Ethics and the Human Body

Introduction

As medical science develops, more and more possibilities are put before us. Some of these are versions of familiar circumstances, but others are genuinely novel. Such developments often bring benefits; but not infrequently they raise ethical problems, concerning, for example, the distribution of goods, and the legitimacy of transgressing boundaries hitherto uncrossed. In trying to deal with these problems we need to have a sure grasp of relevant values and principles. Yet it is one of the pronounced features of the modern era that as ethical problems have multiplied, so our common ethical resources have diminished. Oddly we seem able to recognise that human embryo research, gene manipulation, and xenotransplantation all raise difficult questions, but we are largely at sea when it comes to finding an agreed basis for answering them, let alone to agreeing particular answers.

Several factors underlie the inability to achieve consensus. Some are attributable to cultural pluralism. Modern societies are made up of different ethnic, religious, and ideological groupings, and while each may hold to a definite set of principles (though it is an idealisation to suppose so), there is no significant common set adhered to by all. There is, however, a more general problem which is the lack of confidence in the very existence of any secure basis for ethical deliberation. For obvious reasons (independent of the philosophical ones discussed in chapter one 'Practical

Ethics') appeals to the will of God are held to be problematic, and the idea that a special faculty of moral intuition or the exercise of pure practical reason might yield incontestable values and principles is difficult to take seriously given the failure of either to do so.

There is, however, one approach that seems to have flourished notwithstanding that philosophers have generally been critical of it, namely utilitarianism, or as it still sometimes referred to the 'maximisation of happiness principle'. Its success is due, I think, to the following.

First, it is easy to confuse the particular and restricted utilitarian doctrine that one has a duty to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number, with a general principle of beneficence common to most moral systems, namely, where it is appropriate and where one can, and other things being equal, one should act so as to produce good. The fact that the latter is not equivalent to utilitarianism emerges when one notices the *ceteris paribus* clause and the non-identification of goodness and happiness. Unlike the utilitarian, the advocate of beneficence may say that in a given circumstance it is not permitted to bring about some good because the only way of doing so would be by doing something which was unjust, say. Nevertheless, utilitarianism may seem unexceptionable for being confused with beneficence.

Second, and following from what was said above, those who argue that happiness is not everything and that some values and principles may be more important generally have difficulty justifying those other ethical features.

Third, when it comes to practical ethics utilitarianism enjoys the apparent advantage of ease of application. While it may often be challenging to gauge the likely utilities of conflicting options, this problem is taken to be of a quite different and more tractable sort than faces the application of distinct and often incommensurable values, such as justice, liberty and the protection of the innocent.

Philosophers' qualms about utilitarianism have generally been ineffective in halting its adoption, in part because of its apparent advantages, in part because of the failure of critics to provide a compelling alternative, and in part

because the philosophical criticisms of it tend to be rather abstract. For example, it is sometimes said that utilitarianism aggregates happiness and thereby fails to respect the distinctness of persons.[1] It is also objected that it undermines agency by denying moral actors any legitimate motive other than the maximisation of happiness.[2] Again it is argued that the very idea of double comparatives (in this case superlatives) such as 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number' fails to specify any unique state of affairs to be aimed at.[3] While one situation may involve *the greater happiness of the people* than another situation, the second may involve *more people being happy*; and for any given combination of people and happiness it is possible to imagine acting in a way that results in either more people or more happiness, with neither option uniquely satisfying the description 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'. Finally, and for any theory that holds that the right course of action is that which among the alternatives available has the best possible consequences, there is the general problem that no unique exclusive and exhaustive set of alternatives can be specified for a given agent at a given time.[4]

Given these several considerations and others touched upon in earlier chapters I shall assume that for these or other reasons readers are open to rejecting utilitarianism, and I will direct my efforts to the task of providing a better philosophical basis for thinking about ethical issues concerning the care and treatment of human beings. As previously indicated, the approach I favour is a version of ethical naturalism. However, since this term is used in different and contrasting ways a word of clarification is appropriate. As it refers to positions of the sort I am concerned to advance,

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[1]   This is John Rawls main objection to utilitarianism in *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

[2]   This line of objection originates in Bernard Williams 'A Critique of Utilitarianism' in J. J. C. Smart and B. Williams, *Utilitarianism: For and Against* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 108-18.

[3]   See P. Geach, *The Virtues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) pp. 91-3.

[4]   For a detailed presentation of this last line of argument see Lars Bergström, 'Utilitarianism and Alternative Actions', *Nous*, 5 (1971).

ethical naturalism indicates that claims of value, virtue, or requirement, are to be justified by appeal to what befits the nature of human beings. On this account, an action is right if, other things being equal, it promotes or contributes to human well being as this is implied by human nature. So conceived, 'naturalism' is a form of moral objectivism and is related to 'natural law theory'.

The other main use, by contrast, associates 'naturalism' with forms of subjectivism. The most prominent example is David Hume's view discussed in chapter one according to which ethical claims are to be understood not as describing states of affairs independent of the state of mind of the claimant but precisely as reporting or expressing his or her sentiments of approval or disapproval. Why this second view is also termed 'naturalism' is that it reduces the ethical to something that might be the subject of natural study namely the psychological states of human beings. Having already responded to Hume's challenges to moral objectivism I shall not attempt to refute the second kind of naturalism beyond making and emphasising the point that it is one thing to ask if something is good and quite another to ask if it is approved of. The first concerns the thing itself, the second does not. This difference also comes out in the fact that we can ask of the sentiments of approval whether they are themselves good. For the subjectivist this question will be analysed as asking whether those sentiments should be the subject of second order sentiments of approbation. Yet we can ask the same question of these: is it good to approve of (approving of) such and such? At each turn the subjectivist can appeal to yet higher order sentiments or social norms, but the question of *their* value awaits an answer, and reference to what is felt by a subject is an answer of the wrong logical sort. Either common morality has an objective foundation or it rests on a mistake. The reason most commonly advanced for drawing the second conclusion is the belief that no objective foundation is available. I have argued that this itself is an error and I will return to the issue in the conclusion of this chapter.

Persons and Bodies

Since the naturalism I favour roots ethical value in human nature it is necessary that I develop a philosophical account of human beings, and this involves understanding the relationship between a person and his or her body—hence the title of this chapter. Although this is an ancient topic of philosophical reflection the work of Wittgenstein casts doubt upon the assumption that there is a philosophical issue to be resolved. Wittgenstein was much exercised by the fact that the central problems of philosophy involve matters with which we are, in an everyday sense, quite familiar. We are perfectly at ease with words, know how to use them and are generally understood in our use by others. Yet when we ask such questions as 'what is language?' or 'what does reference consist in?', the whole thing spins out of focus and we feel lost for answers. This is not new, of course. In the *Confessions* Augustine asks 'what is time?' and observes 'if no one asks me I know; if I want to explain it to a questioner I do not know'.[5] One diagnosis of this gap between everyday competence and philosophical understanding is that offered by Wittgenstein himself. This involves the remarkable suggestion that philosophical perplexity is a kind of psychic illness induced by the misuse of thought. His claim is that we take ideas out of their natural setting and then ask questions about them which really do not make any sense.

By way of analogy consider driving along in a car and asking a companion-cum-navigator questions about directions and likely times of arrival; and contrast this with a situation in which the car is sitting in the garage and one asks similar questions: where should it be going? when should it turn off? how far is there still to go? what time will it get there? These were perfectly sensible things to ask in the first context; in the second they make no sense. Going one step beyond this, imagine someone asking where cars as such are going and how long that journey will take. Madness has

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[5]   Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. H. Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) Bk XI, Ch. xiv.

descended. Wittgenstein's treatment for the parallel condition that constitutes philosophical perplexity is a form of intellectual therapy involving repeated reminders of how language works in its proper use. The intended effect is that the patient will stop asking the misplaced questions and all will then be well. He or she, like the car, will be back on the road.

The relevance of this in the present context is that it may seem that there is something peculiar about the idea of the need for philosophical reflection on the human body. After all, there would be something peculiar in the suggestion that there is a philosophical problem about 'the snake body', say. There are snakes. They have bodies. Indeed, they *are*—living—bodies. What is puzzling about this? If the answer is 'nothing' that invites the thought that either the same response is appropriate so far as the human body is concerned, or else there is a significant disanalogy between the cases. The latter, of course, is what many suppose. One kind of disanalogy is expressed by saying that humans have souls and that snakes do not. Consequently, while the whole truth about snakes may be exhausted by telling the appropriate biological story about their bodies the same is not the case so far as human beings are concerned: 'John Brown's *body* lies a mouldering in the grave, but his *soul* goes marching on'.

Wittgenstein was not averse to talk of the human soul, in fact he uses the term approvingly; but he thought that this should be understood as expressively characterising aspects of living human beings (bodies) not immaterial spirits that inhabit them in life and depart them at death. Brilliant as he was, however, I think that Wittgenstein had too restricted a sense of the range of possible views of human beings, and underestimated the need for philosophical justification of one or other of them—including his own preferred 'ordinary' account. He thought that there was *materialism* (including *behaviourism*) which holds that everything true about human beings is reducible to descriptions of their bodies; *dualism* which supposes that the most important things about human persons are attributable to

something other than their bodies (their immaterial souls); and his own view, let me just term it *Wittgensteineanism*, which is that while human persons *are* their (living) bodies, not everything that is true and important about them is reducible to descriptions of matter in motion. 'She was sad and cried' is not the same as 'her body was in such and such a state and a saline solution flowed from her eyes'. In addition to (living) human bodies, says Wittgenstein, there is the human form of life and this is affective, cognitive, artistic, and so on; it is of the nature of human beings that they have feelings, that they think and that they engage in creative practices.

The last is, of course, a philosophical view but it differs from the others in denying that in order to understand the human one has to see it in terms of something more fundamental: the material or the immaterial. What Wittgenstein missed out, I believe, is the possibility suggested by Aristotle and developed by Aquinas, which is that human beings are not immaterial selves plus material bodies but irreducibly psychophysical substances, that is to say beings to whose essence belong activities some of which are evidently physical (such as motion) and some of which are demonstrably non-physical (such as thought). The irreducibility of the human person to the human body is not due to the ineliminability of social modes of description but to the fact that what makes human social life possible is that human beings transcend the mechanico-physical powers of their bodies.[6] In disagreeing with Wittgenstein, however, I think it remains the case that much of what he says fits very well with the metaphysical view I will be defending. His error, if I may presume to put it that way, was to confuse bad metaphysics with metaphysics as such. Everyday competence may not require a theoretical underpinning but there remains the question of what must be the case if what we ordinarily suppose to be so is as we suppose it to be. Identifying and answering such questions is the proper task of philosophy.

[6]   See John Haldane, 'Rational Animals' in A. O'Hear ed. *Verstehen and Humane Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

A Short History of the Philosophy of Mind

Western thinking about the human body has various sources of inspiration and influence. The first centuries of the Christian era were shaped by two important forces: one an understanding of the religion of Holy Scripture, bequeathed by Judaism; the other, the progressive incorporation of Graeco-Roman thought and the development of Christian philosophies. Figures such as St Augustine and Boethius are tremendously important in this connection, because they convey the influence of Neoplatonic thought into the developing Western tradition. Each was concerned with the nature and identity of persons; and each offers a relevant definition. According to Augustine a soul is 'a rational substance suited to ruling a body';[7] and for Boethius a person is 'an individual substance of rational nature'.[8] From the viewpoint of historical interpretation Boethius's definition is in the tradition of the dualism espoused by Augustine. For while a divine or an angelic person need not be thought suited to ruling a body, human persons, conceived of as Augustinian souls, would be such. Happily, however, the words of Boethius are more generally adaptable. That is to say one may accept the definition without thereby endorsing dualism; for one need not suppose that the rational substance that is the person is related to a living body as a driver is to a vehicle. Instead, for example, one might consider that the individual substance of rational nature is nothing other than a living human being, a rational animal.

In antiquity, Aristotle had already turned away from dualism of the Platonic sort, and something of his movement was to be re-enacted in the later medieval period. The thirteenth century saw the translation for the first time into Latin of most of the works of Aristotle including his great

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[7]   Augustine *De Quantitate Animae*, 13, translated by J.J. McMahon, *Fathers of the Church*, Vol. 4 (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1947).

[8]   Boethius, *Contra Eutychen*, 13, in H.F. Stewart, E.K. Rand and S.J. Tester (eds. and trans.) *Theological Tractates* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973).

text on the nature of living substances, the *De Anima*. This corpus had been preserved in the Arab world where it had also been the subject of a number of significant commentaries among the most influential of which were those in the Averroistic tradition. Averroes himself and those who followed him were very interested in Aristotelian natural philosophy, and they had much to say about human nature and the sense in which we are 'besouled bodies'.[9]

Unsurprisingly, the reception of Arabic-cum-Greek philosophy into the medieval Latin West raised questions about its compatibility with traditional Christian teachings, and for a significant period the new philosophy met with more opposition than support. Among those who saw merit in it, however, was the greatest figure of the period, *viz*. Thomas Aquinas, and in his commentary on the *De Anima* of Aristotle, and in his own writings on the soul, Aquinas goes as far as anyone yet has to reconcile the anti-Platonic character of Aristotle's view with the anti-materialist and spiritual teachings of Christianity.[10] I shall say more about the prospects for this project in due course, but for the present let me just extract two elements from it. First, on this account a human being is to be thought of as an animated substance and as a single unified entity. This draws from general Aristotelian natural philosophy according to which substances (things) are to be understood in terms of their organisation and powers. Accordingly, if you wish to know what a thing is, look at what it does; and if you want to understand what a human being is, look at how a human being acts and consider what is distinctive of its activities as a being of that sort. A second Aristotelian element is the idea that natural bodies can be analysed in terms of two aspects:

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[9]   For a scholarly treatment of aspects of the Arabic tradition see Herbert Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[10]   See *Aristotle's De Anima in the version of William of Moerbeke and the Commentary of St Thomas Aquinas* translated by K. Foster and S. Humphries (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951); *The Soul: A Translation of St Thomas Aquinas' De Anima* by John Patrick Rowan (London: Herder, 1949); and *Summa Theologiae* Ia, 75-83 translated by Timothy Suttor (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1970).

their *form* (or organisation) and their *matter* (that in which the organisation is realised). In the case of animate bodies, living things, the principle of organisation (form) is the soul.

In the century and a half following the death of Thomas Aquinas there was a strong revival of the more dualistically and Platonistically inclined Augustinian tradition which thought of a human being as, in effect, a conjunction of two substances: a natural, material substance, the human *body*, and a transcendent, immaterial substance, the human *soul*.[11] At the same time, however, another more 'naturalistic' trend was developing particularly among empirically-minded renaissance humanists. This movement might be termed 'Averroes's revenge' because it reasserted the interpretation of Aristotle with which he was associated, and because some of its advocates looked back upon this the Averroistic tradition with approval.[12]

In the seventeenth century, two great figures came upon the stage, Descartes and Hobbes. Descartes famously gives expression to a view very like Augustine's, in which he separates out mind and body. Hobbes, by contrast, looks to be, and is often characterised as, the first materialist of the modern age. It is a tribute to the power of these thinkers, and evidence of a tendency of opinion on the metaphysics of human nature to polarise along immaterialist/materialist lines, that Hobbes in one way and Descartes in another really defined the terms in which people currently think about human persons, human beings and human bodies. The inheritors of the Hobbesian tradition are ones who presume that thought and consciousness can be understood as 'motions in the brain'—to use a rather antique way of characterising materialism. Meanwhile the followers of Descartes think that there is something naturalistically inexplicable about human beings and that is their capacity for consciousness, thought and action.

[11] For further discussion of mediaeval accounts see John Haldane, 'Soul and Body' in R. Pasnau ed. *The Cambrudge History of Medieval Philosophy.*
[12] For an outline of the history of this period see John Haldane, 'Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy of Mind' in S. Guttenplan (ed.) *A Companion to Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

Contemporary philosophical thinking about these matters is complex and extremely diverse at the level of detail. Those unfamiliar with it might suppose that there is now a consensus around reductive materialism. In fact, however, most philosophers are very unsure about how to characterise the nature of human persons, and it is far from being the case that they are deeply confident that the physicalist story is right.[13] They know that there are difficulties with materialism, on the other hand there is significant, and I think not inappropriate, hostility to the kind of dualism that is associated with Descartes.

Despairing of the possibility of reconciling the existence of ineliminably psychological states with universal materialism some have gone so far as to try and eliminate the mental descriptions in favour of neurophysiology. A different response to the same difficulty is to throw up one's hands and say that the whole thing is an unsolvable mystery; not only do we not have a clue as to how the personal could be explained in terms of the physical but we cannot even see what it would be to have a physical explanation. Somehow mind and body are conjoined, but we are never going to know what the nature of that connection is. Interestingly there are Cartesian and Augustinian echoes in this. At one point Descartes writes 'It does not seem to me that the human mind is capable of conceiving, quite distinctly and at the same time, both the distinction between mind and body and their union.'[14] And Augustine gave voice to similar puzzlement some centuries earlier when he wrote that, 'the manner in which spirits are united to bodies is altogether wonderful and transcends the understanding of men'.[15]

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[13] For a representative sample of current opinion see the chapters in R. Warner and T. Szubka (eds.) *The Mind-Body Problem: A Guide to the Current Debate* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994). The view advocated in the present essay is further described and defended in J. Haldane, 'A Return to Form in the Philosophy of Mind' in D. Oderberg (ed.) *Form and Matter* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999).

[14] See A. Kenny (ed.) *Descartes Philosophical Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970) p. 142.

[15] Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, XXI, 10.

Eliminativism and 'mysterianism' are responses to the difficulty of trying to give a coherent and plausible account of human beings, one that recognises that they are bodily creatures but also that they are possessed of minds. These are, however, minority positions and most prominent Anglo-American philosophers retain the ambition of harmonising the two elements within a broadly naturalistic framework. The most ingenious attempt to do so is that associated with Donald Davidson whose influence has been such that the expression he coined to describe his own account, *viz*. '*anomalous monism*', is often used as a general term to describe reconciliationist projects of the same broad sort.[16] It is worth taking a few lines to characterise Davidson's position, first of all because it has been, without question, the most influential approach in the philosophy of mind and philosophy of the person in the last four decades, second, because it is a fine example of philosophical imagination, but third because it is a solution that is itself dissolving.

Davidson starts off with the thought that there obviously are mental states. It clearly is the case that human beings are moved by their thoughts, and that their thoughts are often induced by the world. In other words there is some causal interplay between persons and their environment. Yet Davidson accepts the claim of hermeneuticists, personalists, Wittgensteinians and other non-reductionists that there are no scientific or any other strict laws governing mental/physical interactions. However, since he also supposes that all interactions are law-like he concludes that any 'mental-physical' interaction has in fact to be a physical-physical interaction. If there is interaction it has to be between two physical things or physical events.

Without denying mentality, therefore, we are forced to assert physicality. This amounts to the thesis that human beings are physical substances with physical attributes, but which also have mental attributes. The latter characteristics

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[16] For Davidson's influential writings on this subject see *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982) especially essays 11-13.

are not identical to the former ones but they do depend upon them. If you want to explain what human beings are doing, you have to bring together these two kinds of attributes. You have to see human action as involving both the physical and the mental attributes or characteristics of physical objects. Davidson's theory is physicalist for the obvious reason that it takes human beings to be purely physical objects; yet it is non-reductive since it rejects the possibility of explaining the mental attributes physicalistically.

Throughout the 1970s and into the 80s this had the appearance of a happy and harmonious resolution, but more recently it has come to be thought of as discordant. The problem is simple. Anybody who really thinks that bodily movement is something wholly physical, something that has a complete physical explanation, is going to be in difficulty if they also want to say that it has a mental explanation; for this conjunction implies causal over-determination. It is equivalent to saying that a deliberate movement of my arm has two fully sufficient causes, a phys(iologi)ical cause and also a mental cause. But two completely sufficient causes seem one cause too many, and it looks as if one must make a choice as to which is the 'real' cause. This is liable to provoke one of two reactions: either a lapse back into some kind of dualism which holds that what *really* moved my arm were my thoughts, my mental states and so on, or a return to a version of materialism according to which what really moved my arm were motions in the brain. What seems impossible to fashion is an account that accords reality to both aspects.

This problem arises not just in respect of the mental and physical. It arises wherever there is an apparent rival to a purely physical explanation. Supposing we say that as well as the physical there is the chemical, that as well as the chemical there is the biological, as well as the biological there is the psychological, and that each of these makes its contribution to the activity of the relevant kind of substance —a human being, say. Then we are going to have multiple causal over-determination, because physics will com-

pletely explain the movement of the object at the level of the physical; chemistry ought to explain it at the level of the chemical, biology at the level of the biological, and psychology at the rational level. But now it seems as if we have four competing stories of why the object moved: a mechanico-physical one, a chemical one, a biological one, a psychological one; and these are now *three* stories too many.

The upshot is to force a single answer to the question of where the real causality lies. If one favours the physical, what you end up with is the idea that the psychological explanations are either merely a convenient way of speaking without realist implications, or else, if you think that the psychological has some reality it is reduced to an epiphenomenon. On the latter account his having a mind is not in any way responsible for a human being's movements; and since the idea of a rational substance is in part that of a substance whose activity is due to thought, this option leads to the denial that human beings really are rational substances or persons.

Perhaps it should have been clear from the outset that the attempt to combine physicalism with opposition to physical reductionism was an impossible one. At any rate there is now a growing consensus that anomalous monism suffers internal contradictions. And as this consensus grows so there is a return to versions of the Cartesian or Hobbesian positions. If one thinks that Davidson was right about the non-reducibility of the mental, and about its ineliminability from the explanation of action, then dualism may seem attractive. On the other hand, if one judges that Davidson's true insight was his insistence upon the physicality of substances and of causation, then reductive materialism beckons. I wrote earlier of 'the revenge of Averroes'; one might speak now of 'the revenge of Descartes and Hobbes'. For all these centuries later we appear to have returned to the situation of trying, like Hobbes, to explain everything about human beings materialistically; or else like Descartes, of having to say that there are really two substances involved, and then confessing puzzlement as to their nature and that of the compositional and causal relations between them.

In light of this, Wittgenstein's rejection of any metaphysics of human persons is likely to have renewed appeal. In the *Philosophical Investigations* he writes that 'the best picture of the human soul is the human body', and elsewhere he comments that, 'the best picture of the human souls is the human being'. Taken out of context these can seem somewhat puzzling aphorisms. It will be helpful, therefore, to quote at somewhat greater length. First from the *Philosophical Investigations* (Part I):

> It comes to this: only of a living human being and what resembles (behaves like) a living human being can one say: it has sensations; it sees; is blind; hears; is deaf; is conscious or unconscious. …
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> Look at a stone and imagine it having sensation. One says to oneself, 'How could one so much as get the idea of ascribing a *sensation* to a *thing*?' One might as well try to ascribe it to a number. — And now look at a wriggling fly and at once these difficulties vanish and pain seems able to get a foothold here, where before everything was, so to speak, too smooth for it.
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> And so, too, a corpse seems to us quite inaccessible to pain. — Our attitude to what is alive and what is dead is not the same.[17]

Later (in Part II) we are given the following

> 'I believe that he is suffering'. Do I also believe that he isn't an automaton?
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> It would go against the grain to use the word in both connections. …
>
> 'I believe that he's not an automaton', just like that, so far makes no sense.
>
> My attitude towards him is an attitude towards a soul. I am not of the *opinion* that he has a soul. …
>
> The human body is the best picture of the human soul.[18]

Part of Wittgenstein's aim in these passages is to remind the reader (as he often sought to do) of the unconcealed facts of the matter. We are so exhausted with the familiar that it is difficult for us to see things as they are, and theory rushes in where intuition has gone out the door. Wittgenstein is intent

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[17] L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (trans.) G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953) 281 and 284, pp. 96 and 98.

[18] *Philosophical Investigations*, Part II, Sec iv, p. 178.

on trying to get us to see what lies before us, and in this case the most obvious thing is that human beings are animated human bodies. They are living things possessed of various sorts of characteristics, and these characteristics are regularly on display. When I see somebody talking, or watch them writing, or indeed just watch them walk across a room, I am in the presence of, and a witness to the activities of a rational animal. I see their rationality in action. I do not infer it, or conjecture it as part of a theoretical explanation.

The shared error of the dualist and the materialist is to assume that what I really see is only a physical object in movement, concerning which the question arises of what is making it move. That assumption leads immediately to a theory of the inner causes of observed effects. At which point one might either adopt a Cartesian theory: the inner causes are thoughts (in an immaterial medium) that somehow interact through some part of the brain so as to make muscles move; or a Hobbesian theory: the inner causes are motions in the brain that are communicated through the nerves, and so on. Wittgenstein's opposition is to any theory of the mind as something distinct from, and lying behind, the behaviour of living human bodies. He is certainly not denying that there is knowledge of human psychology to be had, but this comes from looking at what is happening. Watch somebody walk and you can see psychology in action. A human being is a rational animal whose nature is expressed in the activities that constitute its life. That is why Wittgenstein says that the human body is the 'best picture' of the human soul. He does not mean that the human body is something whose operations invite us to infer the existence of something else, a soul, that is the cause of its behaviour. Rather, the soul is the very principle of organisation of the body and of its activities.

Returning to the problem faced by Davidson and others concerning non-reducibility and epiphenomenalism, the difficulty arises from assuming a notion of the physical as that of the universal underlying nature of things. In this way of thinking reality is ultimately composed of microphysical objects. In order to explain the diversity of things it

is then assumed that aggregates of these have various additional characteristics layered upon them. The problem is then one of allowing these subsequent features to play any role without thereby abandoning the assumption of the complete sufficiency of the physical. The fact that this problem has arisen and appears unsolvable has encouraged many philosophers to revisit the assumptions of Davidson's position; but few have been willing to give up physicalism; hence the recent revival of reductionist varieties of it.[19]

The adherence to physicalism in these circumstances suggests a form of intellectual prejudice, and once free of it other possibilities come into view. That which I am recommending is, in effect, a combination of Wittgensteinian common sense and neo-Aristotelian metaphysics. Observation tells us that there are very many different kinds of substances, of which human beings are one sort, cats are another, and sulphuric acid is a third. By looking at things of these sorts, watching their actions and their reactions, and thinking about the significance of these we build up a picture of their defining characteristics and thus of their natures. When we do this with regard to ourselves and our fellow human beings what we discover is that we are rational animals, and that our rationality is expressed in bodily activities such as drawing and talking, as well as in abstract thought. The human body is the medium of our personal existence. Aquinas recognises this when he says in his commentary on St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians that the hope for future life depends upon bodily resurrection. A pure intellect may survive death but a pure intellect is not a human person.[20] A person does not so much *have* a body as *be* one. On this account, however, the body should not be thought of in the terms favoured by philosophical physicalism. Certainly a human body has physical proper-

[19] In this connection see the essays in Jaegwon Kim, *Supervenience and Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
[20] See the extract from Aquinas's *Super Epistolam Pauli Apostoli* appearing under the title 'My Soul is not Me' in T. McDermott (ed. and trans.) *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Philosophical Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

ties such as spatial location, mass and so on, but it also has chemical, biological and psychological properties and these are in no way secondary or tertiary to the physical. As the principle of organisation and activity of a human being, a human soul is responsible for the shape of the body and for the activities of sub-personal biological systems as much as it is for emotions and thoughts.

Conclusion

Finally I turn to the bearing of this conception of the person/body relationship upon the consideration of bio-ethical questions. Here I may be brief for I am only concerned with the general framework of bioethics and not with particular issues located within it (in the following chapter I shall be exploring further aspects of this frame-work while also engaging a particular issue, viz. that of human cloning). An implication of the neo-Aristotelian view is that in important respects human life is continuous with other forms of animate existence. Equally, however, there is a dimension of human life that distinguishes us from fellow animals, namely our capacity for abstract thought and practical deliberation. In its speculative form reason aims at truth, in its practical form it is directed towards goodness. Both modes of rationality find expres-sion in bodily activities and this gives them a significance and a value that transcends the activities of other animals. Art-making and scientific experimentation are just two examples of this. Accordingly, while there are good reasons not to mistreat non-human animals the human body enjoys a privileged position by virtue of being the medium of rational life.

In order to understand any form of animal existence it is necessary to identify various activities whose occurrence serves the needs of the organism. The vital powers are ordered towards certain ends, and their exercise is subject to implied norms of efficiency and effectiveness. An anatomist who recognises a part of an animal's body as being a heart is well-placed to determine whether the organ is operating as

it should. Likewise for other bodily parts and functions. So too, the activity of the organism as a whole is open to evaluation by reference to a notion of well-being appropriate to the species in question. As with plants and non-rational animals so with human kind. Our activities may be judged good or bad depending on their relationship to a norm of human flourishing whose content is given by our nature. There is goodness and badness in posture and in diet, as well as in language use and in economic activity. It is the work of the human sciences and of moral philosophy to say what the relevant standards are but the general question of their objectivity should not be in doubt. The human body is a locus of value inasmuch as it is the location of human life. This is the basis of the ethical naturalism that I characterised earlier as holding that claims of value, virtue or requirement are to be justified by appeal to what befits the nature of human beings.[21]

Goodness is not an occult property like a neo-Platonic emanation or a mystical aura. It is a state or condition of natural fulfilment (and theologically speaking, of supernatural completion). However complex bioethical issues may be, the starting point for investigating them must be the recognition that human well-being is rooted in our nature as rational animals. Utilitarians regard preferences as the basis for requirement; Aristotelians focus instead on human needs and interests. Not only may these criteria fail to coincide they may actually conflict. At that point the Aristotelian has the advantage of being able to show how value is rooted in the very nature of the human animal: in its body as well as in its mind. Having arrived at this conclusion regarding the nature of human persons I next return to the structure of morality, more specifically to its multidimensionality. Again I shall approach the issue from the perspective of issues in bioethics, but as will become clear the central points are general ones.

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[21]   For a theologically and philosophically informed presentations of this sort of naturalism see P.T. Geach, *The Virtues* (1977).