

Chapter 1 : Stuart Hampshire

Thought and Action has 5 ratings and 1 review. Will said: Hampshire writes about difficult things with such beauty, something hard enough to do convincin.

Share via Email The Oxford philosopher Sir Stuart Hampshire, who has died aged 89, was one of those who, in the 1940s and 1950s, helped to change the nature of moral philosophy and the philosophy of mind. His *Two Theories Of Morality* anticipated the work of those usually credited with communitarianism, like Alasdair MacIntyre, and his *Spinoza* is still widely considered the best introduction to that philosopher. It is perhaps also because he identified himself with the the narrow technical scientific philosophising then favoured in Britain, instead of cultivating the more diffuse continental style of philosophy, to which he was perhaps better suited. John Sparrow, the former warden of All Souls College, Oxford, always said that Hampshire was, in every respect, the opposite of what he thought himself - an impressionistic, literary thinker, rather than one of relentless scientific rigour; a man of conservative instincts, despite the radical leftwingery he espoused; very feminine rather than masculine. Having been regarded as a golden boy at Repton school, Derbyshire, and Balliol College, Oxford - his best friend Isaiah Berlin called him "the gazelle" - Hampshire graduated with a first in greats in 1947. The same year, he was elected to a fellowship to All Souls and became a lecturer in philosophy. He enlisted in the army in 1948, but, partly due to physical ineptitude he had great difficulty assembling a gun, he was soon transferred from the rank of sergeant in a unit of London bus drivers to a position in army intelligence. It was his encounters, in the capacity of interrogator, with Nazi officers at the end of the war, especially with the Gestapo commander Ernst Kaltenbrunner, that led to his insistence, rare among 20th-century philosophers, on the reality of evil. He frequently told the story of how, towards the end of the war, he had to interrogate a French traitor imprisoned by the Free French, who refused to cooperate unless he was allowed to live. Should Hampshire, knowing the man was condemned to die, promise him a reprieve, which he was in no position to give, or truthfully refuse it, thereby jeopardising the lives of Resistance fighters? During these wartime years, Hampshire was also tormented with suspicions about the Soviet spy Kim Philby, who worked in intelligence with him. After leaving the intelligence service, Hampshire lectured in philosophy at University College London for three years, from 1950 to 1953, was a fellow of New College, Oxford, from 1953 to 1956, and domestic bursar and resident fellow of All Souls until 1956. His *Spinoza* book was an enormous success, selling 45,000 copies in three months, and *Thought And Action* also attracted much attention. Although considering most continental philosophy vulgar and fraudulent, and contemptuous of hands-across-the-Channel "British Council philosophy", as he called it, Hampshire was much influenced by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and thus indirectly by Martin Heidegger. His devastating review of the seminal, neo-behaviourist *Concept Of Mind* was something for which its author never forgave him. Two years after the marriage, Hampshire went to be professor of philosophy at Princeton, where, as he ruefully put it, he became, like Noam Chomsky and other liberal academics, part of "the stage army of the good". Sympathetic to the student protests over Vietnam, he was chosen to be head of the teach-ins, where his debonair English rationality enabled him to carry off extraordinary diplomatic feats. He managed, for example, to silence the president of Princeton in compliance with the rule that no one speak for more than five minutes and, indeed, is often credited with preventing riots erupting at the university, as they had at Berkeley, in California, and Columbia, in New York. In his last book, *Justice Is Conflict*, he argued that although justice itself was a universal principle, politicians are mistaken in thinking that they can arrive at a precise conception of what justice is. The best that can be achieved in a free, pluralist society is to perfect the procedures of justice, so that conflicting interests are fairly arbitrated. His work as warden at Wadham College, Oxford, from 1956 to 1961, which he considered to be one of his most significant achievements, manifested and endorsed his faith in institutions. Maurice Bowra, his predecessor, had been excellent on the academic side, but the college was, in every other way, deplorably run down. Wadham got a new library, Hampshire a new quilm. But, as he said, look at the Medicis. He and Renee managed to go on being an eccentric, non-establishment couple, even while promoting the Oxford establishment. Renee, who had always been involved in leftwing activities, insisted on periodically throwing open the Wadham garden to

local children and hiring a donkey to give them rides, while Hampshire was often to be seen wrestling a donkey into his car boot in the college car-park. In *Public And Private Morality*, which he edited, Hampshire spoke of the uneasy relationship between gentleness and integrity, the virtues of private life and the "hardness and deceit" necessary in public affairs. Most people, he later surmised, "feel divided between openness and concealment, between innocence and experience". Politically-minded intellectuals are so rarely egalitarian and just in their private lives and loves. Nancy and their two daughters, Emily and Sophie, survive him, as does a daughter, Belinda, by his first marriage, and a stepson, Julian.

Chapter 2 : Stuart Hampshire | Revolv

Thought and Action is a book by the philosopher Stuart Hampshire. The book has received praise from commentators, and is considered Hampshire's major work.

Stuart Hampshire succeeded A. There he was to influence Ted Honderich to begin a lifelong interest in the subject of determinism and freedom. My future would be concerned with settling or upstaging the dispute as to whether determinism was consistent or inconsistent with freedom. A Kind of Life, , p. In his books Thought and Action and Freedom of the Individual, Hampshire inquired into the power of thought to escape the fate of the material brain. One may say that the sense of freedom that men undoubtedly have is to be identified with their power of reflection and with the self-modifying power of thought. The intuition that when we are thinking of ourselves as thinking beings, we are excluding deterministic explanations of our performances, can be justified, so far at least. The relation between thought and the physico-chemical mechanisms of the body and brain is still left unclear. Freedom of the Individual, , p. He sharply distinguished knowledge of the future from knowledge about the past and present. He further distinguished knowledge about oneself from knowledge about the natural world, which depends upon observations, evidence, and natural laws. These are very familiar distinctions of course, between an open ambiguous future and a closed fixed past on the one hand, and on the other between an internal subjective mind and an objective external world. Only the former justifies his "reactive attitudes" and moral sentiments. A common pattern emerges in the theory of knowledge, common both to the theory of perception and to epistemological problems in the philosophy of mind; that we have to distinguish the first-person knowledge that a person may have of his own actions and attitudes from knowledge by observation, and that we check the deliverances of the internal source against the external senses and vice versa. Philosophers who claim incorrigibility and final authority for the internal source are no less in error than the behaviourists, who claim that only the evidences available to any observer yield genuine knowledge about actions and mental attitudes. Thought and Action, , p. But knowledge about one "what one is going to do in the future" involves ones "intentions. Hampshire proposes an account of freedom that arises at the intersection and collisions of these kinds of knowledge. The account of freedom that is suggested cannot be convincing if the distinction between the two kinds of knowledge is not first made convincing; the reader must first be persuaded that different types of claim to knowledge can legitimately be placed under these two headings, and that there is a distinct kind of knowledge which a person normally has of her own conduct and intentions, and also of her own sentiments and attitudes, distinct in its sources and in the manner in which the claims to knowledge are properly defended, when challenged. They neglect "subjunctive conditionals," statements about "what would have happened if Moreover, reflecting after the fact shows that we could have done otherwise. I argued that propositions of this form are indispensable in practical reasoning, when a man considers what would be the effects of various courses of action open to him, and also what he would do under various different circumstances. The possibilities that he considers as he deliberates, looking to the future, also may be reviewed in retrospect, when he considers what would have been the case if he had decided differently. The power to consider possibilities of action long in advance of the particular occasion, and the power to assess decisions retrospectively, are among the most conspicuous of all the distinguishable powers that come from the possession of a language. Yet the irreducibly singular proposition of conditional form, referring to a particular occasion, was usually dismissed from the text-books of modern logic, as by W. Quine in Methods of Logic, except in so far as the singular proposition was intended to be the instantiation of a general proposition and therefore to be testable in experience. For instance, it is possible that the uncertainty, which is a principle in physical theory, will have further and now unexpected applications within the theories that give an acceptable representation of some human performances, or of biological systems generally. A person is more free, in the desired sense, in proportion as his intentions are a reliable guide to his actions in the present and the future. Freedom as a moral value is here represented as arising directly from the kind of self-knowledge that enables a person to match his actions to his thoughts and intentions, and not to be deceived about what he is doing and about what his objectives are. Freedom of mind, so conceived, has a long

history as a moral value outside the Christian tradition and going back to Epicureans and Stoics. But there is a largely new context for it when the metaphysical problem of free-will versus determinism is sharpened by progress in the physical sciences; Spinoza was a determinist, but he argued that the laws of thought are entirely different from the laws of motion governing physical things. The metaphysical doctrine that reality reveals itself to us in these two distinct but inseparable orders enabled him to give a sense to freedom of mind while asserting an unqualified determinism: The more restricted aim of my argument, without the metaphysical doctrine, was that the two orders of explanation, the explanation of thoughts and intentions and the explanation of observed objects and motions, at least provided a way of understanding the tension in the free-will controversy. The complexities of explanation under specific descriptions, and the problems of identity involved, have been closely examined by philosophers since *Thought and Action* was written. But in writing *Thought and Action* I was arguing for the mutual dependence, as well as for the distinction, of the two orders of explanation, because this two-way dependence helps to explain the unanalysed sentiment, or intuitive belief, often reported as the belief that the will is free; this intuitive belief is sometimes combined in the same person with the belief that his movements, described in physical terms, must be supposed to be determined in accordance with the laws of physics. The argument from the two-way dependence, simplified, is as follows: Secondly, the intentions that he forms are genuine intentions, as opposed to mere wishes, only in so far as he takes account of what is possible, as far as his knowledge goes. Therefore additions to his knowledge of causes determining his own actions require further decisions from him and a review of his intentions. The fact that a person as agent steps back, as it were, from his situation and applies his causal knowledge in forming his intentions gives him the sense of freedom. He always has a decision to make, a set of intentions to form, no matter what the causes determining his desires and sentiments may be. When he learns more about the determining causes, he adds these causes to the elements already known in the situation that confronts him. I think the intuitive belief in free-will, so often reported, is in most cases no more than this sense of reflective agency, and no more than the recognition that evidence of causal determinants of human actions and reactions is not evidence of human helplessness. In summary, there are in this book two grounds given for regarding the traditional free-will problem as less confusing: But these two points still leave the traditional argument unclear: The book stops short of answering these questions. The existence or non-existence of the power to do a specific thing at a particular moment can be conclusively established by actual performance in the normal conditions presupposed, but, subject to the condition that an attempt that fails establishes lack of power, only if the subject really at that time wanted to perform the action in question and was not diverted by some stronger interest. One needs to know the aims of a person in order to be sure that his not doing something is a case of his being unable to do it. I am not arguing that there is anything easy and unproblematic about the distinction between lack of the will to do something and lack of the power to do it, as this distinction is applied in particular cases, and especially in the context of moral -argument, of censure, regret, and the assessment of responsibility. If I certainly wanted to do the thing in question very much, and if I made the attempt and failed, this would in all normal circumstances establish beyond reasonable doubt the truth of the categorical statement that I could not do it, that I was unable to do it, at that moment. Perhaps I have in general the capacity to do it, and perhaps I could have done it on that occasion, if such-and-such conditions, within me or in the environment, had been different. But I may on occasion be deceived about the strength and direction of my own desires and interests, and even more obviously, and often, be deceived about the desires and interests of others. And these errors about dispositions must lead to complementary errors about powers. My not doing it, or my failing to do it, may look like a case of inability, and yet, more closely scrutinised, it may turn out to be a case of not fully wanting to do it, and therefore of not really trying to do it. He could have done it, if he had really wanted to, and wanted enough. When I would normally say that I did not want to do something, which I could have done, if I had wanted to, how do I know that I have not been deceived by ignorance of the specific conditions on which the ability depends? This is a questioning of the adequacy of the commonplace inductive tests of powers by parallel cases. More exact, systematic, and controlled experiment might reveal an unsuspected condition on which the ability depends. Alternatively, the revision can be made in the opposite direction, as, for example, by Sartre, with the suggestion that many cases

of failing to do something, because of an alleged inability, are to be counted as cases of lack of will to do it. But they do make contact at certain points with the apparent incoherencies and complacencies of ordinary usage and belief. This is one point at which there seems to be genuine difficulty in sustaining the distinction. And does not this causal dependence of the inability on the desire prevent us from classifying the failure as definitely either a case of inability, or as a case of lack of will, if these two are mutually exclusive alternatives? Certainly this kind of case does prevent us from regarding the alternative accounts of failure as in all cases mutually exclusive. There are inabilities at particular moments, which are identified as such by failure in an attempt, that has been made with a conscious will to do the action in question. He showed and felt a desire to succeed, which is sufficient to justify the statement that he could not at that moment do what he tried to do; but perhaps it is also true that not all his desires pointed in the same direction; and this fact may explain his powerlessness at that moment. We do often speak of the existence of a will to do, or to achieve, something as a condition of the existence of the ability to do it. And men may commonly hope to extend the apparent limits of their own powers by further appeals to will, or by incitement of the will of others. Once again, it is speech, and the possibilities of incitement, exhortation and appeals to the will, which give a place to a partially indeterminate notion of the will in the explanation of conduct. A man may both explore the limits, and extend the limits, of his powers by questioning his apparent will to succeed. I am certainly not suggesting that the line of distinction between *vouloir* and *pouvoir*, between lack of will and lack of power, is clear and immutable in its application to human actions. The fact that men may authoritatively disclose their desires and aims, and more fundamentally, that they are capable of reflection, and that they may find reasons for wanting to do one thing rather than another, entails the consequence that the existence and nature of these desires and aims are not established solely, or even primarily, by observation of their actual behaviour. We need to know how they think of the actions which they want to perform. Animals complicate the issue, because we do properly attribute desires to them. But their desires and aims, linked with the necessary concomitants of desire, namely, pleasure and pain, are unformulated and are not mediated by thought; so we are prepared, in our unsentimental moments, to establish the nature of their desires solely by reference to their observable behaviour; and perhaps we are even ready to take statements about their wants as equivalent to some set of hypothetical statements about their observable behaviour. But we cannot accurately specify the more sophisticated desires of men without knowledge of their thoughts. Machines have powers attributed to them, and we now often compare their powers with human powers very directly. About a particular machine, at a particular time, we may say that it can now play chess better than a particular man can. Of the particular machine, it cannot in principle be true that it can now, and at this moment, play better than the man, if, when it is now tested in action under the normal conditions presupposed, it in fact plays worse. Of the machine we may, of course, say that it could play better than the man, or that it could have played better, that it has unrealised potentialities, potentialities which would be realised under different conditions, either inside the machine itself, or outside it. But this is not to make the plain categorical statement that this particular machine can now play better, conditions inside and outside the machine being what they now in fact are. If it can now play better, it will play better, when it is tested under the normally presupposed conditions. He may not want to play better, and therefore he may not try to; perhaps he prefers at this time to leave his ability unused, and prefers not to play as well as he can. This cannot be true of the machine; its powers, or potentialities, are merely that which it would observably do under certain implied or stated conditions. Suppose a machine that is programmed to make a losing move whenever its human opponent makes a foolish, losing move. Sufficient conditions of its defeat already exist in its programming. We know two categorical statements about him to be true: I am not denying that to a machine may be attributed powers and potentialities to do various things at particular moments, powers that may come and go, as the conditions on which they depend are varied. There is one overriding condition that must be known to be satisfied before the equivalent test of performance is accepted as decisive: If this peculiar, internal condition is not known to be satisfied, failure in present performance does not prove inability. I shall not repeat the argument. If I do not then escape, the contradictory is true. Having failed, I still may argue that I could have escaped, using a form of words that implies I would have been able to escape, if some missing condition had been satisfied: I may set about it with a will to

succeed, or without any real desire to succeed. In other settings of inquiry into your powers, I am normally asking what you would succeed in doing if you really wanted to and really tried, that is, made the attempt with an unqualified desire to succeed. We do normally, in reviewing actions, include the existence of an unqualified desire to do something in the conditions that must be satisfied before the power to do something on a particular occasion has been proved not to exist. In some contexts and for some purposes – for example, those of the stern moralist – we may say that a man can only be known to be unable to do something, if it has been proved that he fails, when all the internal conditions are favourable; that is, when he has strongest possible desire to do the thing in question, and when there are no conflicting desires of any kind. In other contexts and for other purposes – e. It is sometimes implied that we must wait upon science, and the discovery of causal laws, to know what men can and cannot do, as we must wait upon science and the discovery of causal laws to learn about the powers of metals and gases. But this is not true. I unavoidably acquire an immense amount of knowledge about what I can and cannot do, directly, and in the ordinary course of existence, in my attempts, achievements, and failures.

Chapter 3 : Obituary: Sir Stuart Hampshire | Education | The Guardian

Stuart Hampshire passed away recently, so it is very fitting to ask whether his books are still worth reading. This book is his best known one and I think it is still worth reading it after many years of its publication.

He did not confine himself to history, switching instead to the study of Greats and immersing himself in the study of painting and literature. As was the culture at Balliol, his intellectual development owed more to his gifted contemporaries than to academic tutors. Having taken a first class degree, in he was elected to a Fellowship of All Souls College, Oxford, where he researched and taught philosophy initially as an adherent of logical positivism. He participated in an informal discussion group with some of the leading philosophers of his day, including J. Hart, and Isaiah Berlin. In, at the outbreak of World War II he enlisted in the army and was given a commission. Due to his lack of physical aptitude he was seconded to a position in military intelligence near London where he worked with Oxford colleagues such as Gilbert Ryle and Hugh Trevor-Roper. His encounters as interrogator with Nazi officers at the end of the war led to his insistence on the reality of evil. After the war, he worked for the government before resuming his career in philosophy. His study *Spinoza* was first published in. In, he returned to All Souls, as a resident fellow and domestic bursar. His innovative book *Thought and Action* attracted much attention, notably from his Oxford colleague Iris Murdoch. Although he considered most continental philosophy vulgar and fraudulent, Hampshire was much influenced by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. He insisted that philosophy of mind "has been distorted by philosophers when they think of persons only as passive observers and not as self-willed agents". In his subsequent books, Hampshire sought to shift moral philosophy from its focus on the logical properties of moral statements to what he considered the crucial question of moral problems as they present themselves to us as practical agents. His international reputation was growing and from to he chaired the department of philosophy at Princeton University to which he had happily escaped from the robust atmosphere of London to which his mandarin style, conveyed in a rather preposterous growling accent, was ill-suited, as Ayer implied in his memoirs. Hampshire considered his wardenship to be one of his most significant achievements in reviving the fortunes of the college. He was knighted in and retired from Wadham in, when he accepted a professorship at Stanford University. He was head of the literary panel of the Arts Council for many years. Ayer, in. She died in, and in he married Nancy Cartwright, who was then his colleague at Stanford and is now Professor of Philosophy at Durham University and at the University of California, San Diego. Publications[edit] Hampshire, Stuart *Spinoza and the idea of freedom*. An inaugural lecture delivered at University College, London, 25 October Hampshire, Stuart []. *Freedom of the individual*. *Freedom of mind*, and other essays. *Knowledge and the future*. Gwilym James Memorial Lecture. *Two theories of morality*. *Thank-offering to Britain Fund Lecture*. Hampshire, Stuart; Scanlon, T. *Public and private morality*. Cambridge University Press, pp. Clarendon Press Oxford University Press.

Chapter 4 : Professor Sir Stuart Hampshire - Telegraph

A reflection on Stuart Hampshire's Thought and Action Our THOUGHTS Are FREE - They Are Within Us (Aristotle's ἀλήθεια ἀνάγκη ἴσθι) - But They Seem To COME TO US. We DETERMINE Our ACTIONS - They COME FROM US.

Professor Sir Stuart Hampshire In his Ethics, Spinoza had argued that the individual could not be considered "free" if he was motivated only by causes of which he remained unaware. Genuine freedom, Spinoza suggested, comes only when we learn self-consciously to recognise the influence of our baser passions over our natures. Only then can we strive for the peace of mind that comes through an impartial attachment to reason. Any theory of ethics, he argued, must take account of the possibility of a self-conscious decision not to follow the course ordained. Hampshire had a horror of the moral certainties of Left and Right from his time in British intelligence during the Second World War. He valued freedom over equality and rejected the classical philosophical tradition that set up reason as an absolute arbiter of disputes. Nor did he believe that liberal or socialist values had any special moral or historical significance, regarding all claims to moral universality as bogus. Related Articles Lady Berlin 26 Aug His distrust of those who believe that they alone have a monopoly on truth led him to examine, in his later years, how justice could be done and seen to be done in a pluralist society. In *Justice is Conflict*, Hampshire acknowledged that it is inevitable that people should hold irreconcilable views - on, say, the morality of warfare or abortion or even whether a motorway should be built through a beautiful valley. The popular idea that politicians should aim to find consensus on such issues, he suggested, was not only misguided but wrong. Conflict presumes the right to question authority and is a fundamental safeguard against tyranny. Instead of consensus, Hampshire argued, a free society should aim to perfect the intermediate institutions that arbitrate between contending parties so that all sides feel, whatever the eventual outcome, that they have been given a fair hearing. In late 1940s, working in the Radio Security Service which monitored the radio links of Nazi spies, Hampshire was said to be one of the authors of a study suggesting a growing rift between the German General Staff and the Nazi regime. Its central premise was that the war in Europe could be ended if the British government gave the German General Staff an incentive to launch a coup. The report, endorsed by all the junior officials who read it, including Hugh Trevor-Roper the historian Lord Dacre, was submitted for security clearance to Section-5 Deputy Chief Kim Philby who forbade its circulation, insisting that it was "mere speculation". Given his role in this affair, it was somewhat ironic that, during the 1950s, Hampshire himself, who had experience of both MI 5 and MI 6, was revealed to have been investigated as a possible Soviet agent, having been interviewed in 1951. He had been a friend of Guy Burgess, with whom he had worked in the private office of Hector McNeil when McNeil was under-secretary at the Foreign Office in 1940, and in the early 1950s was named as an alleged spy by Goronwy Rees, a member of the Blunt-Burgess circle and himself under suspicion. Although, in the end, he was cleared of all suspicion, there was embarrassment when it later emerged that MI 5 had allowed him to complete his work at GCHQ with a question mark still hanging over him. Hampshire later recalled that in 1951 Burgess had made what seemed, with hindsight, to be a half-hearted attempt to recruit him: It was only in retrospect that I thought it might have been something more sinister. In 1952 he became the founder chairman of the Jan Hus Educational Trust, a charitable foundation named after the Czech hero and martyr who in 1418 founded a movement within the Roman Catholic Church against its corruption and tyranny. Set up to "help the flow of information and the development of culture in Czechoslovakia", the trust did much to keep the spirit of independent thought alive in that country before the fall of Communism. After the war, Hampshire returned to his studies as a tutor and lecturer in philosophy at Oxford, where he spent five years as domestic bursar and research fellow at All Souls, and at University College, London, where he became Grote Professor in 1954, succeeding A J Ayer. In 1956 he went to Princeton University and in 1957 became chairman of the philosophy department. In 1958, Hampshire published his detailed study of Spinoza, whose influence is apparent in his subsequent philosophical works *Thought and Action*; *Freedom of the Individual*; and *Freedom of Mind and Other Essays*. His growing interest in the distinction between the public and private realms is seen in *Public and Private Morality*, which he edited in 1963, and in which philosophers discussed the question, posed most strikingly by Machiavelli, of how far the same

principles can be applied to public and private morality. He returned to the theme in *Morality and Conflict ; Innocence and Experience* , in which he examined the possibility of a universal ethics based on a minimal conception of justice; and *Justice is Conflict* . Stuart Hampshire was elected a fellow of the British Academy in 1981 and knighted in 1998.

Chapter 5 : Thought and Action - Wikipedia

Thought and Action by Stuart Hampshire starting at \$ Thought and Action has 4 available editions to buy at Alibris.

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