ostrich act. It redistributes guilt instead of eliminating it. There can be no obligation to sell these stocks. It might be added that there are other, better models for moral behaviour: even if it is supererogatory to take the sins of the world upon oneself, we can at least be expected to refrain from casting our sins onto the shoulders of others.

For all its validity, the argument is specious, a straw man argument. The purpose of calls for divestiture of stocks in certain companies is not to cleanse individuals' portfolios and souls. The purpose is to bring pressure to bear on the companies in question to alter the odious practices. The line of reasoning is that a general increase in the numbers selling a given stock will increase the supply of that stock readily available on the market and so have a downward effect on the price of the stock. This would be the kind of message readable by even the most completely economic of agents. Divestiture is morally possible because it is a means, not an end. Accordingly, divestiture is successful only if it succeeds in having an effect. The divestiture that Cahn seems to have in mind would be successful as soon as the agent in question no longer owns the stock. His assessment of this is right: there is only a dubious moral value to be found in that. Influencing the policies of an Immoral-Corp can be a righteous goal; a clean portfolio is merely a self-righteous one. Of course, the two goals call for the same strategy, but identical strategies do not necessarily indicate the same goal. The distinction is not a new one: divestiture merely to clean one's own hands may be compatible with duty but no more.

Colby College,   © Daniel H. Cohen 1988
Waterville, Maine 04901, U.S.A.

RAMSEY–LEWIS IS BETTER THAN MACKIE

By David Papineau

IN a recent article, 'Laws and Accidents' [1], I had occasion to compare two different Humean accounts of the law-accident distinction, the first due to J. L. Mackie [2], and the second originally formulated by F. P. Ramsey [3], and more recently revived by David Lewis [4]. In that article I suggested that these two accounts are more or less equivalent. But further reflection on the comparison has persuaded me that the Ramsey–Lewis view is preferable to Mackie's.

Ramsey said that laws are 'consequences of those propositions which we should take as axioms if we knew everything and organ-

ized it as simply as possible in a deductive system' ([3], p. 130). We can spell out his thought as follows. One possible way of getting all the general truths into a deductive system would be to take them all as axioms. But that wouldn't be simple. On the other hand, simpler systems, with less axioms, would tend to leave some general truths dangling, in the sense that those truths would be neither axioms nor theorems of the simpler system. The optimal system would be the system which best combined simplicity with the inclusion of as many general truths as possible. The Ramsey–Lewis view is that laws are those general truths that appear as axioms or theorems in the optimal system, while accidents are those general truths that are left dangling by that system.

Mackie's view is that laws are differentiated from accidents by being inductively supported by their instances. The predicates in laws are mutually projectible, but those in accidents are not.

In 'Laws and Accidents' I tried to bring these two accounts closer together by adopting the assumption that projectible predicates are those that can be defined in terms of predicates that appear in the axioms of the optimal system. The suggested motivation for this assumption was that (a) only generalizations involving such predicates can be theorems in the optimal system, and (b) it seems sensible to expect an observed pattern to continue just in case it might be explicable by fundamental scientific truths.

Given this assumption, Ramsey–Lewis lawhood implies Mackie lawhood, since predicates in theorems of the optimal system will always be projectible. Mackie lawhood doesn't quite imply Ramsey–Lewis lawhood, however, since a general truth may be framed in predicates which are definable in terms of the basic predicates of the optimal system, without actually being a theorem of that system.

In the earlier paper I suggested that Mackie laws which weren't Ramsey–Lewis laws would be the exception rather than the rule, in that the vast majority of true, projectible generalizations could be expected also to be theorems of the optimal system. And having related the two accounts to this extent, I left it at that. But it now strikes me that if we concentrate on the exceptional cases — that is, on the true projectible generalizations which *aren't* theorems of the optimal system, and which thus differentiate the Ramsey–Lewis and Mackie views — then a strong case can be made in favour of the Ramsey–Lewis view.

Imagine that Dr Jane Jones is conducting an experiment involving some electrical apparatus, and that she notices that, when the apparatus is switched on, a distinctive kind of periodic signal is received on the medium wave radio she is listening to. She doesn't have an explanation for this, but naturally enough assumes it to be a lawlike, counterfactual-supporting fact.

But now suppose that the general claim, 'Whenever this kind of apparatus is switched on, there are radio waves of a distinctive

pattern in the vicinity', isn't a law, but just an accident. Imagine, for example, that there isn't any causal connection between the experimental apparatus and the radio signal: the radio signal is due to something quite different, which just happens to be present whenever the apparatus is on. (If we like, we can beef up the example by imagining that Dr Jones's experiment isn't the only case in history where an apparatus of that kind is used, but that in the other cases too it so happens that there is the radio signal whenever the apparatus is on.)

In the circumstances as described, the generalization won't be a Lewis law, since it won't follow from any of the fundamental principles of physics. But it will be a Mackie law, for it will be true, and it will be framed in projectible terms – the terminology of electrical circuits and radio waves is projectible, if anything is. In fact, of course, it's not a law. So it's a counter-example to the Mackie view.

No doubt Dr Jones, in taking it the generalization to be a law, will *believe* it to be derivable from fundamental physics. But that's beside the point. The generalization *isn't* derivable from fundamental physics, and so Dr Jones is mistaken about this, just as she is mistaken about the generalization being a law. She wouldn't be mistaken to believe that the generalization was a *Mackie* law, of course: for it is true, and framed in projectible terms. But presumably that's not what she believes, in believing the generalization to be a law. Which illustrates, once more, how the Mackie account fails to capture the notion of a real law.

Dept. of History and Philosophy   © DAVID PAPINEAU 1988
of Science,
Free School Lane,
Cambridge CB2 3RH

REFERENCES

[1] David Papineau, 'Laws and Accidents', in G. Macdonald and C. Wright, eds, *Fact, Science and Morality*, Basil Blackwell, 1986.
[2] J. L. Mackie, *Truth, Probability and Paradox*, Clarendon Press, 1973.
[3] F. P. Ramsey, 'General Propositions and Causality', 1929, in his *Foundations*, edited by D. H. Mellor, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978.
[4] David Lewis, *Counterfactuals*, Basil Blackwell, 1973.