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OPEN UNIVERSITY - PROBLEMS OF PHILOSOPHY
MORAL PHILOSOPHY

DIRECTOR.....PATRICIA HODGSON
PRODUCER'S ASSISTANT.....JANE EDWARDS

DESIGNER.....DON GILES
GRAPHICS.....BEVERLEY CLARKE

FLOOR MANAGER.....JOHN DARCLAY

VISION MIXER.....GLADYS DAVIS

T.M.....PETER MURRAY
SOUND SUPERVISOR.....MARTIN WARD
SENIOR CAMERAMAN.....TONY POWELL
CREW.....TWO

MAKE-UP ASSISTANT.....JEAN SPEAK

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER.....PETER SCROGGS

TAKING PART

PROFESSOR GODFREY VESEY (O.U.)
PROFESSOR R.M. HARE
DR. A.J.P. KENNY

SCHEDULE

CAMERA REHEARSAL.....1100-1245
Photocall.....1245-1300
Lunch.....1300-1400
Line-up.....1400-1430
RECORDING (discontinuous).....1430-1545
Tea-break.....1545-1615
RECORDING (discontinuous).....1615-1715

Autocue from 1100

ECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

CAMERA 1: Pedestal - zoom
CAMERA 2: Pedestal - zoom
CAMERA 3: Pedestal - zoom
CAMERA 4: Pedestal - turret

3 Mics (floor-stands)
Tape

3 Floor monitors

AUTOCUE: on camera 4
and floor-stand

Caption stands

TELEJECTOR SLIDES

NO.	SHOT	DESCRIPTION
1.	1	PROBLEMS OF PHILOSOPHY - A Third Level Arts Course
2.		MORAL PHILOSOPHY
3.		Introduced by GODFREY VESEY - Professor of Philosophy
4.	3	**WHAT USE IS MORAL PHILOSOPHY?**
5.		A discussion between . R.M. HARE White's Professor of Moral Philosophy - University of Oxford - and A.J.P. KENNY Fellow and Tutor in Philosophy - Balliol College, Oxford
6.	11	Taking part were Professor R.M. Hare Dr. A.J.P. Kenny Professor Godfrey Vesey
7.		Production Patricia Hodgson
8.		A production for The Open University (c) The Open University 1972

CAPTIONS

1.	20 x 15 Caption (Black on Grey)	AS DIRECTED SEQUENCE (following shot 10)
2.	Animated caption (for superimposing on above cap. and then animated.)	CAMERAS 2 & 4
3.	Animated Caption	

RUNNING ORDER

SHOT	PAGE	DESCRIPTION	CAMS
1.	1	TJs 1-3: Open. credits	
2.	1-2	VESEY: Intro.	4
3.	2	TJs 4-5: Discussion ident.	
4-9	2-6	KENNY/HARE: Interview	2,1,3
10.	6	KENNY: Link to discussion	3
AS DIR	6-7	KENNY/HARE: discussion (with 3 caps - 2 anim.)	1,2,3,4
11.	7	TJs 6-8: Ends credits	

F/U

1. TJ.1
PROBLEMS OF PHILOSOPHY
A Third Level Arts Course

TJ.2
MORAL PHILOSOPHY

TJ.3
Introduced by
GODFREY VESEY
Professor of Philosophy

2. 2 A /VESEY: If there is one thing that marks
MS VESEY

off the moral philosophy of the last thirty years or so from earlier moral philosophy, I think it is probably the concern of moral philosophers with language, with how moral utterances differ from non-moral ones in their use. Previously it had been assumed that to call something good was at least to describe it. G.E. Moore, for instance, started from that assumption and went on to ask whether goodness was a natural or a non-natural quality. Then in 1944, was published a book called "Ethics and Language", by C.L. Stevenson, and we came to see that besides a descriptive use of language there can be an emotive one. Language can be used to express one's feeling and to persuade others to feel

(TJs NEXT)

(SHOT 2, on 2)

VESEY contd: likewise. The trouble about emotivism, as it was called, was that it became rather hard to see the place of reason in ethics. Certainly you can't recognise something as good without feeling drawn to it in some way; but isn't there more to it than that? Can't people argue about what is good, about what ought to be done? Isn't there such a thing as moral reasoning? It was against this background of thought about the nature of morality that Richard Hare, White's Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Oxford, wrote two books, "The Language of Morals" and "Freedom and Reason". In this programme he discusses his moral philosophy with Anthony Kenny, Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford.

3. TJ.4
What use is moral philosphy?

TJ.5
A discussion between R.M.
R.M. Hare, etc...
and A.J.P. Kenny...

4. 2 A
2-S KENNY & HARE

/KENNY: Professor Hare, you say in the preface to one of your recent books that you became a moral philosopher because you were troubled about moral questions. What

(1 NEXT)

(SHOT 4, on 2)

KENNY contd: sort of practical questions started you off?

5. 1 A MS HARE /HARE: Well, it was just before and during the Second World War. There was a lot of unemployment and poverty in the Thirties - much worse than anything that is happening here now - and it raised problems about inequalities of wealth. Then there was the problem of war itself, and whether it is ever right to fight. And of course behing these there loomed problems about what one's purpose ought to be in life anyway. These were moral problems - all boiling down to questions of what one ought to do; and they were pressing, because one had to decide what to do (for example whether to join the army when Hitler started his war). I never thought of maral problems as anything else but extremely practical ones (perhaps that's why I became a prescriptivist).

6. 3 A MS KENNY /KENNY: But can you explain how you thought philosophy would help?

7. 1 A MS HARE /HARE: I only became clear about that after the War, although I was thinking a lot about philosophy during it. It became clear to me that the first step in tackling

(3 NEXT)

(SHOT 7 , on 1)

HARE contd: any difficult question is to understand what it is you are asking; and this involves knowing the meaning of the words in the question. (I came to this conclusion partly as a result of reading what Plato said about Socrates, who started the business, and partly as a result of contact with the new school of analytical philosophy). I thought that if one was to answer questions about what one ought to do, one had to know what 'ought' meant - and I realised that I didn't begin to know what it meant. And to try to find out what it meant was doing moral philosophy. Another reason why we have to find out what such words mean is that only then shall we be clear about their logical properties; and we won't be able to tell whether arguments about what we ought to do are good arguments or bad arguments until we know what the logical properties of the words are - for only in that way can we tell what follows from what, what propositions are consistent with one another, and so on. So philosophical analysis really is indispensable if we are going to get to the bottom of any difficult problem in morality, though I don't say that it is the only thing we have to do,

(3 NEXT)

(SHOT 7, on 1)

HARE contd: because usually there are very difficult factual questions involved too, about the consequences of the alternative actions.

8. 3 A
2-S favouring Kenny

/KENNY: Perhaps you could outline again the conclusions you reached about the logical properties and meanings of the moral words, so that we can start the discussion from your basic position.

9. 1 A
MS HARE

/HARE: Let's stick to 'ought', because it is the simplest. What I think I have discovered is that this word has two properties which together determine its meaning. First of all, it is prescriptive. This means that for any 'ought'-statement there is something that counts as acting in accordance with it, and that if you don't so act, when the occasion arises, you can't be really and sincerely subscribing to it (unless of course you are unable to act as it requires). By this I mean that if I say that someone ought to do something, it has to be because of something about him and his situation, and that if this something were to be true of any other person and situation, I couldn't without inconsistency

(3 NEXT)

(SHOT 9, on 1)

HARE contd: deny that the person in that other situation ought to do the same. In fact moral judgements rest on principles applying to all situations of a certain kind; and it is these principles that we are really subscribing to when we make moral judgements. In my first book, "The Langua e of Morals", I tried to establish that moral judgements have these two properties; and in my secondbook, "Freedom and Reason", I tried to showhow a theory of moral reasoning can be founded on these properties.

10. 3 A MS KENNY/KENNY: (Link to discussion)

AS DIRECTED:

1 A 2-S HARE & KENNY (MS, MCU, CU HARE)

2 A 2-S CAPS (anim.)

3 A 2-S HARE & KENNY (MS, MCU, CU HARE)

4 A CAPS (anim.)

(TJs NEXT)

(AS DIRECTED SEQUENCE, 1, 2, 3 & 4)

11. TJ.6
Taking part were...

TJ.7
Production Patricia Hodgson

TJ.8
A production for
The Open University

FADE SOUND & VISION

PROGRAMME TRANSCRIPT

(A.303/5)

OPEN UNIVERSITY - ARTS

Project No: 00525/3020

PROBLEMS OF PHILOSOPHY - MORAL PHILOSOPHY

VESEY: If there is one thing that marks off the moral philosophy of the last thirty years or so from earlier moral philosophy, I think it's probably the concern of moral philosophers with language, with how moral utterances differ from non-moral ones in their use. Previously it had been assumed that to call something good was at least to describe it. G.E. Moore, for instance, started from that assumption and went on to ask whether goodness was a natural or a non-natural quality. Then in 1944, was published a book called "Ethics and Language", by C.L. Stevenson, and we came to see that besides a descriptive use of language there can be an emotive one. Language can be used to express one's feelings and to persuade others to feel likewise. The trouble about emotivism, as it was called, was that it became rather hard to see the place of reason in ethics. Certainly you can't recognise something as good without feeling drawn to it in some way; but isn't there more to it than that?

VESEY: (cont'd) Can't people argue about what is good, about what ought to be done? Isn't there such a thing as moral reasoning? It was against this background of thought about the nature of morality that Richard Hare, White's Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Oxford, wrote two books, "The Language of Morals" and "Freedom and Reason." In this programme he discusses his moral philosophy with Anthony Kenny, Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford.

KENNY: Professor Hare, before we start our discussion, I wonder if you could give the students um a statement of your basic position. You mentioned in a preface of a recent book that you were first interested in moral philosophy because of an interest in actual moral problems. What was it that started you off?

HARE: Well, I suppose it happened just before and during the Second World War. In the thirties there was a lot of unemployment, a lot of poverty, much worse than anything that's happening here now.

HARE: (cont'd) And it raised problems about inequalities of wealth, for example, and then there was the problem of war itself; whether it is ever right to fight. And of course, behind these there loomed bigger problems about what one's purpose ought to be in life anyway. These were moral problems - all boiling down to questions of what one ought to do; and they were pressing because one had to decide what to do. For example, whether to join the army when Hitler started his war. I never thought of moral problems as anything else. but extremely practical ones (perhaps that's why I became a prescriptivist.) I only became clear about how philosophy could help after the war, though I was thinking a lot about philosophy during it. It became clear to me that the first step in tackling any difficult question is to understand what it is you're asking, and this involves knowing the meaning of the words in the question. I came to this conclusion partly, I suppose, as a result of reading what Plato said about Socrates, who started the business. And partly as a result of contact with the new school of analytical philosophy.

HARE: (cont'd) I thought that if one was to answer questions about what one ought to do, one had know what 'ought' meant, and I realised that I didn't begin to know what it meant. And to try to find out what it meant was doing moral philosophy. Another reason why we have to find out what such words mean is that only then shall we be clear about their logical properties; and we won't be able to tell whether arguments about what we ought to do are good arguments or bad arguments until we know what the logical properties of the words are - for only in that way can we tell what follows from what, what propositions are consistent with one another, and so on. So philosophical analysis really is indispensable if we're going to get to the bottom of any difficult problem in morality; though I don't say that it is the only thing we have to do, because usually there are very difficult factual questions involved too, about the consequences of the alternative actions. I'll try and show you what I mean by taking the word 'ought' because it's perhaps the simpliest of these words. What I think I've discovered is that this - I don't think I was the first person to discover it - but er what I think I've

HARE: (cont'd) discovered is that this word has two properties which together determine its meaning. First of all it's not emotive - that would be quite wrong - but prescriptive. This means that for any 'ought' statement there's something that counts as acting in accordance with it. And that if you don't so act, when the occasion arises, you can't really and sincerely subscribe to it (unless of course you're unable to act as it requires.) The second logical property that 'ought' statements have is what's been called their universalisability, I apologise for these long words. By this I mean that if I say that someone ought to do something it has to because of something about him and his situation and that if this something were to be true of any other person and any other situation, I couldn't without inconsistency deny that the person in that other situation ought to do the same. In fact, moral judgements rest on principles, perhaps complex principles, applying to all situations of a certain kind. And it's these principles that we are really subscribing to when we make moral judgements.

HARE: (cont'd) Now, in my first book, "The Language of Morals," I was trying to establish that moral judgemmts have these two properties. And in my second book, "Freedom and Reason," I was trying to show how a theory of moral reasoning can be founded on these properties.

KENNY: Well both these books have been extremely influential. I think that in this country and abroad er people have looked at many questions in moral philosophy quite differently as a result of reading these books. But I'd like to focus, if I may, on some of the critisisms that have been made of your position. I don't think that people really want to contest - not in this country at any rate - that moral judgements are universalisable, er and I for my own part wouldn't want to contest that they are prescriptive if all that that means is they have consequences for action. But I am rather doubtful whether these two characteristics that you pick on of being prescriptive and being universalisable are sufficient er to characterise what is special about morality and moral judgemmts.

KENNY: (cont'd) Can I just go over the distincion er which you make between is-statements and ought-statement to see that I've got it right? Er you have, first of all, is-statements which are descriptive; they describe things, they say what the word is like, and they're universalisable. If I describe this piece of paper as white, I have to describe anything which it resembles in the relevant respects as white. At the other extreme, you have imparatives, commands; these are prescriptive that is they tell us what to do, but they're non-universalisable. Er if I asked you to pass the butter, er this is prescriptive; it tells you something you do, but it isn't universalisable. I don't mean that everybody situated as you are has to pass the butter. In between these, we have ought-statements and they share with imparatives the characteristic of being prescriptive, telling us what to do, but they share with is-statements the property of being universalisable. Is that fair as a statement of your positior

HARE: Well I think I'd accept it as a summary of statement of my position. Of course one has to over-simplify.

KENNY: Naturally. Now the question I want to put to you is whether this is really an adequate characterisation of moral judgements. In suppose that a society had er a set of precepts say that they were dietary precepts, um one was not to eat beans, say, or one was not to eat cabbage. Suppose that these were regarded as prescriptive judgements, obviously there were conclusions to be drawn about action - not to eat beans, not to eat cabbage. And these are universalisable, these people believe very firmly er that human beings, all human beings, should refrain from eating beans or eating cabbage. Now it seems to me that if this is all we are told about the people in this society, er we can't yet say that this is a moral system that they have.

HARE: Well I think I should like to say to that, that I don't attach enormous importance to the word moral.

HARE: (cont'd) What I attach importants to having a set of principles to live by. Now I don't care frightfully whether you call them moral or not, but if these bean eaters, that you describe, um really stuck to eating beans through thick and think and er let that principle over-rise all sorts of principles we call moral principles, er in the same way as that in which some people even nowadays do to certain sexual taboos er then I think we would call them, I would call them moral principles, just like people call these sexual principles, moral principles.

KENNY: The people that I had in mind were really people who wouldn't eat beans.

HARE: I'm sorry.

KENNY: Er I-I chose negative principles er deliberately but never mind that. Er the er you said if they, if these people allowed the um the eating of beans or the non-eating of beans to over-ride things which we would call moral principles, er then we might say that they had a moral system too.

KENNY: (cont'd) Er I think I agree with that, but it seems to me that now the crucial point is what are the reasons why we call the things that we do call moral principles. And I put it to you that it is - that er there must be something else besides being prescriptive and universalisable which makes us call the things we call moral principles by that name.

HARE: Excuse me, I don't think that's really the question at all. I think the question is not why we call them moral principles, but why we accept those moral principles and don't accept the moral principles like not eating beans...

KENNY: But you would ex...

HARE: But they're both moral principles and I think an explanation should be given of why we or why I don't include the thing about not eating beans in my set of moral principles, if that's what you'd like. But if anybody did I would say that he held a very extraordinary moral principle.

KENNY: It would be enough to make it a moral principle merely that he held it in this way.

HARE: It would be enough to make it his moral principle. I would say of him that he was holding it as a moral principle. If he really stuck to it like that, yes, like people stick to, I mean er take the the rules against incest for example. I think, I can imagine the culture which regarded er the rule against incest in much the light in which you ever regard the rule against eating beans. And er er two people in that culture will be having rhe same discussions we're now having er with the examples turned round, and you would be saying to me, suppose somebody thought it frightfully wrong to er say, go to bed with his sister, er could you really call that a moral principle?

KENNY: Well you don't think that there has to be any anything about the content er of um a judgement in order to make it a moral judgement. It doesn't have to have any connection with human welfare or happiness or anything like that?

HARE: Not in order to make it a moral judgement. Er of course once one has acepted the formal properties which I say moral judgement has: namely prescriptivity and universalisability. I think I can give you very good reason why we all accept the moral principles that we do which nearly all of them have something to do with human happiness. But I refrain from writing this into the definition of the word moral simply because I do wish to be able to argue with people and though one does meet people who don't um think of er human happiness as of prime importance. Er, Nietzchians, for example. Er I want to go and have an argument with them; I want to start far enough back, as it were, in order to catch them into the argument so that I can use the purely formal properties of the words in order to reason with them. If we rule them out at the beginning as not just-just not having er moral opinions at all, the argument can never begin, they would go on with their opinions, we would have ours and we couldn't reason with them.

KENNY: If you restrict yourself, er to the purely formal properties in that way, then it isn't at all clear what reason anybody has for adopting morality at all. That is for for talking the type of language which is characterised by the formal properties you mentioned. If morality is closely connected with human happiness then one can see why somebody either through prudential reasons or benevolent reasons would have an interest in talking about morality. But if morality need not as such have any connection with happiness, why should anyone trouble about moral language?

HARE: Well the beauty of it is that when the moral words are defined in terms of their formal properties, er although we haven't written anything about human happiness into their definition, nevertheless we can see extremely good reasons why people should want to have a set of words in their language having those properties simply because if you are trying with the other people in your society to come to a set of principles expressed say in terms of the word 'ought' er with those formal properties which you can all accept.

HARE: (cont'd) That is to say, if I may repeat, if you're trying to find um a set of kinds of behaviour that all of you can prescribe universally for the behaviour of all of you - whether or not of course um er er what er - you don't start, that is to say, with any er content into the er which is going to be written into your definition of morality, but you just start off with those formal principles it's obvious, I think, why people will be likely to accept a set of such universal principles for the behaviour of them which will be directed towards the um increase in human happiness. Isn't this obvious?

KENNY: Er I think that it's obvious that they will be er keen to um increase human happiness, er whether they will think that this is er best done by adopting a particular style of the use of language is I think, rather a different matter. But perhaps I •ould er connect with this something that seems to me to have been a development in your •wn interest over the years.

KENNY contd: Um you - in "The Language of Morals" you were interested mainly, I think, in an ethical problem, a problem about the nature of moral judgement, a philosophical problem er about the distinction between moral judgements and other sorts of judgements. Um, you described yourself as a prescriptivist and you named your opponents descriptivists; descriptivists being the people who thought that moral judgements were in some way judgements about the World, judgements that told us how the World was, and you as a prescriptivist, er said that no, when one is making a moral judgement, one is essentially prescribing for oheself and for others. Now that's um a moral and ethical distinction - a distinction about the nature of moral language. There is another moral distinction which can be contrasted with this, that is the distinction between absolutist moralities and consequentialist moralities. Let me explain what I mean. An absolutist is somebody who thinks that there are certain types of action which should never be done no matter what the consequences; he may say for instance, er nobody should ever be judicially tortured, no matter what whuld be the consequences of not torturing him.

KENNY: (cont'd) Er somebody else, a consequentialist, might say we can't decide in advance whether tortureis right or wrong er in any particular case we must try to assess the consequences of torturing somebody or not torturing him. The classical utilitarians, I think, Bentham and Mill, were consequentialists in this way. Now one can combine er these two distinctions in various ways. You can be a prescriptivist absolutist or you can be a prescriptivist consequentialist, and you can combine consequentialism with prescriptivism or with descriptivism Er you yourself, er if I understand rightly are a prescriptivist consequentialist.

HARE: Well, I'll be able to say that when I understand your distinction better. Er I'm inclined to think that in most senses of absolutist, at any rate, I'm an absolutist. For example, I'm not a relativist, but that I think is not the distinction you're making. Er I don't really see why a person who assigns importance to the consequences of actions what you're doing when you're

HARE: (cont'd) doing something, can't be called an absolutist in any sense I would understand. I mean a person, for example, who thinks that one absolutely ought not to bring about pain in somebody else by torture, now isn't that er a consequence that one's er forbidden to bring about?

KENNY: Well one can be absolutist about somethings and not others. Certainly one might be um er an abolutist about torture and say that torture is abolutely wrong, meaning by this that once any action falls under the description torture, you don't need to know anything more about it in order to know that it's wrong, and the same person might not be, say, an absolutist about lying; he might think some lies were alright, some lies were not, and one ought to know more about them. I'd like to ask you er as not now as a moral philosopher, but as a moralist, whether you are in fact absolutist about torture; whether you think torture is always and absolutely wrong?

HARE: Well er not er it's hard to answer that question er until you tell me what I'm allowed to inclue under 'always'. Er now I can imagine, I can think up situations, entirely fantastic ones if you like, in which I would think it right to torture somebody in order to extract information from him, I give an example of this in one of my books. But er I don't think that such situations are likely to occur. Even if they do occur really er I think that er once the er people who are in charge of these things say um members of the police force, er get it into their heads that it is sometimes legitimate to torture a prisoner, they will so easily persuade themselves that the particular case which confronts them is one of these cases and so therefore it is very much best if er they simply rule it out from their minds. The point here is I'm not against these um rather simple principles which I think is what the absolutist is really after er I'm not against them, the quarrel is one about their status.

KENNY: Doesn't this mean that you think that the philosophers should really deceive the policeman. You, as a philosopher, er having studied the hypothetical cases can see that torture isn't always wrong, but do you think it would be a good thing if the policeman believed it was always wrong?

HARE: Well here you're importing the um question of belief aren't you? I mean I don't er like to talk in those terms, but I think it would be a good thing if the policeman or I, if I were a policeman, even if I did philosophy sometimes er at other er when I wasn't being a policeman, I would still think it right for me as a policeman to put the idea of torture out of my head and this is a perfectly consistent position for a philosopher to hold. Er as a philosopher I can say well there might be fantastic situations in which it would be right to torture people but once I get into my constable's uniform - or whatever policemen wear - er I must just put it out of my head, because although it's conceivable that such cases might occur, they're very unlikely to occur.

HARE: (cont'd) And if I once let myself think they might occur and that in this case it might be one of them, then I shall find myself doing it.

KENNY: I'm interested that you didn't like er talking about believing that torture was always wrong. Er I take it that when you express um what I would call a moral belief, er what I can get from this on your view, is not any information about the World, but only information about you. If you tell me that torture is always wrong, then all I can really learn from this is a certain resolution that you have taken rather than anything about the World.

HARE: Well as in in the same sense um that er if you er tell me that the train left five minutes ago all you can get from watching me say that or listening to me say that, is an information about what I believe about the train.

KENNY: No, because if I think that your belief has been correctly arrived at, and knowing you to be the kind of person you are, I would assume it had to be. I can get the further information that the train leaves at that time.

HARE: Well then let's be quite clear about this. There are two thing, at least at any rate, two things that happen er when I tell you the thing about the train. One is er you from my behaviour gather that I believe something, and that's a piece of information. You also, if I'm er an honest man and well informed, gather some information about the train. Now if I tell you that I think that torturing is always wrong, er you get parellel to the first of those um some information about what I think about torturing. The second thing that happens, however, is different. What I have conveyed to you and what, if you agree with me, you will think will be, the torturing is wrong which is something prescriptive.

KENNY: But I don't get any information about um any objective moral values, and I think that this is what some of your critics have had in mind when they say that your view anhiliates moral values. You denied that you do this, but it seems to me that you you do anhiliate moral values in the same sense as somebody anhiliates Santa Claus when he tells a child that Santa Claus doesn't doesn't exist.

HARE: Of course, it would be an awful pity to anhiliate Santa Claus if Santa Claus was doing any good, but if um either he didn't exist or he wasn't doing any good, or if the belief of him might have been positive harm, er then it wouldn't be a bad thing that people should learn that he doesn't exist and learn to get on without him.

KENNY: Thank you very much Professor Hare.