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P E N S E

ISSUE  
02

THE JOURNAL OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH  
PHILOSOPHY SOCIETY

*P E N S E* - F R O M S C O T S ,  
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# EDITORS' NOTE

‘THIS IS THE WORST POSSIBLE MOMENT TO BE STARTING A MAGAZINE’

// George Orwell, *Seeing things as they are: Selected Journalism*, 2016, p.172

And as George Orwell said of his time, so we concur in ours. Indeed, publishing and continuing to publish a journal in the hopes that it will be read in 2020 and 2021 has proved difficult to say the least. The first issue of *Pense* was published in the midst of the first lockdown, and this second issue is coming out of the tail end of what we hope will be the last lockdown. Nonetheless, as we creep out of national inertia we are immensely proud to be presenting the second issue of *Pense*. Events have somewhat conspired to turn the public gaze onto their screens, even though a certain former US President has become thankfully a lot less vocal of late.

That said, this second issue of *Pense* has been a marked success. It is a fantastic achievement of our editors, who have put in a lot of work despite these trying times: we are indebted to their enthusiasm in spite of a distinctly unenthusiastic series of world events. We would also like to thank the Philosophy Society for their efforts to shift everything online with great success. Discussion groups, reading groups, social events, book club meetings, and online lectures from philosophers across the globe have gone ahead and been attended with large and appreciative audiences. These events are still available for anyone to join (and who knows how to navigate Zoom), and we still encourage anyone who hasn't already and is philosophically minded to seek what else the Philosophy Society has to offer.

Regarding the contents of this issue of *Pense* itself, we once again present a wide range of papers from numerous disciplines, with no preference to analytic or continental thought. As ever, *Pense* has encouraged papers from all the branches of philosophy, from ethics, ontology and logic, to name a few examples. Naturally we will always welcome papers expressing new avenues of thought, regardless of the topic, and we will give constructive feedback and be transparent in our choices.

On a final note, *Pense* has extended beyond its rubric as a journal, and successfully co-hosted a conference with other society journals. The Unprecedented Conference was a series of lectures and discussions examining the nexus between philosophy, politics and science in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are proud that *Pense* contributed by giving the floor to some of our contemporary philosophers, and we thank them for participating.

Yours sincerely,

WILL PENKETHMAN-CARR & LARA SLYCE,  
*Editors-in-Chief*



# ON NIETZSCHE'S APOLITICAL POLITICS

~ M a r k M a c i e j W i e c h ~

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

The mainstream interpretation of Nietzsche's philosophy in the aftermath of World War II was characterised by denying him any connotations with politics. Walter Kaufmann (1982, published initially in 1954) acutely voiced this view in his, *The Portable Nietzsche*:

Nietzsche's orientation, as he himself insisted once more in *Ecce Homo*, was fundamentally anti-political. His concern was primarily with the individual who is not satisfied with accepted formulas – ranging all the way from patriotism to Protestantism, and including everything that is in any sense, to use his own phrase, “party.” Any attempt to pigeonhole him is purblind. (p. 15)

By depriving Nietzsche of any interests in politics, Kaufmann rescued him from, in Drochon's (2017) words, “the philosophical abyss he [Nietzsche] had fallen into after his misuse by the Nazis” (p. 324). Although undeniably having its merits (chiefly by utilising a prudential approach, given Nietzsche's favour for the wordplay), I wish to challenge this view. I will show that, even if Nietzsche does not directly engage with political philosophy, his views do have political implications; this alone suffices to cast serious doubt on any apolitical interpretation of his philosophy. This work aims to trace Nietzsche's interests in politics across the oeuvre of his mature period – *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883–1885), *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), and *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887). I will specifically argue that Nietzsche's theory of the state is subordinate to his fundamental idea of *the enhancement of the human type* and that the state derives its legitimacy from this principle. This work will begin by discussing *Zarathustra's* tension between the individual and the collective, and its possible political implications. Then, I will proceed to *Beyond* and address the issue of the aristocracy. Finally, I will examine *Genealogy*, especially focusing on the theory of the state and its subordination to the goal of improvement of humankind.

{ *THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA*  
AND THE INDIVIDUAL IN RELATION  
TO THE COLLECTIVE } }

The theme of the improvement of humankind seems to be the central concept of Nietzsche's philosophy, which can supposedly carry some political implications. It is recognisable throughout *Zarathustra* but arguably the most famously formulated at the beginning of the book, "*I teach you the overman*. Man is something that shall be overcome" (Nietzsche, 1982, Prologue, 3). Regardless of what Zarathustra precisely means – Robert Pippin (2012) lists out, among others, the quasi-biological, moral and anthropological interpretations (pp. 153-4) – there seems to be a certain tension embedded in this passage. On the one side, Zarathustra's philosophy tends towards an affirmation of individualism – calling for the advent of singular "overman" rather than plural "overmen". On the other one, Nietzsche seems to be profoundly concerned about "the people", suggested not only by the subtitle, "A Book for All and None" but also by Zarathustra's aiming for an audience throughout the book – firstly abandoning his seclusion and descending to the people, then gathering disciples, and finally feasting with the higher men in Part Four. It is puzzling why the collective plays such an important role in this philosophy, which is supposedly focused solely on the individual. In the following discussion, I will limit myself to its significance for the possible political claims of *Zarathustra*.

In the latter parts of the book, this tension seems to resolve itself (at least partially) in the idea of some sort of collective of individuals. While at the beginning Zarathustra is somewhat prone to address the individual alone, "man is a bridge and not an end" (Z.Prologue.4), near the end, he begins to indicate the social dimensions of this transformation, saying, for instance, "human society is a trial: thus I teach it – a long trial; and what it tries to find is the commander" (Z.III.12.25). A political interpretation of these passages could surely be made. It could be said that Nietzsche argues for the transformation of both the individual and the collective, namely, both the "man" and the "human society" are to be "overcome". The effect of all of this will be a fusion of the individual and the collective, giving rise to "our great *Hazar*: that is, our great distant human kingdom, the Zarathustra kingdom of a thousand years" (Z.IV.1). A view of this sort seems to be favoured by Hugo Drochon (2017), who, in his discussion of Nietzsche's "post-modern state", stresses the prominence of hierarchy – the individual is placed at the centre of a matrix of power-relations of Nietzschean state (p. 343). On this view, Nietzsche would be thus engaged in political philosophy by extension of his concern with the idea of improving humankind. Namely, the overcoming applies to all the individual, the collective and the state. Surely Nietzsche must be engaged in politics in the book – one could say – for his ideas necessarily entail social and political dimensions.

Granting some merit to it, I must admit that I am slightly reluctant to fully agree with this nonetheless bold assertion. Its main weakness seems to be the uncomfortable sense of speculation, for one must admit that Nietzsche never clearly stated the meaning of the passages in question. Taken as it stands, the above view frivolously picks up bits throughout the book, completely ignoring the context in which they appear. For example, the “human society is a trial” passage appears in a larger context of establishing new moral rules and just before a one-sentence critique of contractarianism. It is hardly clear that the passage should be seen as a political claim rather than, say, a slightly metaphorical ethical assertion. Moreover, the political interpretation of the “Hazar” passage (after all, the only fragment that arguably refers to an actual political institution – a “kingdom”) is undermined by the fact that Part Four, in which it appears, was originally not only not part of *Zarathustra* but, as a whole, is characterised by “a perverse sense of humor” (Kaufmann, 1982, p. 344). In other words, the conclusion here rests on exceptionally shaky grounds; it requires us to interpret as literal what Nietzsche was potentially making fun of. Given all these issues, as well as the abundance of sometimes contradicting views about even the basic Nietzschean concepts (see Pipin (2012), mentioned above), I believe it is rather unwise to entirely give oneself to such a speculative enterprise.

It seems that the more prudent version of the above interpretation would have to avoid any direct references to political claims. In effect, the most one can argue is that political claims are implicit, lurking in the background – I neither argue here that there are really any claims made nor that there are not, but simply that there are no direct ones made. However, it does not contradict Kaufmann’s stance, for as Brian Leiter (2003) argues, the fact that Nietzsche’s philosophy has political implications does not mean that the philosopher is involved in making political claims amounting to political philosophy (pp. 292-7). It seems one cannot establish beyond reasonable doubt that in *Zarathustra* Nietzsche argues for a political institution when it merely comes as an implication of what he is arguing for. However, one aspect seems to have become clear by now. In light of all these revelations, it is hardly correct to say that Nietzsche’s focus was centred on the individual alone. Where there is an evident tension between the individual and the collective, arguably reconciled in some sort of agreement, one cannot just ignore it. Similarly, the claims suggesting some political implication arising from the idea of the overman cannot be taken as lightly as Kaufmann did. Had there been no interest in anything but individual, arguments on this point would have never arisen. Although this conclusion does not yet entirely refute Kaufmann’s apolitical stance (it could still be insisted that Nietzsche was “fundamentally apolitical”), it does, I think, succeed in casting doubt of considerable force upon it.

## BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL IN ARISTOCRATIC POLITICS

The political implications arising from Nietzsche's philosophy are articulated more clearly in *Beyond Good and Evil*, the book that Maudemarie Clark (2015) asserts could be taken as seemingly supporting "a truly obnoxious, indeed despicable, aristocratic attitude and politics" (p. 165). At the very beginning of Part 9, "What is Noble", Nietzsche boldly asserts:

Every enhancement of the type "man" has so far been the work of an aristocratic society – and it will be so again and again – that believes in the long ladder of an order of rank and differences in value between man and man, and that needs slavery in some sense or other.  
(Nietzsche, 1989, p. 257)

The idea of value-inequality between humans is looming throughout *Zarathustra* – after all, the whole point of the *overman* is its superior value to a mere "man" – is supposedly presented as laying at the basis of Nietzschean politics. This aristocratic society is then grounded in a division, a demarcation line between people of higher and lesser value – masters and slaves. However, granting that Nietzsche is undoubtedly engaged with politics here, the clarification of his argument is needed. Clark (2015) rightly points out that the extent to which this passage refers to an "*actual historical aristocracy*" (and by extent, an actual political order) is limited (p. 175). For, as Clark goes on to prove, Nietzsche argues for two conclusions in one passage. Firstly, he makes a descriptive claim on how previous enhancements of the type man were brought about, namely, due to that past aristocratic society that only happened to be organised in what we call "aristocratic political order", the one that really existed in the past. Secondly, a normative claim is being made on, in Clark's words, the "ideal aristocratic society", one that is necessary to improve over humankind. That is a distinction shall be made and upheld between few ideas: the past (really existing) aristocratic society, and past (really existing) aristocratic political order, as well as the future "aristocratic" society and future "aristocratic" political order. Thus, according to Clark, Nietzsche does not necessarily commit himself to the aristocracy or indeed any political organisation as such. If it seems that he is doing so, it is merely due to the fact that in the past, the aristocratic society was organised into an aristocratic political order. One obvious flaw of this argument is that it perfectly fits Clark's thesis that Nietzsche need not be seen as endorsing an aristocratic political system (p. 164). Indeed, I worry that Clark is guilty of, in Drochon's (2016) words,

“transforming Nietzsche into an unlikely cheerleader [of the democratic case]” (p. 1057). Following Kaufmann’s approach, she seems to be ignoring the political implication of *Beyond* and pointlessly trying to make Nietzsche compatible with the liberal, western political tradition. It must be noted that I do not wish to directly contribute to the dispute what precise political order Nietzsche advocates (be it aristocracy, meritocracy, oligarchy or others). My interest lies in a broader sense of Nietzschean politics that I attempt to investigate, agreeing on particularities of this politics is not necessary for the present argument.

Nietzsche’s political claims appear to reach deeper to the core of political philosophy than the mere question about a particular political order. I see at least one political theme recurring in both *Beyond and Genealogy* – the “myth of the origin.” In *Beyond*, it takes the form of an argument for the origins of higher culture, found in the descriptive political claims mentioned by Clark (2015). Further in aphorism 257, Nietzsche remarks:

Let us admit to ourselves, without trying to be considerate, how every higher culture on earth so far has *begun*. Human beings whose nature was still natural, barbarians in every terrible sense of the word, men of prey who were still in possession of unbroken strength of will and lust for power, hurled themselves upon weaker, more civilised, more peaceful races, perhaps traders or cattle raisers, or upon mellow old creatures whose last vitality was even then flaring up in splendid fireworks of spirit and corruption. (B.257)

The *higher culture* had begun with violence. The few “men of prey” whose will to power was the greatest assaulted the weaker humans, the “more peaceful races”, and forced them into obedience. Thus, the distinction between masters and slaves originated, and, one could assume, the past aristocratic society was formed. However, the extent to which this refers to broader political structures (like states) is still unclear. The textual and scholarship-based evidence is scarce. Firstly, political vocabulary (e.g. “state”, “society”, or “aristocracy”) is absent from the above passage. Secondly, scholars tend to avoid broader political (state-centred) themes in their discussions. Neither Lampert (2001) nor Southwell (2008) explicitly addresses the question of the origins of the state, instead of focusing on the “origins of aristocratic orders” (p. 265) and “nature of aristocratic society” (p. 88). Although still guilty of attempting to purge Nietzsche of authoritarianism, Clark (2015) remarks on this point that *Beyond* seems to be more concerned with the aristocratic mindset of individuals and their mutual relations than with any broad political arguments (p. 182). In effect, it is difficult to construct a complex account of Nietzschean politics where he himself seems to be rather reluctant to

assume any. Nevertheless, some conclusions could be drawn. Thus far, it seems that Nietzsche's politics is highly instrumental; that is, it has a higher purpose at its core. It cannot be a coincidence that both of the above passages directly reference other non-political (metaphysical, one could say) concepts. As *Beyond* presents it, politics is tied either to the *enhancement of the type man* or the emergence of *higher culture*.

{ ON THE GENEALOGY OF MORALITY  
AND THE STATE'S SUBORDINATION  
TO THE HIGHER CULTURE }

On *The Genealogy of Morality* contains probably the most explicit account of Nietzschean politics of his mature period, although strongly echoing the earlier essay, "The Greek State" – a fact that Drochon (2017) takes as proof that Nietzsche developed a coherent 'theory of the state' (pp. 235-236). At odds with his usual style, Nietzsche is here bluntly clear about his subject matter, declaring in the second essay, section 17:

The oldest "state" emerged as a terrible tyranny, as repressive and ruthless machinery, and continued working until the raw material of people and semi-animals had been finally not just kneaded and made compliant, but shaped. (Nietzsche, 2019, II.17)

Thus, the "beasts of prey" acting as a "ruthless machinery" enforced their will over the "semi-animals" and "shaped" them into the desired form – thus, giving rise to the state. Interestingly, the origins of the state from *Genealogy* seems to strongly echo the origins of higher culture in the aforementioned passage from *Beyond*:

{ I used the word "state": it is obvious who is meant by this – some pack of blond beasts of prey, a conqueror and master race, which, organized on a war footing, and with the power to organize, unscrupulously lays its dreadful paws on a populace which, though it might be vastly greater in number, is still shapeless and shifting. In this way, the "state" began on earth: I think I have dispensed with the fantasy which has it begin with a "contract." (GM.II.17) }

Since both the *higher culture* and the state began in fundamentally the same way, it is hard to resist the thought that they seem to be connected, if not forming the same concept. I do not settle this matter now due to the limitation of space;

however, as I will show later, there seems to be a clear connection between the concepts of the state, the *higher culture*, and the *ideal aristocratic society*.

However, where the *higher culture* seems to be fairly unproblematic in the political context, the other claim was challenged on the basis of its being redundant – failing to provide a positive (justificatory) argument for the state. According to Nietzsche, the few “blond beasts of prey” enforced their authority over the many “shapeless and shifting”. Thus, they alone, “organised on a war footing”, are effectively the state (Drochon, 2017, p. 330). As Renato Cristi (2010) points out, the problem lies in the fact that the brute power of a conqueror by itself can hardly lie at the bottom of a positive argument for the state. She remarks that “the authority of the state is legitimate when it submits to a higher, normatively autonomous authoritative source” (Cristi, 2010, p. 12). It appears that Nietzsche’s theory of the state lacks this normative source of authority, posing a problem if it is to be seen as anything more than a history lesson. It cannot be said that members of the state entered in any agreement, for “whoever can command, whoever is a “master” by nature, whoever appears violent in deed and gesture – what is he going to care about contracts!” (GM.II.17). Simultaneously, the will to power of the “blond beasts of prey” cannot alone justify the state since it would essentially mean that the state is legitimised by itself, for, as mentioned above, the blond beasts of prey are the state. Caught in this vicious void, the answer to the conundrum – I say – lies in the instrumental nature of Nietzschean politics, namely in its subordination to the function of the *enhancement of humankind* (Drochon, 2017, p. 330).

Investing Nietzsche’s perfectionism – his view of the fundamental subordination of lower forms of reality to the higher ones – with political sense, Clark (2015) argues that the *higher culture* is not an end in itself but means for the creation of the genius – “the highest human types” (p. 172). Precisely this is what humankind exists for – Nietzsche claims in ‘Schopenhauer as Educator’ (following Clark, p. 172). Linking it back to *Beyond, the ideal aristocratic society* is necessary for the enhancement of *the type man* because only this society can give rise to the higher culture that creates the genius, which improves humanity. This society of the “blond beasts of prey” is then:

The most involuntary, unconscious artists there are: – where they appear, soon something new arises, a structure of domination that *lives*, in which parts and functions are differentiated and related to one another, in which there is absolutely no room for anything that does not first acquire “meaning” with regard to the whole. (GM, II, 17)

They are the conquerors and the creators. They force the “peaceful races” under their “terrible tyranny” in order to create “a structure of domination that lives.” What those “unconscious artists” create (*the higher culture*) is a means to an end – it is meaningful and valuable only in relation to the whole, to the primary goal. Because those “blond beasts of prey” are essentially the state, the state itself is subordinated to the goal – it is merely a function of the overall scheme. The function of improving humankind, enabling the overman to “become” is where the state’s legitimacy lies. As Drochon (2017) puts it, “the state, for Nietzsche, is justified because it opens up a space within which culture, through genius, can for the first time flourish” (p. 331). In that sense, the “blond beasts of prey” gave rise to the state and aristocratic society. Those consequently enabled the emergence of culture, which is in itself a means for the creation of genius – the *overman*.

## { CONCLUSION }

Creating his own “myth of the origin” of the state, Nietzsche is not only rejecting the social contract theory (see Drochon, 2017, p. 333) but also, by extension, calling into question the very basis of modern political philosophy. Abandoning the tradition, stretching back to Plato at the very least, of politics being fundamentally concerned with the “demos”, Nietzsche unsurprisingly sees himself as developing a “Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future”, as the sub-title of *Beyond* suggests. As I have argued in this work, Kaufmann was essentially mistaken when framing Nietzsche as an apolitical thinker, but he was not wrong in all respects. As I have also demonstrated, Nietzschean politics is not exactly about the collective. If it advocates any politics at all, *Zarathustra* focuses on stressing the individuality of the members of a group. *Beyond* suggests some subordination of the society (the many) to some unity or goal. Finally, *Genealogy*, outrightly invested in advancing a positive political theory, subordinates the collective (the society and the state) to the singular goal of improving humankind, to the creation of the overman. Given the norm-subversive characteristics of Nietzsche’s political philosophy, it is not surprising it was misunderstood and labelled apolitical. It is such only if one’s frame of reference is biased towards the new and the unconventional.

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T A C K L I N G I R O N Y A N D I T S  
I M P L I C A T I O N S F O R L I V I N G  
A N A B S U R D L I F E I N  
N A G E L ' S *T H E A B S U R D*

~ R a m i z A . R a z z a k ~

{ 1. }

A central claim which is underdeveloped in Thomas Nagel's "The Absurd" is that irony, rather than despair or heroism, is the most fitting way to approach the absurdity of human life (Nagel 1971: 727). Indeed, Nagel believes that philosophical absurdity, which he defines as "the collision between the seriousness with which we take our lives and the perpetual possibility of regarding everything about which we are serious as arbitrary" (Nagel 1971: 718), is an accurate depiction of the human condition, but he remarks that it need not be seen as a problem insofar as it is approached correctly (Nagel 1971: 727). However, while Nagel contends that the best response to the absurd is to live with irony, he provides little explanation for this prescription aside from hinting at the relationship between irony and seriousness. It might therefore be tempting to take Nagel's suggestion at face value as a call to diminish the seriousness which is central to his definition of the absurd, since he almost exclusively uses the term seriousness with this definition in his essay. This would imply avoiding seriousness—and mitigating the absurd in the process—by refraining from making choices, since choice is the genesis of this type of seriousness (Nagel 1971: 719). Upon further inspection, however, this interpretation endangers Nagel's argument and leads to a contradiction in his work: since denying choice is a choice, recusing seriousness must inevitably be done seriously. Instead, I will argue that Nagel defines irony in reference to seriousness as the term is used in common language. This interpretation highlights that while the absurd is unavoidable and cannot be diminished directly, individuals can productively leverage their lucidity vis-à-vis the absurd to adapt how they respond to it in their lives. Beyond making irony more consistent in Nagel's work

by avoiding a contradiction, this explanation sheds light on Nagel’s greater view on how to live an absurd life, which is to adopt a less serious attitude without for that matter refraining from pursuing significant ambitions. In doing so, this clarification acts as the missing piece which elevates *The Absurd* from a primarily descriptive work on the absurd to a self-contained treatise on how individuals should approach it in their lives.

{ 2. }

To decipher the meaning of irony in Nagel’s philosophy, it is helpful to begin with the observation that while Nagel proposes irony as an alternative to approaches to the absurd provided by philosophers like Albert Camus (Camus 2000), he specifies that irony does not enable us to escape the absurd. It follows that he sees an ironic approach to life as the optimal way of directly or indirectly dealing with—without thereby eliminating—the absurdity of human life. Since Nagel defines the absurd as the perpetual clash between the seriousness with which we live our lives and the doubt that can be shed on everything that we do (Nagel 1971: 718), his prescription of irony must either play on revising some combination of these two distinct components of the absurd, which would entail fundamentally altering the absurd, or on revising our perception of our absurd lives, which would not directly alter the absurd.

{ 3. }

Nagel offers clarifications to this effect when he claims that after “look[ing] at ourselves without presuppositions”, we “return to our lives ... but our seriousness is laced with irony” (Nagel 1971: 724). This sequential description highlights that Nagel’s backward step—the process through which we take a detached view of our lives by looking at ourselves “without presuppositions”— is what leads us to realize how arbitrary our seriousness is (Nagel 1971: 724). To Nagel, this realization cannot be avoided, since this would imply willing ourselves to forget the existence of the backward step or consciously refraining from discovering it, both of which are unattainable ends (Nagel 1971: 725). Since our seriousness is “laced with irony” upon taking this inevitable step, it appears that irony affects the absurd through its relation to this component of the absurd. Analogously to how food and drinks can be laced with an ingredient which alter them, irony alters the seriousness with which we approach our lives after looking at them as detached observers.

{ 4 . }

Given this link between irony and seriousness, it seems natural to interpret Nagel's recommendation to live with irony as a way to play on the seriousness that he speaks of axiomatically throughout his essay. This seriousness, which I will refer to as *philosophical* seriousness, is the notion that we "take ourselves seriously whether we lead serious lives or not" (Nagel 1971: 719). Philosophical seriousness is both binary and unavoidable to humans, since to live is to take life seriously and to attribute significance to your actions and your behavior by virtue of choosing them. In comparing the life of a Wall Street banker engrossed with her career to the life of a hippie who lives with only the present day in mind, we conclude that both individuals live with philosophical seriousness. On the one hand, the banker takes herself seriously by choosing to prioritize her professional success. On the other hand, the hippie, while more carefree than the banker, still lives just as seriously. The only difference lies in his choices, like his decision to live in an easygoing, happy-go-lucky manner. Philosophical seriousness is the idea that living implies making choices and that choosing is inextricably linked to seriousness, irrespective of the choices that are made.

{ 5 . }

Approaching life ironically through this lens would be to mitigate the absurd by reducing our philosophical seriousness. Indeed, conceptualizing the absurd as the wedge between philosophical seriousness and the doubts that arise upon taking a backward step (Nagel 1971: 718) indicates that we can narrow this gap—and thereby mitigate the absurd—by reducing our seriousness to better reflect the randomness of the choices we make. However, this quickly leads to a contradiction: consciously working on reducing philosophical seriousness is to be serious in doing so, and in the process, to commit further to the absurd. If our banker suddenly becomes convinced that life is meaningless and decides to stop making choices to diminish her seriousness, she is nonetheless taking herself seriously in her attempts to avoid seriousness, since even complete passivity is a choice. Nagel's irony cannot truly be defined in reference to philosophical seriousness, then, since this would contradict his observation that "[i]n continuing to live and work and strive, we take ourselves seriously in action no matter what we say" (Nagel 1971: 724). Defined in relation to philosophical seriousness, irony would only further commit to the absurdity which Nagel intends it to diminish.

{ 6. }

Given this contradiction, the alternative is to interpret irony with regards to seriousness as the term is used in familiar language. Nagel uses this definition of the word when claiming that “We cannot live human lives ... without making choices which show that we take some things more seriously than others” (Nagel 1971: 719). In this case, which we will refer to as *common seriousness*, seriousness is gaged on a spectrum based on the severity with which we approach situations in our lives. Revisiting our previous example sheds light on the distinction between philosophical and common seriousness: through the lens of common seriousness, the banker pursues her life more seriously than does the hippie, since she believes that her actions and the outcomes that she faces in her life are far more consequential than does the hippie. For instance, if she is not selected for a yearly promotion or if she blunders a business presentation, the banker might have a disproportionate response and believe that this marks the end of her professional ambitions. Faced with the same circumstances, the hippie would likely approach the situation with a different attitude and shrug off his initial disappointment after putting the events into a different perspective. This difference in the normative attitude with which people approach and react to situations in their lives is a key characteristic of common seriousness.

{ 7. }

In this frame of reference, to live ironically is to reposition ourselves on the spectrum of common seriousness based on our awareness of our absurd condition. Looking back on her reaction, the banker might tone down her disappointment upon realizing that the promotion she missed out on was not necessarily the be-all and end-all of her career; in doing so, she would be reducing her common seriousness. This approach to irony is more consistent, since it avoids the contradiction that arises when we define irony with respect to philosophical seriousness. Rather than mitigating the absurd directly by altering one of its components, irony in this case alters our post facto outlook on our absurd lives. It is not intended to make life less absurd, since this has been shown to be a futile exercise; it is solely aimed at

changing our approach to living our absurd lives to make the weight of the absurd less heavy to bear. While inevitable doubts about the seriousness with which we live our lives give rise to the absurd (Nagel 1971: 720), these doubts can also help us put situations into perspective in our daily lives, as is the case when our banker revisits the seriousness with which she approached her professional struggles. In this way, irony allows us to leverage our lucidity in the face of the absurd as a productive force.

{ 8 . }

Now that we have clarified the meaning of irony and its relation to common seriousness, what can we conclude about Nagel’s larger view on how we should live our absurd lives? For instance, should we steer clear of significant pursuits to reduce our common seriousness and be more like the hippie than the banker? In ending his essay, Nagel claims that “[i]f ... there is no reason to believe that anything matters, then that doesn’t matter either, and we can approach our absurd lives with irony rather than heroism or despair” (Nagel 1971: 727). By prefacing his remarks with the conjunction “if”, Nagel is remarking that there are two possibilities when questioning if life matters: either it does matter despite our inability to prove it to ourselves, or it does not. Given that Nagel suggests irony after acknowledging these two equally plausible possibilities, interpreting his prescription to deal with the absurd as a suggestion to merely refrain from pursuing ambitions is short-sighted; after all, this would only be sensible if things definitively did not matter. Through irony, Nagel is not claiming that we should be the hippie rather than the banker; he is suggesting that we should be *the banker with the hippie’s attitude*. After all, since whether things do or do not matter is open to doubt, it is sensible to persevere and to pursue our ambitions in case things do matter while always keeping our seriousness in check through irony to remind ourselves that it is possible that our pursuits are irrelevant. By shedding light on Nagel’s greater view on how to approach our absurd lives, clarifying irony heightens “The Absurd” from a piece that mainly argues about the nature and existence of absurdity to a practical treatise on how to approach our absurd lives.

{ 9. }

While it may be tempting to interpret Nagel's cryptic call for irony in response to the absurd as a recommendation to reduce our philosophical seriousness, this is a misunderstanding of Nagel and leads to a contradiction with the rest of his argument, since it is impossible to avoid choice without choosing to do so. Analyzing the subtle distinction between philosophical and common seriousness and framing irony in relation to the latter avoids this issue, since this second variant of irony aims to change our outlook on our absurd lives rather than to fundamentally mitigate the absurd. On top of making Nagel's argument more consistent, this alternative interpretation of irony ties together Nagel's view on the absurd and heightens his paper into a self-contained analysis on the absurd by providing a deeper insight into how he believes individuals should approach their absurd lives.

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# REGRET AND NECESSITY: BERNARD WILLIAMS' CRITIQUE OF THE FREE-WILL DEBATE

~ K a z u k i W a t a n a b e ~

## INTRODUCTION

There has long-since been a debate in philosophy about free-will and moral responsibility. This is known as the free-will debate in which philosophers argue about the existence of free-will. The motivation of disputants to argue for free-will seems to rely on the supposition that free-will is a necessary basis for our moral responsibility; both *hard-determinists* who argue against the existence of free-will and *libertarians* who argue in favor of free-will seem to assume that free-will is the necessary condition of ascribing moral responsibility. Accordingly, determinists are skeptical about our concept of moral responsibility given that there is no free-will.

An argument for hard-determinism – for example, as argued by Van Inwagen (1975) – may proceed in the following way. The present state is causally determined by the conjunction of the past state and natural laws. Since we cannot change the past nor natural laws, it follows that we cannot have control over the present state. Importantly, this lack of control seems to undermine free-will, which requires some sort of control over our decisions. The classic argument for libertarianism would deny this lack of control by insisting, for example, that agents can decide their actions independently of event-causation. They would propose that agent-causation occurs where the causal relation is radically different from event-causation to which determinism applies.

Some philosophers, however, have cast doubts on this debate, for it seems that even if hard-determinists demonstrated that there is actually no free-will, it would be hard to believe that we cannot have any kind of moral responsibility at all. Amongst these philosophers, Bernard Williams notably argued that our moral

responsibility is not undermined by the hard-determinists' attempt to show the non-existence of free-will. Let us refer to this position as *responsibility-compatibilism*.

In this paper, I will present the responsibility-compatibilist argument against *responsibility-incompatibilists* (hard-determinists and libertarians), according to whom the existence of 'free-will', threatened by determinism, is necessary for moral responsibility. First, I will identify what responsibility-incompatibilism presupposes as necessary conditions of moral responsibility: the *Strong Doctrine of Free-Will and the Voluntary Control Principle*. Second, inspired by Williams, I will demonstrate that our real practice of responsibility does not necessarily presuppose these conditions. Finally, I will defend responsibility-compatibilism from an objection.

## 1. TWO PRESUPPOSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY-INCOMPATIBILISM

### The Strong Doctrine of Free-Will

We must start by examining the argument for responsibility-incompatibilists before we scrutinize its presuppositions. One of the most well-known works of this type of incompatibilism is Galen Strawson's argument for the impossibility of moral responsibility. In its simplest form, his "Basic Argument" can be summarized as follows (Strawson 1994: 5):

P1. Nothing can be *causa sui* i.e. nothing can be the cause of itself.

P2. In order to be truly morally responsible for one's actions, one would have to be *causa sui*, at least in certain crucial mental respects.

C. Therefore nothing can be truly morally responsible.

According to Galen Strawson, one's being *causa sui* is to say that one has brought about one's principles of choice (Strawson 1994: 6-7). In other words, to be truly responsible for our actions, we must have freely chosen the will to act in that way. However, this line of thinking falls into an infinite regress where, to be responsible for the current will, I must have chosen the past will, and to be responsible for the past will, I must have chosen an earlier will, and so on. The deterministic interpretation of the Basic Argument is as follows: as we cannot have chosen our first condition of the way we are (e.g. a result of heredity) which conditions our present state, we cannot be truly responsible for our actions (Strawson 1994: 7).

The presupposition of this argument is a view of “*true moral responsibility*”, according to which, *true moral responsibility* depends on conceiving the free-will as being *causa sui*; the unconditioned free-will which we have ultimately chosen freely. As Galen Strawson suggests, libertarians would also accept this view of *true moral responsibility* (Strawson 1994: 19). Moreover, he argues that this view of *true moral responsibility* has been central to the Western moral tradition (Strawson 1994: 8).

There is another classic description of free-will related to this: an agent’s ability to *act otherwise* than they, in fact, do (Van Inwagen 1975: 188). The free-will so described is, again, traditionally deemed as a necessary condition of moral responsibility, as it is supposed that a person is morally responsible for what he has done only if he could have done otherwise (Frankfurt 1988: 1). These two notions – unconditional free-will and free-will as an ability to act otherwise – are closely connected: they both require the *radical freedom of choice* by which plural choices are unconditionally available and they are both supposed as necessary conditions of moral responsibility. So, in this paper, let us refer to this view of free-will and moral responsibility as the “*Strong Doctrine of Free-Will*”.

### **The Strong Doctrine of Free-Will**

Agents are morally responsible only *if* agents have free-will that entails radical freedom of choice.

### **The Voluntary Control Principle**

In the free-will debate, there is another notable platitude about moral responsibility. Thomas Nagel points out that agents can only be reasonably held responsible for what they have control over (Nagel 1979: 25). When we morally evaluate an agent, we evaluate her *will* to act rightly or wrongly rather than the contingent outcomes of her action. For example, we evaluate an agent’s will to save a drowning child as morally good rather than the *outcome* of her action (*e.g.* failing to save the child). This is because, intuitively speaking, her will is what she can control, whereas she cannot control the contingent outcome of her action.

Hence, our moral evaluation and responsibility seem to be applied only to internal factors which agents can control. These factors include intentions, which agents can choose. Conversely, it seems inappropriate to evaluate agents based on external factors which they cannot control. These uncontrollable factors include luck and causal necessity. It is intuitively supposed that an agent acting with a good intention but causing harm by bad luck is not morally bad. Similarly, we seem to suppose that an agent who did a bad action because she was brainwashed and necessitated to act in that way is not morally bad.

The principle that our moral evaluation is applied to factors agents can voluntarily control is crucially employed by the hard-determinist argument. For instance, Galen Strawson's argument seems to rely on the intuition that we cannot be truly responsible for the result of heredity. Let us call this principle the "*Voluntary Control Principle*".

### **The Voluntary Control Principle**

Our moral evaluation and responsibility are applied *only* to factors agents can voluntarily control.

Both hard-determinists and libertarians accept this principle as a necessary condition of moral responsibility and moral evaluation; we are only morally responsible for factors which we can control. What hard-determinists go on to insist is that there is, in reality, nothing we can control, whilst libertarians would say that agents can always control their will. In either case, they both accept the Voluntary Control Principle as the necessary condition of responsibility.

So far, we have identified the two principles that have been crucially presupposed in the free-will debate. The free-will debate has been about whether we can satisfy these necessary conditions of moral responsibility. In the following section, however, I will argue that these two are illusory; that is, they are actually not the necessary conditions of our responsibility.

## **2. BERNARD WILLIAMS AGAINST THE PRESUPPOSITIONS**

### **Argument From Practical Necessity**

We have seen that responsibility-incompatibilists presupposed the Strong Doctrine of Free-Will: to be responsible, we need to have the radical freedom of choice such as alternate possibility or the unconditioned will to act.

The Strong Doctrine of Free-Will is, however, too demanding for our practice of responsibility. To understand this point, we should consider Bernard Williams' argument from "*practical necessity*" by which agents cannot intentionally act otherwise. For some actions, we simply cannot do otherwise. For example, in Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Nora says that she cannot help but run away from home, leaving her children and husband behind, because she cannot live up with the paternal suppression of her identity. In this case, no social duty can persuade her because she just *cannot* continue living in the house.

Williams points out that practical necessity is closely connected to an agent's character (Williams 1982b: 129). Some actions are so rooted in their characters and identities that they must necessarily act in that way. To understand the relationship between responsibility and practical necessity, let us consider an example.

Dedicated protester:

Naomi has always been a determined liberal. She understands and staunchly believes in liberal values. However, her country has elected an incredibly anti-liberal president. Since then, she has been joining in protests against him as much as she can. On the day of the new presidential election, she voted for the president's opponent without hesitation.

She just cannot vote for the president. This incapacity is so rooted in her identity that we cannot imagine any nearby possible world in which she votes for him. Hence, we can say that it is impossible for her to vote for him. As she is necessitated to vote for a liberal opponent, she does not have the ability to do otherwise.

Here, the Strong Doctrine of Free-Will is in trouble when her responsibility is considered. Despite the fact that proponents of the Strong Doctrine of Free-Will would have to insist that Naomi cannot be responsible for her voting as she does not have free choice, intuitively, this necessity does not rob her of her moral responsibility (Williams 1995a: 19). It is true that she necessarily votes for an opponent, but it is clear that she is responsible for her action, and she might well be morally praised for her action. Furthermore, Williams argues that the responsibility in the issue of practical necessity is perhaps the most *substantial* one (Williams 1982b: 130). An action stemming from an agent's practical necessity is most substantially her own, stemming from her identity and integrity. If one acknowledges responsibility for anything, one should acknowledge responsibility for their practically-necessary actions.

As this case shows, we can be *substantially* responsible for our necessary actions. Nora and Naomi do not have the free-will as understood by proponents of the Strong Doctrine of Free-Will, but are still responsible agents. Therefore, it is misguided to suppose that the Strong Doctrine of Free-Will is a necessary condition for moral responsibility.

### **Argument From the Obscurity of Responsibility**

Aside from the Strong Doctrine of Free-Will, we have also seen the Voluntary Control principle. That is, our moral responsibility and moral evaluations should be applied only to factors which agents can control. This principle is rooted deeply in our moral intuitions. When we morally evaluate an agent, it seems unfair to evaluate her according to, say, her genetic makeup. However, whether we have to, in practice, strictly observe the principle is arguable.

To see how exactly our practice of moral responsibility and moral evaluation is detached from strict observance of the Voluntary Control Principle, we should look at another of Williams' arguments. Let us call this *argument the argument from the obscurity of responsibility*, in which he gives examples of various phenomena of responsibility that are not accounted for by the Voluntary Control Principle. First, we can blame an agent who acts out of motivational necessity (Williams 1995b: 39). Suppose a man who is not nice to his wife. Let us say that there is literally nothing in his motivations that gives him a reason to be nice to his wife. Here, he is motivationally necessitated to act in a bad way. If the Voluntary Control Principle is strictly true, then as he cannot control his attitude, he cannot be blamable or responsible for it. This acquittal is, however, inappropriate. As Williams points out, we can blame him in various ways, saying he is ungrateful, inconsiderate, sexist, brutal and so on (Williams 1995b: 39).

Second, it seems that our conception of moral responsibility cannot be limited to voluntary responsibility. One paradigmatic example of the phenomenology of such higher responsibility is *agent-regret* in which agents take responsibility for what they have unintentionally brought about (Williams 1982a: 27). Suppose a lorry driver who drives safely but runs over a child who runs out into the road (Williams [1982a] p.28). Although he could not have controlled the outcome of his action, it seems natural that he feels responsible for his action and regrets driving in that manner.

If the Voluntary Control Principle is a necessary condition for our moral responsibility, we cannot *make sense* of the driver's agent-regret and feeling of moral responsibility. On the contrary, we can make sense of his responsibility, and we would feel doubtful of his sanity if the driver did not feel that responsibility at all and instead viewed the situation from the spectator's viewpoint (Williams 1982a: 28). As agent-regret of non-voluntary actions shows, our responsible actions are not reducible to voluntary actions.

To summarize, Williams shows that our real practice of responsibility is not ultimately committed to the two presuppositions of responsibility-incompatibilists. While these two conditions may be necessary for moral responsibility required by the peculiar conception of modern morality (referred to by Williams as *the morality system*) (Williams 1985: 214-5), our *real responsibility*, which is richer than that of *the morality system*, need not strictly observe these two conditions. In the following section, I will address an objection to Williams.

### 3. OBJECTIONS TO WILLIAMS ANSWERED

#### Objection From Fairness

The most notable objection to our responsibility-compatibilist argument is that responsibility-compatibilism is too liberal to approve nonmoral responsibility attributions which are unfair (e.g. Wallace 1994: 33). For instance, it might be unfair to ascribe moral responsibility to those agents who are motivationally necessitated to act. Psychopathic agents may be criminally responsible but not morally responsible for their actions. According to these philosophers, moral responsibility does not include whatever responsibility we attribute but just includes **fair** attributions of responsibility.

Let us refer to the position to emphasize fair responsibility attribution as the “*fairness approach*”. According to this position, moral responsibility is connected to the notion of fairness. This emphasis on fairness is actually intuitive. Being morally responsible seems to entail being responsible from a fair basis. Moreover, Williams suggests that it is the demand of fairness that drives the application of the Strong Doctrine of Free-Will and the Voluntary Control Principle (Williams 1995c: 72,75). As Williams contends, the attribution of moral responsibility based on what we can control or what we freely choose is assured to be *fair*.

According to the fairness approach, though we might sometimes blame agents who act out of motivational necessity, these kinds of applications of responsibility cannot be instances of moral responsibility as they are not fair. This position is, however, too demanding. The general idea is that the demand for fairness cannot take the form of the *demand for absolute fairness* that requires the complete application of the Strong Doctrine of Free-Will and the Voluntary Control Principle. Alternatively, we should look for the middle ground between absolute fairness and absolute denial of responsibility, such as the modest position taken by Williams. To see this, we can take up two points.

The first is the well-known difficulty with the fairness approach: explaining the moral appraisal of virtuous agents. We do morally appraise virtuous agents’ good deeds. Those agents often say, “I cannot help but to act.” As soon as a virtuous agent sees the drowning boy, she immediately jumps into the sea and saves him. For her, there is no choice. How do proponents of the fairness approach explain

this appraisal for motivationally-necessary virtuous actions? They tend to explain it by the “asymmetry account”, according to which morally worthy actions can be admired *regardless of fairness*, unlike the blame of morally bad actions (Russell 2013: 190). This account follows, however, an abandonment of absolute fairness since it allows the unfair appraisal of virtuous agents.

The second is that Williams’ compatibilism is actually a modest position: it is neither a “whatever goes” position, nor an absolute fairness position. On the one hand, it is not *too liberal* because it will not approve harmful partial attributions of responsibility which are inconsistent with a practice of the moral community. In our moral community, there are many common sense restrictions around responsibility attributions. For instance, we do not approve of attributing moral responsibility to infants. As Peter Strawson argues, we have socially-recognized conditions to hold our moral reactions to certain kinds of agents (Strawson 1962). As Williams can incorporate these social conditions into his compatibilism, we can contend that his position is *modestly fair*.

However, Williams’ compatibilism is not *too fair* in the sense that it rightly denies the demand for *absolute fairness*. This denial is correct, as the pursuit of absolute fairness by ultimately advancing the Strong Doctrine of Free-Will and the Voluntary Control Principle is detached from our real practice of responsibility. Therefore, we need not an ultimately-fair conception of moral responsibility but a modestly-fair one, such as Williams’ compatibilism.

## { CONCLUSION }

In this essay, I have attempted to identify problematic presuppositions underlying the free-will debate and to argue for responsibility-compatibilism by denying these presuppositions. I have concluded that our practice of responsibility is compatible with hard-determinism. First, I have identified two presuppositions of responsibility-incompatibilists about moral responsibility: the Strong Doctrine of Free-Will and the Voluntary Control Principle. Secondly, I have rebutted these two presuppositions. As Williams’ two arguments have shown, our real practice of responsibility does not presuppose them. Finally, I have answered an objection to responsibility-compatibilism from *fairness*. The demand of fairness cannot be *ultimately* pursued, and Williams’ compatibilism is *modestly fair*.

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# DOES ARISTOTLE'S DEFINITION OF THE SOUL IMPLY A CONTRADICTION?

~ C l a e s S ø r e n s e n ~

In *De Anima*, Aristotle's definition of the soul as the form of a natural body allows him to present an appealing middle view between reductive materialism and Platonic dualism. However, as Ackrill observed, Aristotle's view seemingly entails the contradictory proposition that the body is both necessarily and contingently ensouled. (1973: 119) In this paper, I will argue that this problem can be overcome insofar as we grant Aristotle the view that the body is made up of two kinds of matter: proximate and non-proximate matter<sup>1</sup>. Specifically, I claim that since Aristotelian ensoulment is an extrinsic property of non-proximate matter, the non-proximate matter of the human body is contingently ensouled. By the same token, since ensoulment is an intrinsic property of proximate matter, the proximate matter of human body is necessarily ensouled. Thus, the contradiction can be avoided. In the second half of the paper, I will argue that this solution allows us to refute Ackrill's claim that Aristotle cannot hold that the human body is made up of inorganic elements as this would imply that the elements are potentially living bodies. Against Ackrill's contention I claim that Aristotle can consistently hold that (1) the human body is made of inorganic elements and that (2) the inorganic elements are not potentially living bodies.

## { 1.1 }

In the beginning of *De Anima* Book 2, Aristotle reminds us of his tripartite conception of substance from *Metaphysics*: substance as form, matter, and compositeness. (DA, BII, 412a6-11) Individual beings, for Aristotle, are composites of form and matter. That is, a bronze statue is a substance by virtue of being a

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<sup>1</sup> This distinction was first drawn by C. Shields (2016: 28) though he does not consider what implications the distinction has for the claims made in Ackrill's original paper. The aim of this essay is to consider those implications and elaborate on Shields' distinction.

composite of the formal structure of the statue and the bronze material which constitutes this formal structure. But form and matter are also substances in their own right. Hence, when Aristotle declares that the soul is the form of a natural body and the body is the matter out of which the soul is made, it follows that the soul is a kind of substance. (DA, BII, 412a19-20) This, however, does not imply that it is a primary substance in the sense of being ontologically independent. Rather, to exist, the soul needs to be conjoined with some matter, viz. a body. As Aristotle writes, "...the soul is the first actuality of a natural body which has life in potentiality." (DA, BII, 412a28-29) The soul as actuality is what enforms some matter by making it a 'this,' i.e., some actual or determinate thing, which is a living being.

On Aristotle's hylomorphic model, being ensouled is identified with being alive. It follows that all living beings have souls, but not that they have the same kinds of souls. For souls differ with respect to their functional capacities of which Aristotle lists at least five<sup>2</sup> : nutrition, perception, desire, locomotion, and thought. (DA, BII, 414a29-33) These capacities constitute a hierarchy in the sense that possessing a capacity at the top presupposes possession of all capacities beneath it. Human souls are distinguished from lower souls by their capacity for thought whereas animal souls are distinguished from lower souls (like plants) by their capacity for perception, desire, and locomotion. At the bottom of the hierarchy, we find plant souls which only possess the capacities of nutrition, growth, and reproduction. As Shields has pointed out, it is then tempting but misleading to characterize the Aristotelian soul as a set of functional capacities. (2016: 28) The soul is not an aggregate, but rather an indivisible entity, in which several functional capacities inhere.

## { 1.2 }

Given this definition, we can characterize Aristotle's view of the soul as a middle view between his materialist and immaterialist predecessors. The main representative of the materialist side is Empedocles, to whom Aristotle attributes the view that the soul is constituted by material elements in the body. (DA, B1, 404b11-15)<sup>3</sup> From the perspective of hylomorphism, this view mistakenly reduces the form of an individual being to its matter. For Aristotle, the soul is not reducible

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<sup>2</sup> Later in *De Anima*, Aristotle also introduces the faculty of imagination.

<sup>3</sup> I emphasize that this is Aristotle's interpretation of Empedocles' position on the soul. It is beyond the scope of this essay to consider whether this interpretation is charitable.

to a material element in the body in the same sense that the shape of a statue is not reducible to material elements within that statue.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, Aristotle agrees with Empedocles that the soul is not ontologically independent.<sup>5</sup> On this account, he sides with materialism against Plato, who depicted the soul as an immaterial substance which can exist after death (Phaedo, 62b–c, 64c–d, 67c–e) and prior to birth. (Meno, 81b–c) In Meno, for example, the pre-natal existence of the soul plays an important role in Plato’s argument that humans beings have a priori knowledge of mathematics. The resultant view is that the soul is only contingently attached to some body. The soul and its body have distinct diachronic histories, which somehow converge in conception and diverge in death.

Whilst agreeing with Plato that the soul cannot be reduced to something purely material, Aristotle does not accept the dualist separation of soul and body. Rather, Aristotle thinks of the soul as a diachronic unity. (Shields 2016: 27) Consider again the bronze analogy. It is natural to think than when a bronze statue is destroyed, then its form, or essence also goes out of existence. Hence, the statue and its form share a diachronic history. Likewise, the soul and the living body have a shared diachronic history because of their mutual ontological dependence. The soul is the organizing principle which unifies the otherwise disparate bits of matter that constitute an organic body throughout its life history. As such, the living body is necessarily ensouled, and the soul is necessarily embodied. I will now turn to Ackrill’s problem related to this thesis.

{ 2.1 }

Consider Aristotle’s contention that the soul is the form of the body in the same sense that sight is the form of the eye: “The eye is the matter of sight; if sight is lost, it is no longer an eye, except homonymously, in the way that a stone eye or painted eye is.” (DA, BII, 412b20-22) This line expresses one of the key commitments of Aristotelian metaphysics, namely that the essence of an individual being is identified with its function or characteristic activity. Consequently, if an individual being loses its function, it loses its essence and ceases to be what it was

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<sup>4</sup> Aristotle gives several arguments against his materialist predecessors. See *De Anima* Book 1.

<sup>5</sup> Aristotle famously leaves open the possibility that some parts of the soul can survive death. Going into this is beyond the scope of this essay.

prior to this loss. The same principle applies to a living being, whose essence is the soul. When death separates the soul from the body, the dead body that remains is not a body except homonymously. This means that whilst we rightly call dead bodies ‘bodies,’ they are not real bodies, properly speaking. For a dead body does not perform the characteristic activities of a living body. Linguistic oddities aside, the problematic upshot of this is that a living body is necessarily ensouled.

As Ackrill has pointed out, this leads to a contradiction because Aristotle’s hylomorphism implies that some matter is only contingently enformed to yield an individual being. For example, the bronze-material is contingently enformed as a statue of David Hume because it could have been enformed differently, say as a statue of Joan of Arc. That the statue-form is accidental to its matter also explains why the bronze can exist without the form, say, if the statue is destroyed and reshaped. But this does not apply to the matter of the soul. Insofar as a body is identified with its capacity to do the things that a living body characteristically does, then a body cannot exist without a soul, i.e., a dead body is not a body except homonymously. As Ackrill puts it, the matter of the human body is necessarily alive and can therefore not exist in any other form than it does. (1973: 132) Therefore, given his hylomorphism, Aristotle is seemingly committed to the contradictory proposition that the body is both contingently and necessarily ensouled. I will now argue that this outcome can be avoided.

## { 2 . 2 }

In a promising attempt to solve this problem, Shields proposes that we distinguish between the human body as proximate and non-proximate matter. (2016: 28) On Shields’ model, the proximate matter is the organic matter of the body, i.e., flesh and bones, and the non-proximate matter is the inorganic matter in the form of inorganic elements, which underlie the organic matter and its generation. Whilst for Aristotle, these material elements are earth, air, fire, and water, today we would probably classify them as molecules, or at an even lower level, atoms: oxygen, carbon, and hydrogen etc. These two matters jointly constitute a single living body in the sense that the living body consists of organic matter that in turn consists of inorganic matter. We can adopt this model to resolve the contradiction. For whilst the proximate matter is necessarily ensouled, the non-proximate matter is not.

Because the inorganic elements, such as water molecules, are not necessarily found in organic beings, it is contingent that they make up a particular organic body. Just like the bronze material of the statue can exist after the statue is destroyed, it is entirely conceivable the water molecules of my body end up in a lake in Scotland after my death.

The model illuminates another distinction between what I will call intrinsic and extrinsic ensoulment. Whilst the organic proximate matter of the body is intrinsically ensouled, the inorganic non-proximate matter is extrinsically ensouled. When a human being drinks a glass of water and the water molecules become part of the human body's material constitution, then the water molecules do not themselves become ensouled. In other words, they do not undergo any intrinsic change. Rather, the ensoulment takes place at the level of proximate matter, that is, in the ways these inorganic molecules come to be structured in relation to other molecules to form organic bits of matter. This process has the soul as its organizing principle.

Notice that this is another way of stating that the contradiction is resolved: The non-proximate matter is contingently enformed because ensoulment is an extrinsic, or relational property of non-proximate matter. By contrast, proximate matter is necessarily enformed because ensoulment is an intrinsic property of proximate matter. As such, Aristotle's hylomorphism does not have to imply a contradiction<sup>6</sup>. I will now turn to an objection that Ackrill has raised to this type of solution.

### { 3.1 }

Akrill discards the possibility that the body could be made up of inorganic elements on the grounds that this would imply that these elements are potentially human beings. He claims that they cannot be as they are too remote. Aristotle, he claims, would simply not be willing to accept it (Ackrill 1973: 131). The problem

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<sup>6</sup> As Inna Kupreeva has kindly pointed out to me, the argument of this essay only addresses one part (albeit a central one) of Ackrill's problem. Even if Aristotle's account is not directly contradictory, one might still worry whether the account is established on the basis of circular reasoning. See Ackrill (1973).

is bolstered by the claim that the dead body is not even potentially living, for only the living body has life in potentiality. (DA, BII, 412a29) On Aristotle's conception of potentiality, x is potentially y if and only if x comes to be y if no external force prevents x from becoming y. (Met. BVIII, 1049a1-16). Therefore, inorganic elements are not potentially living bodies because they will not become living bodies without the aid of external forces. And if the inorganic elements are not potentially living bodies, then it seems that the living body cannot consist of inorganic elements.

On Ackrill's view then, Aristotle is strangely inconsistent about the relationship between human bodies and the material elements. Aristotle sometimes claims that human bodies are made up of material elements, but this seems incompatible with saying that the elements are not potentially human bodies. On my view, Aristotle is not inconsistent. This is because the distinction between proximate and non-proximate matter allows him to hold both that (1) the body is made of inorganic elements and that (2) the inorganic elements are not potentially alive.

### { 3.2 }

How can a living being consist of matter that is not potentially alive? The distinction between proximate and non-proximate matter allows us to answer this question. Consider again the human being who drinks a glass of water. It is clearly not the case that the water molecules in the glass are a living human body in potentiality insofar as x is potentially y if and only if x comes to be y if there is no external force which prevents x from becoming y. In Aristotle's terminology, this is because the inorganic elements have no internal principles of change. The inorganic elements are not potentially alive in the same sense a water molecule is not potentially a human cell. For to enter the material constitution of an organic cell, the molecule must be moved by some external force such as the human being taking a sip of the water. Therefore, the material elements are not potentially alive because they are dependent on external forces to become part of living organisms. But notice that insofar as we distinguish between proximate and non-proximate matter, it is nonetheless true that the water molecules become part

of the material constitution of an organic being that has life in potentiality, viz. as the non-proximate matter of this being. This is because the proximate matter of the living body is made up of inorganic elements, or better, the proximate matter just is inorganic elements organized in accordance with a specific principle of life, i.e., the soul.

### { 3 . 3 }

This also solves the puzzle of the dead body, which is not alive in potentiality. The dead body is not potentially alive because its soul as the organizing principle of its matter has gone out of existence. Therefore, if the inorganic elements of the dead body are to become part of a new organism, an external force needs to make this happen. For again, if x needs an external force to become y, then x is not potentially y. Nonetheless, the dead body is still made up of material elements, i.e., the very same non-proximate matter, which made up the living body prior to its death. One might ask: but is it not the case that the dead body is also made out of flesh and bones, i.e., proximate matter? I suggest that on Aristotle's view, the change which occurs in death is that the non-proximate matter goes from being extrinsically ensouled to not being ensouled at all. By contrast, the proximate matter, by virtue of being intrinsically and necessarily ensouled, goes out of existence. Whilst there is still flesh and bones, there is no organizing principle which makes them determinate things. On a phenomenal level, they look like determinate organic things, but metaphysically speaking, they are scattered, unorganized bits of inorganic matter. Insofar as this is correct, Aristotle coherently endorses the following two theses:

- (1) The inorganic elements are not living bodies in potentiality
- (2) A living body is made of inorganic elements

Because Ackrill does not consider the distinction between proximate and non-proximate matter, he thinks that (1) and (2) are mutually exclusive, and hence that Aristotle's contradiction stands. On my view, however, the contradiction is only apparent because the non-proximate matter of the body is extrinsically and hence contingently ensouled.

### 3 . 4

One can object that the distinction between proximate and non-proximate matter violates considerations of parsimony. Clearly, the human body is one thing and not two? My reply to this is that Aristotle himself seemed to endorse the view that one thing can have several matters. Consider the following passage from *Metaphysics* Book 6: “And there come to be several matters for the same thing, when the one matter is matter for the other, e.g. phlegm comes from the fat and from the sweet, if the fat comes from the sweet (...)” (*Met. BVI, 1044a20-23*) Here Aristotle explicitly draws a distinction between two distinct kinds of matter, which are distinguished from one another in the sense that one is the matter of or for the other. So, in the case of living bodies, the inorganic non-proximate matter is the matter for the organic proximate matter. This view strikes me as compatible with a commonsensical distinction between the organic matter of a body and its chemical makeup: The organic matter of the body and the inorganic matter out of which it is made.<sup>7</sup>

This paper has argued that Aristotle’s definition of the soul does not imply the contradiction that the body is both necessarily and contingently ensouled. Granted Shield’s distinction between proximate and non-proximate matter and the corollary distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic ensoulment, it is possible for Aristotle to say that whilst the proximate matter of the body is necessarily ensouled, the non-proximate matter is not. Contrary to what Ackrill concluded, Aristotle then seems consistent in his account of the inorganic elements and the human body. Insofar as this analysis is correct, on Aristotle’s view, the human body is made of inorganic elements even though the inorganic elements are not living bodies in potentiality.

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<sup>7</sup>The question of the extent to which this distinction mirrors the scientific distinction between the biological and the physical is an interesting one. But that is the topic of a different essay.

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# THE IMPOTENCE OF “THE IMPOTENCE OF THE DEMANDINGNESS OBJECTION” OBJECTION

## A DEFENSE OF THE DEMANDINGNESS OBJECTION AGAINST UTILITARIANISM

~ *N a t h a n* *Z o u* ~

### 1. INTRODUCTION

**D**EMANDINGNESS IS A CHIEF CONCERN OF MANY NORMATIVE ETHICAL THEORIES. However, certain proponents of demanding theories say that any normative ethic must be demanding in some sense, as morality must obligate us to have high standards- that is, being moral is not always easy, neither should it always be easy. In contrast, opponents argue that overly demanding theories are psychologically unrealistic and commit us to obligations that ask too much of agents. This is known as the Demandingness Objection, a slightly vague term meant to encompass the breadth of demandingness arguments against utilitarianism. David Sobel notes this vagueness and aims to pin down what exactly opponents find demanding about utilitarianism, ultimately arguing that the Demandingness Objection is a red herring and that the only question of demandingness in utilitarianism stems from the doing/allowing distinction. However, in this essay I will argue that Sobel’s attempt at nullifying the Demandingness Objection falls short, as there exists demandingness in utilitarianism regardless of the doing/allowing distinction.

## II. UTILITARIANISM AND THE DOING/ALLOWING DISTINCTION

As a form of consequentialism, utilitarianism is only concerned with the outcomes of events. In particular, utilitarians subscribe to the principle of utility, which Jeremy Bentham defined as the “principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever, according to the tendency it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question” (Bentham 2000: 14). Bentham clarifies that happiness here for hedonistic utilitarianism is equivalent to pleasure<sup>1</sup>. Adherence to the principle of utility results in two notable features of utilitarianism.

First, utilitarianism is agent-neutral: the utility of any given action is impartial and determined regardless of agent-relative factors. In any given scenario, all agents follow the same principle of utility and as a result must come to the same conclusions about which action maximizes utility. If the utilitarian is to sacrifice someone to save multiple people, she must do so regardless of whether the sacrifice is a stranger or her own mother. Further, if sacrificing herself can save the lives of multiple people, she is obligated to do so as she must consider the scenario impartially. Second, utilitarianism does not recognize the doing/allowing distinction: for an agent to allow an outcome to come to fruition is no different than an agent doing something to cause the same outcome under the principle of utility. If the utilitarian allows someone to be murdered, it is as if she murdered them herself, because the net utility is the same in both scenarios.

## III. DEMANDINGNESS OBJECTION TO UTILITARIANISM

The Demandingness Objection to utilitarianism essentially argues that the standards of morality which utilitarianism espouses are too demanding of moral agents. There is not one explicit original source for the objection, but rather it

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<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that the Demandingness Objection is not unique to utilitarianism, and the arguments I go over in this essay extend to consequentialism as a whole. I write this essay with reference to utilitarianism due to the prominence of the theory in ethical discourse.

gets cited as encompassing various arguments about aspects of utilitarianism that appear to be psychologically unrealistic. Very broadly, the Demandingness Objection can be laid out as follows: Utilitarianism obligates agents to courses of action that go against ordinary moral intuitions. This is not to say that the conclusions utilitarianism comes to are bad, but rather that we view these actions as supererogatory: laudable, but optional. Some of the most extreme examples of these actions include organ donation, extraordinary charity, and martyrdom. Under utilitarianism, we are asked to follow the course of action that produces the most utility regardless of the cost to ourselves, whether monetary, temporal, or physical.

Moral philosophers attempt to respond to the Demandingness Objection in a multitude of ways. Some, such as Peter Singer, accept the demandingness, while the majority, like Thomas Nagel, Samuel Scheffler, and Garrett Cullity attempt to defend some variant of consequentialism that is less demanding . Others, like Bernard Williams , still reject utilitarianism on grounds of psychological unrealism. The work of David Sobel has been particularly notable in that he denies there even is a Demandingness Objection to start with, and it is this argument that we will be examining.

#### IV. SOBEL'S 'THE IMPOTENCE OF THE DEMANDINGNESS OBJECTION'

In his paper *The Impotence of the Demandingness Objection*, Sobel aims to clarify the argument of the Demandingness Objection and along the way attempts to show that demandingness supervenes on the doing/allowing distinction. He argues that all demandingness arguments levied against utilitarianism for obligating what seem like common-sense supererogatory acts stem from utilitarianism's rejection of this distinction. According to Sobel, we can discard the Demandingness Objection and instead focus our energies on the doing/allowing distinction.

Consider a kidney transplant case, in which we have a patient requiring a kidney transplant and a moral agent with two healthy kidneys. Our intuition says that the kidney donation is supererogatory, but at a demanding cost for the agent. From this intuition, the Demandingness Objection takes shape and argues that we cannot demand of the moral agent that she donate a kidney and yet at the same time, that donating a kidney maximizes utility. Sobel does not disagree that this is a cost that utilitarianism requires; he does, however, note that this is not the only cost in play.

Sobel raises the distinction between what a moral theory requires and what it permits. Not only should we look at the required cost of action for the moral agent, but we ought to look at the permitted cost of inaction for the patient. For the kidney transplant case, we are neglecting the cost that the patient bears if they do not receive a transplant: death. The fact that the Demandingness Objection only considers the required cost for the agent and ignores the allowed cost for the patient shows that the Demandingness Objection rests on the premise that in our everyday moral intuitions, this required cost is greater than the permitted cost. This difference is what moral philosophers call the doing/allowing distinction.

The doing/allowing distinction is the real source of the Demandingness Objection, argues Sobel. After all, most people would identify a difference between murdering someone and allowing someone to be murdered, even if one could stop that murder. Going even further with the previous example, imagine that a moral agent is asked to donate their heart to a patient with heart cancer. Despite the patient bearing no responsibility for their condition, we can reasonably say that the moral agent also bears no responsibility to donate their heart. Through a utilitarian lense, there is no difference between the agent and the patient living due to the same utility being generated through both actions. Because utilitarianism holds that morality is agent-neutral, we cannot simply say that the moral agent can keep their heart if there is no net change in utility between the two courses of action. The fairest solution would be to flip a coin to decide who gets the heart, but if any one of us were to be the agent, we would think this to be greatly unfair to us. Sobel says that our intuitive rejection of the demandingness of utilitarianism therefore resides in the fact that we think required costs ask more of us than equally-sized allowed costs.

## { V. THE IMPOTENCE OF “THE IMPOTENCE OF THE DEMANDINGNESS OBJECTION” OBJECTION }

If we are to solve issues of demandingness in utilitarianism, Sobel believes we must reconcile our intuitions of the doing/allowing distinction with the theory. However, I hold that Sobel’s account of demandingness in utilitarianism does not encompass all forms of utilitarian demandingness. Sobel identifies a

form of demandingness that I will call the *demandingness of personal affairs*. It is in scenarios like that of the kidney and heart transplants that this variety of demandingness arises. As we are obligated to ignore our personal affairs in favor of maximizing utility, we can be asked to perform supererogatory acts, such as sacrificing our own life to donate multiple life-saving organs. This is perhaps on the extreme side of the possible costs of utilitarianism, but it illustrates the point: it is demanded of the agent to ignore her own welfare for the greater good, as she cannot make a distinction between inflicting death on the patients versus allowing their deaths.

There exists at least one more form of demandingness that Sobel's thesis does not address, which I will call *the demandingness of shared obligations*. This variety of demandingness presents a different intuitive objection to utilitarianism: that we are asked to act without consideration of other moral agents. Imagine we are again in a hospital, but with two patients who need kidney transplants and a moral agent with two healthy kidneys. The demandingness of personal affairs rears its head in this scenario as well. In the maximized outcomes, two of the three people in the scenario walk out alive with a healthy kidney. Once again, we see that utilitarianism's commitment to agent-neutrality and the lack of a doing/allowing distinction create high levels of demandingness for the moral agent.

However, this scenario is different from the previous one, in which the moral agent donated his heart, liver, lungs, for one chief reason: we can further maximize the outcome by introducing a second moral agent with two healthy kidneys. If each moral agent donates one kidney to one of the patients, we now have an outcome in which both moral agents and both patients' lives are saved. However, a moral agent cannot choose how another agent acts. The first moral agent must choose their course of action without consideration of what another agent might do, which in this case does not produce maximum utility and asks more of the first agent than is necessary for an optimum outcome. As Singer noted in *Famine, Affluence, and Morality*, "the principle [of utility] makes no distinction between cases in which I am the only person who could possibly do anything and cases in which I am just one among millions in the same position" (Singer 1972: 232). We find ourselves grappling with a type of demandingness in scenarios of shared obligation that is completely unrelated to the doing/allowing distinction. It is irrelevant in the above scenario whether the required cost of action (donating a kidney) is greater than the permitted cost of inaction (letting the patient(s) die). A type of demandingness exists in utilitarianism stemming from the lack of a model for collective agency.

## VI. CONCLUSION

I would like to state clearly that all I claim in this essay is that the problem of demandingness, and consequently the Demandingness Objection, does not reduce to a problem with utilitarianism's rejection of the doing/allowing distinction, as Sobel claims. Instead, I have demonstrated that the type of demandingness that Sobel isolates, *the demandingness of personal affairs*, does stem from the doing/allowing distinction, but that there exists at least one additional type of demandingness that does not: *the demandingness of shared obligations*. I do not make any claims on the merits of the Demandingness Objection nor do I make any recommendations for any forms of consequentialism that are less demanding. As someone sympathetic to utilitarianism, I do find the demandingness of personal affairs to be less convincing as an objection to utilitarianism than the demandingness of shared obligations. It seems that utilitarians must reconcile the potential of collective agency with the inability to predict the actions of other agents in some capacity to deal with this variety in demandingness.

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# CAN INTUITIONS BE USED AS A PRIORI EVIDENCE IN PHILOSOPHY?

~ *S a m E n r i g h t* ~

## { ABSTRACT }

In this paper, I argue that intuitions can be used as a priori evidence in analytic philosophy. This evidence, however, is of a different type than direct observation in the natural sciences. I examine the role intuition plays in a number of philosophical thought experiments. I also discuss the implications of the literature in cognitive science finding that intuition plays a stronger role in cognition than explicit reasoning, and the WEIRDness of these intuitions. The literature on expert intuition is also discussed. Finally, I argue that intuitions are necessary for reason, broadly construed.

## { 1. INTRODUCTION }

Although there is some disagreement about how the term should be used, I will take an intuition to mean the *seeming* that something is true, without the explicit use of inference or observation<sup>1</sup>. The appropriate role of intuition in philosophy has generated recent controversy. Philosophers disagree about whether intuitions themselves can be used as evidence – analogous to how observation is used in the

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<sup>1</sup> It is not obvious what precisely counts as an intuition. A definition making reference to a disposition toward belief or an implicit belief, for instance, runs into problems with visual illusions. After these illusions are pointed out to us, we continue to hold an intuition that we know to be false, such as that one line is longer than another in the Müller-Lyer illusion.

natural sciences – or if they should simply be used to steer us toward interesting problems to work on. (Cappelen, 2012) argues that philosophers do not, in fact, need to use intuitions as evidence and that the appropriate evidence in philosophy is the extent to which an argument is logically compelling. Even if this is correct, philosophers still sometimes do use intuitions as *prima facie* support for statements being true, and so some clarification needs to be done as to what role intuition does (and should) play in philosophy.

## { 2. INTUITIONS AS EVIDENCE }

### 2.1 TWIN EARTH

One notable example of an intuition apparently leading us to a philosophical conclusion is Putnam's Twin Earth (Putnam, 1973). Suppose that there is a planet exactly like Earth in all but one respect: namely, that on this Twin Earth, the chemical formula for water is not  $H_2O$  but some more complicated formula we abbreviate as  $XYZ$ . This thought experiment is set several centuries ago, before chemistry could tell these apart. Consider a man, Oscar, and his Twin Earth doppelgänger Toscar. Oscar and Toscar will use the word 'water' in exactly the same way, and if Oscar visited Twin Earth, or vice versa, he would conclude that their water was exactly the same as his own. Putnam argues that, intuitively, Oscar and Toscar mean different things when they say 'water': Oscar means  $H_2O$  and Toscar means  $XYZ$ . Yet, this difference is not understood by the speakers. Hence, there must be something external on which meaning relies; this is the view called semantic externalism. However, it is not obvious that Putnam needs intuition here. He is claiming that *it is the case* that the physical embodiment and history of an object is relevant in determining its meaning. The soundness of his case rests on whether the premises are relevant, and the coherence of the jump to the conclusion. The data that would make this more or less plausible exist in the external world, and while our intuitions may bring attention to them, they do not suffice as data themselves.

### 2.2 THE UTILITY MONSTER

Sometimes intuitions are superfluous, like in the Twin Earth case, but there are other instances where an intuition itself is more clearly invoked as evidence. Take Nozick's utility monster (Nozick, 1974). This is a creature that is somehow more capable of experiencing pleasure (positive utility) than all others combined. The utilitarian conclusion – that our suffering and annihilation would be justified

to appease the utility monster – is intuitively repugnant. However, the value of an intuition surely varies in inverse proportion to its detachment from daily life. Why should we expect to have useful intuitions about mythical monsters? So far, no-one has come up with a moral theory that does not have some wildly counter-intuitive conclusions. If anything, we should hope that these conclusions are the ones raised in exactly these contrived and abstract thought experiments.

### 2.3 WHAT KIND OF EVIDENCE ARE INTUITIONS ?

Intuitions are evidence, at least sometimes. However, it is not clear whether intuitions are the same kind of evidence as observation is in science. Popper famously defended the view that what demarcated science from non-science is that scientific claims can be falsified with observation (Popper, 1959)<sup>2</sup>. Regardless of whether we accept Popper’s falsificationism per se, there is widespread agreement that observations can falsify scientific hypotheses. In constant, since anyone can theoretically have an intuition about anything, it stands to reason that intuition cannot completely disconfirm philosophical hypotheses. Rather than falsifying, intuition whittles down the plausibility of bad ideas.

### { 3. REASON AS SECONDARY TO INTUITION }

Decades of research in cognitive science have put into question the extent to which reason is in control of our beliefs and behaviours at all. Some contemporary thinkers identify reason as having more of a justificatory or argumentative role (Sperber & Mercier, 2017). People frequently hold strong views about the morality of many issues, particularly those concerning purity, but are incapable of articulating a coherent reason for their judgements (Haidt, Björklund, & Murphy, 2000). This phenomenon has been dubbed ‘moral dumbfounding’. There are two possibilities here: either we are conducting moral reasoning subconsciously, or not conducting it (in the dispassionate philosophical sense) at all. In a follow-up to the initial dumbfounding result, Haidt tested whether people’s moral judgements

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<sup>2</sup> There are serious objections to the Popperian falsification model – among them that falsificationism itself is unfalsifiable. Lemoine offers a useful overview of these problems on his blog (Lemoine, 2019).

change when they are experiencing a strong cognitive load – e.g. while trying to remember a series of numbers. If this slows down judgement, it would indicate that people tend to deliberate and reason before making moral decisions. Haidt could not find any evidence that it does (Haidt, 2012). On the face of it, this is bad news for philosophy.

So, reason is less powerful, and intuitions are more powerful in human psychology than was originally thought. There are many problems that arise from relying on intuitions. For one thing, they're especially prone to cultural biases. 'Self-evident' truths are self-evident primarily in the eyes of philosophy professors and their students in WEIRD<sup>3</sup> nations, a group that's psychologically peculiar by global standards (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). Intuitions that pose serious philosophical problems to this group may pose no such problems to another. Take a Frankfurt case, in which someone is responsible for that which they have no control over. Suppose Patel will probably vote for the Stripy Party in an election; however, someone has placed a chip in her brain that will activate and give her the sudden urge to vote for the Stripy Party if she changes her mind and tries to vote for the Spotty Party. If the device doesn't activate, she has chosen the Stripy Party, and therefore seems responsible for her actions despite the fact that *she could not have done otherwise*. A Frankfurt case opposes an intuition that someone is not morally responsible for something they have no control over. However, this intuition simply isn't present in many of what anthropologists call honour cultures, common in the Middle East and Central Asia, which see responsibility as more tied to family and reputation (Sommers, 2018). Truth, presumably, does not vary cross-culturally, putting us at risk of slowing down progress when we extrapolate from our WEIRD intuitions.

It is also true that it's hard to correct your intuitions for known cognitive biases. Consider Nozick's experience machine (Nozick, 1974). This is a hypothetical device which can simulate any desired experience in the user's brain. You can plan out a life for yourself much better than your own and simulate it in the experience machine. Nozick asks us to consider what problems, if any, there would be with plugging into the machine. Most people have the intuition that you should not plug in, because any simulated experiences you have are "fake". Nozick uses this intuition to reject hedonism, the view that states of mind are all that is morally valuable. However, even if the intuition described above were universal, it would not account for status quo bias. Suppose that you found out that you are *already* in the experience machine, and none of your family, friends, or achievements are real. Would you choose to return to your real life in the outside world if (a) you were given no information about your real life, (b) in real life you are in a maximum-security prison, or (c) you are really a multi-millionaire living in

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<sup>3</sup> Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich and Democratic.

Monaco? When asked in surveys, close to half of people would rather stay hooked up to the experience machine in cases (a) and (c), and almost 90% would prefer to stay in the experience machine in case (b) (Brigard, 2010). So, our attachment to the authenticity of experiences is not so clear after all.

#### 4. PHILOSOPHICAL INTUITIONS AS EXPERT JUDGMENT

An objection you might have is that the intuitions I have been discussing are of average people, and philosophers may have a kind of expert intuition for philosophical problems. Then we would not need intuitions to be *prima facie* evidence, as the honed intuitions of philosophers would (more often than not) point to the truth. There are reasons to doubt this. Psychologists have identified criteria for the formation of reliable expert intuition, namely predictable conditions and rapid feedback (Kahneman, 2011). Philosophy, meanwhile, is characterised by a total irregularity in its conditions and long spans of time before views become accepted (if ever). So, while we can expect expert intuition to develop in surgeons, we cannot expect the same of philosophers.

The elephant in the room here is that philosophers are in widespread agreement about almost no major philosophical issues. But this disagreement may not indicate anything meaningful one way or the other. It could be that the problems traditionally associated with philosophy are so hard that the proposed solutions fall significantly short of solving them, but that a difference in how much ones' intuitions are honed produces vast differences in how much these solutions fall short.

#### 5. ON THE NECESSITY OF INTUITIONS

Given all the shortcomings of intuitions, you might be tempted to get rid of them entirely, instead taking something like logical coherence as the tool in philosophy which is analogous to scientific observation. Indeed, some have argued that intuition has derailed the conversation in fields like epistemology. Nonetheless, intuitions are essential in moral philosophy. Logic is powerful in exposing inconsistencies in a moral theory, but no amount of facts and logic could, by themselves, give

us a normative claim. But even if this is because philosophers lack a sufficient imagination, and one day someone will dream up a suitable bridge between facts and values, the celebrated impossibility results of population ethics show that every moral theory will have at least one implication that most people find implausible (Parfit, 1984). (Arrow, 1951) also laid out his impossibility theorem, stating that, given a complete list of the preferences of agents, there is no process which could provide a singular ordering for how best to maximise those preferences. So, given a set of axioms that we wish a moral theory to fulfil, it is not only hard but impossible to construct one canonical version of that theory. Deciding between theories thus becomes somewhat of an exercise in which intuition you are least unwilling to give up. You might then admit defeat, but failure to think clearly about these issues is of serious moral consequence. Many practical questions – abortion, for example – hinge upon one’s view of population ethics.

Does this mean that a perfectly rational agent would need intuition to come to conclusions? I think so. Once basic conditions like transitivity and self-consistency are met, it is hard (impossible?) to say that an agent with radically undesirable conclusions, like “misery is good”, is irrational for thinking so. At some stage, we must take a leap of faith to value well-being – or some other qualities – to begin with. This amounts to the problem of how you could convince someone of the veracity of logic, since any justification itself requires logic. We must pull ourselves up by the bootstraps at some point, and I propose that that which pulls us up is intuition.

## { 6. CONCLUSION }

When you began drawing circles, you had no idea what a circle was. It was probably many years before you learned that a circle is the set of points in 2D space equidistant from a given point – and yet this captured precisely the necessary and sufficient conditions of your circle-drawing. Mathematics is the formalisation of basic intuitions we share about numbers. The very fact that these intuitions diverge wildly is not evidence that mathematics is a doomed project. We take confident intuitions (like  $2 + 2 = 4$ ), or propositions derived from confident intuitions, to be true, then ‘fill in the blanks’ in formalising the system. Perhaps philosophy ought to utilise intuition in much the same way. If this is true, we can get around the problem of how intuitions are so scattered, biased, and messy.

Intuition is not quite to philosophy what observation is to science, though it has some features in common. Intuition, when considered from many perspectives, hints at the plausibility of ideas. Intuition is also crucial to get some areas of philosophy off the ground to begin with, whether we like it or not.

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