compatibilist perspective, as espoused by Hume, is that in some scenarios where it doesn't exactly give us a complete view of how we might think free will should work. If you think back to the start of the section where we talked about alternative possibilities, we noted that the key aspect of this principle was that an agent *could* have done otherwise. Hume, of course, analyses this notion in terms of will or desire. To say someone could have done otherwise is to say that they would have done otherwise *if they willed it*. However, take a look at the following

Kiran is psychologically incapable of wanting to stroke a ginger-haired cat. Imag
unaware of this fact, her parents bring her two cats to choose between as a pres
while another is a ginger cat. They tell Kiran to choose one by stroking her favou
to the pet shop. Kiran, without any physical restriction, does what she wants and

Now, the question here is: was Kiran free or able to stroke the ginger cat? From
seem as if this is the case. However, the problem for com bilists is that, in thi
free. For if Kiran had wanted to stroke the ginger cat she would have done so.
would not be psychologically incapable of wanting to stroke a ginger-haired cat.
schema says that Kiran was able to stroke either cat, the reality of the situation i
this example can be applied to a variety of situations and seems to imply that ev
metaphysical state of free will, it is not so easy to escape the main thrust o
argument. While circumstances effectively condition our actions, they also con
everything else. Simply being able to will something is not the same as being abl

Now, the classical compatibilist argument isn't necessarily refuted by this object
indicate that compatibilism does need to be grounded in a perhaps more nuance
possible to criticise the example given by questioning whether such a psychologi
the fashion needed to support the incompatibilist argument, we can equally que
constraint upon our actions is enough to fully describe what free will is. Thus, m
attempted to build on the classical compatibilist argument, with some suggestio
refined psychological state, or that moral agents can be responsive to a variety o
case, the challenge facing the compatibilist is explaining why their theory about
intuitive understanding of free will as the ability to act or choose otherwise.

The Relevance of Moral Responsibility: Reward

Now, throughout this section so far, we've primarily looked at the conflict betwe
noting three key philosophical positions that arise out of this problem: hard dete
compatibilism. However, in this last part, we will look at the implications for eac
concept of moral responsibility, particularly in reference to reward and punishm
view one upon the way in which we choose to hold people morally responsib
this has important real-world consequences for social issues such as crime and p

First, though, it is useful to review how the conflict between free will and determ

Hard Determinism

As we explored, hard determinists contend that due to the truth of determinism
Yet, if this is the case, then moral responsibility itself can also be claimed to be a
human being is able to choose alternative courses of action throughout their life
agency, is it good or just to reward or punish people for their actions?

At first, it may seem as if we should abandon the idea of moral responsibility entire
comes to treating other people. Nonetheless, it is actually a little difficult to judge h
responsibility if hard determinism is correct. In our rewarding or punishing people
free choices or beliefs, but simply the prior events that have led to us judging peopl
rather nihilistic or pessimistic view on the matter, it is possible to contend that if we
actions, we have no free will over the way we hold people morally responsible
or punish so was simply meant to be; there is no way of meaningfully chang

However, it may also be possible to avoid such a pessimistic or nihilistic view on
determinism is true and free will does not exist, it is still not the case that we can
circumstance. So there is no reason to suppose that the world has to be a certai
understanding. In fact, the complexity of the world may be impossible to compr

responsibility is still pertinent in the face of the unknown; where we don't know commit certain good or bad actions in the future. In this sense, moral responsib fiction, where we continue to reward and punish people despite knowing there i way of imposing a kind of convenient or pragmatically useful moral order rather

This will undoubtedly be an unsatisfactory conclusion for some, but it might lead on moral responsibility, particularly when it comes to pun[illegible]ent. For, if moral fiction, then it is possible to recognise the import[illegible]al and external causes particular way. This in turn may lead to [illegible]ogressive ideas about crime and in the next part.

Compat[illegible]n

In many ways, the difference between hard determinism and compatibilism is a will. For both uphold determinism, so both also hold that, in essence, all our act events. So how might views on moral responsibility differ between the two, if hu proper power or agency over their actions?

Well, for classical compatibilists, their views on moral responsibility might be an fiction concept we explored when looking at hard determinism. The central idea and punish individuals for the actions that they will, or are in accordance with th not reward or punish actions where an individual was physically constrained fro examples of how this works in practice, one can easily look to how court cases a typically we distinguish between punishing someone when they undertook actio punishing someone who did not. A classic example is the difference between mu former requires the intent to kill whereas the latter does no[illegible] Similarly, we often punishment if they are sufficiently mentally ill, such that [illegible]ey could not have me

In this sense, classical compatibili[illegible]t in accord with many of the ways in which people. The focus is not on [illegible]an individual could have acted otherwise, b particular act[illegible]or [illegible]as well as the consequences of that action for others. Th further crim[illegible]ed to a person's character under the belief that those who do naturally pre[illegible]posed to commit crimes in the future in similar situations. At the the next part, compatibilism also potentially leads to more progressive ways of u punishment by recognising the myriad of influences that might both influence an

Libertarianism

Now, in comparison to compatibilism and hard determinism, one might expect li concept of moral responsibility. However, there is a range of positions possible w punishment under libertarian concepts of free will. For instance, if one accepts t significant control over their actions, such that there is an indeterministic compo beings make, then one might favour holding people more accountable to their a about libertarian free will implies that most individuals d[illegible]rt significant contr sense to reward those who do good actions and c[illegible]rs[illegible], punish those who do However, most libertarian philosophers [illegible]a less clear-cut vision of moral r Importantly, most still accept tha[illegible]a[illegible]ant number of our actions are determ influences. If you recall [illegible]s proposals about self-forming actions, the numbe exert meani[illegible]ag[illegible]over their choices may be quite small in comparison to to instinct c[illegible]se. If this is the case, then libertarianism may still support a w responsibility, especially when it comes to difficult ethical dilemmas where the r been difficult to discern. What may matter significantly more than the freedom which they are unfree, and so rewards or punishments still need to be tempered constraints individuals may possess upon choosing courses of action.

Therefore, libertarianism can offer a range of perspectives on moral responsibilit
and punishment as a result. In the final part of this section, we will take a closer
in the context of crime and see how it can be applied to real-world social issues.

Discussion Activity

Do you believe discussions on free will should influence our beliefs about rewa
in pairs or small groups.

Crime and Punishme

One difficu th kers have faced throughout history is deciding how a society shou y treat those who are convicted of crimes. In this section, we won't go into detail about the nature of crime or what should be considered a crime, but will instead look at how the debate around free will can influence our understanding of fair punishment. For, by and large, most judicial systems are built upon the societal consensus that individuals freely choose to break the law and so should be accordingly punished for their lack of moral responsibility when it comes to obeying the laws of the land. Similarly, when an individual commits a crime, we often don't want to see them punished simply because this prevents them from performing more crimes (if, say, they are locked in prison) but because we believe they **deserve** it. This idea of desert is what often underpins the punishment of criminals as a fair act. But if human beings do not possess meaningful free will, then neither basic interpretation of the conflicts we've explored, criminals could not have cho commit the crime. So do they deserve their punishment, and is it truly fair to pu

Well, when we take a look at the different th ri e've studied throughout th different conclusions. The suppor h rian free will, for example, might l kind of **retributive justice** f This involves the criminal suffering in some crime they ha or While many progressive countries now seek to redu common se t among many that criminals should suffer for what they have break the la harm another person. If a criminal does possess some kind of a may be a fair position to hold, even if libertarians admit that deterministic cause decisions, since there is always the possibility that a criminal had the ability to ac Moreover, criminal choices they might have freely made in the past may have in made in the present, meaning even if they did not possess meaningful free will f they freely chose their character and the circumstances that led to them commit

However, this idea of retributive justice becomes much more controversial if we compatibilism or hard determinism. For even the compatibilist holds that a pers determined by various factors such as their biology, culture and environment. T conditioned to cause crime and does not possess the kind of ability to act otherv justice. In fact, if you recall, during the section on Hume, we oted that he viewe important in order that progressive ideas about justic d e valid. If people their actions, it would often make little sens someone's crimes or m or circumstances.

Thus, when we consi e and punishment from a compatibilist or hard dete well end up ri a different emphasis on justice. For example, punishment deterrence considering how crime often arises from social circumstances oppression or marginalisation, may end up focusing on improving a person's cha disinclined from committing crimes in the future. This kind of justice looks much considers a **therapeutic** approach to treating and preventing crime. The idea ma should be judged according to the myriad of events and circumstances that caus may be on a society to look out for and prevent crime before it happens.

However, this isn't to say that this kind of justice leaves out the concerns of the v
reform and a therapeutic approach to crime are also many who support **restorat**
resolving criminal issues by facilitating meetings and resolutions between crimin
may be accompanied by forms of **restitution**, but the primary aim is to repair the
and help those who have committed crimes realise the extent of the harm they l
reduce further offences.

Detailing these more progressive kinds of ... is not to argue that the libertari
retributive justice. In fact, it is likely that many libertarians hold that these kinds
are important. But if one adopts a compatibilist position, it may be that argume
are strengthened for ... essive justice focuses less on desert and more on trea
position tha... bly is more consistent with a deterministic view of the world.
well as potentially that of the hard determinists, shifts people's perspective of re
questions of what people deserve and towards how people's criminal actions are
environments, character and societal influences.

Quick Quiz

1. What is causal determinism?
2. What is the difference between compatibilism and incompatibilism?
3. Name two different incompatibilist positions on free will.
4. Who put forward a theory of psychological determinism?
5. What two forms of liberty did Hume distinguish between?
6. What is free will, in Hume's view?
7. Name one philosopher who supports a libertarian view of free will.
8. What is the difference between retributive justice and ...storative justice?

Conscience

What you will learn in this section:

The philosophical discussion around the nature of conscience and its value for m

- Religious views on the nature of conscience with reference to Thomas Aqui
- Non-religious views on the nature of conscience with reference to Sigmund
- The various roles of conscience with referenc[illegible] te[illegible]g [illegible]es, breaking prom
- The value of conscience as a moral g[illegible] [illegible]ligh[illegible] of the religious and non-re

Starter Activity:

Is conscie[illegible]ati[illegible]al activity or an irrational one? A useful moral guide or a one's attac[illegible]t to authority? Think of a time when conscience has steered y wrong way, and write down your thoughts on the nature of conscience and its as you progress throughout this section.

Key Thinker	
Name	Thomas Aquinas
Born	1225
Died	1274
Key text	*Summa Theologica* (1265–1274)
Why are they important?	Aquinas is one of the most important Catholic scholars and i upon modern Catholic doctrine today, writing on everything Christian ethics.
Did you know?	Aquinas also composed hymns, which are still a part of mod

Key Thinker	
Name	Sigmund Fre[illegible]
Born	185[illegible]
Died	[illegible]
Key text	*The Ego and the Id* (1923)
Why are they important?	Freud is the founder of psychoanalysis and also one of the mo psychology for many, even if his ideas have fallen out of favou many popular ideas such as the ego, superego and id, as well continue to endure within public and literary imagination.
Did you know?	Freud in his early career was an avid supporter of cocaine as mental health issues. However, as you can imagine, this soo discontinued using it by the end of the nineteenth century.

Introduction

Regardless of how you might define it as a concept, it is very likely that throughou the familiar prick of your conscience during various ethical dil[illegible]mas. Although it understand, the idea that human beings possess an int[illegible]m[illegible]ral faculty has bee throughout history, and many have even cla[illegible]d t[illegible]conscience is one of the few and wrong. However, at the same ti[illegible]e[illegible]ture and purpose of conscience has the rise of modern psycholo[illegible]sociology. For is conscience truly a reliable sou just reflect the [illegible]ora[illegible]s that have been inculcated and internalised in us si

Throughout [illegible]section we will explore both religious and non-religious views o though, we can note the basic features of the concept. For, in one sense, there i conscience, which allows to look over past actions and judge whether they have or character. However, there is a second element that is much more present-fac future at times. This arises often on the spur of the moment and motivates us t

seem to go against our conscience during ethical dilemmas. In this sense, consci
rational and emotional elements depending on the situation.

These two elements are often echoed when we speak of the concept in our ever
about going against their conscience during ethical dilemmas while others might
when discussing actions they have performed in the past. Moreover, others mig
faculty altogether, claiming that they only act according t
to see why discussions of conscience are importa
about an idea that issues moral guidance
whether it is even trustworthy in
yet committed acts oth

Moreover,
conscience is also an important factor. We may very well be less inclined to pun
were just following their conscience, while we may admonish those who took ac
instinctively might believe to be unconscionable moral choices. Yet when we sp
manner, are we really talking about a universal moral faculty all individuals must
about a kind of relativism, where we believe a person's moral instincts must refl
society or norm? If the latter, are we really even justified in connecting moral re
In the case of the first thinker we will study, the answer is a sure 'yes' as, for the
feeling, it is the voice of reason.

Religious Views on Conscience

The concept of conscience has a long history in religious thought. For many Chri
to be the voice of God acting through human beings. When one feels the pang o
dilemma, it is, in effect, a sign that an action or a choi
strongest interpretation of this idea, conscience
known to human beings seeking mo

However, there are
do not see
ethical dilen
Moreover, if we did have access to God's will so easily, what is the need for ethica
the Church? Could we not just follow our conscience in all situations? It may be t
voice of God both devalues human agency in moral decision-making and trivialise
even affect human free will, for would any reasonable human being freely disobe

Lastly, the most important issue might well be that our consciences don't always
seemingly immoral actions on a daily basis which they view as consistent with th
good actions without any conscious reflection. Moreover, why would there ever
human conscience reflected the will of God. Shouldn't we all just agree?

It is clear when you look at this strong interpretation of conscience that it is quite
conscience is, it cannot simply be a direct pathway to
arising. However, one particularly famous theologian, Thomas Aquinas, took qui
which we will examine next.

Aquinas, Reason and Natural Law

Thomas Aquinas put forward quite a distinctive view of conscience, holding that it was not some special moral faculty or revelation from God but instead an extension of human **reason**. More precisely, the word Aquinas uses is **ratio**, and within his thought it is a somewhat broader concept than our everyday understanding of rationality. Ratio, for Aquinas, is a gift from God to human beings that allows them to understand how they are made in God's image and gain knowledge of the moral principles we ought to live by. In this sense, although ratio certainly contributes to other areas, it does have a specific religious slant, and is essential for the field of **natural theology**: learning about the nature and purpose of God and humanity through observation and rational reflection.

So what is natural law? Well, as you may well already know, it is a body of moral principles that reflect a specific, divinely imparted natural order of the world. For Aquinas, human beings are created by God for specific purposes, which are known both through **special revelation**, teachings God has directly given to human beings, and teachings which human beings come to know through observation and reasoning. Natural law, in an important sense, fills in the gaps in Scripture, allowing us to gain an understanding of obligations human beings possess and how moral principles should be correctly applied. For Aquinas, if we act according to our reason, we are ultimately acting according to God's will. Reflection leads to an understanding of God's laws and how to apply them.

Thus, an important part of ratio is how human beings apply moral principles. Aquinas calls this **practica ratio**, which can be translated as practical reason. It is knowledge and understanding of principles and ideals, and is important for Aquinas in showing how ratio is not merely theoretical but a way in which human beings actively engage with moral decision-making. An example is that of a bow and arrow. Abstract reason might tell us why crafting a bow with particular properties to loose an arrow with the correct force and direction is good; however, actually making said bow requires practical reason: knowing what materials to use and how to cut them to size, and finally how to ensure accuracy. Since its inception, practical reason is put to the test whenever we have to act.

Conscientia and Synderesis

Nonetheless, before we go into Aquinas' ideas about conscience, there is another step. For behind the practica ratio is an even more fundamental principle called **synderesis**: the innate ability of the human mind to apprehend God's laws. From this, Aquinas holds that we arrive at the first foundational principle of natural law: that *good is to be pursued and evil avoided*. This might seem a little strange. If human beings do possess this innate ability, and if we are naturally drawn to what is good, why do we still perform bad actions? Shouldn't there be significantly more moral harmony than we can commonly observe?

Now, you might have wondered why we didn't define Aquinas' view of conscience first. But it is important to appreciate this background of his ethics, particularly the concept of synderesis as not just an innate ability to apprehend God's law but also to judge how we talk about and apply the application of this law. In other words, it is a kind of universal premise that underpins our actions in the world. Yet a clear difficulty emerges because human actions are naturally sinful and flawed. This is why practical reason is not enough on its own; other capacities are needed to make sense of it.

This is ultimately where conscience fits in. Aquinas defines it as 'the application of knowledge' (*Summa Theologica*, I–II, I); it is the employing of practical reason to discern how best to act in a particular situation. For, while synderesis as a kind of innate habit cannot be wrong, conscience can err. This fallibility means when we do wrong, it is not because of our inability to apprehend God's laws but to understand them and apply them correctly. Conscience is, thus, not a source of moral **guide**; it is morally neutral and can err when it comes to translating our moral knowledge

Ignorance and Conscience

Hopefully, you can now see the place of conscience in Aquinas' ethics. It is a mu
it also arguably fits the different ways we talk about it in our lives. If we're follo
we're just following what our reason is telling us when we face an ethical dilemn
bad conscience, we're referring to the failure of our reason to regularly determi
according to God's laws. In this sense, Aquinas' portra
is sharpened as we correctly reason on the best c
action throughout ou

This leads us nicely on to talki
ow conscience can err. For, ultimately,
reason, a wrong actio
rmed because of **ignorance**. Aquinas holds t
ignorance t
conscience to choose immoral actions: **vincible ignora**
former con
norance that it is likely could be overcome through reason, w
that no human being could reasonably overcome. As an example, imagine a ski l
a very difficult, steep slope. If a person skis up to the lift with the right gear and
they would be able to ski the difficult slope. This means if the operator lets then
an accident when they ski down the slope, it is not one the operator could have
their ignorance *invincible*. However, if a person barely wearing any protective cl
skis wishes to go up in the lift and the operator lets them, any accident that occu
could have been reasonably foreseen and would be an example of *vincible* ignor

The important idea is that in cases of vincible ignorance, a person can be held m
actions. If they had truly attempted to apply reason to the ethical dilemma, they
actions might transgress God's law. However, we cannot hold people morally re
result of invincible ignorance, for no amount of reasoning could have allowed th
of their actions. In this way, Aquinas emphasises the importance of **prudence** in
instinctively but must also properly attempt to reason
e good and bad ac
Aquinas' ethics are consequentialist, but rat
hat moral principles are
dependent. While synderesis offers
ity of human beings knowing rig
steer this knowledge in the
. Conscience is, therefore, not just an imm
power of reas
d through continued reflection.

Discussion Activity

What issues can you foresee in Aquinas' concepts of vincible and invincible ign
small groups.

What's the Problem?

On the surface, it can seem as if Aquinas' view of conscience quite nicely fits our
what if introspection about its nature and purpose is misleading? While it's appe
just an extension of reason and that human beings have the innate ability to kno
challenged by secular analyses, particularly those from the more modern fields o

For instance, what if human beings didn't possess
e ability to apprehend
conscience, therefore, still be useful, or w
t j
be a form of rational reflect
we've come to believe through o
ce of the world or our upbringing?
itself *wasn't rational* and
s a kind of impulse or guilt that manifests its
different par
ou
These are all important considerations, especially w
number of
t moral beliefs people possess and the way conscience differs
Aquinas is co
ct, then reason should to some degree reveal a level of unanimit

But many critics have questioned whether this is the case, and moreover have as
thinking of conscience in terms of practical reason. Thus, in the next section, we
major early figures behind a psychological interpretation of conscience: Sigmund

Non-religious Views on Conscience

We noted that one of the key elements to understanding Aquinas' view of consc that human beings have the ability to apprehend God's law. This is naturally dep But if God is thought not to exist, the question arises not only about what consci provides moral guidance. Any non-religious focus on conscience as a result ofte while it is obvious that conscience is a form of mental pr or state which elic to a person's moral beliefs, it is less clear why cor s a state emerges in h does conscience exist, and what is its pu

Now, it is likely that cor e to some degree has a biological origin. There is s least for m vi hardwired to produce certain states in response to e transparent nscience can take many forms, and that a complex number o its generation and form in a person. These might be explainable in terms of indiv perhaps even in terms of societal norms and pressures. Moreover, we have to c produced by conscience, whether they be inhibitors to certain actions, such as g satisfaction upon acting in line with one's moral beliefs. The interactions betwe conscience works in different situations and whether we can consider conscienc proposed by religious thinkers such as Aquinas.

Freud's Psychological Approach

Freud was an early twentieth-century psychologist and philosopher who is credit by many as the founder of psychoanalysis, a clinical method for treating mental illnesses through constructive dialogue between a patient and doctor. Naturally the development of psychoanalysis, Freud came to propo any ideas about h the human mind worked, why human beings belie ar acted as they did and mental phenomena such as conscience m te emselves in the human psy Many of these ideas were novel a at the time, and arose out of Freud's own experiences treatin o presented themselves with various ment issues, such as or obsessive behaviour, stress and anxiety. In fact, Freu came to ho human beings generally suffered from varying degrees of thes low-lying mi ental illnesses, which he referred to as **neuroses**.

Now, these neuroses certainly are common; there are bound to be times in your life when you have been anxious or stressed, for example. But what Freud puts forward is that these visible aspects of the mind arise from the interaction of underlying structures or constructs in a person's psyche. Many of these structur by Freud as the **unconscious** mind: the workings of the mind that aren't available introspection. These include different motivations, desires, interactions and pro another are hidden and can only be learnt about through certain psychoanalytic and phenomena such as dreams.

How, though, does this all relate to conscience? Well, Freud held that conscienc feelings of **guilt**, which are manifested in different ways depending on a person's background. But what causes this guilt to arise is the various interactions betwe unconscious mind, or, more precisely, the **superego** and the **id**.

The Ego, Superego and Id

Freud's tripartite division of the human psyche came about due to his perceived
when talking about the conscious and unconscious minds. These were difficult i
though now most people have come to terms with the idea that there are certai
largely inaccessible. The existence of an unconscious part of our mind naturally
conscience' as put forward by Aquinas, for it presents the possibility that our mo
an underlying psychological impulse we aren't even aw

To start, though, we can outline what Freud means when he talks about the ego,

- **The ego** – The ego is the mediating rational mind, which mediates between
socialised values of the superego. Although it includes what we would cons
is also unconscious as there are various organisational functions it pe
unawa
- **The superego** – The superego is our moral voice, or conscience, that reflects
principles and ideals taught to us by our various parental and cultural influe
accessible to the conscious mind but a significant amount resides in the unc
moral perfection and criticises and punishes desires, feelings and habits tha
- **The id** – The id is a disorganised, unconscious aspect of the mind which con
It is the source of our physical desires and impulses, especially towards plea
holds the human **libido**, which seeks these pleasure-seeking activities regar
destructive influence. This generates the internal chaos of the id, as it strive
irrespective of the cost to our lives.

So, we can instantly see that the conscience is equivalent to the superego in Freu
the part of our mind which seeks to align our behaviour with the values we have
during our upbringing. Here, a key idea is **internalisation**. This is the process by
our lives come to be part of our own moral outlook. This typically occurs throug
especially during our early years. As such, a significant influence that rewards or punishe
development of our superego, and thus our conscience. For any individual, this inf
parents, but these influences can also be cultural or religious. If a person interna
their conscience is likely to be able to reflect the moral rules of that religion's scr
person is raised in a secular environment, their conscience could instead reflect
their culture or society. What's important to note is that conscience, in Freud's v
(unlike in Aquinas' view). In fact, it really only represents what moral values we
however strange or unusual others might consider them to be.

Guilt and Conscience

So we've explored the nature of the superego and how it develops. However, w
how it interacts with the ego and id. For, as you might well have guessed, the re
aspects is less than harmonious. The superego as a moralising force is often natu
seeks pleasure-seeking activities that are commonly held to be immoral, such as
does not just wish for these activities but wishes to pursue them to the point of
what destruction it causes. So we have these two different forces in our brain, o
perfection and the other aiming for a certain degree of moral self-destruction.

This is where the ego comes in. Its role as the rational centre of the brain i
opposing impulses and try to devise courses of action that at least appear to br
benefit for an individual. In short, the ego allows human beings to function in
example, imagine you are looking for a new pair of shoes but the ones you desire
demand you have the shoes there and then in order to fulfil that desire. The sup
pairs of shoes and give one pair to a person in need. However, the ego would pr
good pair of shoes, wait until you can afford the desired pair and then just buy th

This is a simplistic example, of course, but it's the kind of interaction that occurs
severe moral dilemmas. The issue, though, Freud claims, is that our id tends to b

most individuals as the desires of the id are typically easier to gratify. While one achieving moral perfection is a difficult, effort-filled endeavour. Giving into your means, Freud claims, that more often than not the ego tends to side with the id, of benefit to an individual, but may be self-destructive, or harmful to others ove consequence, though. The pressures of the superego when the ego sides with th mentally punishing or admonishing an individual, producing strong feelings of **gu conscience** for Freud; it is the superego making itself felt when one fails to achie ethical dilemma and succumbs in some way to the desires of the id.

Discussion Activity

Do Freud's theories about the ego, the superego and the id seem accurate to y unscientific psychological fiction? Discuss in pairs or small groups.

Conscience and Neuroses

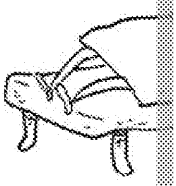
If Freud is right here, though, why aren't we feeling constantly guilty? For it is ce lives we're certainly not acting strictly according to our moral ideals. Well, Freud during these feelings of guilt. Instead, it develops what Freud calls **defence mec** rationalise or justify the siding of the ego with the id. Examples of these mechan denial, fantasy or projection. For instance, imagine you're given a cake to share favourite flavour and you sneakily steal a few extra slices without them knowing punish you for this act with feelings of guilt, but you also may try to brush these deserve the cake after a long, hard week or that your friend doesn't really like ca reasoning alleviates guilt but also means we often have a tendency to engage in immoral behaviour without meaningful remorse.

Moreover, this kind of tension can result in various problems, such as stress or de tension between the ego, superego and id. This can even occur the other way, w according to their superego but in turn repressing the constant desires of the id suppressing of conflicting desires and feelings is what Freud calls **repression**, and behaviour may then manifest. For example, if one represses the desires of the sudden acts of violence or aggression as a person fails to acknowledge the strain per the wishes of the superego.

Freud's Later Views

Freud was an interesting character in the sense that his views were never static. adding more concepts and more ideas to his views on human behaviour, meanin of the conscience in terms of internalisation and repression was never abandone In particular, Freud's later works began to compare two fundamental forces in th and the **death drive** (**Thanatos**, although Freud did not use this term). For, at he will to live, they also seem to have certain self-destructive aspects to their perso noticed that soldiers with war-associated trauma would often re-enact their trau personal behaviour or in dreams. Similarly, his patients would often relive or rep regardless of whether the consequences were materially harmful.

Thus, Freud came to hold that there was an innate death drive in human beings; a basic pressure towards death that can take over our subconscious thoughts in stressful times. It's a strange idea and one that Freud himself admitted was in part speculation. The push and pull between our will to live and the death drive can potentially play havoc with our conscience and behaviour. Freud, for instance, came to hold that one of the major roles of civilisation is to repress this death drive and its associated violent and destructive behaviours. However, this means that internalised values in the superego come to



conflict with this death drive and manifest once more as neuroses. In this sense, to live and the death drive can cause deep anxieties, and show once more how c determined construct, not a guide to what is right and wrong.

What's Wrong with Freud's Picture?

Freud's picture of conscience is not a pretty one, but it does perhaps better expl differences in the way it manifests itself in everyday be[illegible]. For, on the one of the superego as our conscience can pressure u[illegible] to do better things. Yet, at th can easily disobey conscience, and perhaps [illegible]portantly how people could perfor according to their conscience, [illegible] this be the result of different internalised repression of unconsci[illegible]s.

However, Fr[illegible]views were controversial, even at the time of his academic car distance themselves from his work for a variety of reasons. One important critic his views are ultimately unscientific. We cannot test for the existence of concep and the id, nor can their existence be falsified. For any behaviour could technica interactions when the only evidence is phenomena such as dreams or aberrant b subjects tended to be taken from a very narrow section of middle-class affluent not reflect the nature of conscience within the rest of humanity.

At the same time, Freud's central ideas about an unconscious mind have proved modern psychologists accept that conscience is likely to be due to the interactio internalised moral values and their actions, even if such interactions are not betw the superego and the id. For example, Lawrence Kohlberg, another influential ps as an emergent phenomenon that evolves alongside a person's moral developm up into six stages with three general levels, these being:

1. **The preconventional level** – where morality is e[illegible]ly controlled and a p guided by what they can get away with
2. **The conventional level** – where [illegible]al [illegible]s focused around conformity to so scope moves from self i[illegible]st to the interests of larger social groups.
3. **The poste[illegible]ve[illegible]vel** – where morality is focused around abstract pri and sc[illegible]

Kohlberg argues that only at the postconventional level (particularly stage six) do determine people's actions. In this sense, conscience is not a mere interaction b mind but is the end stage of modern development, when a person's own moral b they naturally intrude on their decision-making. In prior stages, there might still conscience is active, but it is not fully fledged as their moral sense hasn't properl notes that some might never reach the higher stages of moral development and conscience at all.

Another thinker influenced by Freud, but who departed from his views, was Eric between the **authoritarian conscience** and the **humanistic conscience**. The form observations of German society in the 1930s under the Nazi Party and refers to t influenced by external authorities, whether they be pare[illegible], teachers or other co importantly, the authoritarian conscience is gove[illegible]d by the idea of rules and pu internalised by human beings into an int[illegible]nse of right and wrong. Howeve humanistic conscience, which is a[illegible] internal evaluation of our behaviour th counterpart. It is not al[illegible]t but it judges our behaviour not according t punishment[illegible] a [illegible] general sense of integrity; whether we have succeeded flourishing [illegible]

What we get with Fromm's ideas is a kind of integration of Freud's views with m perspective. For, arguably, conscience can't just be analysed person to person; t important to consider when we look at how conscience exists on a societal level. more detail when we come to analyse the views of Emile Durkheim. But Fromm

quite pessimistic when it came to human behaviour. He strongly emphasised the conscience and held that for the most part human beings are reduced to a state conscience is, in effect, predetermined by wider socio-economic forces that silen feel guilty about our own personal desires or moral aims.

Such analyses are important to consider as they expose the potential flaws in Fre doesn't fully consider conscience properly as a developm[illegible] phenomenon. W conscience in terms of defence mechanisms, is it [illegible] plausible that consci individual with a poorly developed mora[illegible] how would one distinguish b defence mechanism and ones w[illegible]ividual has a poorly developed consc potentially fail to accom[illegible] importance of society and culture, and how of a larger c[illegible]t. [illegible]ve can turn next to another theory of conscience, this **sociological a[illegible]ach** to the phenomenon.

Durkheim's Sociological Approach

We looked at how Freud's view of conscience might be overly individualistic. If c significantly by the values of a particular society or culture, shouldn't it be analys perspective? This is what Emile Durkheim, one of the founders of sociology, pro individual's conscience arises due to **social conditioning**, such that when a perso largely due to the socialised values they have internalised conflicting with their s similar to Freud in principle, so what exactly is distinctive about Durkheim's over

Well, Durkheim put forward quite a distinctive idea called **collective conscience**. within a particular society or culture that act as a unifying force upon its people. does not concern any individual moral conscience, but inst[illegible] the shared unders have of its social norms. Yet although it exists outsi[illegible] individual conscienc how people act and behave. As Durkheim s[illegible]s: *'The totality of beliefs and sent members of a society forms a dete[illegible]ystem with a life of its own.'* (E Durkh *Society,* 1893). Thus, whe[illegible]king at conscience, it is not enough to focus itself in indivi[illegible]s b[illegible] necessary to look at it on a societal level.

There is an i[illegible]tant intuitive appeal to this idea. If we think about how conscie but often within social interactions with others. Our behaviour is constrained no expectations but also by the moral expectations of others. Human beings are fu Durkheim's essential point is that if we accept this as true, we cannot examine m individualistically. Moreover, we can understand how human beings fundament this collective conscience. For, while people might have their own personality, q still adhere to the societal norms of their society, and thus any understanding of the collective.

What's most important to understand, however, is how individuals have an emo conscience. We often feel shame when we fail to live up to the standards impos this is a powerful motivation to act in ways that cohere with t[illegible]e collective consc collective conscience breeds solidarity among those w[illegible]it.

What's Missing from Durkh[illegible]s Approach?

In the same way that Fre[illegible] misses the important collective aspects of c that Durkhei[illegible]er[illegible] more individualistic aspects. Throughout his analyse when deali[illegible] societies or cultures that prioritised the individual over the co over how ide[illegible] collective conscience can encompass individuals who reject th even a cursory look through history shows that the collective conscience can pot individual influences seek to change certain norms or ideals. As such, it may be a psychological approach, such as Freud's, is needed to explain these more individ

Yet, this issue also exposes a more general problem with non-religious perspecti
phenomenon can be analysed at multiple different levels, whether it be biologic
psychological processes in the mind, or even sociological forces among a group o
therefore, remains as to what kind of approach we should prefer or how all thes
Maybe there might be a unified explanation which accommodates these differen
one compares Freud and Durkheim it is easy to spot the differences. Whereas F
influences in a psychological sense, Durkheim holds that t[illegible]ccommodation is
influences also exist as a collective conscience, not just an individual one. Thus,
whether a unified explanation for consci[illegible]n be given.

This is where the advant[illegible] religious perspective come in. While there are
conscience [illegible] t[illegible]omenon to be the result of divine intervention in a d
easy footing [illegible]derstanding how it works. Take the religious thinker Joseph B
that conscience is a God-given inner sense of right and wrong. He divides it into
human beings to promote their own self-happiness and another which tells hum
happiness of humankind. The difficulties in conscience arise through mediating
Similar to the ideas of Freud and Durkheim, there is the tension between the ind
not necessarily as great a clash as ultimately conscience has a foundational expla

At the same time, while it is not clear that non-religious perspectives offer a unif
conscience, there is still considerable agreement about the kinds of influence tha
it manifests itself in human beings. Whether or not a psychological or sociologic
good consensus that a naturalistic explanation is possible; it is just the complexit
difficult to tease out and satisfactorily explain. In the next part, however, we wil
these different perspectives and how they might influence our understanding of

Discussion Activity

Do you believe there is a form of collective conscience in society? Or is Durkhe
talking about the different norms and principles many societies uphold? Discu

The Ro[illegible]f Conscience in Moral Decision-maki

So far we have looked at a number of theories about the nature of conscience. Y
conscience is not a passive entity but a source of moral guidance for many peopl
with a religious perspective on conscience, it is also likely to be more trusted dur
perhaps for those who are non-religious there are greater grounds for mistrustin
both on the theory one subscribes to and the context of the ethical dilemma fac

To explore this idea a bit further, we can first look at Aquinas. Under his view, c
application of our reason and knowledge to our moral activity. Now, while it is c
err, Aquinas would not hold that it is wrong to go against one's conscience durin
one is expected to employ one's conscience to reason through the right action, i
understanding human beings have of God's law. In the most fundamental sense
necessary to determine the goods that should be pursued in an ethical dilemma
be avoided.

However, in the case of the no[illegible]eligious perspectives we have examined, it is n
should be a trusted mo[illegible]d. Taking Freud as an example, we can note that t
through int[illegible]at[illegible]of the various influences, rewards and punishments a pe
upbringing. [illegible]en clashes with the id, which pursues only basic, instinctual d
Now, in many cases, the pang of conscience may be important to prevent these
hold in a person. Yet the superego itself may also be unreliable; there is no guar
good, only what moral values a person has been brought up to believe.

The same may be true when looking at Durkheim's sociological analysis. A perso
the societal values they are invested in as part of a collective conscience. Yet wh
representative of what is morally good? It may be necessary for a person to bre
which case their conscience isn't always a reliable moral guide. These discussion
when it comes to analysing the **value** of conscience, but for the moment we can
issues: **lying and breaking promises** and **adultery**.

Lying and Breaking Promises

Lying is a common circumstance where we might feel the pang of conscience.
Often we are brought up to believe that one should be honest, yet, at the same
time, there are other situations where we believe lying might do more good than
bad. In fact, even in cases where we believe lying to be doing good, we might
still have a bad conscience. The same is true for breaking promises. So what
exactly is the role of conscience when it comes to lying?

Taking Aquinas first, it should be noted that Aquinas believed that lying is always
defined it as asserting something one believes or knows to be false, creating a ki
self that one presents to the world and the real self underneath. This does not n
wrong to lie, for Aquinas, particularly if a greater moral principle would be broke
should seek to always be honest. So how does this relate to conscience?

Well, as we saw, conscience is the rational application of moral knowledge to a p
Aquinas to be right in saying that lying is de facto wrong, then generally our cons
do tell a lie. However, as we noted, practical reason is the key concept here. If v
order to stop a murderer killing an innocent individual, we would to lie about thei
rationalise that we should break a lesser moral principle by lying in order to avoid
Now, this obviously excludes the possibility of remaining quiet and not saying an
Aquinas), but such a situation may be an acceptable application of one's conscie
double effect, as put forward by Aquinas, is potentially a key example of practica
usually immoral act, but can foresee a greater, necessary effect.

The role of conscience, therefore, is to judge whether lying can be justified accor
situation. It may be permissible (but still wrong) to lie if one can foresee certain
consequences. The same is true for breaking promises. For while it is likely to b
could produce a greater or necessary positive effect, the situation may well dem
conscience to reasonably assess whether moral principles about breaking promis

But what about non-religious perspectives on lying and breaking promises? Well
conscience is the work of the superego. It provides a counterpoint to the id and
person is brought up within a family, culture or society that values honesty, it is l
internalised within the superego. This means that when a person tells a lie, they
conflict, even if the ego rationalises the lie as having a greater purpose. The role
to push an individual to conform to their internalised values and refrain from lyin

The same is true, in a different sense, for Durkheim's collective conscience
of conscience is to maintain adherence to the shared ideals, norms and values of
therefore, truth-telling or honesty is a virtue espoused by the collective conscien
it. In this sense conscience has the role of maintaining social conformity. A pers
not because of any individual inclination but because it is part of the collective, s
society. This may well be seen, for example, in commerce. Any kind of trader ty
honest about the exchanges they make and may well refrain from lying or breaki
collective ideals about a fair market.

Adultery

In the case of adultery, we can perform a similar analysis to that of lying. For Aq
and should always be revealed to be wrong through one's conscience, as it goes
marriage. On a more basic level, however, we might also hold that practical reas
contravenes the natural trust we place in relationships, both as partners and as f
change, in the same way as lying and breaking promises. If a situation is such t
might be broken, but, for most Christians, it may be hard to envisage a situation
inform someone to break marital bonds. Therefore, adultery may well be a clear ca
person against any such acts.

However, t[illegible]e may not be true if we adopt Freud's or Durkheim's perspecti
wrongness of adultery is due more to societal norms and principles which are re
collective conscience. The pang of conscience, therefore, may reflect a phenome
superego or the participation in a collective set of societal ideals. What this mea
adultery, for a conscience, is only dependent on the circumstances of an individu
Someone who was brought up to believe that marriage is not sacred or importan
importance to adulterous acts. Similarly, a society that has no strong attachmen
generate an aversion to adultery in its collective norms and ideals.

Such differences may be reflected in how British society has progressed in the la
Church influence, divorce is more common and less importance is placed upon m
couples might even deem it acceptable to engage in adulterous acts, either reas
harmed or holding that marital vows are not strictly morally binding. In these ca
well not object to adulterous acts. Furthermore, an interesting problem for Aqu
conscience is just the use of practical reason, then it may be possible to hold tha
necessarily a wrong. Many of Aquinas' moral principles are predicated upon Chr
exist, then conscience as a use of practical reason may lead to different conclusio
beliefs. Naturally, Aquinas would argue that conscience has to be understood in
God-given ability for humans to know God's laws. Yet it is something to reflect o
of this section, where we discuss the value of conscience as a moral guide.

Activity

We've looked at two key ethical issues in our discussion of conscience. Howev
that arguably remain tricky for philosophers. How would you apply the theorie
the following issues?

1. Consuming animal products
2. Cheating in an exam
3. Euthanasia

The Value of Conscience as a Moral Guide

In the last section, we looked at how different theories of conscience might help
making around key issues in ethics. Yet, if there is the possibility of conscience a
is possible to ask: what exactly is the value of conscience? This is a troubling que
disagreement. For, if conscience does not impart reliable moral guidance, is it ri
first place? And should we be looking to other areas of c e and thought for r

Taking the thinkers we've looked at thro g this section, it is possible to arriv
questions. For Aquinas, it is clear that c science is a very valuable moral guide.
only through the use of r t reason upon our moral knowledge that we can
situation. W t c ence, human beings would be in effect paralysed; in co
right moral r les are but with no way to apply them to our everyday surrou
Furthermore, when conscience guides us wrongly, Aquinas holds this is simply d
foreseeable or not. Thus, even when we do face different kinds of moral disagre
fallibility, not the faculty of conscience itself.

Yet, if we turn towards Freud, a different picture of conscience emerges. For if t
the internalised norms of the superego clashing with our base desires and ration
emerge. For these internalised norms may be misguided, depending on one's u
acknowledge the rational needs of a particular situation. Thus, conscience, altho
internal moral values, is not an impartial voice of reason. Rather, it stands again
aspiration to moral perfection. In this sense, conscience might be valuable in po
for a person, but it may also be a hindrance in situations where the ethical ideal
realities of a particular dilemma. Furthermore, it may be that a person's interna
even immoral. In these cases, the pang of conscience may lead to wrongful actio

The same is potentially true for Durkheim, alt ou h p aps to a lesser extent.
the bundle of ideals of a particular s e v. n this sense, the collective conscien
psychological problems of an e ind vidual. However, it may be that a society
norms or virtues that a e f rently self-destructive or immoral in certain situati
society beli e at s icism is a virtue, it may lead some to simply endure suffe
prevent it. I e cases, the collective conscience may not be the best moral g
ethical dilemmas where the needs of the collective are not present. However, a
conscience may also steer people towards actions that are communally beneficia
of their society. In these cases, conscience may still be a valuable moral guide, a
potential exceptions.

Quick Quiz

1. What is synderesis?
2. What is the difference between vincible ignorance and invincible ignorance?
3. How does our conscience arise according to Freud?
4. Name another figure (other than Freud) who puts forward a psychological t
5. What is internalisation?
6. What is collective conscience?
7. Which theory of conscience holds that it is a r onal process?
8. Which figure puts forward a s ch l account of conscience?

Bentham and Kant

What you will learn in this section:

A comparison between the philosophical ideas of Bentham and Kant about mora

- Bentham's utilitarianism and its teleological view of ethics.
- Kant's deontological ethics and the categorical imper[illegible].
- The degree with which these two systems of [illegible]s [illegible]n be reconciled with r[illegible]

Starter Activity:

What do you believ[illegible] essential elements of any religious system of ethic[illegible] commanc[illegible]t [illegible]ng inspired by his goodness or love? Write down your ide[illegible] with Benth[illegible]nd Kant's views on ethics throughout this section.

Key Thinker	
Name	Jeremy Bentham
Born	1748
Died	1832
Key text	*An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1
Why are they important?	Bentham is one of the main thinkers behind the developmer major force in law and justice in both the seventeenth and e considerably influencing the reform of prisons, schools, and
Did you know?	Bentham's body is still preserved as an auto-icon to this day UCL student centre if you visit.

Key Thinker	
Name	Immanuel Kant
Born	1724
Died	180[illegible]
Key text	[illegible]*ework of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785)
Why are th[illegible] important?	Kant is perhaps the most famous and influential philosopher i on nearly every major philosophical field during his life. His w philosophers today.
Did you know?	Kant was a notoriously punctual person, adhering to the san people used to set and regulate their watches according to h

Introduction

Throughout this section so far we have largely looked at meta-ethical concerns: w influenced by debates on issues such as free will and conscience. Yet, in the last look at two major figures in the history of ethics: **Jeremy Bentham** and **Immanue** for the beginnings of two major but very different approaches to ethics that con on by philosophers today. First, we deal with Bentham and his utilitarianism, a t some familiarity with from the first section: introduct[illegible]m[illegible]ta-ethics. Second deontological ethics and how Kant believed [illegible]ould derive valid moral principl Bentham and Kant are naturalists [illegible]ev[illegible]th deal with questions on moral de and a critical comparison of [illegible]with this section will highlight both the advan their approach[illegible]

But first, it is [illegible]n thinking about ethical naturalism once again. If you rememb defined by the belief that moral statements can be reduced to descriptive staten one thinks about this idea, one may be instinctively drawn into thinking about pr character, motivations or nature. However, the scope of naturalism is potentiall descriptive fact need not just concern human aspects of the world, but the natur

This particularly comes into focus when we discuss Kant later, for he argues that moral principles, implying that moral truths are structurally beyond any single hu

In this way, when we talk about naturalism, it is worth paying attention to conce words, when we talk about potential moral truths and facts, who are they truths do they apply to any possible being in the universe? Regardless, we shall first tu utilitarianism is rooted in the potentially very human ide **appiness**.

Bentham and Utilitarianism

Jeremy Ben wa ighteenth- and nineteenth-century British philosopher and **jurist** (g an expert in law), who is commonly regarded as the founder of **utilitarianism**. This is an ethical theory which holds that the right action is one that follows the **principle of utility**: one should seek to maximise utility in any ethical action one performs. Now this is of course quite the simplification of Bentham's ethics. He took utility here to mean happiness, defined by the presence of pleasure and the absence of pain. In his well-known work *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789) he writes:

Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. (Ch. 1, p. 1)

Bentham's ethics is thus **hedonistic** in nature. It ultimately holds that what is good is what is pleasurable and so one ought to act so as to generate as much pleasure (and as little pain) as possible. So long as thi ue Bentham held that it must be the case that *'the greatest hap in ss e greatest number… is the measure of right and wrong'* (Ben n, *A Fragment on Government*, 1776). **consequentialist**, as the goo or adness of an action is measured only by its much pleasure or pai rates.

Now Bentha ew was quite controversial for his time, particularly because h **hedonism**, the view that human beings are always motivated by pleasure or pain Many ethicists at the time were naturally a bit appalled at this view. Even to ma pessimistic. Don't we care about important concepts such as justice, beauty or h has the tendency to view human beings as nothing more than animals. This was critics, valid or not.

However, Bentham wasn't intending for his ethics to be pessimistic. Instead, he Bentham was not just concerned with the nature and meaning of ethics, but also **law**. He wanted a practical method for determining what was right or wrong, su rules and laws in a society, it was possible to effectively implement the ethical id vision of an ideal society. At the same time, Bentham was quite reductive when ideals. He argued that even it appeared people gained le pleasure from follow this was in fact just an appearance. For there are no o who gain a strong perso morally righteous, even if they won't ad emselves.

So we have two fundan ts to Bentham's ethics. The first, of course, is th generates t st happiness for the most number of people. The second is tha presence of nd the absence of pleasure. On the surface, it seems as if mor quite simple. All we do is figure out what course of action produces the most ha measure pleasure and pain in any situation? Is there any reasonable way to pred might generate? Well, true to form, Bentham argued there indeed was; through **calculus** (or **felicific calculus**).

The Hedonic Calculus

Now Bentham's utilitarianism, in being a consequentialist ethical theory, is also t
directed towards an end: happiness. However, there are still questions over hov
Bentham, for example, is an **act utilitarian**, holding that individuals should calcul
pain produced by each act they intend to do. However, act utilitarianism is not t
argued instead for **rule utilitarianism**, which holds that individuals should aim to
over time, and generate the most amount of pleasure and the least amount of p
there is the fundamental assumption that it is possible to be able to measure the
or a group of actions, generate.

Bentham in particular held that an action could be judged as good or bad fairly r
system for working out how much pleasure or pain an action produced. This mig
pleasure a mental state that is naturally obscured from human observation? We
aware to differing degrees of the barriers to judging how much pleasure an actio
hard-pressed to find a serious thinker who holds that any calculus could be comp
case of basic ethical dilemmas, it can be argued that when one thinks through th
foreseeable result that is more pleasurable than the others. What matters most
quantity of pleasure, especially when it is such a subjective phenomenon, but ins
different factors that are likely to affect the amount of pleasure generated. This
hedonic calculus, of which Bentham argued there were seven aspects:

1. **Intensity** – How strong or weak the happiness produced is
2. **Duration** – How long the happiness will last for
3. **Certainty** – How likely or unlikely the happiness is to occur
4. **Propinquity** – How near or remote in time the happiness is
5. **Fecundity** – How likely or unlikely the happiness is to occur or lead to furt
6. **Purity** – How free from pain the happiness is
7. **Extent** – How far the happiness will reach in terms of the number of people

Bentham thus holds that for each act, one must consider these different aspects
judging whether the overall act produces the most happiness possible. While Be
philosophers have acknowledged that act utilitarianism does place quite a burde
consequences of their actions, it can still be held that this is what moral responsi
ordinary actions can be judged to be inconsequential in producing happiness, me
rely on instinct to operate efficiently throughout the day and not be constantly c
they are producing!

However, you might already be able to spot some problems with Bentham's ethi
moral decision-making. In the next part of this section, we will explore a few an
stands up to extensive scrutiny.

Activity

Consider the following scenario:
Jerome is a keen angler and has decided to go on a fishing holiday in the Caribb
holiday, he joins an expedition with four others to a remote island where the c
good. En route, a tropical storm of fearsome magnitude envelops the small fis
themselves shipwrecked. The four other anglers, all of whom have sustained s
floating in a small life raft, unsure if or when they will be rescued. Fortunately,
medical supplies; unfortunately, he only has enough to treat half the group. Th
two people perish.

Over the course of the trip, in conversation Jerome has learnt that:

- Fisherman A is a 57-year-old priest who has done much charitable work in
- Fisherman B is a 43-year-old, who works in the accounting department of a
  is happily married with five children.
- Fisherman C is a 27-year-old bachelor who writes screenplays for big-budg
- Fisherman D is a 32-year-old widower who works part-time as a handyma

Using the utility calculus, try to work out which two people Jerome should save
results with the rest of the class. Did everyone come to the same conclusion?
any issues for Bentham's theory?

The Problems with Act Utilitarianism

Before we look at some of the issues with act utilitarianism, it is worth considerin
advantages. For while Bentham's ideas have been heavily criticised over the last
merits that have ensured it remains relevant today.

The first is its **simplicity**. While the calculation is inevitably difficult, most people can
clear basis for judging the goodness of any action. Happiness is a conce
intimately tied to pleasure and even if it is impossible to tell exactly how much pleasure
can be argued that these perceptions are a common experience all people can re
instance, we might all agree that eating a very spicy chilli will cause pain, while e
pleasure. Now, naturally there are some people who will masochistically enjoy e
stranger people who don't enjoy ice cream, but, regardless, happiness or unhapp
common causes for many people. In this sense, utilitarianism is also **practical**.

The second merit is its **impartiality**. Now, this causes problems for some, but, in
every human person as deserving of equal consideration. Regardless of who son
whether actions produce pain or pleasure for them, and many proponents regar
theory, since it forces people to account for human beings beyond their own per
whether an action is good or bad. Sometimes utilitarianism is also described as
wide variety of interests and perspectives.

However, the issues begin to arise when we consider how useful it is in practice
we shall explore a few key pervasive issues facing Bentham's utilitarianism.

Immoral Decisions

One of the difficulties with Bentham's utilitarianism is that on the surface it seem
intuitively seem to be morally questionable acts. For instance, should we kill anc
person to save 10 people on the transplant list? If one sticks to calculating this c
pleasure and pain, it seems as if this should be an easy decision to make in favou
transplant. Yet most people would regard this action as morally wrong. This is t
utilitarianism doesn't easily accommodate any meaningful concept of **human rig**

would typically oppose killing the person because we believe every person has th
moral decision-making is only guided by the calculation of pleasure and pain, no
to their life and livelihood. We should always be prepared to sacrifice individuals

Now, in some ways, utilitarianism may possess an advantage here. For often we
great need, it might be morally right to sacrifice a person in order to achieve a gr
example is during a war, such as the Second World War, where the sacrifice of A
as important to prevent Nazi occupying forces. Yet, what this criticism highlights
simply judge the goodness of actions based on their pleasurable or painful conse
other factors that are important, especially when it comes to guaranteeing huma

In fact, Bernard Williams points out that if utilitarian philosophers such as Benth
prepared to continuously perform smaller evil acts in order to prevent larger one
stealing a murderer's weapons before they kill someone. The trouble with this is
universally, then we would find ourselves in a world where everyone is constantly
of preventing large-scale immoral acts, a result that can hardly be endorsed. So
does not just come from the nature of utilitarian ethics but also how individuals
decision-making under its principles.

Such problems are why many modern utilitarian philosophers either endorse a v
where people follow moral principles that are thought to generate the greatest p
endorse different ideas about utility, which focus on **justice**, **preferences** or even
former, rules can be developed which endorse respecting the rights or welfare o
people will have to calculate actions based on a wider set of ideals. Yet, the trou
is that in focusing on acts, and pleasure/pain alone, it is too restrictive and reduc
guidance that agrees with our common ethical intuitions.

Problems with Calculation

This is perhaps one of the most cited problems with Bentham's philosophy; that
calculation is either impossible or too burdensome on the moral agent. Taking
the former issue first, we must ask one basic question: how can any individual
reliably predict the long-term pleasurable or painful effects of their actions? This
isn't an abstract question but one that individuals might easily encounter
throughout their lives in different ethical dilemmas. Imagine that you come
across a person drowning in a river. Naturally you would want to jump in and
save them. But what if, unbeknownst to you, the person is a violent criminal who
in the coming weeks will murder a number of people? Under Bentham's utilitaria
admit that saving the person's life was ultimately an immoral act, even if one co
consequences. Simply put, while Bentham wishes for us to use tools such as the
the right course of action, there can never actually be any certainty that we are r

Moreover, this epistemological issue leads to a number of other psychological pr
the case of the drowning murderer, would anyone really have time to calculate t
action? It's not as if in life-or-death scenarios we can do a background check on
to make sure they're better off alive than dead. Bentham's utilitarianism seems
upon the moral agent, one that leads to a kind of **moral paralysis**. For it is practi
being to continually calculate the pleasure and pain caused by their actions, yet ac
is required of any responsible person attempting to do the right thing.

Impartiality

We noted earlier how impartiality can be construed as an advantage for utilitaria some problems when we consider personal relationships. For if all human being we cannot give preference to friends and family in our everyday moral decision-m buy a chocolate cake for your friend's birthday, but en route to their party you e discover loves chocolate cake far more than your friend. Under Bentham's utilit may well be to give the cake to the random individual ins[illegible] of your friend. No criticism is misplaced. If we substitute the rando[illegible] for a homeless indivic may be that utilitarianism shows that th[illegible] ences we give to friends and fam beings should think about oth[illegible] more. Yet, most people would hold that special treatment outsi[illegible] h pleasure or pain our actions might generate.

Thus, we ca[illegible] hat Bentham's utilitarianism, despite having some advantages avoiding immoral decisions, calculation and impartiality. In fact, we shall explore comes to comparing Bentham's ethics with religious ethics, for all these aspects may well be irreconcilable. However, for the moment, we turn to a very differen comparison: Kantian **deontological ethics**.

Discussion Activity

What issue do you believe is most troubling for Bentham's utilitarianism? Disc

Kant and Deontological Ethics

Immanuel Kant is often considered one of the greatest philos[illegible]phers in human history, having written extensively on nearly every m[illegible]il[illegible]sophical topic and influencing the course of the subject imm[illegible]ns[illegible]ly [illegible] the next few centuries. Despite this, his work is v[illegible]ec[illegible]cal and often difficult to decipher. There are as man[illegible]ate[illegible]bout what Kant meant as there are about the merits of h[illegible]ophy! Most of his work was published during the eighteenth [illegible], when the Enlightenment was at its peak, and his philosophy r[illegible]s many of the ideals that were upheld by thinkers during this time, such as a strong emphasis on the importance of reason and the wish to move away from religious influences when thinking about fields such as ethics. Overall, he sought to encompass ethics within his grander philosophical project of **transcendental idealism**, which aimed to show how phenomena such as space, time and causality were mind-dependent, interrelated and necessary preconditions for understanding the world.

Most importantly, Kant believed that one could derive a complete, meaningful sy alone (although he did also hold that God was necessary as a **postulate** or founda that although Kant's ethics were naturalist in nature, he believed that moral truth structures, discoverable by anyone reasoning properly about how one ought to a as space or time, they were also necessary for understa[illegible]g [illegible]e world as it is. T from Bentham's ethics, which had their founda[illegible]io[illegible]n[illegible]notion that human bein and avoid pain. As a result, Kantian eth[illegible]s quite a distinctive form, and thro the key features that Kant beli[illegible]d er[illegible]ed any moral agent to engage in effectiv

The first thi[illegible]ot[illegible]hat Kant put forward a **deontological** system of ethics. T action is one complies with the relevant moral laws. The outcome or conse important when considering its goodness. Furthermore, Kant endorsed moral **abs** should always be followed, regardless of personal opinion, feelings or the context possesses a moral **duty** to adhere to moral laws, and human beings as a whole sho

Good Will and Duty

Before we grapple with ethical decision-making in Kant's deontological ethics, it about its foundations. For we noted already that Kant is preoccupied with ideas question of why Kant should favour a concept such as duty over concepts such a

Well, in developing his ethics, Kant first tries to discover w e mean when we t he seeks to understand is what we might consider o t. **ood without qualificatio** goodness, it is not always clear to what we are referring. If you remember from ou beings can think of different en s that goodness is directed towards, while others good as means to an end. For example, chocolate may be good for those who are to the pers is a overweight and looking to slim. So when Kant asks what is go asking what independently of being a means to something else, or rather w

Now here is where Kant diverges from Bentham. For Bentham is quite happy to of action, but Kant holds that calculating happiness is an example of a prudential seeks instead an end that is not dependent on experience, but instead reason, a that can be defined as good-in-itself is a **good will**. This sounds a little strange, b is isolate the thing within our discussion of morality that is the ultimate example simply put, a good will is good-in-itself because it will always choose to do the go when we talk about a good will, we are led again towards asking what a good act

Now, hopefully having not lost you in the preceding line of thought, we can ask wha course, has rejected the idea that goodness is some simply human property such as that goodness comes from acting out of **moral obligation** or **duty**. Kant defines dut reverence for the law', and this reveals what he is getting at wh n talking about a g say that a good action does not arise out of an agent's des s or motivations, but t that it is the right action to perform. The good will is simply that which always choo

This concept should also not be so foreign. There are plenty of examples in hist where a person has fallen what they perceive to be their duty, regardless of w consequen ht be. This emphasis on duty is, of course, what makes Kant's mentioned e . What is right is what adheres to moral laws. However, Kant human beings can't get pleasure or enjoyment out of doing the right thing. Just action should come from wanting to do one's duty, not the enjoyment of it. For argues, reveals what is good, and so anyone who is behaving rationally will also b

Acting in Accordance with Duty Versus Acting out of D

Now Kant's thought here might seem a little fusty, or even alien. Most people a about ideas such as goodness being synonymous with some natural property. B thought easily with a little example. Imagine you're a big fan of Justin Bieber an needs an urgent kidney transplant. Unfortunately, he has an incredibly rare bloo ineligible to donate a kidney except you.

Here, we might posit that the right thing to do is to d nate a kidney to Justin and since you're a big fan of Justin, your particular motivation might be that you want otherwise you'll never get to hear his music again, which will be a terrible loss. H were the case, you would be **acting in accordance with duty**. Your action, in ess done for the right reasons. As such, it could not be classed as an action with re see Justin h is motivated by your own desires. Kant instead argues that fo worth, you have to be **acting out of duty**. This means you're motivated by your principle or law that you should help others facing life-threatening illnesses. You be a factor in your decision-making, because whether or not you like the person irrelevant. Following your duty should be the main goal of your actions.

Naturally, this might seem very strange, and one common criticism of Kant, as w
that ideas such as empathy or compassion, or any emotion, should be left out of
when deciding upon a course of action, we should use our impartial reason to di
reason that reveals the moral laws we ought to follow and so reveals our duty.

The First Formula of the Categorical Imperative

So far, we've looked at how Kant defines good as acting out of duty, which involv
determine and act upon the right moral law. In this sense, we have drawn a sha
Bentham. Although both are deontological ethics, this is perhaps the only p
Bentham is fundamentally concerned with matters of human experience, where
comes to using reason. For Bentham, reason is a tool to calculate what pro
is the faculty which we discover the moral laws which we should dutifully follo

But how do we get to these laws? Well, as a starting point, Kant asks what prope
laws must have. For, as we have seen, they must be separate from our desires a
equally. In fact, these two properties of **objectivity** and **universality** define the n
deontological ethics. Taking the first property, if moral laws weren't objective, t
some individual belief or desire, and so could not be available through impartial
weren't universal, then they also would be dependent on some relative feature
would not be possible to know through reason whether a certain moral law appl
Moral laws must, therefore, independently and consistently apply to all individua
circumstances.

The property of universality is particularly important when we look at Kantian et
just impartial features of the universe. They prescribe commands, which people
Thus, when we are looking at duty, we're not just looking for moral laws, but also

Hypothetical and Categorical Imperatives

So, Kant's ethics take the form of objective, universal imperatives. Simple, right?
more about how Kant actually envisions moral decision-making taking place. For
this point the ethics involves following these kinds of objective, universal imperat
discovering what they are. Yet Kant also argues that, through reason, we can de
anyone moral guidance.

First, Kant distinguishes between **hypothetical** and **categorical imperatives**.

Hypothetical imperatives usually look like this: 'You ought to do x if you want to
commands that depend on us having a certain aim in our actions. For example, w
healthy, you should eat an apple every day', with the understanding that eating a
be healthy. We can look towards utilitarianism as a system of ethics that is large
imperatives, as we can say 'you ought to do x if you want to maximise utility'.

However, **categorical imperatives** are usually of the form 'You ought to do x'. Th
commands that do not depend on us having a particular desire or aim to our acti
'you ought not to lie', and this is meant to mean that this is irrespective of the co
the truth. This is important, as categorical imperatives possess the properties of
whereas hypothetical imperatives do not. If we are thus searching for actions th
categorical imperatives must follow, as they are not conditional on any featu

Reason and Categorical Imperatives

Now, the previous section may have made it sound as if there are many categori
However, Kant believed there was only one categorical imperative that took mul
at this categorical imperative?

Well, as we noted before, universality is a key property of categorical imperative commands. This means any action that is proscribed by a categorical imperative **universalised**. In other words, it must be an action that all people could reasona not possible for an action to be universally adhered to, then it cannot be one tha categorical imperative. Thus, Kant concludes that one should only behave in a w world in which everyone could coherently and consistently behave in the same v apply universally, it has to be possible for it be adhered to universally.

Thus, through reflecting on the nature of universality, Kant arrives at the first for categorical imperative: '*Act only in accordance with that maxim through which y at the same time will that it become a universal law.*'

So, if we ar[illegible]g to discover what to do in a particular situation, we have to s courses of a[illegible]to what is sometimes called the **universalisability test**. The cen idea behind this is that for any moral decision, we must ask ourselves what woul outcome if everyone else in the universe could do the same thing. In Kant's ethi are, in essence, testing whether our actions could reasonably or coherently beco universal laws.

Now, for some actions, this is clearly impossible. If I like the look of your new m would quite like to steal it, Kant would immediately ask that I stop and consider *permissible to steal'* be a universal law? In answer, I might turn around and say *want that phone'*, but if we are measuring our actions by the categorical imperat arguably be wrongful. For if everyone were permitted to steal when they felt lik property would soon disappear. In fact, people would probably not bother owni be stolen, so pretty soon there would be nothing to steal. Some might even con everybody just stole everything they wanted would prevent anyone from reliably other people, preventing the self-preservation of the human race. In other word steal whenever you feel like it' is **self-defeating**. We cannot conceivably imagine a principle should be acted on by every rational agent.

Perfect and Imperfect Duties

Now, you m[illegible]ll have noted a slight ambiguity in the first form of the categoric ask, what ex[illegible]oes it mean to say that a maxim has failed the universalisability t scholars today are still divided over what Kant intended 'failure' to mean. In one se would be a direct contradiction if universalised. In another sense, it might just be t nature of everyday human existence. The idea of a law being self-defeating is, thou significant degree. What Kant wants us to do is just ask whether it makes sense to not will everyone else to also perform. While it might seem acceptable to me to ste to a law that stealing was acceptable, it would just lead to all my things being stole

Furthermore, Kant makes an important distinction between **perfect** and **imperfe** categorical imperative. Perfect duties are those such as 'Do not kill', 'Do not stea involves an obvious logical contradiction. This is often called a **contradiction in c** we cannot imagine a world in which as a moral rule the core concepts retain any Kant's example of a perfect duty is 'Do not make deceitful promises'. In particul

Should I be able to say to myself, 'Every one may make a deceitful promise when from which he cannot otherwise extricate himself'? Then I presently become awa lie, I can by no means will that a lie should be a universal law…

What does [illegible]ean here? Well, while we might be able to make a false prom at a given p[illegible]time, the same thing cannot be applied to everyone, for if eve would be no way of trusting that anyone would keep their promises, making the meaningless. Therefore, a duty to only make promises one can keep is binding a a perfect duty under Kant's ethics.

On the other hand, imperfect duties relate to those maxims which do not involve nonetheless undesirable for a rational being. This is often called a **contradiction** contradiction in conception. For instance, there is no logical contradiction in uni need, feel free to urinate on tombstones'; society would not collapse if individua whenever they needed the bathroom. It is hard to imagine anyone wanting to li everyone is happy to defile the graves of each other's ancestors, however. Thus imperfect duty to 'Act respectfully towards the dead'.

Imperfect Duties and Moral Responsibility

Kant also distinguishes betwe[illegible] duties to ourselves and duties to others, as part and imperfect duties. [illegible]us problem emerges when we consider the nat lives. If we [illegible]ns [illegible]ly obliged to help others, we may find ourselves in a con prevents us [illegible]mproving ourselves, or even just living our lives! Moreover, if self-improvement, then they might not be able to fulfil certain duties to others i doctor needs to take time to perform research and to read in order to learn abo not, they could well be hindering the recovery of patients rather than helping it.

In fact, Kant gives an example of a particularly interesting imperfect duty to ours He argues that human beings have an imperfect duty to develop their talents, an through laziness. This is important as the growth of knowledge and ability in pe functioning of human society. If we did not have builders, houses could not be b talent for building should develop it accordingly. However, if we try to universal difficult to justify. For the builder surely should not spend all their time getting b prevent them from even building things in the first place, and mean they could n have. So the duty to develop one's talents is an imperfect one. An individual is avoid laziness in their pursuits, but dedicate their lives to this obligation at the ex

At the same time, Kant adhered to the ethical formula of '**ought implies can**'. Si required to perform a certain actio[illegible] must actually be able to perform it not meant to be idealistic b[illegible]reason. It does, in essence, recognise that nat when thinking about [illegible]y. Otherwise, we could prescribe a million oughts a could imag[illegible]ng given a pill that causes one to constantly lie. In this case, alt the truth, th[illegible]ght should be construed as a duty to tell the truth *wherever pos* therefore, also sets up Kant's ideas regarding moral repsonsibility and when we

The Second Formula of the Categorical Imperative

Kant does not stop at the first formulation of the categorical imperative, and arg second form that illuminates further the kinds of duties and obligations have to might be the most influential aspect of Kant's moral theory; it grounds his deont respect for the life and autonomy of human beings. As such, it is often called the categorical imperative. Kant summarises it as:

So act as to treat humanity, both in your own person, and in[illegible]e person of every an end, never simply as a means.

Now, it is useful here to compare [illegible]nd formula to utilitarianism. For, as w identified with Bentham'[illegible] that it failed to guarantee human rights, sin accounted f[illegible]er [illegible]e pain they suffer or the pleasure they gain. Howeve formula of [illegible]egorical imperative, takes precisely the opposite view. Certain they treat pe[illegible]e as means rather than ends. In other words, we're not allowed **instrumental** towards other goals. We can't harvest the organs of one person to

There is an intuitive appeal to this idea, and Kant's second formula has perhaps b aspects of his thought in Western ethical philosophy. For if the first formula see

guiding moral decision-making, the second formula grounds his ethical philosophy in the principle. Kant argues that any rational being, who is capable of reasoning about ethics, is worthy of respect as a moral agent. This means that any rational being capable of generating the categorical imperative is also worthy of being an end of those laws themselves, meaning we should always seek to treat people as ends in themselves.

Means and 'Mere' Means

However, we can ask for more clarification from Kant about what it means to treat someone as an end. For example, if I order a taxi to work in the knowledge I am simply using a taxi driver to get from one place to another, does this count as treating them as a means? Similarly, is my boss right to treat me as a means towards making money for themself? It can be noted that what counts as treating someone as a means is what Kant takes to differentiate between treating someone as a means and treating someone as an end. The former is acceptable so long as interactions between the people involved are accompanied by mutual respect and dignity for each other in their actions, whereas the latter involves attempting to manipulate or deny this respect and dignity to the other.

Therefore, in our example, if I took the taxi, but refused to pay the driver, I could be treating the taxi driver as a mere means. However, if we both agreed a price for the journey, and I paid the taxi driver at the end of my journey, I could reasonably say that I had treated the driver as an end and not violated the second formulation of the categorical imperative.

Nevertheless, there are still questions that can be raised about where the line between means and ends is to be drawn. For example, should I not buy clothes that I know might have been made by exploited factory workers, for this is treating them as a mere means towards my own aims to be fashionable? These are difficult questions than we can answer here. But we can now take a deeper look at some criticisms of Kantian ethics as a whole.

The Problems with Kant's Ethics

So far, we've noted two main ways of guiding moral decision-making: the two formulations of the categorical imperative. However, Kant's ethics are not without their problems. Throughout history there have been a selection of ethical issues that illuminate the issues at the heart of the categorical imperative and provide a useful base for comparison with Bentham's utilitarianism.

Are Consequences Really Unimportant?

Imagine that you hear a knock at the door one night. Upon answering, you see a man in a mask holding an axe asking you for the address of your friend in the town, one whom you are familiar with and regularly visit. Naturally, you sense something is a bit off and don't want to direct a person with clearly violent intentions towards your friend's house. Surely the sensible thing to do is to lie about the address and then call the police? In fact, the one thing we might intuitively think is the wrong thing to do is to tell the truth here and put your friend in danger!

Yet, if there's one record-scratching moment for Kant, it's this one. For the first formulation of the categorical imperative tells us we should never universalise a maxim such as 'it is acceptable to lie' as this cannot be universalised. So we seem to have arrived at a bit of a problem, one which was presented to Kant in his own time. The issue has come to be known as **the case of the inquiring murderer**, and Kant himself considered his response quite unsatisfactory. He actually doubles down on his argument, stating that, despite our own feelings, one in fact does have a duty not to lie to the murderer. In fact, lying to the murderer would be treating them as a means to an end, also violating the second formula. So how can we escape this?

Well, for critics, the answer is we simply can't. The case of the inquiring murderer, despite Kant's best efforts to show otherwise, we actually do care about the consequences of our actions.

possible solution may lie in narrowing the conditions of the categorical imperativ
able to instead formulate a universal rule such as 'one should lie in order to save
principle, can be universalised well enough as saving lives is generally quite an in
self-defeating. Yet, this also introduces more difficulties in moral decision-makin
innocent? What if the murderer was, in fact, obeying this same rule and lying ab
save another? As we introduce more conditions into Kant's categorical imperati
making more difficult. We might end up with a million ru[illegible]bout when we sho
much more difficult to follow than, say, Bentham's [illegible] calculus.

Yet, there is perhaps a greater iss[illegible] this problem. For specifying such co
develop conflicting duti[illegible] we will explore next.

Discussion Activity

Is there any satisfying response for Kant to the case of the inquiring murderer?
simply worthy of moral consideration? Discuss in pairs or small groups.

Conflicting Duties

In the last section, we explored how it was potentially possible to craft a maxim th
to save an innocent life. Yet, if we did craft this maxim, it would also conflict with
never acceptable to lie. In fact, it may be more than possible to develop many dif
universalised but end up conflicting with each other, or at least being inconsisten
we reason about maxims such as 'one should save others' lives when they are in t
the health of others'. For these seem to contradict the maxim to never lie in the c

Moreover, we noted that Kant draws a distinction between perfect and imperfec
intuitively useful to prevent moral paralysis, we can also [illegible]ow one decides wh
preference over a perfect duty, or vice versa. Should [illegible] imperfect duty to impr
second to helping others, or are there [illegible]rcumstances in which we should
problem with conflicting duties partially arises from the abstract nature of Kant's
imperative may be useful in [illegible]ling what we might call negative moral principle
harder to d[illegible] positive moral principles (i.e. what to do) when there are no e
within the c[illegible]cal imperative. We can develop this idea further by looking a
imperative is a truly useful and reliable guide to right action.

Moral Guidance and Decision-making

We've noted that as Kant's ethics is based on abstract reasoning, it is short on en
conditions in developing moral guidance. For many critics, this has proved to be
not just the possibility of a universalised law that drives our moral decision-maki
particular ethical dilemma. For instance, say there is a head of government who
to tackle poverty in the city they run. However, they only have a small budget an
quarter to a third of the poor individuals in the city. How should they allocate th

Under the categorical imperative, it seems difficult to judge the answer to this co
question perhaps). The test of universalisability is har[illegible]ormulate with so man
laws such as 'help the needy' don't really give [illegible]uch g[illegible]ance. In comparison, w
calculate in practice, Bentham's act utilitarianism at least gives an intuitive way t
could evaluate which groups [illegible]m[illegible] need and who would gain the most hap
problem emerges with [illegible]n complex ethical dilemmas; it seems as if the categ
situations [illegible]ge numbers of variables and potentially a significant number o
we noted, c[illegible] ethical situations involve not just refraining from actions but
the issue of positive moral guidance once again raises its head.

Trivial and Immoral Maxims

Alasdair MacIntyre claims in his book *After Virtue* (which will be explored more in the Virtue Ethics section) that the categorical imperative allows both trivial and immoral maxims to pass, as there is no actual moral content within the formula itself. He gives as examples:

- **Trivial Maxim:** 'Always eat mussels on Monday in M
- **Immoral Maxim**: 'Persecute all those who ho[illegible] religious beliefs'/ 'Keep all your promises throughout [illegible]fe except one'

MacIntyre claims all these [illegible]s conceivability test, as imagining a world in contradictory [illegible] sense, imperfect duties which we should all follow. there are w[illegible]formulate them which render them conceivable under the cat example of [illegible]ng promises, which Kant argued was inconceivable as a univers of promises would destroy the idea of a promise in the first place. Yet MacIntyre law such as 'keep every promise but one' or 'keep ninety five percent of your pr since the fact people do occasionally break promises doesn't make the concept o the question is raised about whether the categorical imperative really is useful in generating valid laws altogether!

Duty and Emotion

At the beginning of the section, we noted that Kant believed acting out of one's same as performing a good act. Goodness is separate from one's interests. But viable in practice? For example, it seems as if Kant is saying that a wife helping h a bad act. Instead, she should be acting out of duty for her husband and essenti decision-making.

It's not incorrect to think that there is something wr[illegible]ve. The simplest exan Stocker in his 1976 essay *The Schizophrenia of M[illegible]thical Theories*. Imagine accident and slowly recovering. Duri[illegible]is [illegible]e your friend comes to visit you, remark, 'Thanks for coming it[illegible]ce t[illegible]now someone cares about me'. Howev and says 'I came to vi[illegible]lo[illegible]out of friendship but because it was my moral d this, even a[illegible]or [illegible]eems to devalue not only the meaningfulness of your frie developing [illegible] form of care for human beings beyond one's moral duty.

What's interesting about this example also is that Kant's deontological ethics suf impartiality as Bentham's ethics. For Kant, duty requires us to ignore our person purely according to reason. Yet this doesn't really seem to fit with our intuitions as the philosopher Bernard Williams contends, if we do try to fit these kinds of in results in 'one thought too many'.

Consider the following example as an illustration. Imagine a situation where a m people from drowning in a shipwreck. One of them is his wife, the other a comp whoever he does not save will die. Of course, presuming the marriage is healthy save his wife. This is likely to be acceptable to Kant; a maxim stating that 'You ou drowning' would probably pass the universalisability test. Nevertheless, William peculiar arrangement where, according to deontologi[illegible]s, the man must ju my wife so I will save her *and* the maxim I am [illegible]ct[illegible]g [illegible]er accords with the cate we can simply ask why the man needs [illegible]o[illegible]ivated by both duty and love for

One final thing we can [illegible]ut, however, perhaps in defence of Kant, is that he ethics to be[illegible]ti[illegible]ecision-making guide per se. In fact, the main work in w called *Grou[illegible] of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Kant is trying to work out, the what it requires of us. He isn't trying to do applied or practical ethics. So it may cases like the above we are not required to think in terms of the categorical imp to claim that Kant did not also envision a future in which his deontological ethics laws and, for each of these issues, it is worth thinking closely not only about how but what solution they might have under his deontological system.

Comparing the Two Approaches

Throughout this section so far, we've looked at the different ethical systems put
Bentham puts forward a **consequentialist** system of ethics best termed **act utilit**
action is judged by how much happiness it produces, based on the generation of
pain. Kant, on the other hand, puts forward a **deontological** system of ethics, wh
judged by whether it follows maxims produced by reason's application of the ca
we have explored the strengths and issues, seeing how they generate moral guid
principles that might be derived from th

In this part, however, we're going a little bit further and compare both Bentham a
decision-m Throughout Year 2, we have explored various ways in whic
In the first s we looked at divine command theory, while in latter sections
religious beliefs about free will to conscience. But beyond exploration of these t
secular ethical theories to traditional religious views reveals a lot about how phil
has shifted since the Enlightenment. For both Bentham and Kant wrest away dis
God's will or commands. As such, although the moral laws they produce may int
interesting differences that can influence the way we think about and judge Chri

Bentham and Religious Decision-making

At first it might seem as if Bentham's utilitarianism is as far off a religious system
ethics as one might imagine. Throughout the Bible, for instance, one typically
encounters various moral laws which Christians ought to follow and, in other cas
Jesus speaks more of the importance of cultivating virtue than he does of
calculating consequences. However, there might be a few ways in which they ar
similar, and so it is worth considering both the similarities and differences, which
we will detail below.

The Differences between Utilitarianism and Religious Ethics

- Religious ethics are typically deontological in nature. In Christianity, for exam
moral la as the Ten Commandments, and there is little talk of instrum
calculus. Thus, a consequentialist form of ethics isn't consistent with a religi
- Moreover, Christians are often required to abstain from material and physica
spirituality. Thus, on a very basic level, it can be argued that a complete conc
unhappiness goes against most systems of religious ethics, which often requi
the form of moral commands. Bentham's hedonism is, therefore, unlikely to
- Religious ethics also often advocate the importance of other virtues such as
alternative sources of moral goodness challenge Bentham's proposal that wh
equivalent to what is pleasurable (or not painful).
- Religious ethics often stresses the importance of the sanctity of life or the rig
Bentham's ethics, under which it may, for instance, be acceptable to end a li

The Similarities between Utilitarianism and Religious Ethics

- Religious ethics often stresses the importance of impartiality, just as does Be
following a religious system of ethics often asked to consider the welfare
enemies! For instance, Christians may follow Jesus' command to pray for th
- Religious ethics may to some degree actually encompass considerations abo
Situati cs is one clear example of a consequentialist interpretation of S
there ar nces in Scripture where Jesus prioritises the welfare of individ
considerations, implying that moral laws aren't absolute.
- It can be argued that utilitarianism to some degree can accommodate religiou
people significantly happy then it would be a consideration under Bentham's
would still be unacceptable as what is good for those who are religious is not

So can Bentham's utilitarianism be reconciled with religious ethics? The answer
ways there are likely to be significant similarities between the moral guidance of
moral laws to help each other in everyday life could well end up performing the
with maximising utility. The differences perhaps emerge more when we conside
especially around those concerned with new technologies. For instance, the con
predisposed to disagree with the utilitarian on issues such as abortion or euthan
preservation of life is more important than merely generating the most amount
considering how Christians typically factor in the welfare and happiness of indivi
this sense, the end goal of religious ethics and utilitarianism may be the same, ev
paths to reach that goal.

Kant and Religious Decision-making

In comparison to Bentham, it is a little more difficult to work out whether Kant's ethics can be reconciled with religious ethics. Both are deontological in nature, and Kant even holds that God is one of his **three postulates**: three requirements for his ethics to be meaningful. However, despite this potential theological slant, Kant was notably ambivalent about the relationship between God and ethics. In fact, as we studied, he held reason to be the foundation of ethics, casting aside the idea of God being the source of morality. There are some that have even questioned whether Kant truly intended for God to be part of his ethics at all. For the moment, though, let us take a look at some basic similarities and differences.

The Differences between Kantian and Religious Ethics

- Kant holds that all moral laws can be derived from the categorical imperative formulas. The ultimate foundation to ethics is, therefore, reason, and this na ethics, which often holds God to be this foundation. However, there are som natural law) which do accommodate reason as a source of moral laws, and t great depending on the thinker [illegible] one is comparing to Kant.
- Similarly to the above, Kant would not recognise any source of ethics that dis proposed by the [illegible] categorical imperative. This leads to a natural clash with re may pr[illegible]ma[illegible]ns that cannot be universalised.
- Religiou[illegible]s may hold that that duty should not be the sole concern of th feelings may be encouraged. For instance, Christianity often promotes the id Kant, would be the wrong motivation for a moral agent.
- Religious ethics often places a strong emphasis also on the importance of vir character, not just acting out of duty. Kant did not hold that virtues weren't that they were not central to moral considerations. However, a religious ind may well be argued to be acting for the wrong reasons.

The Similarities between Kantian and Religious Ethics

- Both are deontological systems of ethics; they hold that goodness comes fro case these are those derived from the categorical imperative while for religio those given by God.
- Both value the important of treating human beings a[illegible]s. For religious ind principle of the sanctity of life, while for Kant this [illegible]of the humanity formu
- Kantian and religious ethics are both [illegible]lly absolutist; they believe in the must always follow regardless of the situation.
- Finally, both hold th[illegible]essential for ethics to be meaningful. Kant hold postulat[illegible]ce[illegible] for his system of ethics to work, while those following r God to[illegible]ntial for their beliefs to be applicable.

So when we add up the various similarities and differences, it can appear as if Ka with religious ethics than Bentham. They both hold similar ideas about what sho while both support the inherent treatment of individuals as ends. However, as w regard Kantian ethics as fundamentally still a secular theory of ethics. Why is thi

The Foundations of Kant's Ethics

We noted that Kant's ethics should be accessible if one possesses a rational mind wholly secular. But is it true that this is all that is required? What if agents did n own volition? Or could not, for some reason, act properly out of duty? These w who was under some pressure to explain not just how we can arrive at the right the right moral duties in the first place.

For instance, we can consider Kant's th about the **summum bonum** in or a bit deeper. The summum bonum, for Kant, is a place or state of pure goodness attainment of a good will which, as we have seen, should adhere wholly to the c essence, what Kant is saying is that, in a perfect world, our happiness and virtue act dutifully would be wholly in accordance with our attainment of happiness. T be reached, yet when we look at the current world we live in, we see it is full of u and happy people barely considering their duties. In fact, it seems as if the attai possible at all in the world we live in.

Moreover, let us consider Kant's earlier suggestions about duty. If the summum good, then it should be the aim of our moral obligations. This seems fair – why s is the highest possible good? Yet, you might remember, Kant also argues that **ou** that human beings ought to achieve the highest good. Rather, the highest good However, this creates an interesting dilemma with our previous suggestion. For obliged to try to attain the highest good when it is not actually possible to attain As you can see, there is a bit of a contradiction at play here.

Well, for Kant this problem was solved by positing **three postulates**, necessary c of ethics would work. This problem also, in effect, is the foundation for Kant's **m** of God, an argument which proved very pro at the time's day. For it's not really recognition that God may be necessary for Kant to make his system of ethics work. Eithe three things that exist in order to make sense of this problem: **free will**, an **after** free will is necessary for agents to adhere to their duties. In the second case, an that the summum bonum can be achieved (think of heaven as an example!), and necessary in order that such an afterlife could exist in the first place! Voila, Kant Yet, many were quite unhappy with Kant's shoehorning in of God into his ethical than just a mere assumption behind a system of ethics? As we saw with divine c be the source of moral principles? Kant instead seems to place reason at the cen being a mere source of the necessary afterlife. Thus, Kant uses God and the sou ethics founded on reason, whereas most religious individuals would hold that Go ethics, and his act of creation the justification for our use of reason. In a sense, I bit of an afterthought. Thus, although Kant did attempt to show how his ethics f contend it is ultimately still secular. However, in comparison to Bentham, it pote promise when it comes to reconciling its ideas with those belonging to a religiou

Quick Quiz

1. What is act utilitarianism?
2. What is hedonism?
3. What is the hedonic calculus?
4. Name two aspects of Bentham's hedonic calculus.
5. What is meant by ethics?
6. What is a categorical imperative?
7. Give an example of a perfect duty and an imperfect duty for Kant.
8. What is the humanity formula?

Answers to Activities

Activity: Meta-ethics

This activity should hopefully be fairly intuitive for students as they will have st
with an emphasis on how Aristotle develops his idea of virtue out of the unique
human beings. The naturalistic criticisms facing utilitarianism are very similar a
that virtue ethics has an advantage due its use of 'thick' ethical concepts over u
result, some students might note that virtue ethics may be better poised to res

Activity: Free Will and Moral Responsibility

The video is a great introduction to the idea of operational conditioning and sh
free, in a very practical sense, human actions really are. If we're a combination
predispositions (such as reward mechanisms) and environmental influences, w
fit in? Skinner here can be compared with libertarian thinkers such as Kane, fo
psychological research puts the burden of proof on the libertarian to show how
potentially indeterministic.

Activity: Conscience

This is a useful activity for students to expand their views on conscience beyon
adultery and lying. Euthanasia in particular is a difficult concept to which to ap
most individuals would feel a pang of conscience at watching the suffering of o
conflict with wider individual and societal ideals about the nature and preserva

Activity: Bentham and Kant

This activity is intended as a complex example of how to apply Bentham's hedo
important aspect is not the calculation produced by students but the inherent
first place. There may be some students who regard it as an essential exercise
foresee consequences, but others might argue that attempting to calculat
an immoral act in the first place.

Answers to Quick Quizze

Introduction to Meta-ethics

1. The meta-ethical theory that what is good is equivalent to what is commanded
2. The Euthyphro dilemma asks whether what is good is good because God commands it because it is good. In either case, there are difficult ramifications for omnipotence or the nature of God's commands.
3. Karl Barth
4. The view that what is good is equivalent to a natural property.
5. Pleasure (and pain)
6. An argument put forward by G E Moore that attempts to show how goodness cannot be reduced to a natural property.
7. David Hume
8. The view that goodness is a non-natural property grasped through the use of intuition.

Free Will and Moral Responsibility

1. The view that all events are completely determined by prior causes or states.
2. Compatibilism holds that free will and determinism are reconcilable; incompatibilism holds that they are not.
3. Hard determinism, libertarianism.
4. B F Skinner
5. Liberty of spontaneity and liberty of indifference.
6. Free will is the ability to act according to one's will or desire without external constraint.
7. Robert Kane
8. Retributive justice purely involves punishing someone for their crimes; restorative justice is towards reconciling the criminal and their victim.

Conscience

1. For Aquinas, is the innate ability of the human mind to apprehend God's law.
2. Vincible ignorance is ignorance which a person could foreseeably overcome through effort. Invincible ignorance is ignorance which a person could not overcome through effort.
3. Through the internalisation of values and ideals during our upbringing, which is the function of the human mind as the superego.
4. Lawrence Kohlberg
5. The process by which human beings come to adopt external values and ideas into their own belief system.
6. A sociological concept introduced by Durkheim that refers to the shared beliefs of a particular society.
7. Aquinas' religious view of conscience.
8. Emile Durkheim

Bentham and Kant

1. A version of utilitarianism which holds that when a moral agent is deciding what to do, the action which results in the greatest utility
2. The view that what is good is equivalent to what is pleasurable.
3. A method used by Bentham to calculate the happiness or unhappiness produced by an action.
4. Propensity, fecundity.
5. A system of ethics which proposes that a good action is one that adheres to a moral rule.
6. Unconditional commands that do not depend on having a particular desire or goal.
7. A perfect duty is 'do not lie'; an imperfect duty is 'help others in need'.
8. The second formula of the categorical imperative that holds one should treat people as ends in themselves.