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ISUS-X, Tenth Conference of the International Society for Utilitarian Studies

Title

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<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/64w666m6>

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Publication Date

2008-08-18

Can There Be a Utilitarian Theory of the Reactive Attitudes

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Prepared for I.S.U.S

Berkeley, California : September 11-14, 2008

Outline

- I. What are the reactive attitudes?
 - A. Examples: indignation, resentment, blame
 - B. What makes an attitude reactive? It is its being responsive to something: that is part of what is constitutive of them
- II. What is a theory of the reactive attitudes
 - A. Explanatory
 - B. Justificatory
- III. Different kind of Explanatory Theories of the Reactive Attitudes
 - A. Causal
 - B. Functional
 - C. Evolutionary
- IV. Different kinds of Justificatory Theories of the Reactive Attitudes
 - A. Rationality: the conditions under which such attitudes would be rational to have
 - B. Optimization: the extent to which having such attitudes is part of a rational enforcement or deterrence strategy
- V. Two important distinctions
 - A. The difference between the reactive attitudes and their behavioral manifestations.
 - B. Seeing the attitudes as accidentally connected to the behavior to which they are connected
- VI. So the best way to see the utilitarian theory is as a justificatory theory and of the optimization sort: when should such attitudes be cultivated as part of a general theory of deterring wrongful or undesirable behavior
- VII. But there are two problems with this.

- A. The first is that a theory of the reactive attitudes is a theory of the attitudes and not their behavioral manifestations
 - B. The second is that the attitudes are conceptually connected to the behavior that occasions or warrants them. So even if the attitudes are caused by the behavior or justified by the behavior they are also conceptually connected: and that means that we cannot cultivate them as part of a strategy for deterring such conduct. They are part of what it means for such conduct to be wrong.
- VIII. So if there is a utilitarian theory of the reactive attitudes can it instead be a theory of the behavioral manifestations of the attitudes and not the attitudes themselves?
- A. Yes and no. Yes in that it can only be a theory of the optimal expression in behavior of the attitudes, but no insofar as the attitudes they are expressions of are conceptually connected to the behavior that occasions it.
- IX. If there is a utilitarian theory in the offing, it must be a theory of the wrongness of the conduct and not of the attitudes that help us understand what it is for conduct to be wrong. The latter is part of the meta-ethics or semantics of the notion of wrong whereas the former (utilitarianism) is a normative theory of what makes conduct wrong.