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Ysgrif Rhestr Termau/Glossary Entry

Preparation: in class
Draft due: due by date marked on schedule
Revised due: due by date marked on schedule
Length: 300–400 words
Submission: via Learning Central (which includes plagiarism detection)
Referencing: in-text citations; bibliography
Layout: double-space; reasonable font; page numbers; word count
ID: include your name and/or ID number in your uploaded document

• Audience

Remember your target audience!

Your reader is the bright 14 year old with no philosophical background described in the handout ‘Writing With Philosophical Attitude’.

• Collaboration

Although your final entry must be your own work, collaboration is encouraged. Two things may be particularly helpful. First, you might compare notes with people working on related entries to avoid unnecessary duplication and to explore connections. Second, you may wish to try out a draft on somebody who is working on an unrelated entry.

• Cross References

Use cross references rather than duplicating explanations better included in other entries. This is where collaboration becomes especially important.

You may cross reference any term in the list of entries even if it has not been claimed by another member of the class. I will provide brief ‘stub’ entries if necessary to plug any gaps.

See below for entries grouped by theme or topic.

• Examples

A good example is worth a lot. Try to use examples to illustrate the ideas you are explaining. The more engaging and colourful the example, the better but you may also use examples from the literature and/or class if these are more appropriate.

I have suggested possible examples for some entries, but you should feel free to pick an alternative. The best example is one which you are comfortable discussing, as well as being one which illustrates your entry appropriately.

• No Quotations

The key here is to explain the term in your own words. Your reader could see how the original author explains it by reading her/his article. Relying on quotations defeats the purpose of writing the entry.
Entries by Theme

All entries have plenty of room for creative examples! Although I have sometimes included possible examples, these are simply possibilities — you should choose an example which you are comfortable writing about and which illustrates the ideas you are discussing well. The possibilities I have listed are not the only, and may not be the best, examples for this purpose.

Self-Deception, Inattention & Cruelty

- REDACTED is responsible for writing the entry on self-deception, a topic with connections to many, if not all, of the other glossary entries. The entry covering the vices of inattention is currently in need of an author. These entries both cover candidate vices which have prima facie connections with a range of others.

  Kant (1999), Murray (1936) and Taylor (2006) may be especially useful resources for the entry on self-deception.

  Jenni (2003) is the most relevant course reading for the entry on the vices of inattention which includes several examples of these vices and their actual effects. In light of Jenni’s discussion, this entry is also likely to have close connections with the entry on cruelty. Although we will not have discussed Hurka’s account of the vices prior to the deadline for submission of entries to the glossary, it may be interesting to contrast his conception of ‘vices of indifference’ with Jenni’s ‘vices of inattention’ (2003).

- Cruelty is currently unclaimed.

  Examples are plentiful in both fiction and non-fiction, and it may be useful to start by thinking about one or two. Jenni (2003), though not a discussion of cruelty, provides several non-fictional examples of cruelty including that involved in torture, genocide and factory farming. Hugo’s Les Misérables: Complete in Five Volumes provides several detailed depictions of cruelty (2008). Madame Thenardier seems actively cruel to Cosette, for example, and her husband at best indifferent to the child’s suffering. Incorporating discussion of one helpful example into the entry will probably be useful.

  Murray (1936) suggests that cruelty may be a side-effect of certain vices, rather than a feature of those vices as such. In contrast, Hurka (2001) takes cruelty to be itself a vice — either

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6 Names are redacted for publication on an open-access site.
a ‘pure vice’ or a ‘vice of indifference’, depending on the cruel person’s particular attitude towards others’ pain and suffering. Although we will not have discussed Hurka’s account of the vices prior to the deadline for submission of entries to the glossary, it may be interesting to take a look at his conception of ‘vices of indifference’ in light of Jenni’s discussion of ‘vices of inattention’ (2003). While Jenni is not concerned with the vice of cruelty as such, she is concerned with the vices which permit cruelty to flourish. Might these vices themselves qualify as cruelty of the indifferent type on Hurka’s view?

Snobbery, Pride & Servility

- REDACTED, REDACTED and REDACTED are writing the entries on snobbery, pride and servility respectively. These are connected by the ideas of dignity and respect.

For these entries, I strongly recommend selecting a good example to illustrate the vice in question. For instance, Pip in Great Expectations is both proud and a snob (2008). Uriah Heep (Dickens 1996) or ‘Uncle Tom’ (Stowe 2006; see Hill 2012a), on the other hand, might provide a useful illustration of servility. (If possible, it would be great if snobbery and pride were illustrated with different characters.)

Hill (2012b) discusses snobbery in detail.

Kant’s remarks are key reading for the entry on servility. Hill’s paper on snobbery also references his work on servility. Going beyond the assigned readings, this detailed interpretation of Kant’s view is in ‘Servility and Self-Respect’ (2012a).

Pride is a significant element in the megalomania discussed by Murray (1936), but Hill’s discussion of snobbery may also prove useful. Kant’s discussion of servility be helpful here as well: while some forms of pride seem vicious, the vice of servility may suggest that some kinds of pride — or, at least, minimal self-respect — are essential if one is to avoid other vices. Going beyond the assigned readings, Taylor (2006, ch. 5) discusses pride in detail.

Sloth, Avarice & Gluttony

- REDACTED is covering sloth.

A good example to illustrate sloth will be important in this entry. It is harder to find examples of sloth than of some other vices (possibly because a character who does nothing is not the most obvious basis for a good story), but Oblomov certainly fits the bill (Goncharov 1954).

The most relevant reading is certainly Taylor (2006, ch. 2), although Murray (1936) offers an interesting, albeit brief, dissenting voice.

The entries on avarice and gluttony are the responsibility of REDACTED and REDACTED respectively.

For these entries, too, I strongly recommend selecting a good example to illustrate the vice in question. Scrooge is probably the best known example of avarice (Dickens 2004), but there are plenty of other examples, both fictional and otherwise. (Jack of Beanstalk fame is arguably among them by the end of the tale, despite being granted a hero’s status. Why must he steal all that the giant has, even if he is justified (on what grounds?) in stealing something?!) Carter from South Park might make a good example of gluttony, although he illustrates so many other vices that it might be difficult to isolate the manifestation of any one in particular.

Our excerpts from Kant (1999) are key for both entries. Murray (1936) offers a possibly dissenting voice, albeit briefly, in apparently dismissing gluttony from his list of genuinely
nasty vices. But overindulgence in drink and drugs might arguably be classified as ‘gluttony’, at least in a broad sense.

Efficiency

- **Efficiency** is the responsibility of REDACTED.

This entry will focus on Setiya (2005). As we’ve seen, what is or is not a vice is a matter of considerable controversy in many cases, but this entry will need to be especially sensitive to the controversial status of Setiya’s classification of efficiency as a vice since it is not an entirely intuitive one. This entry has two main tasks. The first is to explain the relevant sense of ‘efficiency’ i.e. the one which Setiya thinks vicious. An illustrative example may be helpful here. The second is to explain why he thinks it is vicious.

References


Preparation

Selected entry: ..........................................................................................................................

Relevant reading: ......................................................................................................................

Related entries with authors: ................................................................................................
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Which order will you present these points in?

Is there an example or analogy which might help your reader understand the ideas involved?

Do you foresee any particular problems in writing your entry? If so, how will you solve them?
Heyden, Disidia, c1550

§4 The Deadly Seven
The Deadly Seven

The seven ‘deadly vices’, as we’ve already noted, are based on the Christian set of seven ‘deadly sins’. It is certainly plausible to think that some other character defects are properly classified as vices. Certainly, the traditional Christian picture did not deny the existence of ‘sins’ excluded from the list of seven. This obviously raises the question, what’s so deadly about the ‘deadly’ seven? What, if anything, qualifies these vices for special elite status among the failings to which humankind is subject? Do the seven even belong together on the side of vice, or might one or two be the victims of miscarriages of an overly Puritanical justice?

So far, we have discussed some examples of putative vices, and we have seen some suggestions about what makes them vices. For example, we explored Murray’s discussion of the role which illusion and self-deception play in a range of vices (1936), and we examined the foundation which a Kantian approach might provide for thinking about virtues and vices (Hill 2012; Kant 1999).

We are now going to examine an account which attempts to explain what makes the seven ‘deadly vices’ deadly. After reading week, we will reconsider this account in light of two papers discussing vices which are not among the seven, before exploring proposed criteria for the vices in general. This will allow us to further reflect on whether the seven deserve their elite status.

Taylor (2006a) defends a version of the traditional Christian claim that these seven are ‘death to the soul’ in the sense that in their most destructive forms, these vices destroy one’s capacity for agency and, hence, the possibility of leading any kind of minimally worthwhile life. (One may still exist, perhaps, but one is no longer capable of living.) Those entirely ‘in the grip’ of one of the deadly seven — those who have any of these vices in its deadliest form — are, in a sense, beyond redemption. The possibility of ameliorating one’s condition is excluded by the effect of the deadly vice itself. The seven engender vicious cycles which reinforce the vices themselves and destroy the self as an agent. This is why the vicious can be properly described as ‘in the grip’ of such vices.

Further Reading

The full text of Taylor’s book is available online through the library (2006a). If time allows, I recommend reading the first chapter before reading the second, which is included here. Although discussion will focus on the second, the first provides useful background which will enhance your understanding of the second.

Several reviews of Taylor’s book have been published including Hurka (2007), Jacobs (2008), Mason (2008), Miller (2007), Pugmire (2008) and Swanton (2007). These typically provide a brief overview of the book and the reviewer’s assessment of its key strengths and weaknesses.

As I mentioned in the first class, Oxford University Press published a series of seven monographs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>accedia, disidia</th>
<th>sloth, joylessness, apathy</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>avaritia</td>
<td>avarice, greed</td>
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<td>gula</td>
<td>gluttony</td>
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<td>invidia</td>
<td>envy</td>
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<td>ira</td>
<td>anger, wrath</td>
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<td>luxuria</td>
<td>lust</td>
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<td>superbia</td>
<td>pride</td>
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Table 7: The seven ‘deadly’ vices
on the ‘deadly sins’. While not all of these are by philosophers, some are, and others may nonetheless be useful sources of examples and insights. The books are intended to be generally accessible and may be especially good starting points for those with little or no prior philosophical experience. Each author either defends the traditional status of the ‘sin’ by arguing that it is, indeed, a vice, or argues that the alleged sin is, in fact, no vice at all. For example, Blackburn argues that, far from being a vice, lust is, in fact, a good character trait, even a virtue.


These books are all available from the library.

**References**

Recall that philosophers are concerned with the *arguments* which authors give for their theses. In order to evaluate a piece of philosophical writing, we need to clarify both the claims the author is making and the reasons she gives in support of those claims.

The key reading for this week is a chapter from Taylor’s *Deadly Vices* (2006) and is included in this course packet. You will probably find it useful to read chapter 1 as well, if time allows. The full text of the book is available online as Taylor (2006).

Note that Taylor seems not to distinguish ‘virtue theory’ from ‘virtue ethics’. You should not assume that these terms are used synonymously by other authors, however, and should take care to explain your own usage when writing.

In preparing for class, focus on questions 1, 2, 5, 6 and 9.

**Thesis**

1. What is Taylor’s main thesis or *conclusion* in *Deadly Vices*?

**Terminology**

Understanding a philosophical text often involves identifying specialist terminology and ensuring that you understand how the author is using that terminology.

2. Identify and explain in your own words the terms which are important for understanding *Deadly Vices*. Your explanations should reflect Taylor’s use of the terms.

3. How does Taylor’s distinction between the ‘internal’ and ‘external objects’ of passions work? How is it supposed to help distinguish between moods and emotions?

4. Explain the different types of ‘passion’ Taylor discusses (12–16).

5. How does Taylor understand *sloth* or *acedia*?

**Argumentation**

6. What *argument* does Taylor give for the main *conclusion* you identified in question 1? (See figure 5.)

   (a) What are the *premises*?

   (b) How are the premises supposed to support the conclusion?

7. What is the relation between the passions and the ‘deadly sins’ in Taylor’s view?

8. How does Taylor understand the relations between *sloth*, *indolence* and *boredom*?

9. What characterises *deadly sins* according to Taylor? How is sloth supposed to illustrate this?
We have seen that philosophy is concerned with *arguments* and with evaluating them i.e. with deciding whether they are any good. By now, you probably have an intuitive sense of what arguments are and the sorts of considerations relevant to evaluating them. We now introduce some terminology to capture our intuitive sense of what arguments are and what makes them good or bad.

An *argument* is a set (or group) of sentences. One of the sentences is the *conclusion* of the argument and the other sentences are *premises*. The premises are supposed to support the conclusion. The conclusion is the claim the argument is trying to convince you of.

†Technically, an argument can have zero or more premises but we will not be concerned about arguments with zero premises for now.

Figure 5: Arguments, premises & conclusions

**Evaluation**

10. Is the argument you explained in question 6
   (a) *valid*?
   (b) *sound*?

   (See figure 6.) Why or why not?

**References**


No devastating or redeeming fires have ever burnt in my life...My life began by flickering out. (pt. 2, ch. 4)

You lost your ability for doing things in childhood...It all began with your inability to put on your socks and ended by your inability to live. (pt. 4, ch. 2)

Intuitively, a good argument needs two things:

(i) good logic/reasoning i.e. the premises should support the conclusion;
(ii) good premises i.e. the premises should be true.

Philosophers use the idea of validity to describe the quality of an argument’s logic. An argument is valid* if, and only if, the conclusion follows from the premises. That is, it is not possible for the premises to all be true and the conclusion false. In other words, if the premises are all true then the conclusion must be true as well. An argument is invalid* if, and only if, it is not valid.

Here are two examples:

1. Purple mice discuss Descartes daily.
2. If purple mice discuss any philosopher daily, they must be super-intelligent aliens.
3. Descartes is a philosopher.
4. Purple mice must be super-intelligent aliens.

1. A child starving on your doorstep is relevantly similar to a child starving thousands of miles away.
2. In the case of a child starving on your doorstep, you should give the child something to eat.
3. Contributing to famine relief (in the distance case) is relevantly similar to giving the child something to eat (in the doorstep case).
4. In the case of a child starving thousands of miles away, you should contribute to famine relief.

Exhibit A: A valid argument. Exhibit B: Another valid argument.

Clearly, validity is not enough. Exhibit A is valid but obviously rubbish!

Philosophers use the idea of soundness to describe the overall quality of an argument. An argument is sound* if, and only if, it is valid and all its premises are true. An argument is unsound* if, and only if, it is not sound.

So an argument can go wrong in two different ways:

(i) An argument may be unsound because it is invalid.
   i.e. The logic is bad — the conclusion doesn’t follow from the premises.
(ii) An argument may be unsound because one (or more) of the premises is false.

On the one hand, if you can show either that an argument is invalid or that one of its premises is false, you’ve shown it is unsound. An unsound argument gives you no reason, by itself, to accept its conclusion.

On the other hand, the conclusion of a sound argument is true. If the conclusion is false, there must be something wrong with the argument.

So if you think an argument’s conclusion is false but the argument seems sound, you need to rethink!
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§5 Beyond the Seven

Heyden, Avaritia, c1550
Vices, as we’ve already noted, do not seem limited to the traditional ‘deadly’ seven. Even granted that the seven form a vicious elite of particularly destructive vices, we would hardly expect them to exhaust the possibilities for human vice. Moreover, one might argue that the seven are not even be the most egregious of the vices. The seven might be especially deadly to their possessors, but other vices might constitute graver character defects if, say, they are especially deadly to others. Or perhaps, contra Taylor, the seven are not even the ‘deadliest’ in any important sense. Going further, one might even argue that some of the seven are, in fact, virtues (e.g. Blackburn 2004). Or one might offer a weaker defence by denying that they are vices. (Presumably some traits of character can be ethically neutral i.e. neither virtues nor vices.)

In this section, we will examine two claims concerning non-paradigmatic vices. Not only are the character traits concerned not among the deadly seven. These traits are not usually thought of as vicious at all.

Our first example concerns what Jenni calls the ‘vices of inattention’ (2003). While nobody would claim these traits are virtuous, the claim that they are positively vicious is significantly stronger. One might even argue that these traits — at least to some extent and in some form — are crucial to psychological well-being and sanity itself. On the other hand, this move might be no more than a ‘cop out’ tempting us to respond to Jenni’s call for change with an easy and self-satisfied laziness rather than the self-critical ethical reflection her argument demands.

Our second example concerns Setiya’s claim that ‘efficiency’ is a vice (2005). It will be crucial for our purposes to clarify the particular sense of ‘efficiency’ which Setiya has in mind, as well as his reasons for thinking it a vice. This example is, in some ways, more controversial than the first. Although somebody might argue that inattention is no vice but a requirement of psychological health, this move defends it as, roughly, ‘a necessary evil’. In contrast, Setiya is claiming that a trait often classified as a virtue is, in fact, a vice.

Further Reading

Lynch (forthcoming) picks up on some of the issues raised by Jenni’s discussion. DesAutels (2004) is about virtue rather than vice in terms of emphasis, but it is concerned with some of the same issues as Jenni.

Parts of Setiya’s paper invoke a debate which is technically complex. For this reason, I do not recommend that less experienced philosophers follow up Setiya’s discussion of these issues. For those with more philosophical background, Williams (1981) sets out the view of practical reason which Setiya is attacking here. The paper is reprinted with a postscript as Williams (2001). The library has a copy of Quinn’s Morality and Action (1993), which includes the paper to which Setiya refers. The library also provides access to the full text of the collection in electronic form as Quinn (2012-06).

References

Recall that philosophers are concerned with the *arguments* which authors give for their theses. In order to evaluate a piece of philosophical writing, we need to clarify both the claims the author is making and the reasons she gives in support of those claims.

The key reading for this week is a chapter from Jenni’s ‘Vices of Inattention’ (2003) and is included in this course packet.

In preparing for class, focus on questions 1–3.

**Thesis**

1. What is Jenni’s main thesis or *conclusion* in ‘Vices of Inattention’?

**Terminology**

Understanding a philosophical text often involves identifying specialist terminology and ensuring that you understand how the author is using that terminology.

2. Identify and explain in your own words the terms which are important for understanding ‘Vices of Inattention’. Your explanations should reflect Jenni’s use of the terms.

**Argumentation**

3. What *argument* does Jenni give for the main *conclusion* you identified in question 1? (See figure 5.)
   (a) What are the *premises*?
   (b) How are the premises supposed to support the conclusion?

**Evaluation**

4. Is the argument you explained in question 3
   (a) *valid*?
   (b) *sound*?
   (See figure 6.) Why or why not?

**References**

Hard copy includes Jenni, ‘Vices of Inattention’ (Jenni 2003)
Recall that philosophers are concerned with the *arguments* which authors give for their theses. In order to evaluate a piece of philosophical writing, we need to clarify both the claims the author is making and the reasons she gives in support of those claims.

The key reading for this week is a chapter from Setiya’s ‘Is Efficiency a Vice?’ (2005) and is included in this course packet. Note that parts of Setiya’s article use concepts and terminology which may be difficult. If you do not understand these, simply highlight them as points to raise in class and keep reading. Setiya frequently makes a point initially using sophisticated technical apparatus (likely to be confusing if you aren’t familiar with that apparatus) and then makes the same point in less technical language (possibly less precise, but generally much more accessible).

**In preparing for class, focus on questions 1–5.**

**Thesis**

1. What is Setiya’s main thesis or *conclusion* in ‘Is Efficiency a Vice?’

**Terminology**

Understanding a philosophical text often involves identifying specialist terminology and ensuring that you understand how the author is using that terminology.

2. Identify and explain in your own words the terms which are important for understanding ‘Is Efficiency a Vice?’ Your explanations should reflect Setiya’s use of the terms.

3. What exactly does Setiya mean by ‘efficiency’? What is the difference between ‘general efficiency’ and ‘specific efficiency’? Try to pin down the character trait he considers vicious as precisely as possible.

4. What is the difference between ‘silencing’ a desire and that desire’s being outweighed?

**Argumentation**

5. What *argument* does Setiya give for the main *conclusion* you identified in question 1? (See figure 5.)

   (a) What are the *premises*?

   (b) How are the premises supposed to support the conclusion?

**Evaluation**

6. Is the argument you explained in question 5

   (a) *valid*?

   (b) *sound*?

   (See figure 6.) Why or why not?
de re/de dicto*

Basically, this is just a fancy way of distinguishing between a specific thing and a thing of some general kind.

‘I want to buy a house.’

This is ambiguous. I might mean either of two different things:

de re  There is a specific house which I want to buy e.g. 39A Goldfinch Crescent or the impressive stately pile which I viewed while walking a coastal path on holiday.

de dicto  I want there to be a house such that I buy it i.e. I want a house but not some house in particular. I haven’t picked out 29A Goldfinch Crescent or set my heart on an unreasonably large and draughty mansion. Any decent house will satisfy me, provided I manage to buy it.

Figure 7: The distinction between de re and de dicto.

Counterfactuals

A counterfactual is just a claim concerning something which is possible but not actual.

For example, ‘if you had taken a course on botany rather than philosophy, then you would not be reading an article by Setiya’. This is a counterfactual claim because it is a claim about what would have been the case if something were true which is actually false. Such a claim may itself be true (the only reason you are reading Setiya is that it is assigned for this class) or false (you would have read Setiya anyway because your friend would have recommended it to you).

Figure 8: Counterfactuals.
References

Hard copy includes Setiya, ‘Is Efficiency a Vice?’ (Setiya 2005)
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**de re/de dicto**

Simon Blackburn summarises the difference in terms of one between taking a specific thing as object and taking a statement as object (1996). His examples include Quine’s, ‘I want a sloop’:

\[(\exists x)(x \text{ is a sloop } \land \text{ I want } x) \quad \text{de re}\]

I want it to be the case that \((\exists x)(x \text{ is a sloop } \land \text{ I own } x)\) \quad \text{de dicto}

In the first case, there is a specific sloop which I want: ‘There is something such that it is a sloop and I want it’. In the second, I want some sloop or other: ‘I want it to be the case that there is something such that it is a sloop and I own it’.

**disposition**

A property of an object or organism which manifests itself if and when some condition is satisfied. For example, glass is brittle. Brittleness is a dispositional property. This means that glass is disposed to break under certain conditions e.g. if it is dropped from a height onto a hard floor. So the glasses in my kitchen cupboard have this property even though I have not yet broken them. Even though they have not yet broken, they are brittle because they have a tendency to break if the conditions are right.

**References**
