

Chapter 3

Philosophy and Argument: The Example of Cloning

3.1 Homework

Readings – RTD 2, 12

Study Questions – Give a short answer to the following questions

1. What is a premise?
2. What is a *valid* argument? What is a *sound* argument? Give simple examples of:
1. a non-valid argument, 2. an argument which is valid but unsound.
3. What does the moral skeptic claim?
4. Explain why the cultural differences argument is not valid?
5. Explain why the arguments against non-natural birth is not sound?

3.2 Arguments

Argument – An *argument* is a chain of reasoning aimed at supporting a *claim*. It includes

1. several premises
2. one conclusion

An argument is a *good* argument if:

1. the conclusion logically follows from the premises – i.e. the argument is *valid*
2. the premises are true – the arguments is *sound*

Consequently there are two ways in which an argument can be *bad*:

1. the conclusion does not follow from the premises – logical flaw
2. the premises are false

Definitions – Valid and Sound

Definition 6 – *Valid argument*

We call an argument **deductively valid** (or, for short, just “*valid*”) when the conclusion is entailed by, or logically follows from, the premises. (Jim Pryor)

Validity is a matter of the logical form of the argument, not the premises. We are compelled to accept the conclusion of a valid argument only if the premises are true. If these premises are true, then there is no way around it.

Definition 7 – *Sound argument*

An argument is **sound** just in case it’s valid and all its premises are true.

Note that all sound arguments are valid. In order to be sound, they need something extra: that the premises are true. If someone presents a sound argument, then we are compelled to accept the truth of the conclusion. This means that, if you want to disagree with a philosopher, you have to show that his argument is not sound: either it is invalid – the conclusion does not follow from the premises, or the premises are false.

Silly Examples : Here are a few examples:

- Valid or not:
 - Valid
 1. All cats are mammals
 2. Jalisco is a cat
 3. So, Jalisco is a mammal
 - Invalid (with true premises)
 1. If Alice was pregnant, then she would be fat
 2. Alice is fat
 3. So, Alice is pregnant

Here are some more examples of INVALID ARGUMENTS (From Jim Pryor):

The Argument	Its Form
If there is a hedgehog in my gas tank, then my car will not start. My car will not start. Hence, there must be a hedgehog in my gas tank.	If P then Q. Q. So P.
If I publicly insult my mother-in-law, then my wife will be angry at me. I will not insult my mother-in-law. Hence, my wife will never be angry at me.	If P then Q. not-P. So not-Q.
Either Athens is in Greece or it is in Turkey. Athens is in Greece. Therefore, Athens is in Turkey.	Either P or Q. P. So Q.
If I move my knight, Christian will take my knight. If I move my queen, Christian will take my knight. Therefore, if I move my knight, then I move my queen.	If P then Q. If R then Q. So if P then R.

Exercise (From Jim Pryor) – For each of the following arguments, determine whether it is valid or invalid. If it's invalid, explain why.

- Your high idle is caused either by a problem with the transmission, or by too little oil, or both. You have too little oil in your car. Therefore, your transmission is fine.
- If the moon is made of green cheese, then cows jump over it. The moon is made of green cheese. Therefore, cows jump over the moon.
- Either Colonel Mustard or Miss Scarlet is the culprit. Miss Scarlet is not the culprit. Hence, Colonel Mustard is the culprit.
- All engineers enjoy ballet. Therefore, some males enjoy ballet.
- Sound or not
 - Unsound: Valid with false premises
 - 1. All horses have wings
 - 2. Jalisco is a horse
 - 3. So, Jalisco has wings

Exercise (From Jim Pryor) – Here are some sample arguments. Can you tell which ones are valid and which of the valid arguments are also sound? (There are 5 valid arguments and 2 sound arguments.)

- I. If Socrates is a man, then Socrates is mortal. Socrates is a man. So, Socrates is mortal.
- II. If Socrates is a horse, then Socrates is mortal. Socrates is a horse. So, Socrates is mortal.

III. If Socrates is a horse, then Socrates has four legs. Socrates is a horse. So, Socrates has four legs.

IV. If Socrates is a horse, then Socrates has four legs. Socrates doesn't have four legs. So, Socrates is not a horse.

V. If Socrates is a man, then he's a mammal. Socrates is not a mammal. So Socrates is not a man.

VI. If Socrates is a horse, then he's warm-blooded. Socrates is warm-blooded. So Socrates is a horse.

VII. If Socrates was a philosopher then he wasn't a historian. Socrates wasn't a historian. So, Socrates was a philosopher.

Sources – Here are great sources on arguments

- The irreplaceable Jim Pryor website: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/vocab/index.html>
- A website for learning and practicing: Dr. Joe Lau <http://philosophy.hku.hk/think/arg/>
- For logical fallacies, to Shefen's guide to logical fallacies at <http://onegoodmove.org/fallacy/toc.htm>
- Some books might useful too, as, for example: Weston, Anthony, *A Rulebook for Arguments*, 3rd edn. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000).

3.3 Examples of argument in Ethics

3.3.1 The cultural differences argument

Moral Skepticism – Moral skepticism is the view that *there is no objective moral truth*.

Note that this is much stronger than saying that we cannot *know* the objective moral truth. The claim is about the non-existence of moral truth.

The “Cultural Difference Arguments” – Here is the argument which makes Moral Skepticism so successful

Societies radically differ in their moral values

Therefore, nothing is objectively right or wrong. It all depends on opinions which vary from culture to culture.

Problem with the Cultural Differences Argument – Is the argument sound? that is: 1. are the premises true? 2. is the argument valid?

1. Premises? the premise is true: there is no way to deny it, it is true that many values vary from culture to culture

2. Validity? the argument is not valid! The premises are about what some people believe, and the conclusion is about what exists. This does not follow:

- it is not because nobody believes in the existence of X that X does not exist! There could be many things that nobody knows about

- it is not because many people (even a large number) believe in the existence of X that X exists either!

Example from the book: same form of argument: Opinions vary on whether the earth is round or flat. Do we conclude from this that there is no objective truth of the matter?

NOTE: to check the validity of an argument, it is always a good idea to change the premises with others while keeping the logical form of the argument. If you can find premises such that: 1. the form of the argument is unchanged,

2. the (new) premises are true,

3. the conclusion is false,

then you have proved that the argument is invalid, because *a valid argument can never lead from true premises to a false conclusion.*

SO: the Cultural Differences argument is invalid, and hence does not support moral skepticism

Note that:

- to say that the argument does not support the view is not saying that the view is false: moral skepticism might be a viable view, but if you want to claim so, then you must provide a better argument than the one above.

- If you do, then we have to start to examine the new argument.

The Provability Argument – see RTD

- The provability argument is that no moral truth is provable

- Counter-argument: no all moral truth is unprovable, only the most difficult ones are. In fact, many moral statements are easily provable.

3.3.2 Cloning (Gregory E. Pence)

The moral issue – The resulting person would be harmed in some way, either by the process, or the expectations placed on that child.

Cloning – SCNT

Transfer the nucleus of a human cell in a enucleated human egg. The egg is transferred to the womb of a woman who agreed to gestate. The process of gestation is then perfectly normal.

Parallels with In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) • Arguments against non-natural birth

1. Any method of reproduction must prove that only healthy children will be created. This is not the case for IVF. So, IVF should not be performed.

2. One needs to get consent on the experimented before the experiment can be done. This is not possible in the case of IVF. So, IVF should not be performed.

• Problem: if these arguments are sound, then we should prohibit natural birth:

1. not all natural child is born healthy

2. no natural child gives his or her consent before birth

So, this type of argument against either IVF or cloning, are not compelling.

• Humanity will not be harmed

The argument against cloning is here that widespread cloning will lead to the reduction of the gene pool.

Pence argues against this argument in showing that the assumption that cloning will become widespread is false.

- Figures:

Reproduction is not always easy : 1 out 12 couples is infertile, 30% chance to get pregnant on a cycle, because: fertilization is hard to get + implantation (40 % human embryos fail to implant, half of which for genetic abnormality)

IVF: 12000 dollars per attempt, 25% chance of success

We are looking at a few hundred of kids in the next decade.

- Countercounterargument: one could answer to Pence in the following way:

If there is an interest in cloning, someone will try to make a profit on it. If someone tries to make a profit on something, they will try to minimize the costs and make it available as widely as possible. Cloning will become widely accessible. If it is widely accessible, and people have an interest in cloning they will use it. Hence, cloning will be widespread.

Pence's argument that cloning is not harmful because not widespread is not compelling. The false premise is : what costs a lot does not become widespread. We could find plenty of counter examples in the past decades.

Pence needs to argue that cloning will not lead to the reduction of the gene pool, even if it becomes widespread. A good question to rise would be: what interest could a perfectly healthy couple have in cloning vs. natural reproduction. Most people agree that it is more interesting to have kids that are a mixture of both parents. If this is true, then the gene pool is not threatened.

• New Things Make Us Fear Harms Irrationally

Arguments show how similar natural twins are to clones. Rebecca, Susan, birthdays, mothers, etc...

Tacit Argument:

1. Similar processes are similar morally.
2. Cloning is similar to having twins.
3. Having twins is morally acceptable.
4. SO: Cloning should be morally acceptable.

Counter-argument: Whether a given activity is morally acceptable does not depend only on the what, but also on the why. The fact that the process of cloning is similar to the process of how twins come up naturally does not imply that the two processes have the same moral status. The intentions behind could differ tremendously.

This is an argument against our fear of novel technology. As such, it is an okay argument: technology is never much more than a clever use of natural processes. That said, it is unconvincing as far as the moral value of cloning is concerned.

- Loss of human embryos – Compare with natural birth.
- No harm to the embryos

Argument: harm is done to all the embryos that are stored / destroyed etc

Pence's argument: Embryos are not sentient and cannot experience pain. Embryos cannot be harmed by being brought into and out of existence. Also, embryos are not persons with a right to life.

Possible counter argument: Embryos are potential humans. By destroying embryos we deprive them of potential future autonomy and value. Potential future autonomy and value ought not to be eliminated. Embryos ought not to be destroyed.

Counter-counter argument: Potential autonomy is not valuable, only actual autonomy is.

- Psychological harm

Argument: Having a child ought to be a careful, responsible choice and focused on what is best for the child. A cloned child will not have an open future. A cloned child cannot be based on careful choice

Pence's argument:

1. Premise 2. Is false. A cloned child will have similar expectations placed on them as normal children. GENETIC DETERMINISM HAS BEEN PROVEN TO BE FALSE.
2. Societal attitudes change quickly and are unpredictable.

3.4 Conclusion

The point was to understand the philosophical way to think about moral claims. Here is what we learned:

1. A *claim* is considered as philosophically acceptable *only if there are good arguments in its favor*.
2. A good argument is a *sound* argument. It takes two things to be sounds:
 - a. the premises are true
 - b. the argument is *valid* – the conclusion logically follows from the premises
3. the distinction between a valid argument and a sound argument is important:
 - A valid argument cannot lead from true premises to a false conclusion
 - That said, it may well be the case that an argument is valid, and still its conclusion is false. This is the case if the premises are false.
4. To prove that an argument *A* for a claim *C* is unsound is **not** sufficient to prove that *C* is false: only that it remains unsupported and need further argument in its favor.