LINGUISTIC ETHICS AND MEMETICS

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Abstract: The human mind develops as a consequence of acquiring memes therefore, language may play a relevant role in the completion of memes while an integral part of memes is their executive function in creating phenotypic effects. Our innate mental potential is advanced by interacting with our environment, and beliefs are responses to memes. The choices we make about incoming data are affected by our existing memes. The meme is the information included in the blueprint for a design, and design memes incorporate information which is replicated, varied and selected. Ethics, in its turn, relies on this type of system development.

Keywords: Memetics, brain capacity, linguistic ethics, solipsism, replicability

Memetics is a theory about the transmission and development of information: it must supply a powerful description of how selection, variation and replication function is achieved. Memetics covers the development of culture, focuses on the relevance of the cultural environment for the triumph of specific memes, and has been limited by a deficiency of understanding of cultural heredity. Memes are more like viruses than genes: they do not bring about their own survival machines. Memes do not bring about the replicative mechanisms by which they create their phenotypic effects. Memes exist and function autonomously, owing their distinct properties to the representational content in which they consist. Memes are representations which keep their content in a way that can be reproduced between generations. (Distin, 2005) In Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, the world is the main partner in its relations with language which confers sense on its sentences. Something can only be shown and not said. A word acquires its meaning when it is correlated with an object (the latter *became* its meaning), and keeps its meaning so long as its occurrences in sentences track the object's possibilities of association with other objects. Names should be introduced only in connection with other names in elementary propositions. Words stand for the objects that are their meanings only so long as their combinations are ones that are possible for those objects. Sentence and state of affairs must have the same form: form is "the possibility of structure." A sentence is a picture. A picture and the reality that it illustrates will share the same form when the display of the elements in the picture indicates a possible display of the correlated elements in reality. A picture must have as many distinct parts as there are in the situation that it represents (it must share the form of the reality that it represents). A word stands for an object so long as it follows its possibilities of association with other objects. The Picture Theory makes each sentence extract its sense separately from the portion of the world with which it is concerned. The philosopher can invoke the doctrine of showing, and claim that an elementary proposition shows its sense. (Pears, 2008)

Kant holds that we act wrongly when we treat people in any way to which they cannot possibly consent. It is wrong to treat any rational being merely as a means: in treating anyone merely as a means, we would be *acting* wrongly. We treat people as ends and not merely as a

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means, if we deliberately treat them only in ways to which they could rationally consent (to respect people, we should treat them only in ways to which they could rationally consent). To treat people as ends we must never treat them in ways to which they could not consent. Treating people as ends consists partly in *not* treating them merely as a mean. If our acts were merely events in time, they would be causally determined, so we could never have acted differently: we could never be responsible for them in some way that could make us deserve to suffer. Our *maxims* are our policies and underlying aims: it is wrong to act on any maxim that could not be a universal law. We act wrongly if we act on some maxim that we could not rationally will to be a universal law. When we think about normative questions, we can be misled by claims that are *concealed tautologies*. Whether our acts are right or wrong depends on our *maxims* (our policies and their underlying aims). It is wrong to act on maxims that could not be universal laws. Cruelty to animals is wrong because it dulls our sympathy, making us to be cruel to other people. It would be wrong for any of us to give ourselves sexual pleasure, or to hasten our deaths to avoid suffering (such acts debase or defile humanity). Our will is good when we do our duty because it is our duty: having a good will is something that we ought to try to achieve. (Parfit, 2011)

Memes

- have their foundation in representational content,
- must vary if cultural evolution is to happen,
- must be *generally applicable* concepts,
- are part of the *environment* that leads to the formation of the mind,
- do not design survival machines,
- cannot operate independently of minds,
- are able to retain information, carrying it to the next cultural generation (memes rely for their replication on the representation instinct).

Memes

- are representations of the phenotypic aspects that they control,
- can defensibly be considered discrete elements of cultural selection,
- rely on human minds and other external media for their preservation and replication,
- engage in a genuinely autonomous evolutionary process,
- are separate from the mind.

Memes are subject to selection constraints which differ according to their content, must rely for their replication on assembling limitations, vary via both mutation and recombination, are realized in systems of representation, and form part of the mind's environment, being governed by an evolutionary algorithm (they have their foundation in representational content). (Distin, 2005) Wittgenstein builds up logic from its roots in the ordinary thinking of common people, seeking the test of the adequacy of truths of logic in something accessible to common people in daily life. All necessary truths are tautologies. We can see all the entailments of a proposition in the proposition itself. If what we see is that it is a tautology, we see that it is necessarily true. Logically necessary propositions are consonant with anything that the world can provide us as reality. Particular associations of symbols are tautologies, names have meanings and elementary propositions sense, and language and world share the same logically atomic configuration. The limit of language can be drawn only from within it, elementary propositions must be logically independent of one another, logical necessities rely on definite general facts

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about the world, and genuine thoughts owe their senses to one-to-one correspondences of their elements with objects. (Pears, 2008)

Kant distinguishes three kinds of end: (i) *ends-to-be-produced* are the aims or outcomes that we could try to achieve or bring about (*ends in the ordinary sense*); (ii) *existent* or already existing ends (*rational beings, or people*); *ends-in-themselves* have *dignity* (*absolute, unconditional, and incomparable value or worth*). The continued existence of rational beings is an end-to-be-produced with supreme value. Rational beings or people are ends-in-themselves, who have dignity, or supreme value. Dignity is a value that is "infinitely far above" a lower kind of value (*price*). Like having a good will, rationality is partially an end-to-be-produced, or promoted. The principle of prudence is a merely hypothetical imperative, applying to us only because we want to be happy. All rational beings have a kind of value that is to be respected (they ought to be treated only in certain ways). Even the morally worst people have the same moral status as anyone else. *All* rational beings or persons ought to be treated only in certain ways. Everyone's degree of happiness should be *in proportion* to their degree of virtue, or worthiness to be happy. Everyone's deserved happiness would be best promoted by "the strictest observance of the moral laws." It would be bad if people had more happiness, or less suffering, than they deserve. We ought rationally to promote our own happiness (all rational beings necessarily want their own happiness). No one can affect how virtuous other people are (we can promote virtue only by increasing our own virtue). Everyone ought to try to produce the world that would be the best, or be the greatest good. If everyone followed the moral law, this would *lead to* or be the *cause of the ushering in* of the Greatest Good. (Parfit, 2011)

In the endeavor to be selected, most memes do not come with indications for their own replication. An important aspect of memetic content must be its replicability (otherwise no representation could be a meme). Human culture relies on a relentless process of memetic replication. Memetic replication arises at the level of meta-representation. There will be limitations upon which types of transmission methods can support memetic replication. Memetic replication must rely on the human ability for social learning. If the human mind is developed via interplay with existing culture, then external representations play a relevant role in memetic replication. Memetic replication was preceded by the appearance of constant behavioral models. (Distin, 2005) Wittgenstein draws a line around existing objects and thus around sentences with senses. The process of logical analysis ends at a level where simple names extract their meanings directly from the objects that they designate. The solipsist's claim (the range of his knowledge is limited to the contents of his own mind) is a presupposition of thought and language. Anyone who understands the idea that solipsism is a theory about language will find that it opens up a new line of investigation. Wittgenstein fixes the boundary of meaningful discourse: all sentences that have senses are truth-functions of elementary sentences. Linguistic solipsism's implicit assertion is to add an additional turn of the screw to the restriction of meaningful discourse: the only way to evaluate it is to achieve an understanding of the concept of the ego. The ego is not a possible goal of reference, but "a limit of the world." The unity and consistency of a person's interpretation of the physical world may be the result of his own dual existence as mind and body in that world. Wittgenstein presents linguistic solipsism as a dramatization of a deep truth about the limit of language (there is a space into which we may extend our language by creating new patterns of speech). Solipsism is an essential phase of an intellectual journey from confusion to enlightenment. (Pears, 2008)

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Kant condemns all lies by appealing to the harm that these acts bring about. Our own perfection consists in our having good wills and acting rightly: acting rightly is the only way to promote the happiness of others (to be virtuous and act rightly, we must act in the ways which are such that, if everyone acted in these ways, that would produce universal happiness). We have two ends that are also duties, our own virtue and the happiness of others (happiness is good only when it is *deserved*): it would be bad if people had more happiness, or less suffering, than they deserve. If everyone promoted the happiness of others at a greater cost to their own happiness, everyone would lose more happiness than they gained. If determinism were true, morality would be undermined (we wouldn't have the kind of freedom that morality requires). (Parfit, 2011) If memes are chosen via their phenotypic influences, we must inspect the evidence for their selection at the phenotypic level. The recombination of memetic alleles may be the more current method by which cultural variations appear. Artefacts cannot be meme vehicles, novel memes have internal influences on the minds of the people who own them, the ability to gain and retain attention is the best measure of memetic fitness, whereas both memes and their effects can be found inside the human mind and outside it. Memetic alterations are generally too swift to be picked up at the level of genes. Memetic changes may provide their bearers with genetic benefits. Population processes is part of the memetic environment, being a component of the selection constraints acting on memes. The differences amongst the human population provide an outstanding impact on the precision and speed of memetic transmission. (Distin, 2005) The *person*, not her rationality, has the high moral status that Kant calls dignity. Respect for a person is respect for the moral law. We ought to help others for moral reasons. Duties of virtue require us to act for the right motive, whereas duties of justice can be fulfilled whatever our motive. Duties of justice *are* moral duties. Our failure to fulfill duties of justice makes our acts "illegal" (such acts are against the criminal, state-based law, and against the *moral* law). We act wrongly *if* we act on maxims that we could not rationally will to be universal. As we have moral duties, we must have some kind of incomprehensible freedom in a timeless noumenal world. All categorical imperatives declare some act to be necessary of itself, without reference to another end (there are no objective ends-to-be-produced given by reason to all rational beings). (Parfit, 2011)

Wittgenstein focuses on the variety of the things to which a single word is applied. Isolated ostensive definitions are not sufficient to fix the meanings of words. Theories of meaning that provide verbal analyses of particular words leave the canopy of language "hanging in the air:" it should be tied down in real life by applying words to things and in philosophy by offering a general explanation of the practice of applying words to things. Linguistic techniques are the ultimate repositories of meaning. The sense of a sentence is not entirely decided by a single application of its words: we need to know how the speaker will employ each word to other things. We consider the contents of our own minds as symbols of their own future evolution. Reports of sensations should not be considered as the independent basis of the whole construction of empirical knowledge. When a word is inserted in a language, there must already be a place for it. The would-be private linguist cannot insert names for sensations unless there is already an area in his language arranged for them and waiting to be occupied by them. The phenomenalist's replacement of sensations for physical objects is a key change (the maintenance of meaning and the sharing of it stand or fall together). Meaning should be kept by objects accessible to anyone in the significant community of language-speakers. Wittgenstein describes a

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movement of thought without identifying a definite point at which sense is lost. We cannot drive a wedge between our general conception of the world and the way things are in the world. We are not only passive receptors of information about the world but also agents who get involved in the course of nature. (Pears, 2008)

Kant distinguishes between the spatial-temporal *phenomenal* world (reality as it appears to us to be), and the world of *noumena* (reality as it really is). For us to be moral agents, we must be responsible for our acts in some way that could make us deserve to suffer. If our acts were merely events in time, they would all be causally determined. We could not have any kind of freedom that could make it true that we can deserve to suffer because of what we did, if our acts were merely events in time. To be responsible for our acts, we must be responsible for our own character. If we are merely beings in the spatial-temporal world, we cannot have freely created our own character. Everything that happens is in part jointly brought about by a vast number of free and separate decisions, made timelessly. We should not expect to understand the timeless monumental world. If everyone believed that lying promises were permissible, the practice of making promises would be a "vain pretense." It would be wrong to lie even to a would-be murderer who asks where his intended victim is. Everyone ought to disobey immoral commands. We could not rationally will it to be true that everyone acts on some bad maxim. Whether some act is wrong depends on the *agent*'s maxim. To fulfill some *duties of virtue*, we must act rightly and with the right motive. To fulfill a duty of gratitude, we must feel grateful. We have many *duties of justice*, which we can fulfill by doing what is morally required, whatever our motive. Our acts are in one sense right or wrong when these acts *conform with duty* or are *contrary to duty*. Wrong-doers do not will that their maxims be universal, so "there is no contradiction" in these people's wills (a maxim is a subjective *principle* of action). When we act wrongly, we often make unfair exceptions for ourselves, doing things that we would not want or will other people to do. (Parfit, 2011) The human mind develops as a consequence of acquiring memes, language may play a relevant role in the completion of memes, an integral part of memes is their executive function in creating phenotypic effects, our innate mental potential is advanced by interacting with our environment, and beliefs are *responses to* memes. The choices we make about incoming data are affected by our existing memes, meme is the *information* included in the blueprint for a design, and design memes incorporate information which is replicated, varied and selected. From the memes' perspective, the conscious direction of human minds is a portion of the system of the cultural evolutionary process. (Distin, 2005)

Kant appeals only to what we ourselves could rationally will: what each of us could rationally will is the same as what everyone could will. Rather than first asking what is good, we should search for the law that determines the will of all rational beings. Moral laws are laws *of* the determination of the will, ideal normativity involves an irresistible coercive incentive, and reason gives a law by determining the will. All imperatives either *represent* some act as a necessary means to some subjective end, or represent some act as necessary in itself. Our acts have moral worth only when we act "*from* duty," or for the sake of duty. We do not have non-moral reasons to promote our own well-being. While some ends are subjective, there are also *objective ends*, which reason gives to all rational beings. Humanity is an end in itself, which has dignity in the sense of supreme and unconditional value (only good wills have such supreme value). Rational beings are ends-in-themselves, with supreme value. We ought to treat people only in ways to which they could rationally consent. It would be wrong to treat people in any

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way to which they could not rationally consent (Kant's Formula of Humanity). If there are categorical imperatives we must have a reason to obey them. It is the value of rational nature that gives morality its "end or point." All persons have *dignity* (absolute, unconditional, and incomparable value or worth). The supreme value which grounds morality is the dignity of all persons. The Highest or Greatest Good would be a world of universal virtue and deserved happiness, and everyone ought to strive to promote this ideal world. We ought to develop and use our various rational abilities. (Parfit, 2011)

Wittgenstein disapproves of reliance on proofs *in* logic: they must be entirely perspicuous. Logical compulsion is self-imposed. The Picture Theory relies on the concept of isomorphic possibility: the combinability of names in a sentence must indicate the combinability of the objects designated by the names. The elements of the picture should be associated in ways that are possible arrangements of the things for which they stand. The technique of employing a general word can neither be fixed onto a universal nor entirely incorporated in any verbal formulation. I cannot achieve absolute certainty about my future employment of a word by depending on my present experience. The language in which we communicate sensations owes its meaning to their associations with the physical world. The construction of calculi is an optional activity. Grammar described by itself is arbitrary. The generality of the word involves the employment that we make of it. The physical facts do not furnish the whole account of the incompatibility of two complementary colors: the words in which we record the inconsistency make a crucial contribution to its existence. Logical necessities cannot rely on contingencies in the world: we cannot formulate in the same language both the necessary truth and the contingent facts on which it is supposed to depend. Contingent facts have a role to play in the appearance of logical necessities. (Pears, 2008)

Kant dismisses the Golden Rule as "trivial" and unfit to be a universal law: the Golden Rule does not imply that we have duties to benefit others (many people would gladly agree never to be benefitted by others). By appealing to the Golden Rule, a criminal could argue that his judge ought not to punish him. The Golden Rule cannot be a universal law: it does not cover our duties to ourselves (this feature of the Golden Rule may make it misdescribe some of our duties to others). Kant's Formula of Universal Law (*the supreme principle of morality*) does not best handle selfishness, meanness, and advantage-taking, failing to condemn many of the acts with which some people take advantage of others (it can give us a plausible criterion of wrongness). It is wrong to act on any maxim that we could not rationally will to be universal. We are subject only to principles that we give to ourselves as laws, and obligated only to act in conformity with our own will. We *ought* to act only on maxims that we could rationally will to be universal. (Parfit, 2011) There is struggle between design memes for the limited supply of human attention, the evolution of design memes relies on human minds, memetic mutation has no underlying tendency towards increased fitness, and cultural change is a process based on interplays between particulate memes (memes' particulate nature alleviates cultural evolution). In recombination, existing memes are adequately reassociated in new positions. Memes' basis in representational content explains their ability to exert executive influences on the world. A human mind is partially the result of the memes that attack it, having the innate potential to interplay with and develop in response to them. Alterations and novelties in cultural information are memetic processes of variation and selection. Our minds provide the mechanisms of memetic evolution. From the perspective of the selfish meme, culture's development will be influenced by a intricate

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interaction between memes and their environment. (Distin, 2005) Wittgenstein's exploration of solipsism is a journey which returns him to its starting-point with a better understanding of what the character of that starting-point is. The phases of this journey are various philosophical theories that try to use language to limit the world and set it in relief. There is a single spirit prevalent to all sentient beings that can only perform in its distinct embodiments in individual sentient beings. Our inner and outer lives are inseparable. When I point to my body in the way in which a solipsist points to his body, I am pointing to the pure ego, which is a free-floating subjectivity. The confines between sense and nonsense are a series of road-blocks positioned on individual departures from sense into nonsense. Language can only be about the one and only world. It would be possible to use a language that lacked the word "I." (Pears, 2008)

Kant's Formula of Universal Law implies that we are required to develop our talents, and requires us to act only on maxims that we could will to be universal laws. An act's moral worth lies in the agent's motive, which is to do his duty. The moral law must be formal: it should have no "regard for the ends" that our acts might bring about. To act out of duty, we must be moved by a principle's law-giving form. If some moral principle does not appeal to a desired object, it must require the mere form of giving universal law. For us to have a reason to want ourselves not to suffer, our suffering would have to be morally bad. Since pleasure and pain are feelings, they cannot be appraised by reason. "Good" or "evil" cannot be applied to states of feeling, whereas well-being and woe cannot be good or bad. The moral law is a categorical imperative: we are subject to it only if we give it to ourselves. We are subject only to principles or imperatives that we give to ourselves as laws (Kant's Autonomy Thesis). Just as each of us has a will, each of us has, or is, *a reason*, reason is subject only to laws which it gives to itself, and moral laws apply to all rational beings. When reason determines the will, the latter is determining itself. Since we are rational beings, our reason or will is our authentic self. *We* are autonomous when our acts are motivated by our reason or will. Our desires are non-voluntary products of our natural constitution (they are alien to our true self). When we act on some moral imperative, our reason can motivate us without the help of any desire. We can fulfill duties of justice whatever our motive. If we do our duty for non-moral motives, our act does not have moral worth. Imperatives are hypothetical when they determine our will only with the help of a desire for some effect, and would be categorical when they motivate us all by themselves, without the help of any such desire. Pure reason can by itself motivate us. Moral laws must hold for all rational beings. Reason, or the moral law, must *determine* the will of all rational beings. If we can find some law that necessarily determines the will, we could draw conclusions about both the right and the good. The concept *good* must not be determined before the moral law, and the concept of the good should be derived from the moral law. If there is some principle that necessarily determines the will of all rational beings, its motivating power makes it the true moral law. A moral will must be free from empirical conditions, and cannot be determined by anything material. (Parfit, 2011)

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