University of Sheffield

Authority, Objectivity, and Progress in Naturalistic Ethics

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Acknowledgement

Abstract

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The purpose of this thesis is to argue that moral progress is possible within a naturalistic framework. Moral progress is possible in principle even in the absence of any kind of non-natural, irreducible normative components of reality. This is because it is the nature of moral progress to solve moral problems and overcome limitations, not to approach ethical reality. Moral progress is possible without appealing to Kantian rationality or impersonal, objective perspectives. It is possible because we have moral sensibilities and imaginations, and we are capable of dialogue and collaboration to solve moral problems. Justification for why we should engage in projects of moral practice is possible from a naturalistic perspective. The authority of morality consists in its function of contributing to the solution of the problems that arise in living together. Objectivity, as non-arbitrariness, can be pursued in problem-solving through a process of reflecting on our own aims, concerns, and desires in light of other aims, concerns, and desires. David Hume, Adam Smith, and John Dewey provide insights into how moral progress can be made on the basis of sympathy, imagination, and cooperation. Hume's general point of view and Smith's impartial spectator show that partiality can be overcome while still drawing on sympathy or empathy. Dewey's emphasis on moral inquiry as experiment shows that moral norms can be refined based on inquiry grounded in imagination and conversation.

<u>Declaration</u>

I, SooHwan Park, confirm that the thesis is my own work. I am aware of the University's Guidance on the Use of Unfair Means (www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/unfair-means). This work has not been previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, university.

Introduction

Can a naturalistic view of reality make space for the possibility of moral progress? Yes, it can. This dissertation consists of arguments in favour of this answer. The possibility of moral progress can be understood along two dimensions. One is the question of whether there can in principle be genuine progress that is not "mere change." The other is the question of whether, even if progress that does not collapse into "mere change" can exist in principle, it is within our power to achieve it in practice. I will argue that a form of naturalistic ethics can answer "yes" to both.

The naturalistic ethics I advocate in this thesis can be characterised as sentimentalist pragmatism or functionalist naturalism. This position is based primarily on Philip Kitcher's pragmatist ethics, Simon Blackburn's quasi-realist expressivism, and Max Khan Hayward's terrestrial ethics. However, my position also reflects the theories of other sentimentalists who emphasise the role of sentiments and sensibilities in moral inquiry. It also reflects other naturalistic theories that emphasise the function of morality as problem-solving and the importance of inquiry and experimentation in solving problems. These include James Lenman's Humean constructivism, Valerie Tiberius's Humean naturalism, and Allan Gibbard's norm-expressivism. Their historical precursors, the ethical theories of David Hume, Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, William James, and John Dewey, are also reflected. Schematically it is as follows:

As prosocial animals, we want to live together. We have sentiments such as sympathy, empathy, benevolence, altruism, guilt for our own wrongdoings, and resentment for injustice. These pro-social or moral emotions contribute to making life together go more smoothly. However, we confront moral problems, because we are not completely altruistic beings and have selfish needs, and sometimes our partiality towards those who are emotionally and genetically closer to us can lead to serious conflicts. We attempt to resolve these problems and conflicts and overcome our limitations through reflection and conversation based on our moral sensibilities. Of course, sophisticated language skills can contribute to understanding and discussing complex norms, and imagination can help us anticipate the consequences of certain types of behaviour and norms. But fundamentally, our endorsement of certain norms and values is based on our sensibilities. Our moral judgements and attitudes are not based on perspectives external to our moral sensibilities, and the results of reflection and inquiry based on moral sensibilities are reflected in subsequent processes of moral practice and inquiry. The history of moral practice is the history of overcoming the problems of living together through moral sensibilities. Morality is in this sense a social technology based on moral sensibilities. The authority of morality lies in the fact that it solves moral problems. In other words, its practical function is the source of its authority.

The naturalistic ethics I advocate rejects any putative non-natural ethical reality or any special faculty, such as intuition, for recognising it. Nor do I see the endorsement of a Kantian conception of practical reason, with its idea of a rational perspective that all rational agents can and must take, as a requirement for moral progress. Thus I need to demonstrate that moral progress is possible without appealing to non-natural reality or an objective, impersonal perspective. By subverting the realist view of moral truth and progress, I will

argue that moral progress can be shown to be possible in principle even within a naturalistic framework. Moral progress is possible even if there is no fixed, objective, ahistorical reality or rationality to which we should aim. This is because moral progress does not consist in reaching such a robustly objective ideal, but in solving the problems and overcoming the limitations we face in living together.

Sentimentalist pragmatism rejects the reality or special faculties that anti-naturalist or non-naturalist theories present as sources of the authority of morality. More precisely, it rejects the position that they are a necessary condition for moral inquiry and progress. Thus, my position must be able to answer the questions "Why should we solve moral problems?" or "Why should we participate in the process of such progress?", for sentimentalist pragmatism rejects nihilism when nihilism is understood in the sense of claiming that there are not legitimate or authoritative moral obligations. In other words, sentimentalist pragmatism must be able to vindicate the authority of morality within a naturalistic framework.

Sentimentalist pragmatism sees the authority of morality as stemming from the function of morality: the reason we should follow moral norms is because they fulfil the function of solving moral problems. Morality or moral norms can contribute to solving the failures of altruism and overcoming the limitations of our responsiveness to others. And the resolution of these problems and the overcoming of these limitations can facilitate cooperation. If it makes sense to consider these practical functions of morality as the source of the authority of morality, then the demonstration of the authority of morality can be made within a naturalistic framework.

The view of problem-solving as a source of justification raises another anxiety. The anxiety is that the diagnosis and solution of problems is reduced to a matter of arbitrary and subjective tastes. Since naturalistic ethics does not invoke non-natural reality or Kantian rationality, it faces the criticism that it cannot guarantee objectivity, where "objectivity" is understood as non-arbitrariness. A process of moral reflection and conversation based on our moral sensibilities and moral understanding need not be arbitrary in any objectionable way. This is because we can reflect on our aims, concerns, and desires in light of other aims, concerns, and desires. In other words, we can overcome the anxiety that moral inquiry based on desires is arbitrary by noting the holistic nature of our desires.

Another thing to note is that, as Lenman emphasises, our desires have characteristics of "stability" and "commonality." Some of our desires are relatively consistent over time. We also have commonalities in our moral understandings and desires, even though we have different perspectives and interests.[1] Stable and common desires become resources to be actively relied upon and used in moral reflection and conversation. Reflection and conversation based on stable and common desires is the key to solving moral problems without falling into arbitrariness.

I see the history of moral philosophy as inhabited by heroes who demonstrated a naturalistic methodology of moral progress. Hume, Smith, and Dewey are among them. I will draw on

[1] See James Lenman, *The Possibility of Moral Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming.

their ethics to reveal how a naturalistic methodology for moral progress can work. According to Hume, sympathy, as the ability to receive the "inclinations" and "sentiments" of others through "communication," plays an essential and central role in moral judgement and action.[2] However, this sympathy is affected by principles of association such as contiguity and resemblance. Sympathetic responsiveness by itself, which is based on each person's subjective perspective, seems to provide little basis for dialogue for the resolution of moral problems. Hume's emphasis on a "general point of view" actively accepts the role of sympathy as a source of moral judgement and action, but the construction, through sympathy, of a shared standpoint of affective evaluation also enables conversation and consensus to resolve moral conflicts by overcoming the variations caused by principles of association.

Smith's impartial spectator, like Hume's general point of view, acts as a mechanism by which human sympathy and imagination can be used to arrive at better moral judgements. The impartial spectator enables us to overcome ignorance and error in factual information and to overcome partiality based on personal interests and intimate relationships. However, this impartial spectator is also limited in its ability to overcome historical and cultural partialities in that it derives from the moral understanding of a particular community. Overcoming these problems requires the kind of collaborative inquiry that Dewey emphasised. Through a process of collective reflection on the nature of the functions of particular norms and institutions, we can achieve better moral judgements.

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[2] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 316.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter 1. Philip Kitcher's Ethics: Pragmatic Naturalism and Moral Progress

By exploring Kitcher's pragmatist ethics, this chapter argues that moral progress can be understood in principle within a naturalistic framework and that a methodology can be constructed for it. This chapter is divided into four parts. It will first address what his pragmatic naturalism seeks and what it excludes. His naturalistic position rejects appeal to "external constraints" in philosophical inquiry and in the understanding of moral phenomena and norms. His pragmatist moral philosophy views ethics as a tool for promoting moral progress. Secondly, I will address Kitcher's understanding of the history of ethical practice. Drawing on scientific theories and findings from anthropology, history, psychology, biology, and primatology, he explores the history of moral change over tens of thousands of years without appeal to "external constraints." Through altruism, our capacity for normative guidance, and our ability to communicate and cooperate, we have made moral progress(although this is not to say that there have not been moments of regression). Third is his metaethical perspective. He says that philosophical theories of morality should be compatible with a thoroughgoing understanding the history of ethical practice. At a more ideal level, philosophical theories of morality should be able to deepen our understanding of the history of ethical practice. However, Kitcher argues that non-naturalist realism and Kantian ethics seem to marginalise the history of morality, or even to imply claims about the history of moral progress that are only dubiously compatible with the historical record. The position of pragmatist metaethics, which holds that moral progress as problem-solving is prior to moral truth can address this problem, since its account of moral judgement seems

well to match what we find in actual historical accounts of moral progress. Finally, I will address Kitcher's ideal conditions for conversation to promote moral progress. For moral progress, we must be able to overcome errors in factual information. We must also overcome failures of sympathy and address the problem of false consciousness caused by misguided socialisation and institutional problems.

Chapter 2. Authority without Holy Grails

The purpose of this chapter is to argue that sentimentalist pragmatism can justify the authority of morality. To this end, this chapter will unfold in the following order. First, I clarify what I mean by vindicating the authority of morality. It does not mean demonstrating that every conceivable agent should be the subject of moral obligations. Rather, it means giving us, as a species with moral understanding and sensibilities, reasons for why morality is required in our lives. Second, I expound the functionalist approach to the authority of morality that I will defend. Functionalist naturalism can vindicate the authority of morality within the perspective created by the practical functioning of morality, rather than from an external and impersonal perspective. Third, it defends functionalist naturalism by comparing it with anti-naturalist or non-naturalist theories. This argument is based on the first-order normative position that "human needs, interests, and projects" are of more, and thus serve as a better basis for the authority of morality, than any putative non-natural moral facts or any moral imperatives based on a supposedly universal rational perspective. Fourth, it rebuts the criticism that such a form of naturalistic ethics, which emphasises the role of emotion and imagination in moral judgement and inquiry, cannot demonstrate the authority of morality because it collapses into relativism. The kind of naturalistic ethics which I favour can avoid

such criticisms by distinguishing between the project of the anatomist and the project of justifying of moral obligations. Fifth, I criticise the claim that naturalistic ethics fails to demonstrate authority in terms of its inability to persuade recalcitrant knaves or wicked agents. Providing guaranteed procedures and methods that can persuade all the knaves, fools or other wicked agents which philosophers have dreamt up is simply not a requirement for vindicating the authority of morality.

Chapter 3. The World is Enough: Objectivity in Sentimentalist Pragmatism

The purpose of this chapter is to argue that within the framework of sentimentalist pragmatism, our processes of moral reflection and practice can be non-arbitrary. That is, we can pursue objectivity as non-arbitrariness without positing non-natural reality or Kantian rationality. To do so, I first discuss the insights of Nomy Arpaly and Hayward into the sadness and disappointment of anti-naturalists at the naturalistic outlook. In particular, Hayward's argument resonates with the purpose of this chapter in that he argues that the morality we need does not require inflationary metaphysics. Then, I shall elucidate how Kitcher's pragmatic naturalist account of moral progress, while offering the possibility of a naturalistic theory of progress, is limited in overcoming the arbitrariness problem. I then argue that the account of moral judgments and moral reasons offered by Blackburn and Lenman can contribute to overcoming this arbitrariness problem. Finally, I will specify the degree of objectivity that is both necessary and achievable within a naturalistic framework.

Chapter 4. Hume's General Point of View: Convergence of Sentiments and Conflict Resolution

This chapter aims to justify the general point of view as a method of moral problem-solving within a naturalistic framework. To do so, I will first expound on the features and functions of the general point of view in Hume's ethics. It serves as a mechanism to prevent moral judgements based on sympathy from being distorted by principles of association such as contiguity and resemblance. It also enables us to base our judgement on its tendency to produce "usual effects" rather than on the actual effects of any character trait. Next, I discuss why it is necessary for our lives. That is to say, I attempt to justify the general point of view. The general point of view is justified because it contributes to the resolution of our conflicts. Finally, I discuss how the problem of relativism from the general point of view can be overcome. The general point of view is a view that can be adopted on the basis of conversation or codeliberation, which contributes to overcoming the subjective biases of individual judges.

Chapter 5. Impartial Spectators' Experiments and Pleasurable Progress

The purpose of this chapter is to present a normative methodology for moral progress that is grounded in a naturalistic perspective, showing that genuine progress is possible within a naturalistic framework. I will draw insights into this naturalistic methodology of moral problem-solving from Smith and Dewey. I first address the functions and limitations of the impartial spectator that Smith presents as a perspective for solving moral problems. It enables us to overcome ignorance and error in factual information, and to overcome partiality due to personal interest. However, the isolated impartial observer is ill-equipped to utilise the

specialised knowledge required to solve problems that reveal complex moral functions. Above all, it is limited in its ability to overcome certain historical and cultural partialities. This limitation of the impartial spectator leads to the conclusion that it has trouble resolving functional conflicts. Next, I argue that Dewey's theory of moral inquiry can contribute to overcoming these problems that face the impartial spectator. The process of reflection and dialogue as an experiment in the consequences of each moral function can contribute to a more satisfactory resolution of functional conflict. This is because, through cooperation, sufficient expertise can be acquired. Furthermore, cultural and historical partialities can be overcome through collective reflection on the consequences of following each alternative. Finally, this chapter addresses how participation in a process of cooperative inquiry can be justified from a Deweyan perspective and how the pleasure of mutual sympathy emphasised by Smith can facilitate such cooperation. Cooperative inquiry contributes to better conditions for us and our descendants to live in. The process of engaging in such inquiry also nurtures the participants, enabling them to better solve other problems in the future. The pleasure of mutual sympathy sought by the impartial spectator makes him eager to correct not only his own moral limitations and errors but also those of others. This combination of Smith's and Dewey's ethics shows one way in which moral progress can occur in a naturalistic way.

Chapter 1. Kitcher's Ethics: Pragmatic Naturalism and Moral Progress

1. Introduction

What should be the task of ethics or moral philosophy? Following John Dewey, Philip Kitcher says it is to promote moral progress. More specifically, it is to make moral progress more systematic and secure, less chancy and less bloody.[1] To borrow Dewey's phrase, it is to make advances "more intelligently."[2] It is important to note that this pragmatist stance on ethics in no way implies that philosophy or philosophers have privileged access to transcendent truth or divine revelation. Rather, Kitcher denies the existence of an "expert" as the final authority on moral inquiry.[3] Is moral progress possible if philosophy or philosophers abandon appeals to faculties such as intuition or pure practical reason, if they abandon realms of morality such as divine revelation or the Platonic Forms? Can we understand and promote moral progress without postulating such faculties or entities? In this chapter, I argue that the answer is: yes!

More specifically, the purpose of this chapter is to illuminate Kitcher's ethics to argue that moral progress can be understood within a naturalistic framework, and that moral progress can be promoted based on that understanding. In other words, we can understand moral

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[1] See Philip Kitcher, *Moral Progress* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021), p. 24.

[2] See John Dewey, *MW 12*, pp. 234-243. Dewey citations are from The Collected Works, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Southern Illinois University Press), indicated by series (EW for Early Works, MW for Middle Works, and LW for Later Works), volume, and page number.

[3] See Kitcher, *The Ethical Project* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 241.

progress without postulating the sui generis, mind-independent moral facts that robust realists present as a requirement for the very possibility of moral progress.[4] We can also achieve moral progress without seeking to arrive at them. We can achieve it without taking what Thomas Nagel calls "the view from nowhere." In other words, we can promote moral progress without taking an "impersonal standpoint" that is maximally stripped of all perspectival particularities.[5] And we can do it without appealing to an abstracted, supposedly universal rational point of view, a point of view emphasised by Kantians such as Christine Korsgaard, which all rational beings not only can occupy but must occupy.[6] Indeed, Kitcher rejects the ethical reality or special faculties that non-naturalists or anti-naturalists posit as sources of moral truth and authority, calling them "mysterious entities" or "external constraints."

Although Kitcher argues that it is difficult to understand examples of historical moral progress from the perspective of non-naturalist realists and Kantian constructivists, the direct purpose of this chapter is not to argue that the anti-naturalist position has nothing to contribute to understanding and promoting moral progress. My aim is much more modest. It is to argue that it is possible to understand moral progress from the perspective of pragmatic naturalism and to improve the methodology of inquiry in order to promote it. Of course, this chapter also includes arguments about the problems that anti-naturalist positions have in explaining moral progress and promoting it, but exposing their problems is a secondary aim.

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[4] See Russ Shafer-Landau, *Moral Realism: A Defence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); David Enoch, *Taking Morality Seriously: A Defense of Robust Realism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[5] See Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[6] See Christine M. Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2014).

Kitcher's seminal work on ethics, *The Ethical Project*, can be understood in three main parts. They are, respectively, an account of the history of ethical practice, a metaethical perspective, and a normative methodology for promoting moral progress. [7] These three parts are interdependent. What unifies these three parts is Kitcher's philosophical position of "pragmatic naturalism." This chapter is divided into four parts. It will first address what his pragmatic naturalism seeks and what it excludes. His naturalistic position rejects appeal to "external constraints" in philosophical inquiry and in the understanding of moral phenomena and norms. His pragmatist ethics views ethics as a tool for promoting moral progress. Secondly, I will address Kitcher's understanding of the history of ethical practice. Drawing on scientific theories and findings from anthropology, history, psychology, biology, and primatology, he explores the history of moral change over tens of thousands of years, to draw out a history of moral progress that makes, and needs to make, no appeal to "external constraints." Through altruism, our capacity for normative guidance, and our ability to communicate and cooperate, we have made moral progress. This is not to say that there have not been moments of regression. Third is his metaethical perspective. He says that philosophical theories about the nature of morality should be compatible with an accurate understanding of the history of ethical practice. At a more ideal level, philosophical theories of morality should be able to deepen our understanding of the history of ethical practice. However, Kitcher argues that non-naturalist realism and Kantian ethics seem to marginalise the history of morality. The position of pragmatist metaethics, which holds that moral progress as problem-solving is prior to moral truth, can address this problem. Finally, I will

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[7] See Kitcher, *The Ethical Project*.

address Kitcher's ideal conditions for conversation to promote moral progress. For moral progress, we must be able to overcome errors in factual information. We must also overcome failures of sympathy and address the problem of false consciousness caused by misguided socialisation and institutional problems.

2. <u>Pragmatic Naturalism and Ethics</u>

Naturalism is sometimes used to mean different things depending on the philosopher or context. Similarly, it seems impossible to provide a set of necessary and sufficient conditions that unite the various pragmatist philosophers.[8] Kitcher identifies himself as a pragmatic naturalist, and his ethics is based on a pragmatic naturalist perspective.[9] Therefore, in order to understand his ethics, it is necessary to understand the kind of pragmatic naturalism he advocates. Kitcher's pragmatism is Deweyan. All philosophical investigation, including the investigation of morality, must be such that it can contribute to overcoming the real problems of our lives. Philosophy should not collapse into "sentimental indulgence for a few"[10] or "mere arbitrary dogma."[11] It should be able to influence our thinking about values and our actions accordingly. In particular, Dewey and Kitcher believe that ethics should contribute

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[8] Robert Talisse and Scott Aikin say in this context: "[a]lthough there are doctrinal similarities and channels of influence among all pragmatist philosophers, the differences among them make it difficult to see them as constituting a school." Robert B. Talisse and Scott F. Aikin, *Pragmatism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum, 2008), p. 1. In the same context, Richard Rorty says, "Pragmatism is a vague, ambiguous, and overworked word." Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism: (Essays: 1972-1980)* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. 160.

[9] See Kitcher, "Introduction: From Naturalism to Pragmatic Naturalism ," in *Preludes to Pragmatism: Toward a Reconstruction of Philosophy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. xi–xxxiii.

[10] Dewey, *MW 9,* p. 338.

[11] Ibid.

to promoting moral progress. Changes such as the abolition of slavery and the expansion of women's rights are seen as "moral progress" rather than "mere change." But such examples of progress in history have often been chancier, slower, less thorough, and less systematic than they might be. Following Dewey, Kitcher argues that philosophical understanding and reflection on morality can and should make these advances more stable and systematic.

Kitcher, like Dewey, is also a naturalist. His naturalism is not a reductionist naturalism in the sense that philosophical inquiry can and should be reduced to a particular branch of empirical science. Nor does he believe that any particular present or future scientific enquiry will end the need for philosophical inquiry. Kitcher gives two reasons for opposing reductionist naturalism. One is that he finds it unconvincing that the various branches of scientific enquiry can all be reduced to a more fundamental branch. Kitcher is sceptical about the prospect that disciplines such as anthropology, art history and zoology are reducible to more fundamental disciplines. The other, more important reason is that we should never think that we have reached the end of our enquiry, or that there is nothing left to amaze us. There is no end to scientific enquiry, as there is to philosophical enquiry. After defining the naturalism he opposes, Kitcher goes on to say that the naturalism he advocates is also Deweyan:

> Dewey is also committed to "naturalism." His questions and his answers are intended to avoid mysteries rather than multiplying them. In the broad sense, 'naturalism' names a philosophical position distinguished by its willingness to conform to the standards of inquiry at its best—as measured by the (synthetic) state of human knowledge. One way to conform is to restrict the entities and processes you invoke to those licensed by the sciences of your day—where 'science' is construed broadly to cover all the rigorous disciplines around, from art history and anthropology to zoology. Another is to introduce

only entities and processes that are defensible according to the methodological canons adopted by the sciences of your day. Yet another is to introduce only entities and processes that would be warranted by methodological canons, themselves defensible as progressive additions to the standards of the sciences of your day.[12]

As Kitcher's naturalism rejects "mysterious entities" that various fields of inquiry cannot recognise, his ethics rejects elements such as Platonic forms, divine revelation, and the procedures of pure practical reason. If Kitcher's naturalistic ethics rejects these elements that philosophy and religion have held to be the source of moral truth or justification, what can he say about the nature and source of moral truth and justification? Kitcher's pragmatic naturalism tells us to look to the history of ethical practice, not to a metaphysical foundation or a priori order for morality. As Dewey puts it, "moral conceptions and processes grow out of the very conditions of human life."[13] What Dewey means by "the very conditions of human life" should be understood to include not only the natural and cultural environments in which humans live, but also their capacities and limitations. If we can understand how and under what circumstances we have overcome moral problems, we can use that understanding to make future moral progress more stable and systematic. This is the strategy that Kitcher's ethics pursues. According to Kitcher, moral progress is a more fundamental concept than moral truth or moral justification. Thus, if we can understand the nature of moral progress through an understanding of the history of ethical practice, we can understand the nature of moral truth and moral justification. Charles Darwin's insight that "we should understand a

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[12] Kitcher, "Introduction: From Naturalism to Pragmatic Naturalism," p. xv.

[13] Dewey, *LW* 7, P. 308.

complex present by investigating the historical processes out of which it has emerged"[14] should be applied to ethics.

3. <u>Look at the history!</u>

Before we turn to the ways in which Kitcher's ethics understands and utilises the history of moral practice, something needs to be said. As I said earlier, Kitcher's pragmatic naturalism rejects any appeal to "mysterious entities" in his understanding of the history of morality and in his philosophical elucidation of ethics. However, the record of moral history in prehistory and early history is neither complete nor sufficient to allow us to know with certainty every detail of the development of the moral project. Therefore, Kitcher's strategy is to offer a "how possibly" rather than a "how actually" explanation. In other words, while Kitcher's understanding and account of moral life reflects the work of a variety of empirical sciences, including anthropology, archaeology, evolutionary biology, psychology, and history, Kitcher does not claim that all accounts of the history of morality are absolute truths. His aim is to show that it is possible to understand the history of the moral project without invoking "external constraints."

Kitcher draws on findings from anthropology, history, psychology, biology, primatology, and archaeology to explore the history of ethical practice. It is an exploration of how human ancestors overcame the moral problems of living together. Paleoanthropological evidence

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[14] Kitcher, "Pragmatic Naturalism," in *Philip Kitcher: Pragmatic Naturalism*, ed. Ansgar Seide and Marie I Kaiser (Frankfurt: Ontos Verlag, 2013), 15–44, p. 31.

shows that the social lives of hominids were similar to those of chimpanzees and bonobos. They spent their lives in small groups (probably with 30 to 70 members) mixed by age and sex. This lifestyle requires a capacity for psychological altruism, or a capacity for responding to others. Because psychological altruism plays such a central role in the unfolding of the history of morality, we need to understand it by comparing it to other types of altruism. Altruism can be categorised into three types. They are biological altruism, psychological altruism, and behavioural altruism. An organism A is "biologically altruistic toward a beneficiary B just in case A acts in ways that decrease its own reproductive success and increase the reproductive success of B."[15] Biological altruism has nothing to do with the intention of the act, and thus it does not require perceptual or cognitive abilities. In this respect, it is possible for even some plants to be biological altruists.

The altruism that should be noted in the history of human morality is psychological altruism. It is directly related to the intentions of the agent and has nothing to do with the spread of genes. Psychological altruists are "people with other-directed desires, emotions, or intentions."[16] By "other-directed desires," I mean desires that respond to an awareness of the impact of one's actions on the situation of others. To be a psychological altruist, then, is to be a being who, upon recognising the impact of one's actions on others, modifies one's actions to benefit others.[17] Of course, such actions can fail. However, success is not a

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[15] Kitcher, *The Ethical Project*, p. 18.

[16] Kitcher, "Varieties of Altruism ," in *Preludes to Pragmatism* 388–414, p. 388.

[17] More specifically, about the conditions for psychological altruism, Kitcher says: "A acts (psychologically) altruistically with respect to B in C just in case: (1) A acts on the basis of a desire that is different from the desire that would have moved A to action in C*, the solitary counterpart of C. (2) The desire that moves A to action in C is more closely aligned with the wants A attributes to B in C than the desire that would have moved A to action in C*. (3) The desire that moves A to action in C results from A's perception of B's wants in C. (4) The

requirement for being a psychological altruist. On the other hand, the behaviour of a behavioural altruist may be the same as that of a psychological altruist, but the intention is different: the behavioural altruist also responds to the needs and desires of others and acts to promote them, but the goal is ultimately the satisfaction of the agent's own needs and self-interested desires. Examples of behavioural altruism include actions based on the expectation that one's altruistic behaviour will prevent aggressive acts by others against oneself, or that one will receive a material reward.

The capacity for psychological altruism made it possible for groups of hominids larger than a single family unit to live in groups and encounter each other on a daily basis without a high incidence of social friction and violence. But there are also clear limits to this capacity: it is constrained by conditions along five dimensions: "the intensity of the animal's responses to others, the range of those to whom the animal is prepared to make an altruistic response, the scope of contexts in which the animal is disposed to respond, the animal's discernment in appreciating the consequences for others, and the animal's empathetic skill in identifying the desires others have or the predicaments in which they find themselves."[18] In other words, a psychological altruist may respond altruistically to one member of a group but not to another, or may act altruistically to both, but with different intensities. Depending on the situation, altruism may or may not be expressed towards the same member. These constraints lead to the failure of altruism: the instability of altruism was a moral problem for our ancestors to

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desire that moves A to action in C is not caused by A's expectation that the action resulting from it would promote A's solitary desires (with respect to C and C*). Kitcher, "Naturalistic Ethics without Fallacies," in *Preludes to Pragmatism,* 303–24, p. 308.

[18] Ibid., p. 31.

overcome.

Kitcher argues that if psychological altruism were the only resource for solving moral problems, our moral lives would never have become as sophisticated as they are. Studies of chimpanzees and bonobos show this. They also have some propensity for psychological altruism, but the instability of that propensity drives them to engage in long hours of "cumbersome peacemaking"[19] every day, because the instability of altruism can lead to conflict and fighting, and that is their chosen strategy for dealing with these problems. Mutual grooming (and other gestures of reassurance) exists in chimpanzee social life far beyond what is necessary for hygienic purposes (removing parasites from the fur). It stems from the constant need to repair the social fabric. However, despite all the hassle and effort, it is almost impossible for chimpanzees and bonobos to form communities of more than 150 members, and frequent conflicts and fights are unavoidable: "cooperators are sometimes exploited, returns are uneven, and, when there is an opportunity for large selfish benefits, even long-standing allies are sometimes left in the lurch."[20]

But this is where our ancestors diverged from the other apes. This is because they acquired a "capacity for normative guidance."[21] This can be defined as "a capacity to formulate and follow rules."[22] Of course, a sophisticated linguistic ability that differs from that of other

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[19] Kitcher, *The Ethical Project*, p. 69.

[20] Ibid., p. 67.

[21] Ibid., p. 69.

[22] Kitcher, "Naturalistic Ethics without Fallacies", p. 308.

species would have been one of the conditions for this capacity. It is based on recognizing the regularity of actions and consequences, and on observing that following certain desires can not only cause problems, but also get the actor into trouble. Humanity's early ethical project was therefore to some extent based on fear. In this respect, part of the human ethical project is constituted by actions that constitute behavioural altruism, but which were motivated in a psychologically egoistic manner. However, the ability to follow rules is not reducible to fear alone. Emotions such as "solidarity, pride, shame, and awe"[23] also contributed to it.

The lifestyle of early humans allows us to anticipate that the content of the rules would have been a fair distribution of resources and prohibitions against unprovoked violence. The ability to make and follow rules would have significantly reduced the frequency of failed altruism and made the prolonged process of "peacemaking" undertaken by bonobos and chimpanzees unnecessary. This ability has enabled humans to live in groups much larger than those of other primates. The shared ideals, values, and rules of Mesopotamian and ancient Egyptian sources epitomise the ways in which the capacity for normative guidance contributed to social life.

However, rather than simply viewing the history of ethical practice as a process of progress that relied on capacities such as altruism and normative guidance, Kitcher proposes to view it in terms of what John Stuart Mill called "experiments of living." Mill saw human

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[23] Kitcher, "Is a Naturalized Ethics Possible?," *Behaviour* 151, no. 2–3 (2014): 245–60, https://doi.org/10.1163/1568539x-00003145, p. 249.

understanding of "the good" as not fixed. Rather, it can be improved, and this can be done by applying a particular good or way of life in pursuit of it to real life.[24] It is necessary to try out a certain way of life or a new understanding of goodness and reflect on the results. Similarly, Kitcher argues that humanity can learn what kind of moral life should be pursued by applying and experimenting with different ways of living.[25] Kitcher says that the pioneers of the moral project would gather during the "cool hour"[26] to discuss the norms that would govern their community. They would discuss the failures of altruism that had occurred during the day and talk about ways to overcome them. Typically, they would have discussed the distribution of scarce resources. Each group would have agreed on different norms for resource allocation, and the group that invented and followed the better norms would have had an advantage in surviving and thriving over the group that did not. These "experiments of living" with morality or moral norms lead to a kind of "cultural competition."

Kitcher's account of moral history provides an explanation for how the crude moral codes of a community of roughly 50 people could have evolved into the complex system of morality and law that we have today, without any call for "timeless, sui generis moral truths." Nor is there an appeal to the rational perspective that all rational beings must take, as emphasised by Kantians such as Kosgaard. Nor is there a demand for the "view from nowhere" that Nagel says is necessary to achieve moral progress. In other words, Kitcher's account of the history of moral practice shows that better and worse norms have existed

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[24] See John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* , ed. John Gray and G W Smith (London: Routledge, 2015), pp 72-74.

[25] See Kitcher, *The Ethical Project*, pp. 104-137.

[26] Ibid., p. 104.

throughout history, and that the achievement of the better ones can be explained within a naturalistic framework. His metaethical perspective and position on normative methodology are interdependent on his understanding of the history of morality. Therefore, in discussing his metaethical perspective and methodology for progress, important moments in the history of morality will also be addressed. Now it is time to look at his metaethics.

4. Understand Progress!

Kitcher draws on his understanding of the history of morality to provide an elucidation of moral progress and the nature of ethical truth. There have been moral changes in human history that should rightly be regarded as moral progress. The abolition of slavery and the expansion of women's rights are typical examples. Not only must a philosophical understanding of morality be compatible with these examples of progress, but it must also deepen our understanding of the history of ethical practice. For Kitcher, the role of ethics as a discipline is to promote moral progress. If the abolition of slavery and the empowerment of women are desirable moral changes that we should seek, then we should seek similar types of change. Therefore, in order to seek progress, we need to understand the nature of examples of progress in history. If philosophical ethics fails to understand these instances of progress and to provide devices or tools to promote similar instances, it will be a less effective theory for promoting moral progress than one that can provide such pathways.

An example of slavery abolition is explored by Kitcher in the case of John Woolman, a Quaker and a pioneer abolitionist in the United States. Woolman left a journal. According to

the journal, Woolman was asked by his employer to sign a slave contract. At this point, Woolman says he felt "unease." He continued to feel uncomfortable about his behaviour and reflected on his actions for several months. He also engaged in in-depth conversations with his colleagues about his doubts. Through this reflection and conversation, he decided to oppose slavery. The attitudes that made up this opposition to slavery were solidified through years of travelling, preaching, and writing.[27]

Kitcher points out that Woolman's process of changing beliefs and attitudes towards slavery did not require such things as ethical reality or the procedures of pure practical reason. He asks us to compare examples of moral progress with examples of scientific discovery. In the case of the discovery of X-rays or genes, we can see a connection between the psychological changes in the discoverer and the phenomena discovered. We can see cases where the entity discovered is represented in the consciousness of the discoverer, and provide a story of how this came about when it did (and why others failed to perceive the same portion of the objective world). However, in the case of Woolman, it seems difficult to understand what "mysterious entities" Woolman had access to that distinguished him from others who were not critical of slavery. For pragmatic naturalists, appealing to "external constraints" in understanding cases of moral progress like Woolman's seems to multiply the mystery. Kitcher criticises the objectivists and says the following about the deficiencies of their

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[27] John Woolman wrote about this:: "My employer, having a negro woman, sold her, and desired me to write a bill of sale, the man being waiting who bought her. The thing was sudden; and though I felt uneasy at the thoughts of writing an instrument of slavery for one of my fellow-creatures, yet I remembered that I was hired by the year, that it was my master who directed me to do it, and that it was an elderly man, a member of our Society, who bought her; so through weakness I gave way, and wrote it; but at the executing of it I was so afflicted in my mind, that I said before my master and the Friend that I believed slave- keeping to be a practice inconsistent with the Christian religion." John Woolman, *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman*, ed. Phillips P. Moulton (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 2001), p. 31.

philosophical position:

> The psychological processes these people[contributors to moral progress] seem to undergo differ radically from the forms of evidence conjured in typical philosophical accounts of ethical justification. There are no special abstract forms of reasoning, nothing reported as a moment of "perception" or "intuition."[28]

> Those, like Scanlon and Nagel, who hypothesize objective facts about reasons, need to explain how a pioneering abolitionist—John Woolman, for example—was able to see that there are reasons for rejecting chattel slavery, while others, apparently with quite similar experiences and educational backgrounds, failed to do so. […] An account of method in moral inquiry is needed, if moral realism is to be linked to the historical narrative. The mysteries would be dissolved if it became possible to see how the procedures conducive to moral discovery were followed by the participants on one side of an issue, and not by those on the other. The core of the relativist challenge is scepticism about settling moral disputes, a form of scepticism that would undermine talk of moral progress. The challenge can be met by providing a method for resolution. Without moral methodology, moral metaphysics is impotent.[29]

Kitcher's critique of non-naturalist realism can be understood in two ways. One is that the cases of moral progress reveal no appeal to a non-natural reality or reference to the faculties necessary for its discovery. The other, derived from the first aspect, is that since realism does not contribute to the understanding of cases of moral progress, it does not provide a methodology for progress. This criticism also applies to Kantian rationalism, which emphasises the procedure of pure practical reason or the rational standpoint that all rational

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[28] Kitcher, *The Ethical Project*, p. 179.

[29] Kitcher, *Moral Progress*, pp. 19-20.

beings must take.[30] By what process did the actual instances of moral progress take place, if not by the recognition of objective moral reality or the application of the procedures of pure practical reason?

In Woolman's example, Kitcher emphasises that the gathering of factual information and reflection on one's existing moral resources were crucial to the change in Woolman's beliefs and attitudes. Furthermore, Kitcher argues that above all else, "conversation" was crucial in bringing about change. In other words, the change in Woolman's beliefs and attitudes did not come about through a special revelation or access to ethical reality. As Kitcher puts it, "[m]oments of ethical insight are elusive."[31] Rather, Woolman came to realise that the violent and oppressive treatment of slaves did not make them more God-fearing. Woolman realised that the arguments justifying slavery were false. He was "uneasy" with the suffering of slaves under slavery. He empathised with the suffering that slaves endured from abuse. Through the correction of errors in his factual information, application of his pre-existing moral values, and his empathic responses to the suffering of slaves, he began to engage in various dialogues about the issue, solidifying his new beliefs and attitudes in the process. There is no appeal to "external constraints" in Woolman's case. Woolman changed his moral

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[30] Kitcher argues that the Kantian demand for universality of the categorical imperative is a powerless and empty demand for the abolition of slavery, because the question of the legitimacy of slavery depends on the justification of exceptions, and the Kantian demand for a vague universality provides no clear guidance for that. Regarding this, Kitcher says: "If he pursued an approximation to the favoured procedure, it is one so rough as to be useless. To substitute some vague requirement of universalizability for the rigorous test of the Categorical Imperative would be entirely inadequate to settle the live eighteenth-century debates about slavery, for these turned crucially on the legitimacy of certain exceptions to strict universality, and vague thoughts about universalizability are powerless to endorse those exceptions or to repudiate them." Kitcher, "Précis of the Ethical Project," *Analyse & Kritik* 34, no. 1 (May 1, 2012): 1–20, https://doi.org/10.1515/auk-2012-0101, p. 9.

[31] Kitcher, *The Ethical Project,* p. 179.

views – but there seems to be no identifiable point at which he "discovered" a sui generis moral fact, or a truth about pure practical reasons.

But if the appeal to "external constraints" as an objective basis for understanding moral progress disappears, how can we distinguish ethical progress from "mere-change" that is to say, subjective and arbitrary change? That is, while we may consider a change to be progress, is it not just an illusion on our part, and is there no true standard by which we can evaluate the goodness or badness of moral change? According to Kitcher, we can understand progress and achieve it without postulating "external constraints." Even from the perspective of pragmatic naturalism, the possibility of progress is valid. Kitcher calls for a reversal of the traditional view of the relationship between truth and progress.

Typical Objectivists understand progress in terms of the recognition and accumulation of objective truth. In such a framework, in principle, truth is prior to progress. In contrast, Kitcher's pragmatic naturalism says that moral progress is prior to moral truth in principle. We face all kinds of moral problems. Solving moral problems is moral progress, and truth is what you get by making progressive steps. Truth is a byproduct of progress as problem-solving. More specifically, "the moral truths are the judgements that emerge in moral progress and that remain stable parts of progressive moral practice, as it continues indefinitely."[32] For example, consider a society facing severe economic inequality. The society would be able to devise new political principles and institutions to overcome the

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[32] Kitcher, *Moral Progress*, p. 21.

problem of inequality. If such norms and institutions are effective in overcoming the problem of inequality, they may be candidates for provisional truth. Of course, such norms and institutions can probably be improved upon. Principles and institutions would be a matter of degree, a matter of what is relatively better, not a matter of absolute right or wrong, because humans are fallible, and the methods of human enquiry and the results of that enquiry are open to improvement: norms and institutions that seemed to be the most effective solutions at a particular point in time may be discarded in the process of enquiry. And if we view truth as a tool for problem-solving, we must allow for pluralism in moral truth, because there may be many different solutions that are equally effective in solving a problem. Moreover, the moral innovation that might solve our problems today could be the source of new problems tomorrow, and thus need to be overcome in its turn.[33]

 Kitcher calls this conception of progress as a solution to moral problems "progress from" or "pragmatic progress" and contrasts it with the realist conception of progress as "progress to." The understanding of pragmatic progress can be made clearer by analogy to technological progress. The introduction of the automobile as a new mode of transport significantly reduced the time it took to reach certain places, and made it possible to travel to places that were previously considered impossible to reach due to the time and effort required to make the journey. The mobility of the automobile has made it possible to overcome the traditional problems of physical and time constraints. However, it seems folly to assume that there is an

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[33] Kitcher explains the moral pluralism he advocates as follows: "Pluralism, as I conceive it, proposes there are (1) some pairs of codes for which one is objectively better than the other; (2) some pairs of codes for which neither is objectively better than the other, but there is a third code constructible from elements of both, objectively better than either; and (3) some pairs of codes for which neither (1) nor (2) obtains. To salvage the notion of "objectively better than" that occurs in these claims and counterclaims, we do not need any concept of ethical truth. It is enough to recognize which kinds of changes would be progressive or regressive." Kitcher, *The Ethical Project*, p. 210.

ultimate endpoint to the development and evolution of the transportation. Kitcher says the following about "progress from":

> Stepwise pragmatic progress is guided by local goals. At each stage, the aim is to find relief from a problem or from a limitation felt as confinement. The break with teleology consists in the absence of any goal guiding the whole sequence of transitions. New problems emerge from the steps already taken to address older ones. How you go on depends on the decisions made in bringing you to your current place.[34]

By understanding progress as solving the problems we face, we can understand and achieve it without assuming a final destination for it to reach. We may not understand what the Platonic form of a car is, but we can say that a car produced in 2024 is more advanced than a car produced in the late 19th century. And even if we don't know what the end point of a car's evolution is, we can still try to improve it. Similarly, we may regard the current norm of punishing the perpetrator as better than a version of lex talionis that would regard the rape of the rapist's daughter as a just punishment, even if we do not envisage a final ideal of punishment for rape. The understanding of progress, and the possibility of it, does not depend on what the endpoint is.

So does Kitcher's pragmatism, which holds that progress is in principle prior to truth, claim that "moral truth" is useless? No! Kitcher acknowledges the existence of moral truths, and he also acknowledges that they are for our benefit. As I said previously, moral truths "are the judgements that emerge in moral progress and that remain stable parts of progressive moral

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[34] Kitcher, *Moral Progress*, p. 25.

practice, as it continues indefinitely." In other words, we can and should regard as true those norms or judgements that are stable in the course of progress. For example, Kitcher says that claims like "honesty is right" or "killing innocent people is wrong" can be considered tentative and vague truths. Regarding the reasons for this, Kitcher says:

> First, despite the variation we find in the world's ethical experiments, some themes are discovered again and again, not easily captured in any exact formulation, but universally present. Traditions lacking them would make progress by adopting them. Second, as we think about possibilities of jettisoning our own versions of the rules expressing these themes, we find it hard to conceive how any society that abandoned them, that lacked anything like our prohibitions against murder and lying, would have an ethical system able to reduce social tension through remedying altruism failures. We make a well-based conjecture about which rules are "destined" to endure, using our own, quite possibly crude and inapt, language to gesture toward a theme that will be present in the "last words of the last man."[35]

We can regard norms as truths that can prevent and solve a variety of problems. This is because there are problems that are common to many different moral journeys. Crimes such as murder, rape, and theft occur in every age, and we can expect that efforts to prevent them and to punish them appropriately will be required in the future. It also seems impossible for people in a society, whatever that society may be, to live happily together in smooth cooperation in a society in which murder and fraud are entirely acceptable. Therefore, we can tentatively accept vague-level truths such as "murder of innocent people is wrong" and "people who commit fraud should be punished."

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[35] Kitcher, *The Ethical Project*, p. 247.

If we acknowledge the existence of moral truths, and that they are necessary for our lives, there is no reason to abandon the possibility and necessity of 'progress to' from a pragmatist perspective. As products of moral problem solving, moral truths can function as moral ideals to which we refer in the course of moral practice. Numerous articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are norms that require the relief of the suffering and marginalised and the prevention of such suffering and frustration. Such clauses to overcome failures of altruism or failures of response to others can serve as ideals to which we should aspire. In a society such as North Korea, where many of the rights guaranteed by the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are trampled under dictatorship, the ideals pursued by those provisions should be realised. Moral progress towards them is possible. What pragmatic naturalism seeks to emphasise is that these ideals and our understanding of them emerge as tools for overcoming moral problems.

Earlier I said that within the framework of pragmatism, moral progress has priority not only over moral truth but also over moral justification. This is because the source of moral authority lies in its contribution to the solution of moral problems. The reason we should follow moral norms and engage in conversations about moral problems is that they can contribute to overcoming them. The reason we should engage in moral projects is to become more sensitive to the suffering of others, and to prevent lives from falling into the pit of despair and alienation. As Kitcher says, "people are justified when their decisions are generated by processes likely to yield progressive changes."[36] The grounds for following it do not depend on whether moral norms correspond to mind-independent, sui-generis moral

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[36] Kitcher, *The Ethical Project*, p. 212.

facts. Nor is it because they are right from an "impersonal standpoint" that is maximally stripped of all perspectival particularities, nor is it because they are right from the standpoint that all rational beings must take. The normative justification for us to pursue moral progress and follow moral truth is that doing so contributes to us living better lives.

It is now time to address the most significant problem that all anti-realist naturalist ethics, including Kitcher's ethics, face: "functional conflict." I will address this through the example of the "division of labour." In terms of meeting basic needs through maximising productivity, the division of labour can be considered an example of moral progress. However, it has resulted in a diversity of jobs and roles, which has led to feelings of marginalisation and hopelessness for those who are unable to access certain positions or roles. Changes often seem to involve losses as well as gains. The increase in productivity through the division of labour is certainly an advance as a function of the satisfaction of basic needs, but it is the source of the problem as a frustration of participatory desires: functional conflict, where the better fulfilment of one function leads to the loss of another. Most of the moral problems we face that demand reflection and discussion seem to involve functional conflicts. The absence of the possibility of resolving functional conflicts in a better way seems to imply that we must abandon the possibility of a naturalistic account of moral progress. In this sense, functional conflict is the most difficult and important problem for naturalistic ethics to overcome. What, then, is Kitcher's response to the problem of functional conflict?

Kitcher's response to this is two-fold. One is that it is pointless to demand solutions to all functional conflicts. The other is that while there are certainly functional conflicts that we need to overcome, we can construct ways to solve them. Kitcher offers the first solution by

contrasting the lifestyles of primitive people with those of civilised people. Primitive life has serious problems with meeting basic needs such as food and shelter. On the other hand, civilised people are able to overcome many of these problems through the introduction of the division of labour. However, the introduction of various positions and roles in the division of labour has led to the frustration of participatory desires. So which of the two ways of life is better? According to Kitcher, this question is idle. For there is no possibility of a return to the primitive life of civilised people, who already live in a world of division of labour. Already they live in a life of irrepressible desires and their fulfilment. A return to primitive life is therefore not a real possibility, and a judgement on the superiority of the two types of life is therefore not necessary for moral progress.

Related to the above are the concepts of "local progress" and "global progress." A progress concept is global "if it generates a verdict in comparing any two states of the focal system."[37] On the other hand, The concept of local progress is the basis for judgements about "some pairs of temporally adjacent states of the system."[38] In order to determine the superiority of all moral norms and moral states, it would be necessary to presuppose the commensurability of all changes. But even if such an ambitious theoretical task is not possible, there is still the possibility that we can say what is better or worse. This is because we can pursue "local progress" rather than "global progress." Even if we can't be sure which world would be better - a world without cars at all or our current world full of them - we need to reduce the incidence of car accidents and the deaths they cause. Similarly, although we may not be able to judge whether the primitive form of life is better than that of civilised man, we need to understand

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[37] Kitcher, *Moral Progress*, p. 23.

[38] Ibid., pp. 23-24.

the harms of extreme economic and social inequality and work to overcome them. "Local progress" is not trivial.[39]

The problem is that not all cases of functional conflict can be dissolved in this way. Even in the pursuit of "local progress," there are functional conflicts that are difficult to resolve. Consider the international response to climate change. There are demands for developing countries to reduce their carbon emissions. But developing countries argue that such demands are not only unfair but also threaten their right to survive. This is because they believe that the main culprits of the climate problem are not them but the developed world, and that the failure of industrialisation could lead to a threat to their very survival. Certainly, unilateral repressive measures against developing countries can be seen as ignoring and promoting international inequality. However, allowing developing countries to emit unchecked carbon emissions could also be seen as damaging the quality of life of future generations. These functional conflicts are unavoidable. Each choice we make is an ethical decision, because inaction is a choice that has different consequences than the alternatives. There are functional conflicts that we can never avoid. Therefore, it is necessary to explore and construct a methodology that can overcome functional conflict. That's the second response to functional conflict. Let's look at it now.

5. Have a Conversation!

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[39] Kitcher's distinction between global and local progress resonates with Bernard Williams' "relativism of distance." Williams distinguishes between notional options and real options. In this regard, Williams says: "A relativist view of a given type of outlook can be understood as saying that for such outlooks it is only in real confrontations that the language of appraisal—good, bad, right, wrong, and so on—can be applied to them; in notional confrontations, this kind of appraisal is seen as inappropriate, and no judgments are made." Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 179.

There is something that should not be overlooked in understanding the methodology for solving the moral problems. That is, the methodology for solving the problem is "historical." I see Kitcher's understanding of moral methodology as "historical" in two ways. First, no methodology is finalised, and it is subject to refinement and modification in the course of history. Second, the construction and refinement of a methodology is based on an understanding of the moral problems in history and their resolution. An understanding of the history of morality has a direct impact not only on our understanding of moral philosophy, but also on our future moral inquiry! In this chapter I will explore the features of Kitcher's methodology in terms of its "historical" character, and show that it is possible to achieve moral progress within a naturalistic framework.

First, I will address issues related to the possibilities for improving the methodology. According to Kitcher, the methodology of ethics, like the methodology of the natural sciences, is provisional and evolving. He argues that an understanding of the methodology of modern science in the 17th century can help us understand the possibility of evolving methodologies for moral progress. Regarding this, Kitcher says:

> According to a popular story, scientific research became more successful as it was more self-consciously directed by ideas about method, this joint process occurring in the seventeenth century. […] Despite the frequency with which pioneers of early modern science linked their hypotheses and discoveries to claims about method, one does not have to read very far in their writings to understand that, first, their methodological conceptions, while related, have important differences, and, second, that their methodological counsel is often imprecise. If we now have a more detailed account of methods of scientific justification, that is because the initial vague thoughts about method have inspired scientific research whose successes could then be used to refine and revise the preliminary ideas about method.

To take the comparison between ethics and science seriously should accustom us to the possibility that an initially imprecise account of method might spark ethical deliberations, whose results lead to further precision about method. There are no final definitions, but an evolutionary process.[40]

The pioneers of modern science sometimes had different methodologies, and from a contemporary perspective, their methodologies were by no means perfect and complete. Nevertheless, they have contributed to the development of scientific theories. And this development also includes advances in methodology. The same is true of the methodology for moral progress. Sometimes different moral methodologies can all contribute to moral progress. The methodology for moral progress is also subject to improvement. Woolman's case is useful for understanding this. Woolman's process of reflection before embarking on the abolitionist movement suggests three points on which a methodology for moral progress should be based. These are the gathering of factual information, active empathy for others, and conversation. However, from the perspective of pragmatic naturalism, Woolman's example is by no means a complete methodology for moral progress. However, it is undeniable that the method of moral enquiry pursued by Woolman contributed to the abolition of slavery: methodologies for overcoming the problems we face are imperfect, but they contribute to moral progress, and imperfect methodologies can contribute to the construction of better methodologies. Kitcher emphasises that moral judgements and methodologies are "doubly provisional,"[41] which means that both our moral judgements and our methodologies are doubly subject to refinement.

Then what kind of "good" should a pragmatist methodology for moral progress, open to

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[40] Kitcher, *The Ethical Project,* pp. 342-43.

[41] Kitcher, *Moral Progress,* p. 76.

constant revision and improvement, pursue? Kitcher says it should be understood in terms of "dynamic consequentialism." Dynamic consequentialism can be understood as consequentialism in the sense that it holds that moral inquiry and the resulting actions should contribute to making the world a better place. Dynamic consequentialism says that morality should contribute to producing good outcomes. It is important to note that the actual meaning of "a better world" in dynamic consequentialism is provisional. This is because, according to it, the "good" that we should strive for is provisional and open to revision. This notion of dynamic consequentialism can be clarified by contrasting it with utilitarianism, the most well-known version of consequentialism.

Kitcher highlights the differences between the two by criticising a version of standard utilitarianism, hedonistic utilitarianism, from the perspective of dynamic consequentialism. The crux of the criticism converges on the point that hedonistic utilitarianism is a reductionist theory. For example, Kitcher argues that standard utilitarians accept the proposition "[t]he only aspects of the world needing to be considered in evaluating the consequences of an action are those subsequent to the action."[42] Since it is true that our actions cannot change the past, this proposition can be taken for granted. However, the above proposition is subject to criticism because it implies something else. According to Kitcher, it should be rejected because it implies that "the value of an event or state of affairs is always independent of its causal history."[43] Our moral judgements of actions should be made in terms of how they relate to past actions or past events, not simply in terms of the changes that occur after the

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[42] Kitcher, *The Ethical Project*, p. 290.

[43] Ibid., p. 291.

action. In this regard, Kitcher proposes the following thought experiment:

> Imagine two world histories involving exactly the same distribution of pleasures and pains, satisfactions of desires, and anything else about individual people you might take to be relevant to their individual good, but diverging in the causal relations. Suppose, for simplicity, all that matters is pleasure and the absence of pain. In one world history, many of the pleasures and pains come about because of systematic relations among people— there are relationships of mutual helping; punishment is given for harms caused— much as things happen in the world we know. In the alternative, the causes of the pleasures and pains are quite random: you do something to please a friend, and, instead of the friend, a complete stranger acts to give you pleasure; you cause harm to someone, and, out of the blue, a harm equivalent to the punishment is inflicted on you.[44]

Kitcher says that if you think that a world in which the causality of action appears anomalous lacks something of value, then you cannot deny that you assign value to the causality of action itself, not just to the amount of pain and pleasure. Kitcher presents another assumption that standard utilitarians make: the only dimensions that should be subject to direct moral consideration "are properties of the lives of existing beings, all of whom belong to a particular class."[45] Kitcher criticises this assumption in the sense that we can go beyond considering living beings as isolated entities: the relationships between living beings and their relationships with non-living things can also be the subject of direct moral consideration. Even the relationships between inanimate objects, he argues, can be subject to direct moral consideration within the framework of dynamic consequentialism.

Kitcher views the problems shared by versions of standard utilitarianism as arising from

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[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid., p. 290.

reducing things that should not be reducible. If we reject reductionist assumptions, there is no reason why consequentialist moral judgements should be reducible solely to the aggregate amount of individual pleasure or happiness. Other states, actions, or outcomes should also be considered morally relevant. For example, dynamic consequentialism leaves room for judging a state in which there is less happiness but a fairer distribution as morally better than a state in which the sum of happiness is greater. In the same vein, Kitcher says that if we consider the meaning and importance of free choice and planning in our lives, we can realise that the utilitarian demand to simply consider the sum of pleasure and pain is problematic. For even if a disconnected experience offers a large amount of pleasure, we would not consider it a desirable state if it lacked "certain global properties" such as a life plan and continuity in the process of pursuing it. In other words, a worthwhile life requires a plan. Then what kind of inquiry should we engage in to lead the project of a dynamic consequentialism that emphasises that the "good" is provisional?

As I said earlier, his understanding of normative methodology also relies on the history of ethical practice. The methodology is based on a naturalistic perspective. In the process of exploring how to overcome the moral problems that have arisen throughout the history of morality, Kitcher found that conversation was crucial. Why should we seek dialogue rather than monologue? One reason is that throughout history, moral progressive figures have used dialogue to form and reinforce their new moral beliefs and attitudes. But there is a more fundamental reason. Functional conflict.

I mentioned in the "introduction" to this chapter that Kitcher's ethics denies the existence of

an "expert" on moral inquiry or the outcome of inquiry. Kitcher sees morality as a social technology. It is a technology for overcoming the problems of living together as creatures with prosocial dispositions such as sympathy, empathy, benevolence and altruism. It is a practical tool to serve collective human goals. The problem is that there are many different functions that this social technology needs to fulfil. Sometimes morality requires us to punish offenders, sometimes it requires us to forgive them generously. Sometimes morality allows someone to be deeply attached to their children and parents, but sometimes it requires us to treat everyone equally. It seems dogmatic for one person to decide which functions should be prioritised in the face of various moral problems. In this respect, Kitcher argues that while there may be experts in terms of a single function of morality, there are no experts in the whole domain of morality, which is characterised by functional conflict.[46] So how should cooperation and dialogue be carried out to solve moral problems?

First, errors in factual information must be corrected. The dialogue must be based on correct information about the problematic situation and the real effects of the alternatives. Second, it must overcome the failure of sympathy. The conversation should reflect the thoughts and feelings of people in different situations. Third, we need to overcome the problem of false consciousness. Dialogue should seek to correct false ideas about the ideal of the self that are the result of unjust institutions and misguided socialisation.

According to Kitcher's naturalistic view, those who have contributed to progress in the history of morality have done so without relying on judgements based on 'ethical reality' or

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[46] See Kitcher, "Afterthoughts. Reply to Comments," *Analyse & Kritik* 34, no. 1 (May 1, 2012): 167–90, https://doi.org/10.1515/auk-2012-0112, p. 183.

on their privileged ability to access it. Rather, they were subjected to a process of moral socialisation by their parents, teachers and peers, just like anyone else who was compliant and content with existing moral norms and attitudes. So why is it that only a small fraction of those who inherited similar moral lore and vocabulary contributed to moral progress? They questioned existing factual information and corrected errors in it. The example of Mary Wollstonecraft, who was at the forefront of the women's rights movement, is a clear example of this. Her argument for allowing women to be educated stems from the fact that uneducated women often do not perform well in the roles expected of them in the traditional image of womanhood. She realised that the traditional practice of not educating women had to be overcome in order to raise children properly.

Historical examples aside, it is easy to see that errors in factual information must be overcome in order to make good moral judgements about moral problems. Even the most altruistic person will not be able to make the right moral judgement if they are misinformed about the signs and cues of suffering. We will also be able to overcome the problems more effectively if we are able to judge more accurately the impact that any institution or action will have on people. It also requires that the participants in the conversation have knowledge of people's wishes and how they have changed as a result of the process and outcome of the dialogue. From a pragmatist perspective, one of the fundamental functions of morality is to contribute to enabling us to pursue our "endorsable desires" more freely and without constraint. To do this, we need to be aware of the wishes of others. Dialogue for moral progress also requires a process of exchange of information and perspective-taking, each of which can contribute to the correction of errors and the expansion of new perspectives. Eventually, this can lead to the modification of desires or the creation of new desires. We

need to be aware of these changed and generated wishes.

Next I will address aspects of the methodology related to the problem of failing to hear "the cries of the wounded,"[47] that is, the failure of sympathy. There are three epitomes of moral progress in Kitcher's view. They are the abolition of slavery, the advancement of women's rights, and the spread of acceptance of homosexuality. A key reason why the oppression and discrimination of the slaves, the women, and those drawn to members of their own sex was justified was the failure to sympathise with their pain and loss. Their suffering was overlooked, ignored, or even recognised as deserved, and so the overcoming of these problems is linked to the success and expansion of sympathy. It was sympathy for the lives and suffering of slaves that led Woolman to engage in serious inquiry and dialogue about slavery, and Wollstonecraft's empathetic understanding of women's suppressed aspirations was a catalyst for the women's rights movement. Negative attitudes towards homosexuality were slowly changed by seeing the world through the eyes of gay people.

In this respect, Kitcher sees the emotional aspect of sympathy, or mutual engagement, as central to his methodology for moral progress. His emphasis on sympathy resonates with Adam Smith's notion of projective sympathy. For Smith, we sympathize with the sentiments of others via an imaginative projection mechanism.[48] In other words, sympathising with others means putting yourself in their shoes and imagining how you would feel if you were in the same situation as them. The problem is that we may not be able to act in a way that

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[47] William James, "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," in *The Will to Believe: And Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (Auckland: The Floating Press, 2010), p. 236.

[48] See Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D D Raphael and A L Macfie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).

reflects all the desires of others equally, because there may be desires for things that cannot be realised at the same time. One person may want slavery to continue, while another wants it to be abolished. Kitcher offers two strategies for overcoming incompatible desires.

One is to introduce a filter of cognitive condition. In other words, the desires that we should empathise with, or prioritise, are those that are not based on false beliefs about the natural world, and those that are based on a correct understanding of the consequences of the realisation of their desires. If the belief that uneducated women will lead more rewarding and happier lives than educated women is false, and if someone wishes that women should be deprived of educational opportunities on the basis of this belief, it should be rejected. This is because it is a desire based on a false belief. However, even if we fulfil the ideal level of cognitive conditions, we may still have desires for incompatible things. To overcome this, we need to expand our sympathy. In other words, A needs to empathise not only with B's solitary desires, but also with "B*'s assessment of B's desires, B*'s assessment of A's assessment of B's desires, B**'s assessment of B's desires, B**'s assessment of B*'s assessment of B's desires, and so forth."[49] The participants in the conversation need to find the best balance in the process of mirroring different desires based on correct beliefs.

 Even if we aim to find a balance between these desires, there remains one other fundamental moral problem that threatens us. It is the "problem of false consciousness."[50] Kitcher presents "the devoted wife at the Victorian fireside"[51] as the epitome of the problem of false

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[49] Kitcher, *The Ethical Project*, p. 347.

[50] Kitcher, *Moral Progress*, pp. 41-43.

[51] Ibid., p. 49.

consciousness. Some Victorian women were content with the traditional image of womanhood assigned to them and were wary of pursuing ideals that deviated from it. And they enjoyed having relaxed and happy conversations with their patriarchal husbands. It is important to note that they saw nothing wrong or coercive in the pursuit of such a single ideal. They didn't see it as a problem, even though they lost the possibility of going in many different life directions and taking many different opportunities. In Kitcher's words, "[m]ost of the wounded do not even cry."[52] This is why the problem of false consciousness is the most serious obstacle to moral progress. This is because it is much more difficult to grasp the pain and loss of someone who is not only not crying, but who even appears to be content, than it is to grasp the pain of someone who is crying loudly.

So can we recognise the false consciousness problem? Of course, in order to recognise and overcome the problems associated with false consciousness, it may be helpful to strive to fulfil the cognitive conditions described above and to activate a constant multidimensional process of sympathy. However, as mentioned earlier, it seems extremely difficult to understand and empathise with those who do not express any complaints or feelings of hopelessness about suffering and loss. Therefore, our moral progress would be more stable and systematic if there were devices to overcome these problems. There are two such devices. One is to imagine the ideals and life plans of people who might emerge from alternative socialisation processes. The other is to actually try out "experiments of living" that involve living out alternative ideals. I'll start with the first device.

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[52] Ibid., p. 59.

Those who are morally and politically sceptical about expanding opportunities for women - defenders of the status quo - note that "most women" or "normal women" fulfil the roles tradition has assigned them without complaint. But we should not overlook the fact that most women's understanding of the ideal is inextricably linked to their particular way of being "socialised." If the socialisation process had sufficiently suggested, directly or indirectly, that women are capable of pursuing different ways of life, and that they have different opportunities and different values within those life processes, they might not be bound by traditional images of women. Therefore, we need to examine what ideals of self particular groups may have under alternative socialisation processes and life circumstances.

The problem is that active advocacy and promotion of minority ideals can sometimes come with risks. For people living in an era where progress has already stabilised, this is quite natural, and it can be difficult to understand why it took so long and effort to achieve. But until progressive change stabilises, we shouldn't overlook its dangers. Many progressive changes involve functional conflicts, and we should be concerned about the functions that may be sacrificed or overlooked in the process. So how do we deal with the risks of pursuing certain ideals? Experimentation.

As Mill insightfully observed, sometimes we cannot know the true meaning and utility of certain values or ideals until we have embodied or tried them out in real life, and so we must sometimes actually live out the pursuit of those ideals. Victorian opponents of women's active political participation, public roles, and access to education at all levels argued that such a life would cause women pain and misery. Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill, however, believed that

the possibility of such suffering and unhappiness should not be a sufficient reason to prevent women from experimenting with a life of autonomous choice. Of course, it is important to listen to a variety of concerns and advice, but we should not deny the moral importance of respect for the autonomy to choose for oneself to plan one's own life.

6. Conclusion

The resources for moral progress are historical. Our moral judgements and norms are based on the moral heritage and moral vocabulary of the past. What we need to do to overcome new moral problems is to constantly review and revise the moral lore we have inherited. Theories that create a disconnect between past moral practices and moral lore and our understanding of new problems to be solved are not desirable theories for understanding and promoting moral progress. From the perspective of pragmatic naturalism, invoking non-natural reality in this process of review and revision does nothing to improve our judgements and practices. Furthermore, the Nagelian view from nowhere, which excludes all special perspectives, and the rational perspective that Korsgaard says all rational beings should take, risks marginalising the moral heritage that we should cherish and improve upon. It is not only impossible, but also undesirable, for us to jump off the ship we have been on in our moral voyage. Kitcher's ethics shows us that new moral challenges, like storms and waves, can be overcome on the same boat we have been driving. Refining our moral beliefs and norms through sympathy, reflection, and conversation is the way to go.

Chapter 2. Authority without Holy Grails

1. Introduction

"Merely" is often used as a modifier to imply that naturalistic ethics lacks something vital or essential to morality. Critics say that in naturalistic ethics, moral judgements, or truths, are mere expressions of feelings, or mere tools invented to overcome the difficulties of living together. However, I think that the modifier "merely" should be eliminated from this naturalistic conception of morality, as proposed by Simon Blackburn.[1] This is because a naturalistic understanding of morality can vindicate the authority of morality. Naturalistic ethics can demonstrate the importance of moral inquiry based on moral sensibilities. Even within the framework of naturalistic ethics, morality is never trivial. From a naturalistic perspective, morality can be understood as the expression of moral attitudes to coordinate our attitudes and behaviors and to overcome moral problems. Coordinating attitudes and behaviors and overcoming problems to promote cooperation is at the core of humanity.

The purpose of this chapter is to argue that naturalistic ethics can justify the authority of morality. It does so by viewing the practical function of morality as the basis for its authority. The naturalistic position defended in this chapter draws on Philip Kitcher's pragmatist

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[1] See Simon Blackburn, "Is Objective Moral Justification Possible on a Quasi-Realist Foundation?," *Inquiry* 42, no. 2 (June 1999), p. 215.

ethics,[2] Blackburn's quasi-realist expressivism,[3] and Max Khan Hayward's sentimentalist pragmatism.[4] But I think that other naturalistic ethics that take the practical function of morality as the basis for the authority of morality can also be supported by my arguments.

To this end, the chapter will unfold in the following order. First, I clarify what I mean by vindicating the authority of morality. It does not mean demonstrating that every conceivable agent should be the subject of moral obligations. Rather, it means giving us, as a species with moral understanding and sensibilities, reasons for why morality is required in our lives. Second, I expound the functionalist approach to the authority of morality that I will defend. Functionalist naturalism can vindicate the authority of morality within the perspective created by the practical functioning of morality rather than from an external and impersonal perspective. Third, it defends functionalist naturalism by comparing it with anti-naturalist or non-naturalist theories. This argument is based on the position that "human needs, interests, and projects" are of more value than any non-natural moral facts or any moral imperatives based on a rational perspective. Fourth, it rebuts the criticism that a version of naturalistic ethics that emphasises the role of emotion and imagination in moral judgments and inquiry cannot demonstrate the authority of morality because it collapses into relativism. The kind of naturalistic ethics which I favour can avoid such criticisms by distinguishing between the project of the anatomist and the project of justifying moral obligations. Fifth, I criticise the

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[2] See Philip Kitcher, *The Ethical Project* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011) and *Moral Progress* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

[3] See Blackburn*, Essays in Quasi-Realism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) and *Ruling Passions : A Theory of Practical Reasoning* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009).

[4] See Max Khan Hayward, "Practical Reason, Sympathy and Reactive Attitudes," *Noûs* 53, no. 1 (April 20, 2017): 51–75; "Non-Naturalist Moral Realism and the Limits of Rational Reflection," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 96, no. 4 (December 3, 2017): 724–37; "Immoral Realism,*" Philosophical Studies* 176, no. 4 (January 2, 2019): 897–914; "Terrestrial Ethics" [Manuscript Submitted for Publication].

claim that naturalistic ethics fails to demonstrate authority in terms of its inability to persuade recalcitrant knaves or wicked agents. Finding ways that can persuade all knaves or wicked agents is not a requirement for vindicating the authority of morality.

2. Vindication as Reassurance

The naturalistic understanding of morality that I advocate is based on the pragmatist ethics of Kitcher, the quasi-realist expressivism of Blackburn, and the sentimentalist pragmatism of Hayward. Schematically it is as follows: As prosocial animals, we want to live together. We have sentiments such as sympathy, empathy, benevolence, altruism, guilt for our own wrongdoings, and resentment for injustice. These pro-social or moral emotions contribute to making life together go more smoothly. However, we cannot avoid moral problems, because we are not completely altruistic beings and have selfish needs, and sometimes our partiality towards those who are emotionally and genetically closer to us can lead to serious conflicts. We attempt to resolve these problems and conflicts and overcome our limitations through reflection and conversation based on our moral sensibilities. Of course, sophisticated language skills can contribute to understanding and discussing complex norms, and imagination can help us anticipate the consequences of certain types of behaviour and norms. But fundamentally, our endorsement of certain norms and values is based on our sensibilities. Our moral judgements and attitudes are not based on perspectives external to our moral sensibilities, and the results of reflection and inquiry based on moral sensibilities are reflected in subsequent processes of moral practice and inquiry. The history of moral practice is the history of overcoming the problems of living together through moral sensibilities. Morality is in this sense a social technology based on moral sensibilities. The authority of

morality lies in the fact that it solves moral problems. In other words, its practical function is the source of its authority.

What I will argue in this essay is that this naturalistic understanding of morality can vindicate the authority of morality. By vindication, I mean giving rationales for "Why should we be moral?" Morality often asks us to do things that are burdensome and uncomfortable. Sometimes it requires you to sacrifice your own interests. It asks you to give up opportunities to make the person you love happier. In very extreme circumstances, it may even ask you to sacrifice your own life. Despite the fact that morality sometimes demands these sacrifices, why should we follow it? The answer to these questions is vindication.

There is another point to clarify regarding the vindication that this chapter presents. It clarifies the answer to the question, "Who should obey moral norms?" My naturalistic position limits the scope of such subjects to humans as a species with prosocial emotions such as empathy and altruism. Thus, my position does not include the claim that species without any moral sensibilities or understanding should be subject to the authority of morality. For example, imagine a species that is much more capable of mathematical reasoning or scientific inquiry than humans. However, the species does not have any altruistic tendencies or sympathy. They do not have any understanding of morality. My argument does not imply that these agents should also be subjects of moral obligations. The demonstration of morality that I attempt in this chapter is to give those who already have moral understanding a reason for why it is worth following it, to show that they are not mired in mere rule-worship or fetishism. That is, to demonstrate that such processes are worthwhile for those who reflect and act on the basis of their own moral understanding and moral

sensibilities. This position resonates with Kitcher and Hayward's position that one of the roles of metaethics is to reassure those who are engaged in moral projects. They say:

> Understanding that the task is not to quell the sociopath with some brilliant philosophical formula helps us see more clearly what the troublesome characters really represent. We should envisage the skeptical challenge as posed by ordinary people, whose socialization is reasonably effective and who feel the tug of ethical commands. They have a tendency to conform but also want to know why they should be glad to have this disposition. The troublemakers are devices for giving substance to this worry, personae with which the skeptical questioner can vicariously identify but for whom following through on the identification would be psychologically disastrous. The skeptical question is not a demand to be talked into complying (typically, disobeying the rules is not a live option), but a request for reassurance. The questioner needs to feel at home with his or her ethical propensities.[5]

> And finally, there may be cases where ethics will call upon us to sacrifice the interests of ourselves or of those we love, or to abandon the projects that give our lives meaning. We want to be reassured that there is some point to this, that in making these sacrifices we are not merely acting superstitiously or fetishistically, in thrall to rules that serves no good end.[6]

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate that it is possible to reassure people with such moral understanding and sensibilities, even within the framework of functionalist naturalism. Kitcher argues that moral inquiry is necessary to promote moral progress, and indeed can achieve moral progress, without postulating "external constraints." External constraints refer

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[5] Kitcher, *The Ethical Project*, p. 279.

[6] Hayward, "Terrestrial Ethics," p. 13.

to non-natural facts or special faculties for accessing them, which anti-naturalists or non-naturalists present as the basis for moral truth or the authority of morality. They are seen as having authority independent of, or in priority to, the practical function of morality. Non-natural reality, Kantian practical reason, and the Nagelian view from nowhere are representative of this.

According to Kitcher's pragmatic naturalism, even if non-natural reality does not exist, we are capable of moral inquiry, and the progress we achieve through it is worth pursuing. Even if we cannot take the view that all rational beings ought to take, it is necessary to follow the truths that have been invented through the process of moral inquiry and progress. In the similar vein, Blackburn says sentimentalists like himself are strongly opposed to good behaviour being held hostage to "Holy Grails":

> We sentimentalists do not like our good behaviour to be hostage to such a search. We don't altogether approve of Holy Grails. We do not see the need for them. We are not quite on all fours with those who do. And we do not quite see why, even if by some secret alchemy a philosopher managed to glimpse one, it should ameliorate his behaviour, let alone that of other people.[7]

Whereas Kitcher's "external constraints" refer to the perspectives, capacities, or reasons that must be invoked to arrive at moral truth, Blackburn's "Holy Grails" refer to the objective truths or goals that judgments or inquiries based on those "external constraints" must arrive at. Blackburn says that sentimentalists, including himself, Allan Gibbard and David Hume, do not regard non-natural facts or perspectives, such as non-natural reality or Kantian

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[7] Simon Blackburn, "Must We Weep for Sentimentalism?," in his *Practical Tortoise Raising: And Other Philosophical Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 109–28, p. 128.

practical reason, as necessary conditions for moral justification or moral authority. He explicitly disagrees with the position that not appealing to such non-natural reality or special faculties denies the authority of morality. Both Kitcher and Blackburn argue that the authority of morality can be vindicated within a naturalistic perspective. I agree with their position that external constraints and Holy Grails are not a requirement for the authority of morality.

Of course, the absence of external constraints and Holy Grails may disappoint some of us, especially philosophers. Their absence saddens some philosophers. They even fear their absence in the sense that the absence of Holy Grails leads us to moral nihilism. But we must overcome that sadness and anxiety by distinguishing, as Hayward says, between "what we might want" and "what we genuinely need."[8] Non-natural moral reality, independent of our moral sensibilities or moral understanding, might be thought of as a requirement for overcoming disagreement and conflict and arriving at moral truths as accurate answers. Those who hold this position will aspire to non-natural moral facts. Others believe that our prejudices or contingent and idiosyncratic desires can obscure the light of moral reflection, and that a perspective or ability to be free from the influence of such things is called for. They see Kantian rationality or an objective, impersonal perspective as a requirement for the authority of morality.

But even if non-natural reality did not exist, and even if we could not take an impersonal, objective view, morality would still be something we need. This is because it is necessary to

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[8] Hayward, "Terrestrial Ethics," p. 4.

overcome the challenges of living together as prosocial and sympathetic creatures. This sentimentalist pragmatism views the standard for overcoming conflict and disagreement and reaching better moral judgment and practice not in terms of whether it corresponds to non-natural reality, but in terms of whether the problems we face can be more effectively overcome. A better way to solve problems is based on our moral understanding, sensibilities, and imagination. The most important part of this process is conversation and cooperation. I see this as the nature of the morality and moral inquiry we need. If this is what we truly need, there seems to be no reason to be sad or anxious because external constraints or the Holy Grails are not ours. It is the aim of this chapter to dispel such sadness and anxiety. To do this, we first need to understand the pragmatist metaethics, which claims that the function of morality, the overcoming of moral problems, is the source of its authority.

3. Function and Authority

The aim of this chapter is to argue that justification for the authority of morality within the framework of functionalist naturalism. It is possible through a new understanding of the relationship between moral progress and moral truth. In understanding the concepts of moral justification, authority, and progress, realists seem to rely, among other things, on the concept of truth. The reason a moral judgement is justified is because it is based on how truth can be arrived at. The authority to follow a norm is based on its conformity to truth. Any moral change is to be regarded as progress because it is a change in access to truth, or progress is the accumulation of truth. Realists share these assumptions. But Kitcher demands that we consider progress, not truth, as the fundamental concept of moral practice and inquiry.

Progress is in principle prior to truth. To understand this inversion, it is necessary to understand Kitcher's account of the nature of morality.

Kitcher's pragmatism views morality as the process of solving problems that arise from imperfectly altruistic humans living together, and in that sense morality is a social and historical phenomenon. Early humans with limited altruism had difficulty living with others of the same or different sex and age. Conflicts involving acts of violence and over the distribution of resources are perhaps the most obvious examples of early moral problems. Morality was required to solve these problems. Morality was invented to remedy altruism failures and to overcome the limits of our responsiveness to others. Overcoming existing problems can create new ones. For example, the introduction of the division of labour to maximise the satisfaction of basic needs can create a new problem: the frustration of participatory aspirations. This is because the division of labour will result in a variety of roles and positions, and those who do not rise to the limited roles and positions may become frustrated or despair. Moral problems reflect a variety of natural and cultural circumstances and conditions, and as those conditions change, new problems arise. Since there is in principle an infinite variety of problems that can arise, there is also an infinite variety of moral functions to solve them. In other words, we are constantly confronted with new moral problems, and new moral functions must be devised to overcome them. John Dewey said in this very context, "moral conceptions and processes grow naturally out of the very conditions of human life."[9] The history of moral practice can be understood as a process of making existing functions more fulfilling and of devising new ones. Morality is "a social technology"

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[9] John Dewey, *LW 7*, p. 308. Dewey citations are from *The Collected Works*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Southern Illinois University Press), indicated by series (*EW* for *Early Works*, *MW* for *Middle Works*, and *LW* for *Later Works*), volume, and page number.

for solving the problems of living together. It is a practical tool to serve collective human goals.[10]

Within this pragmatist framework, progress as problem-solving is a more fundamental concept than truth or justification. Moral truths are by-products of moral progress. More specifically, they "are the judgements that emerge in moral progress and that remain stable parts of progressive moral practice, as it continues indefinitely."[11] Truths are norms or judgements that we should follow because they contribute to overcoming the problems we encounter in living together; in other words, the authority of truth is based on its practical function. Similarly, a particular moral change can be justified because it is consistent with a process or method that can lead to progress. The legitimacy of any moral change therefore depends on whether it enables us to perform more successful functions to solve problems or whether it enables us to overcome new problems. The legitimacy of moral norms and judgements depends on how effectively they solve moral problems.

Within this functionalist conception of morality, external constrains are not required. For the justification of ethical judgements or norms depends on the performance of moral functions and the improvement of those functions. Thus, whether moral claims correspond to non-natural reality is not required in this process of justification. Nor does it require approval that they are correct from a point of view that can be adopted by any rational agent. We do not take the accurate recognition of the non-natural fact that we need to use the iPhone as a reason for using it. Likewise, when we created it, we probably didn't think about whether

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[10] See Kitcher, *The Ethical Project*, p. 221.

[11] Kitcher, *Moral Progress*, p. 21.

every conceivable rational agent, such as God or aliens, would use it. We invent and use it because we see it as contributing to making us live better by solving the problems we face. Similarly, moral codes are invented to overcome moral problems, and their justification is based on the functions they perform in our lives. Maybe for a perfect being like God, or a wholly evil being like the devil, nothing like our moral codes would be of any use. Nevertheless, morality can be authoritative if it overcomes the problems that arise when we, who have moral sensibilities and understanding but also selfish desires, live together. As Gibbard says, "[w]hat matters chiefly is not what we can say to strange beings who are merely conceivable, but what we can say to each other."[12] The ultimate justification for moral truths and changes depends on whether they contribute to solving moral problems.

However, this justification seems to be based on a view from within morality, and is therefore circular. If someone asks us if the authority of morality is based on its function that it should serve to make us live better, someone might ask, "Why should we live better together?" He might say, "Even if the human race were to perish right now, it doesn't matter at all," or "Nothing matters except my pleasure and my life." I am not aware of any philosophical argument or theory that could bring these people to repentance. Again, the "vindication project" that this chapter aims at is not aimed at convincing beings devoid of any humanity and compassion or extreme egoists. Why then give up trying to persuade them? For it seems impossible to persuade those who lack moral sensibilities or moral understanding to feel and act morally. The following insight from Blackburn illustrates the source of this difficulty:

> The refusal to stand outside ethics in order to place it is supposed to tie in with one strand in Wittgenstein.

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[12] Allan Gibbard, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings: A Theory of Normative Judgment* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 201.

This is the thought that there is characteristically neither a reduction nor an explanation of the members of any major family of concepts in terms of those of another. Ethical notions require ethical sensibilities to comprehend them. Similarly, why should it not require an ethical sensibility to comprehend an explanation of the views we hold? Only those who perceive friendship as good will understand why we do so, and to them it can be explained why we do so by reminding them that it is good, or making them feel that it is so. The rest—aliens, outsiders, Martians—cannot be given the explanation, but this is as it must be. What I said about the explanation of our spatial capacities will make it apparent that the circularity exists there in exactly the same way. Only those who appreciate distance can understand the distance-centered explanation of visual perception.[13]

Even if we cannot convince extreme egoists or psychopaths to join the moral project, there are certainly arguments that can be made for why it is so important to overcome moral problems for those who are already engaged in the moral project. Imagine what our lives would be like if we let go of all our moral attitudes, practices, and norms. Imagine going through life not feeling or being able to feel any moral condemnation or resentment towards deliberate murder or rape. In Kitcher's words, such a life is tantamount to "to abandon one's human identity, to prefer to it a nonhuman mode of psychological life."[14] Imagine a society in which no mutual promises could be trusted. Of course, in such a society, no systematic and stable cooperation would be possible. A life in which we abandon morality would be a life in which we lose our humanity and would have to give up the fulfilment of many of our desires. I am convinced that such a life is not a desirable life. Of course, I do not hold that all of our moral codes are infallible. In the history of moral practice, some of them will have to be revised or discarded. But that process of revision and rejection will have to reflect our

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[13] Blackburn, "How to Be an Ethical Anti-Realist," in Essays in Quasi-Realism, p. 174.

[14] Kitcher, "Biology and Ethics," in *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory*, ed. David Copp (Oxford: Oxford University Preess, 2007), p. 180.

moral understanding. To demand that we completely abandon our moral understanding and sensibilities is as dangerous as demanding that we jump into the water and build a new boat.[15]

4. **Shaking off Lingering Anxiety**

Even if we grant that a view of morality in terms of its practical function of problem-solving can vindicate the authority of morality, it can still be argued that the problem of justification or authority remains. Even if acting in accordance with some norms or judgements contributes to overcoming the problems of living together, there may be lingering anxiety that we need a higher level of justification or a source for it. Like Kitcher, I assume that those who are dissatisfied with, or uneasy with, functionalist accounts of moral authority hold the view that moral authority must be based on "external constraints."

External constraints can be defined as standards of moral truth, or special faculties to grasp them, that are considered objective and ahistorical, independent of the inquiry into the practical function of norms or actions. Realists and Kantian rationalists who affirm the existence of external constraints regard moral inquiry as "conformity to external constraints." External constraints are represented by properties, facts, or capacities that are beyond naturalistic descriptions of moral thought and practice. These constraints are the source of moral truth and justification in anti-naturalist and non-naturalist theories. The position that external constraints are required for moral truth and justification is represented by non-

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[15] This analogy comes from Otto Neurath, who says: "We are like sailors who have to rebuild their ship on the open sea, without ever being able to dismantle it in dry-dock and reconstruct it from the best components." Neurath, "Protocol Statements," in *Philosophical Papers 1913-1946* , trans. Robert Cohen (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1983), p. 92.

naturalistic realists and Kantian constructivists.

Robust Realists, such as Russ Shafer-Landau and David Enoch, argue that ethical claims are true only when they correspond to sui generis, mind-independent moral facts.[16] That is, the facts or properties that guide our moral judgements and actions exist in themselves, independent of our moral sensibilities. And they are willing to bear the ontological costs of their theories, which include appeals to sui generis, mind-independent moral facts or properties. Enoch, for example, admits that he has "serious metaphysical worries for Robust Realism to deal with."[17] And he acknowledges that his outlook "does lose plausibility points merely for not being a naturalist."[18] Nevertheless, he says, "step up to the plate, and defend [its] rather heavy commitments."[19]

Similarly, relaxed realists such as Derek Parfit,[20] T.M. Scanlon,[21] and Thomas Nagel[22] agree with robust realists that there are mind-independent moral facts, and that moral truth is determined by whether moral claims correspond to them. But they say that their theories differ from robust realism. The reason that relaxed realists want to distinguish their position from that of robust realists is at metaphysical cost. They say that their theories are in no way

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[16] See Russ Shafer-Landau, *Moral Realism: A Defence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). and David Enoch, *Taking Morality Seriously: A Defense of Robust Realism* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2011).

[17] Enoch, *Taking Morality Seriously*, p. 136.

[18] Ibid., p. 135.

[19] Ibid., p. 7.

[20] See Derek Parfit, *On What Matters. Vol. 1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) and Parfit, *On What Matters. Vol. 2* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[21] See T. M Scanlon, *Being Realistic about Reasons* (Oxford : Oxford University Press , 2014).

[22] See Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

metaphysically extravagant; that is, relaxed realists aim for "metaphysically light"[23] theories.

For example, Scanlon claims that there are no serious metaphysical objections to "the idea of irreducibly normative truths." [24] Similarly, Parfit says that non-natural, irreducibly normative properties "are not ... metaphysically mysterious", and "thus face no decisive metaphysical objection."[25] That is, they seek to distance themselves from an unacceptable ontological account of moral reality. But relaxed realists, like robust realists, seem equally unsatisfied with a purely naturalistic description of ethical thought and practice. Scanlon, for example, says that "[t]o identify a reason with a naturalistic property seems immediately to destroy its normativity."[26] Similarly, Parfit says that naturalistic and expressivist views in ethics are "close to nihilism."[27]

Nagel, another relaxed realist, presents a perspectival sense of objectivity as a requirement for moral authority. He can be considered a relaxed realist in that he emphasises that his realism is not "a form of Platonism,"[28] stating that "[i]t is important not to associate this form of realism with an inappropriate metaphysical picture."[29] He argues that the goal of moral

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[23] Annika Böddeling, "Cognitivism and Metaphysical Weight: A Dilemma for Relaxed Realism," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 98, no. 3 (August 18, 2019): 546–59, p. 546.

[24] Scanlon, *Being Realistic about Reasons,* p. 15.

[25] Parfit, *On What Matters. Vol. 2,* p. 747.

[26] Scanlon, *Being Realistic about Reasons,* p. 24.

[27] Parfit, *On What Matters. Vol. 2,* p. 487.

[28] Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*, p. 69.

[29] Ibid.

reflection or inquiry should be to discover "irreducibly normative truths"[30] from a "view from nowhere" which is formed by progressively abstracting away from the "local perspectives or idiosyncrasies of enquirers."[31] The authority of morality consists in whether certain judgements or norms correspond to "irreducibly normative truths," and the discovery of such truths depends on an impersonal, objective perspective. For non-naturalist realists, the authority of morality is based on external constraints, such as non-natural reality, truths, facts, and properties. This applies to both robust realists and relaxed realists. That is, for them, the absence of such non-natural entities means nihilism.

Kantian constructivism is another camp that appeals to external constraints in vindicating the authority of morality. Christine Korsgaard, representing Kantian constructivism, asks what she calls "the normative question"[32]: "what justifies the claims that morality makes on us?"[33] She argues that it is precisely "the reflective structure of human consciousness"[34] or "reflexivity" that provides the source of justification for normativity. It is important to note that she argues that reflection, the source of morality or normativity, must take place beyond or independently of all our impulses and desires. In other words, the rationality or rational perspective that she presents as the source of morality transcends our desires and simultaneously serves to govern and constrain them. In her ethics, desires are "the incentives, the passively confronted materials upon which the active will operates, and not the agent or

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[30] Ibid., p. 71.

[31] Bernard Williams, *Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline*, ed. A. W Moore (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 184.

[32] Christine M. Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 10.

[33] Ibid., pp. 9-10.

[34] Ibid., p. 103.

active will itself."

The capacity for reflection she refers to is one that all rational beings possess. Within her theoretical framework, an action that conforms to a maxim that survives the reflective scrutiny of a rational agent is objectively right. That is, the action has normative legitimacy. On the other hand, an act in accordance with a maxim that does not survive such reflective scrutiny is wrong. In other words, right maxims and actions are based on the process of "governing yourself in accordance with universal principles which you can will as laws for every rational being."[35] As David Sussman puts it, "Korsgaard never wavers in her resolve to show how a recognizably Kantian form of morality realizes a fundamental commitment implicit in any sort of self-conscious, rational agency."[36] Thus, her theory suggests that capacities such as practical reason or moral identity, which are shared by all rational beings, are the source of normativity. In this respect, Shafer-Landau is right to say that "[f]or the Kantian, there is no moral reality - no genuine moral obligations or any justified moral claims - if there is no such thing as pure practical reason."[37] In Kantian constructivism, the authority of morality relies on an objective, ahistorical standard of "rational agency" or "practical reason."

It may sound convincing to argue that ahistorical and objective criteria, should be the

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[35] Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution: Agency, Identity, and Integrity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. xii.

[36] David Sussman, "The Horizons of Humanity," in *Normativity and Agency: Themes from the Philosophy of Christine M. Korsgaard*, ed. Tamar Schapiro, Kyla Ebels-Duggan, and Sharon Street (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), p. 3.

[37] Shafer-Landau, *Moral Realism,* p. 14.

standard for moral truth and authority. This is because the process of all inquiry, including moral inquiry, is supposed to be independent of our arbitrary interests and ungrounded beliefs. In this respect, facts "are authoritative over beliefs."[38] But according to Kitcher, this slogan is overstated. Of course, in both scientific and ethical inquiry, the process and conclusions should not be governed by completely arbitrary and idiosyncratic desires or beliefs. But to say that arbitrary and subjective desires and beliefs should be excluded from inquiry does not mean that all of our desires and beliefs should be excluded. To argue this point, Kitcher asks us to consider the following propositions:

(a) For any true statement p one ought to believe p.

(b) For any true statement p one ought not believe any statement q that is incompatible with p.[39]

According to Kitcher, both (a) and (b) are false. He gives three reasons for this. First, humans are finite beings. On the other hand, there can be an infinite number of true propositions about the world. Therefore, the set of true statements that we need to care about and believe as true is extremely limited. Only a small fraction of true statements have human significance, and the criterion for significance is "human needs, interests, and projects."[40] There is no need for inquiry to answer questions that do not have this importance. Suppose a person is obsessed with finding out the exact amount of ink in ballpoint pens that he has used throughout his life for the sole reason that he needs to know the truth. We would look upon him as having some sort of neurosis or mental problem; it would not be considered a desirable inquiry. Nor would it matter to us whether the amount used was 1 ml or 100 ml,

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[38] Kitcher, *The Ethical Project*, p. 265.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

unless we were a psychiatrist consulting him. That is, even if someone gives an answer to such a question, there is no reason why we should necessarily believe it. (a) is false.

Second, there are times when an inaccurate representation of the external world serves or contributes to the goals we seek. Consider the example of a map. The maps that explorers of the past relied on must have contained inaccuracies. The process of cartography is inherently "selective" because it is impractical to expect a paper map to completely represent every aspect of the Earth's surface. Some parts may have been omitted, and some parts may have been drawn in less detail than others. Yet explorers of the past have used such inaccurate maps to explore and discover new routes and lands. Should we have told them, "You shouldn't trust inaccurate maps?" No! Even if the maps were inaccurate, they had reason to believe them to be true and to rely on them.[41] In this context, Kitcher says:

> Much of our practical use of "knowledge" is grounded in accepting simplified versions of the world, approximations to the truth rather than the genuine article. When the phenomena are too complex for us to render accurately, and when an accurate rendering would only interfere with our aspirations to predict, control, and intervene, we are better served by believing something that is not, strictly speaking, true. […] we ought not believe the exact truth and we are entitled to believe statements incompatible with the exact truth.[42]

As Kitcher says, if we pay attention to how knowledge is used or functions in real life, we must accept that we sometimes have reason to believe in approximations of the external world rather than accurate representations of it. Therefore, both (a) and (b) are false. Thirdly,

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[41] For the position that the objectivity and progress of science and technology are not independent of human concerns or interests, See Kitcher, *Science, Truth, and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[42] Kitcher, *The Ethical Project*, p. 266.

if believing the truth would crush us, we have reason to believe the opposite. Suppose a person has a serious illness. If he knew the truth, we would expect him to feel hopeless and frightened and to become even sicker. We have reason not to tell him the truth. There are also reasons why he should not know the truth, or why he should believe the opposite of the truth. Both (a) and (b) are false.

Kitcher's three arguments show that the reasons why "our needs, interests, and projects" matter do not have to be based on external constraints. It also shows that we do not have to rely unconditionally on external constraints or on accurate representations of objective reality if they interfere with our needs, interests, and projects. There are reasons to believe certain propositions, statements, or positions even if we do not posit external constraints. Of course, even from a pragmatist perspective, we need to have an accurate representation of external conditions or circumstances. This is because human needs are best met in almost all cases when we have an accurate representation of external conditions or situations. In almost all cases, human projects can be successfully implemented when we have an accurate understanding of ourselves and the world. But the ultimate reason we should believe something depends on the extent to which it serves human purposes.

Even without external constraints or holy grails, there are important sources of authority of morality. These are human needs, interests, and projects. If we value human needs and projects, it seems unnecessary to subordinate the authority of morality as a technique or tool for serving them to the existence of external constraints. For the source of the authority of morality depends on its function, and that function seems independent of external constraints.

How, then, can the better fulfilment and improvement of the function of morality be achieved within a naturalistic framework?

I do not deny the possibility that we might take a view that any rational agent might take. Nor do I claim that a process of reflection that transcends all desires or particular identities, while simultaneously controlling them, is impossible. I do not argue that it's impossible to take a "view from nowhere" which is formed by progressively abstracting away from the "local perspectives or idiosyncrasies of enquirers." But I hold that even if such a rational perspective, Kantian reflection, or impersonal point of view is not ours, it is possible to overcome the moral problems we face through reflection and conversation. This is because we can reflect on our aims, desires, and concerns in light of the other aims, desires, and concerns we have. For example, suppose someone feels the urge to insult a homosexual person. He does not necessarily need Kantian rationality or reflection not based on any sentiment or desire to decide that it is wrong to insult a homosexual person, or to refrain from doing so. For he may decide that it is wrong to insult a homosexual person based on his empathy for the person in the situation being insulted, or on his moral understanding that the senseless suppression of someone's natural desires can make that person unhappy. We can make better moral judgements based on our moral sensibilities and moral understanding.

5. Unraveling misunderstandings

I argued earlier that neither the Nagelian view from nowhere nor the Kantian rational point

of view is necessary to demonstrate the authority of morality. On what basis is the naturalistic view, which denies the need for such special perspectives and special faculties, to conduct moral inquiry? Moral sensibilities represented by sympathy, empathy, and benevolence! However, the naturalistic position, emphasising emotion and imagination, is suspected of undermining the authority of morality. That is, sentimentalist or pragmatist theories that emphasise sympathy, empathy, culture, and imagination in moral inquiry often face the criticism that they relativise morality by subordinating moral truth or authority to subjective, relative, and contingent human capacities or cultural influences.

If this criticism is correct, then naturalistic theories such as sentimentalism and pragmatism may fail to vindicate the authority of morality. For if our subjective feelings, imagination, or contingent cultural influences determine moral truth or authority entirely, then we lose the criteria by which we can discern between better and worse norms. All things being equally right will eventually lead us to nihilistic relativism in the sense of "anything goes." "Anything goes" is never the nature of the authority of morality we seek to vindicate. However, neither sentimentalists nor pragmatists claim that moral truth or authority is subject to subjective feelings or cultural influences. To understand this, we need to compare the following statements:

(a) If you hate homosexuals, you are likely to torture them.

(b) If you hate homosexuals, you might pass by the sight of torturing homosexuals.

(c) If you hate homosexuals, you might take pleasure in seeing them tortured.

(d) If you hate homosexuals, it is morally acceptable to torture them.

There is nothing wrong with affirming (a), (b), and (c). There is no reason for metaethical positions, including expressivism and pragmatism, which I support, to deny them. The problem is (d). Theories that emphasise the role of emotion and imagination are often regarded as affirming propositions such as (d). (d) is a proposition that should never be accepted, and neither the sentimentalist nor the pragmatist position I espouse affirms a proposition like (d). Why, then, are theories that emphasise the role of emotion and imagination often regarded as affirming conditional sentences like (d)? Blackburn would say the following about the cause:

> The only explanation I can offer for the misreading is that it comes from conflating two different projects. One, the project of the anatomist, in Hume's terms, is to give an accurate and complete account of the states of mind that gain expression in moral thinking. The other, a moralistic project appropriate to Hume's painter, is to give an account of the 'sources' of our obligations.[43]

Both sentimentalist and pragmatist ethics emphasise the importance of capacities such as empathy and imagination as dimensions of the anatomical project. But in the realm of

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[43] Blackburn, "Must We Weep for Sentimentalism?," in *Practical Tortoise Raising: And Other Philosophical Essays* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 111.

justification, it is not the capacities of empathy and imagination per se that need attention. What needs to be paid attention to at the level of justification is the object on which empathy and imagination are projected. What must be considered for justification are the objects of moral consideration and their characteristics and circumstances. No one should torture homosexuals. Things like "I can empathise with their suffering" or "I can imagine the misery of a life of torture" are not adequate grounds for justification. What is relevant is the pain itself, or the mental despair they may experience in the process of torture. Whether or not I can empathise with them or imagine them is not a good basis for justification. Why, then, do sentimentalists and pragmatists value empathy and imagination? Because they are useful tools or means for making better moral judgements or performing better actions. Or, as Blackburn says, because it's impossible to make moral judgements that are not based on moral sensibilities:

> But it is only by using our sensibilities that we judge value. So it is as if we are asked to judge colours with a blindfold on, and the inevitable result is that values are lost, and our sense of ourselves as reliable indicators of them is lost along with them.[44]

What should not be overlooked is that the fact that we judge and act through our moral sensibilities and imaginations does not in any way preclude the possibility of better judgements and actions, for we can and should improve our sensibilities and imaginations. As Blackburn says, "we can stand apart from any particular desire or disposition, and

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[44] Blackburn, "Securing the Nots: Moral Epistemology for the Quasi-Realist," in *Moral Knowledge?: New Readings in Moral Epistemology*, ed. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong and Mark Timmons (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). p. 89.

consider the good of it in the light of other desires and dispositions."[45] And, as Kitcher says, we can improve the methodology itself for moral progress in the course of moral inquiry.[46]

6. Whatever You Say

In addition to positing external constraints, there is something else that is claimed to be necessary in order to vindiciate the authority of morality: it is necessary to present rational arguments to sceptics, relativists, recalcitrant knaves and wicked agents so that they can be rationally convinced of the moral reasons. These are, of course, all demands of philosophers. I do not think that quasi-realist expressivism or pragmatist ethics can provide arguments that will rationally persuade all sceptics, relativists, recalcitrant knaves and wicked agents, or get them to engage in the moral project. But I do not see this as implying that functionalist naturalism fails to vindicate the authority of morality, nor do I see it as implying that naturalist ethics is an inferior position to anti-naturalist ethics. There are two reasons. First, succeeding in persuading them is not a requirement for vindicating the authority of morality. Second, no other philosophical theory can provide such an argument. I'll address the first reason first.

Suppose that a lesson about the shape of the Earth is being taught in a middle school science

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[45] Blackburn, "The Majesty of Reason," *Philosophy* 85, no. 1 (January 2010): 5–27, p. 17.

[46] See Kitcher, *Moral Progress*, p. 76.

class. A variety of evidence is presented for the spherical shape of the Earth, and at the end of the lesson, an image of the Earth from a satellite is presented. A student says that in his experience, he could never believe that the Earth is spherical. He argues that the pictures taken from satellites are also manipulated to quell the confusion and anxiety that would arise if it were known that the Earth is flat. At the same time, an ethics class for first-year philosophy students is being taught. The topic is ethical relativism. A philosophy student, a self-described ardent believer in ethical relativism, argues that slavery is morally permissible. He argues that arguing that slavery is morally wrong is a reflection of a dogmatic attitude.

We do not believe that the authority of the fact that the Earth is spherical would be undermined by a middle school student in a science class claiming that the Earth is flat. Similarly, suppose there is a person in the world who claims that 1+1=3. We do not see that belief as undermining the authority of the truth that 1+1=2. It is still true, even if there is no obvious way to lead a middle school student who believes the earth is flat to the truth. The same is true of the authority of the moral statement that slavery is wrong. There may be no absolute and certain way that will convince the freshman. But from the perspective of quasi-realist expressivism or pragmatist ethics, the fact that there is no such way cannot and should not undermine the authority of the moral truth that slavery should not be permitted.

Why can such beliefs of the philosophy freshman never undermine the authority of the moral truth that slavery is wrong? This is because, regardless of what beliefs he holds, the effects of slavery on human life are horrific. The freshman's belief that slavery is permissible does

not transform the misery of slaves who have lost their freedom into joy. His beliefs do not guarantee slaves the opportunity to explore different life possibilities and to autonomously choose the direction of their lives. In other words, the freshman's beliefs and attitudes do nothing to ameliorate the negative effects of slavery. Thus, the authority of morality that slavery is wrong is not undermined by his beliefs. We would not doubt the belief that the earth is spherical if someone appeared who argued passionately that it is flat. Similarly, even if you can't convince the new student that slavery is wrong, you shouldn't cast doubt on your belief that it is.

Saying that slavery is acceptable because you want to demonstrate your intellectual superiority over your professor may not be that harmful. Sometimes it can even have a positive effect in terms of stimulating other students' philosophical thinking. The problem is that there may be people who actually want to make someone their slave to fulfil their own physical and material needs. So, regardless of whether the beliefs or attitudes of such villains or wicked people cannot undermine the authority of morality, it would be good if there were a philosophical argument that could persuade such wicked people to become sound participants in the moral project. If there were a theory which contained arguments which could make all wicked men repent and become good men, it would have to be admitted that it was much better than one which could not. But it seems to me that no philosophical theory can provide arguments with such power. Take Kantian ethics for example. Kantians say that "[a]s an autonomous rational being, you must act on your conception of a law."[47] According to them, to violate the moral law as a requirement of reason is to fall into a mode of

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[47] Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). p. 102.

irrationality, in which one contradicts oneself. Let's see what Kantian rationalism can tell the wicked agent about the act of gaining economic advantage through false promises. Korsgaard says:

> If the action no longer works as a way of achieving the purpose in question when it is universalized, then it is an action of this kind. Intuitively speaking, the test reveals unfairness, deception, and cheating. For instance, in the false promising case, the difficulty is that the man's end - getting the money - cannot be achieved by his means - making a false promise - in the world of the universalized maxim. [...] Promises are efficacious in securing loans only because they are believed, and they are believed only if they are normally true. Since promising is the means he proposes to use, his end would not be achieved at all, but frustrated. In willing the world of the universalized maxim and - as Kant says - at the same time - willing the maxim itself, the man wills the frustration of his own end.[48]

Will this Kantian argument succeed in dissuading everyone who decides to take economic advantage of a false promise? Kantians will emphasise that "in a world in which the rule is universal, no one would believe false promises, so he would not be able to make economic gains." In other words, they will say that "the person who seeks to make economic gains through false promises is committing the contradiction of willing a world in which he both seeks economic gains and wills a world in which the conditions for such gains are destroyed." The problem, however, is that the person who seeks to benefit from false promises never actually desires a world in which such a maxim is universal, nor will his false promises bring about such a world.

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[48] Ibid., pp. 92-93.

Rather, he might ask: "Why should I consider the situation when my maxim is universalised? I want to make economic gains through false promises, and I can succeed in that. You may call me irrational. Why should I obey what you call the imperatives of reason? To borrow your favourite smug term, I want to be "an irrational rich man." I am sceptical of the idea that any philosophical theory, not just Kantian ethics, can provide a surefire way to persuade and put the recalcitrant knave on the right path, because there seems to be no surefire way to silence a wicked person who says that the objects they pursue or their desires are more important to them than any value. Since other theories also lack a surefire procedure for convincing the recalcitrant knave, the fact that sentimentalist pragmatism cannot provide such a procedure is not a reason that it is inferior to other theories.

There is one question that is raised here. It is the question of what is the function of philosophical theories of morality. I do not think that the fact that theories of morality fail to provide arguments for bringing recalcitrant wicked people to repentance implies that they are useless. For, as Hayward puts it, the function of moral criticism is not only to persuade someone to behave better, but also "simply to condemn, to mark out the wicked as the degenerates they are."[49] Grounds for criticism or punishment have played an important role in the history of our moral practice. If a philosophical theory can provide grounds for such criticism, it is not trivial.

If Kantians regard wicked agents as irrational beings who commit contradictions,

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[49] Hayward, "Terrestrial Ethics," p. 21.

sentimentalist pragmatists will regard them as ignorant of the function that morality plays in our lives, or as unable to empathise with the suffering of others and to rejoice with them in their happy, free, and prosperous lives. Naturalists who pay attention to the practical function that morality has played in human history will agree with Kitcher's diagnosis of the wicked as those who seek only the maximisation of their own self-interest and have no qualms about violating moral norms:

> Knave cannot be silenced. Yet pragmatic naturalism can offer a diagnosis of what he is doing. He wants to take advantage of the products of social evolution without acknowledging the functions that have made those products possible. He wants to operate within a society without feeling that sympathy to others, that altruistic response to their desires, whose evolution has formed that society. Being human, we tell him, consists in participating in this project through which altruism failures are remedied and further ethical functions generated and fulfilled. He shrugs his shoulders, unmoved by this rhetoric. Yet the diagnosis seems no worse than that offered by the major rival approaches to ethics.[50]

We may never find a way to silence all those wicked people who say that the fulfilment of their own needs and desires is more important than anything else. It would be great if we could find a Holy Grail that could work such miracles, but even if we cannot find such a Grail, we should still not abandon the authority of morality, because through moral inquiry and practice we have become more sensitive and effective in responding to the needs of others. Through them we can achieve a higher level of cooperation. Sensitivity to others, coordination of interests, and smooth cooperation allow us to live more freely, happily, and prosperously. Even if the Knave is not silenced, even if the Holy Grail that philosophers have

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[50] Kitcher, *The Ethical Project*, p. 276.

sought does not exist, we must not abandon the authority of morality.

7. Conclusion

If the authority of morality is not hostage to the Holy Grails, then maybe we should stop looking for them. This is because there are more important and urgent things to do. It is to elucidate or construct better methodologies to overcome moral problems. But can we pursue a methodology that allows us to better perform and improve our practical functions without assuming an intuition that can recognise sui generis moral facts or an autonomous rational agency that can know the processes of pure practical reason? Yes we can!

Indeed, the naturalists, who argued that the practical function of morality is the central topic for ethics to address, were keen to inquire into such methodologies. Hume proposed a "general point of view" that would overcome the subjectivity of sympathy and ensure the stability of moral judgement.[51] Adam Smith elucidated the nature of the "impartial spectator" as a perspective that can overcome the biases that can emerge in the process of empathy.[52] John Stuart Mill emphasised the importance of "experiments of living," in which one must actually live a form of life that is provisionally deemed better in order to move towards a qualitatively better type of life.[53] Dewey proposed a method of "moral inquiry" as an

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[51] See David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

[52] See Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).

[53] See John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, ed. Mark Philp and Frederick Rosen (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

experimental simulation based on the imagination.[54] Of course, these processes of inquiry do not require intuition to recognise sui generis moral facts or a rational perspective to grasp the processes of pure practical reason. Instead, they emphasised sympathy, empathy, imagination, intelligence, and conversation.

To me, the questions and discourse around the Holy Grails seem at best secondary to the inquiry into methodologies for moral inquiry. Far more important than the search for Holy Grails is the search for ways to improve the practical functioning of morality on the basis of our moral sensibilities. Hume, Smith, Mill, and Dewey are excellent examples of this. The authority of morality does not rest on the Holy Grails, and we know that moral progress can be achieved without relying on them. If so, rather than joining a pilgrimage in search of the Holy Grails, wouldn't it be better to join a path that would reduce the pain and suffering of our neighbours and future generations?

2015).

[54] See Dewey, *MW 14*; *LW 7*.

Chapter 3. The World is Enough!: Objectivity in Sentimentalist Pragmatism

1. Introduction

Thomas Nagel, a non-naturalist realist, says that what we need to do for moral progress is to discover objective reasons for action. And in order to find them, we must take "the view from nowhere," a view that can only be achieved by abstracting away from subjective, contingent and even human perspective. [1] In other words, the impersonal, objective perspective that Nagel emphasises allows us to discover non-natural reality, and the discovery of such reality is a necessary condition for genuine moral progress. Christine Korsgaard, a Kantian constructivist, argues that right moral judgements and actions require an objective, ahistorical, rational process based on the exercise of self-conscious, rational agency. [2] In other words, according to her, overcoming moral problems in the right way requires taking a perspective that any rational agent can take. I do not hold that an impersonal, objective view to discover non-natural moral reality is a necessary condition for moral progress or better moral practice. Nor do I think that Kantian rationality and its ahistorical moral laws are such conditions.

What is needed for moral progress is our desires and passions, including pro-social emotions such as sympathy, empathy, altruism, and benevolence. What we also need is intelligence,

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[1] See Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[2] See Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

imagination, and empirical knowledge to help us predict the consequences of our actions. No inflationary metaphysics is required to explain these things. Nor does the view from nowhere or Kantian autonomy seem necessary in carrying out moral discussions and conversations to expand the scope of sympathy or prevent tragic consequences. Also, we can pursue objectivity as non-arbitrariness in the naturalistic framework. For our passions and desires, which are the deepest grounds for moral inquiry, are common and stable.

The purpose of this chapter is to argue that within the framework of sentimentalist pragmatism, our processes of moral reflection and practice can be non-arbitrary. That is, we can pursue objectivity as non-arbitrariness without positing non-natural reality or Kantian rationality. To do so, I first discuss the insights of Nomy Arpaly and Max Khan Hayward into the sadness and disappointment of anti-naturalists at the naturalistic outlook. In particular, Hayward's argument resonates with the purpose of this chapter in that he argues that the morality we need does not require inflationary metaphysics. Then, I shall elucidate how Philip Kitcher's pragmatic naturalist account of moral progress, while offering the possibility of a naturalistic theory of progress, is limited in overcoming the arbitrariness problem. I then argue that the account of moral judgments and moral reasons offered by Simon Blackburn and James Lenman can contribute to overcoming this arbitrariness problem. Finally, I will specify the degree of objectivity that is both necessary and achievable within a naturalistic framework.

2. **Hayward's Reassurance**

Arpaly distinguishes between philosophers who inquire about humans as "celestials" and "terrestrials." Celestials believe that humans have some sort of transcendent nature or ability that is essentially different from the natural abilities of animals. Terrestrials, on the other hand, see no need to assume transcendent, a priori abilities to explain humans. What should be noted is not just that Arpaly divides the philosophers who inquire into human beings into two categories. It should be noted that the celestials seen by Arpaly would be saddened by the fact that humans do not have a capacity or nature that other animals will never have, such as "autonomy."[3] That is, according to her, celestials not only try to understand humans based on inflationary metaphysics, but also feel sad and disappointed about the terrestrial view that humans are just "more capacious and complex" than wolves. Hayward focuses on this point. And he argues that we do not need to become restless by such sorrow and anxiety, saying that the sadness and anxiety of celestials stem from the confusion between "what we might want" and "what we genuinely need." In other words, the purpose of his metaethics is to reassure us.[4]

According to Hayward, celestials want to hold that "legitimate moral thought is the province of special power of reason, intuition or autonomy."[5] And they argue that morality must

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[3] Nomy Arpaly interviewed by Richard Marshall, retrieved on the 17th January 2022 from https://www.3-16am.co.uk/articles/in-praise-of-desire-and-some: "I suspect that there are two prototypes of philosophers who write about humans – I call them 'celestials' and 'terrestrials'…The difference between these two types is not so much in their theories but in whether or not they would find it a very sad thing if it turned out that the only way a human is superior to a wolf is this: the human brain is significantly more capacious and complex. Celestials would much prefer it if it turned out, for example, that humans have something special called 'autonomy' which makes them categorically different from other animals. I, with a mostly terrestrial philosophical temperament, would be ok if I found out for sure that if I am in any way superior to a wolf it is simply in virtue of my brain's higher capacity and complexity."

[4] Max Khan Hayward, "Terrestrial Ethics" (Manuscript Submitted for Publication).

[5] Ibid., p. 1.

necessarily involve ahistorical truths. On the other hand, terrestrials "accept a central role for emotions and desires in the formation of moral judgment."[6] They also view moral norms as the product of invention or projection. Based on this classification, Hayward defends terrestrial ethics or naturalistic ethics by criticizing celestial ethics, which states that morality that does not guarantee robust objectivity lacks some characteristic that is crucial and vital as morality.

Non-naturalist realists and Kantians say that morality must be objective and point to non-natural reality or Kantian rationality as the basis for its objectivity. For non-naturalistic realists, the only basis for objectivity is the fact that objective reality exists, and its absence means that objective morality is impossible. And for them, any morality that is not objective is pseudo-morality. The same is true for Kantians. For them, the only ground of objectivity is pure practical reason, or its equivalent, and its absence implies the impossibility of genuine morality. Hayward criticizes the psychology of celestial ethics, like the ethics of these realists and Kantians, that the absence of a non-naturalistic objective ground implies the absence of an essential part of morality. He argues that naturalistic ethics, particularly Blackburn's sentimentalist expressivism and Kitcher's naturalistic pragmatism, can provide us with the kind of morality we need: even if morality is not robustly objective, even if non-natural reality does not exist, even if pure practical reason and Kantian autonomy are illusory, we need not be disappointed or worry that we do not have genuine morality. In this sense, the purpose of his metaethics is to argue that a naturalistic worldview is sufficient to demonstrate the authority of morality. Without positing an inflationary metaphysics, we have sufficient

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[6] Ibid.

reasons to engage in moral reflection and practice. In this sense, "the world in enough."

My position in this chapter is Haywardian in two respects. First, I agree with his sentimentalist and pragmatist understanding of the nature of morality, which underlies the discussion in this chapter: morality "is invented, not discovered - invented as a kind of social technology that allows us, as the sort of mutually sympathetic animals that we are, to solve the problems that we find in living together."[7] The purpose of this chapter is also Haywardian. Rather than aiming to demonstrate that objectivist moral theories are ontologically implausible or psychologically unrealistic, this chapter aims to argue that we can make moral progress within the framework of naturalism, so that we need not be anxious if non-natural entities do not exist, or if autonomy in the Kantian sense or the noumenal self are mere mirages. That is, we do not need to posit any mysterious entities in order to conduct our inquiry into moral progress. Moral inquiry for that can be fully made through the moral lore we have inherited, the moral sensibilities we have as human beings, and our ability to communicate with others to overcome new problems.

3. History and Progress

In Kitcher's ethics, moral progress is achieved by solving moral problems and overcoming limitations. And moral truths are "the judgments that emerge in moral progress and that

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[7] Ibid., p. 2.

remain stable parts of progressive moral practice, as it continues indefinitely."[8] Within the framework of Kitcher's ethics, progress is what we ought to aim for. And moral truths as a derivative of progress are only provisionally true, but if they are judged to be useful in the process of ongoing moral inquiry, we should follow them. In other words, in Kitcher's naturalistic framework, truths emerge as having normative authority. But if they are only completely arbitrary and relative, they would not be normative, because if a judgment or act is not better than other judgments or acts, there is no reason to follow it to the exclusion of other options. So if we cannot refute the position that morality is simply "a matter of variable tastes," we will have to give up the normative claim of moral progress. Therefore, Kitcher's naturalistic account of moral progress must provide a non-arbitrary basis for progress. Importantly, Kitcher argues that "external constraints" are unnecessary in demonstrating the possibility of moral advancement. According to Kitcher, "external constraints" refer to special powers or entities that objectivists or anti-naturalists posit as essential to ensure moral truth or justification, but that are incompatible with the naturalistic view. Thus, Kitcher argues, a naturalistic perspective can illuminate "moral progress" that does not collapse into "mere change."

Of course, Kitcher argues that a pragmatic naturalist account of morality can overcome this nihilistic view that genuine progress is impossible because all change is just "a matter of variable tastes." That is, Kitcher argues that his pragmatic naturalism can vindicate the "possibility of moral progress." As a pragmatist, Kitcher would say that moral progress is not arbitrary as it means solving problems. The idea is that solving a moral problem in a way

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[8] Philip Kitcher, *Moral Progress* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), p. 17.

that is "more thoroughly, more reliably, and with less costly effort"[9] may not be arbitrary in the sense that it is better than the alternative. For example, suppose our ancestors faced the moral problem of food distribution. If moral change A and moral change B were equally likely to alleviate the problem of food inequality, but unlike A, moral change B led to constant and frequent fights and conflicts between individuals and families, then we should consider A to be a better moral change than B.

But arguing that simply solving a problem more effectively, efficiently, or at the least cost is a basis for moral progress seems to leave a philosophical lacuna about moral progress on two levels. First, it lacks an explanation of what it is that makes a situation a moral problem. Second, the answer that we should simply solve the problem effectively and efficiently leaves a blank as to what goals we should morally pursue or what costs we should minimize. If the basis for the diagnosis of moral problems or the basis for better problem solving is arbitrary, then Kitcher's claim that the objectivity of moral progress is based on the better solution of moral problems cannot escape the criticism that it is arbitrary. Thus, Kitcher's ethics, which argues for the necessity and possibility of moral progress within a naturalistic framework, faces the problem of showing that the diagnosis and solution of moral problems are not arbitrary without appealing to external constraints. However, he argues that a kind of objectivity about morality can be found even within a naturalistic framework. I take it that these are where the ground for the justification for the diagnosis and solution of moral problems in Kitcher's ethics lies:

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[9] Kitcher, The *Ethical Project* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 221.

The objectivity of ethics, on my account, lies in the fact that our construction of ways of living and of living together must adjust to that pervasive constraint.[10]

In the particular case of hominid social life, the combination of the need to live among others and the limitations of responsiveness constitute the objective grounds of a problem.[11]

According to Kitcher, the objectivity of the need and desire to live with others and the limits of our capacities to do so is the ground on which morality is not arbitrary. The need for humans to live in society and the desire to do so are not subjective, nor are the capacities needed to solve the problems of living together arbitrary. Kitcher's position sounds very plausible on a primitive and simple level. Our ancestors would have faced very similar problems regardless of where they lived. They had to allocate scarce food to the satisfaction of all members of the group, and they had to avoid conflicts that could lead to family or tribal warfare. These issues can be considered objective problems. For it seems obvious that serious disease, injury or death due to starvation and violence should also be considered problems for all humans seeking to survive. In other words, it seems to be an objective requirement to develop a moral code for the distribution of food and the prevention of wars between groups.

However, some of what we consider to be moral problems in the present day are not so simple. Do we have an obligation to give away our wealth to feed the hungry and poor in a

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[10] Kitcher, "Reply to Smith," in Mark Couch and Jessica Pfeifer eds., *The Philosophy of Philip Kitcher* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 267.

[11] Kitcher, "Is a Naturalized Ethics Possible?," *Behaviour* 151, no. 2–3 (2014), p. 251.

country or community that we are not a part of? Should we make decisions to reduce our consumption and sacrifice our quality of life for the well-being of future generations born 1,000 years from now? The argument that we treat these questions as moral issues that we ought to address seems less objective than that our primitive ancestors ought to solve tribal food shortages and prevent violence and war. This is because it is expected that the proportion of people who see future generation issues or foreign aid issues as moral problems will be smaller than that of people who view the immediate food shortage issues or violence prevention issues within the group as moral problems. In other words, the argument that these issues should be considered moral problems seems to be somewhat subjective, relative, and arbitrary.

Realists and Kantian constructivists could take a firm stand on these problems. If they took the normative position that both issues should be viewed as moral issues, they would say: Realists will diagnose that those who do not see the problem of future generations or the problem of foreign aid as moral problems that we must solve do not cognize objective moral facts. Kantians will claim that they have not taken the rational point of view that rational agents should have, or have failed to properly apply the universal and absolute procedure derived from pure practical reason or equivalent abilities to moral judgment. However, as a naturalistic anti-realist, Kitcher rejects these "external constraints" as mysterious entities.[12] Then, does Kitcher's ethics eventually reduce to individual subjectivism or cultural

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[12] Kitcher calls unacceptable entities from naturalistic perspective external constraints, and says the following about them: "Pragmatic naturalism rejects the idea of a special moment (long ago on Mount Sinai, perhaps) when people received authoritative information about how they should live, and also abandons surrogate philosophical theories about external constraints discovered by special faculties." Kitcher, *The Ethical Project*, pp. 8-9.

relativism? Kitcher names the position that regards the diagnosis of moral problems as subjective and arbitrary judgment the "Berkeleyan View" and asserts that his metaethics is not a version of such a viewpoint, thereby claiming that his position is not subjectivism or relativism.[13] He elaborates on this with the following analogies of medical and moral problems:

> Yet, even with respect to medical problems, my elaboration of the Berkeleyan approach is unsustainable. Its bias in favor of the stoics is unwarranted. Their judgments aren't immune from error. Perhaps the well-trained Spartan with the dangling entrails doesn't take himself to have a problem, but he still needs surgery. And beyond the Spartans are people who take pleasure in experiences most people find excruciating, those for whom bondage and torture are preconditions of sexual fulfillment. The Berkeleyan View is a misguided attempt to elaborate a more plausible thesis, namely that situations are problematic when they are rightly judged to be problematic. It goes astray because, in identifying the right opinion with what is universally believed, it commits a familiar fallacy. Unanimity is neither necessary nor sufficient for correctness.[14]

As Kitcher says, the diagnosis of problems does not require "unanimity." This is even true in math. We may encounter someone who insists that there is no error in the proposition "1+1=3." But Kitcher's position that "unanimity" is not necessary for moral progress implies that there is a better standard or method of "moral diagnosis" than that, and Kitcher has the burden of demonstrating what it is. In the medical realm, there appear to be better diagnostic tools than unanimity. Doctors and nurses can measure a patient's blood pressure, blood

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[13] Kitcher defines the "Berkeleyan View" as the following perspective: "a situation is problematic if those who find themselves in it seek relief from it." Kitcher, *Moral Progress*, p. 26.

[14] Kitcher, *Moral Progress*, p. 33.

sugar, and white blood cell count, and they can take x-rays to see the condition of their ligaments, muscles, and bones. They have accumulated an enormous body of clinical data on what diseases are accompanied by what symptoms. Do we have such references or diagnostic tools in the realm of morality? The answer to this question will depend on the metaethical position one takes. Roughly speaking, though not necessarily, non-naturalist realists will use intuitions that can cognize non-natural facts, properties, or entities as a basis for diagnosing moral problems. Naturalistic realists, such as the Cornell Realists, on the other hand, would argue that moral problems can be clearly recognized and specified through the same sort of empirical methods used to identify scientific facts.

However, Kitcher's pragmatist metaethics is a kind of naturalistic anti-realism: he explicitly rejects the introduction of any non-natural facts into the explanation of moral phenomena and moral inquiry. At the same time, he eschews the claim that they are reducible to scientific facts. What, then, can Kitcher adopt as tools for diagnosing moral problems? He argues that the diagnosis of moral problems and their overcoming are not arbitrary because there is a methodology of moral inquiry that can refine and improve our judgments, attitudes and norms. But where does the legitimacy of a methodology for diagnosing and solving moral problems come from, or on what foundation does it rest? These questions are very pertinent and once again make Kitcher's ethics seem to wander between the poles of the objectivist and relativist dichotomy. Kitcher sees this clearly, and he seems to try to overcome this dichotomy by recognizing that morality itself is a historical phenomenon.

Kitcher takes it that by exploring the history of moral progress, we can shed light on the nature

of moral methodology or the direction of progress of the methodology itself. He cites the abolition of slavery, the expansion of opportunities for women, and the growing acceptance of homosexuality as examples of moral progress. However, it took an incredibly long time for slavery to be abolished, women's political and educational rights to be guaranteed, and homosexuality not to be condemned (although this is still ongoing). This means that for a significant period of time, the majority of people did not recognize them as moral problems. Thus, to consider the mere numerical preponderance of judgments as a justification for the diagnosis and resolution of moral problems would be disastrous for Deweyan ethics, whose goal in ethics is to make our understanding of moral progress more systematic and intellectual, and ultimately to promote it. Hence, it would seem that making mere "majority judgment" as well as "unanimity" a methodology for moral inquiry should be removed from Kitcher's options.

If the number of judges cannot be the source of the legitimacy of a method of moral inquiry, then one alternative is to define the legitimacy of a method of moral inquiry in terms of historical trends. That is, the method of inquiry that comes later in history is better than the method of inquiry that came before it. This view seems plausible at first glance. We seem to live in a better moral culture today than in ancient societies where slavery was entrenched, and we seem to be able to make better moral judgments than in the Victorian era when women were denied the right to any political activity. But is this really the case? At the height of the Nazi era, was Germany armed with a better moral methodology, and hence judgement, than at any time before? It is quite ludicrous to think so. We have countless examples of individuals, as well as groups, who become morally corrupt or engage in behaviour that shows signs of moral regress. We can never rule out the possibility of moral regress, both

empirically and in principle. Naive optimism about numerical superiority and the course of history must be abandoned. These conclusions make it seem hopeless to secure a methodology for the moral progress we need without ahistorical or non-natural entities.

However, Kitcher says that it is possible to construct a methodology for the moral progress we need from a historical and naturalistic point of view. And he says that it is possible by giving up the aspiration for a perfect and infallible tool for diagnosing and solving moral problems and carefully examining the history of morality. He asks us to look at what prevented the abolition of slavery, the expansion of opportunities for women, and the acceptance of homosexuality as examples of moral progress. This is because the cause of those mistakes is the nature of the problem. We can use our understanding of it as a tool to diagnose and overcome similar problems.[15]

For example, our ancestors did not feel the need to alleviate the physical and mental suffering of slaves at various points. They did not realize what the problem was with the frustration of women who did not have the opportunity to receive an education and participate in the public sphere. Furthermore, they were thoroughly insensitive to the sorrow and resentment of those who had to be the object of contempt for loving someone of the same sex. Kitcher calls this insensitive state "moral blindness." Why couldn't they see the suffering and oppressed properly? Kitcher says the root of the problem lies in "an obvious failure of sympathy."[16]

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[15] See Kitcher, *Moral Progress*, p. 37-47.

[16] Ibid., p. 39.

That is, they had the following problems or limitations:

> Opinions voiced by people who suffer and who express their suffering are disregarded. Failure to take them seriously may rest on drawing a distinction among types of human beings, on supposing some members of our species to be unqualified on particular topics or even in taking them to be inferior altogether. Because of their deficiencies, these subjects have no place in a responsible moral discussion. Sympathy for them, and for their judgments on their lives, thus lapses.[17]

If, as Kitcher suggests, one of the main causes of moral problems is a lack of sympathy for the oppressed and marginalized, then one of the important roles we all, including moral philosophers, have to play in moral progress is to pay attention to "the cries of the wounded,"[18] as William James puts it. Furthermore, Kitcher sees "problems of false consciousness" as reasons why moral progress has been so slow and difficult. These are problems that arise when people believe and accept that the unjust oppression, violence, or deprivation of opportunity they are experiencing is justified. Throughout history, many slaves accepted their master's authority and orders as legitimate, and Victorian women accepted that there was nothing wrong with their situation of being solely engaged in household chores. Kitcher's diagnosis is that moral progress could have happened more quickly and easily if the oppressed themselves had seen their problematic situation sooner and more clearly, or if those who were not oppressed had helped the oppressed realize that they were in trouble.

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[17] Ibid.

[18] William James, "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," essay, in *Will to Believe: And Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (The Floating Press, 2010), p. 236.

From these analyses of the causes of failure in moral progress, Kitcher argues, we can construct a methodology for moral progress[19]: we need to identify where our sympathy has fallen short, and we need to invite diverse perspectives into the conversation so that the voices of the marginalized are heard. Furthermore, we must constantly look out for those who are oppressed or deprived of important life opportunities, but who do not notice it. Through these methods, we can solve moral problems and make progress. Of course, as Kitcher concedes, human mistakes, limitations, and the directions and aspects of problems are in principle infinite, so it is not possible to fully foresee the ways in which human moral failures can occur.[20] It is for this reason that Kitcher emphasizes that no moral methodology can be complete and final, but only provisional and always subject to improvement.

I fully agree with Kitcher's insight that moral blindness and false consciousness have been the root causes of moral problems, and I cannot rule out the possibility that they will continue to serve as a backdrop for moral problems in the future of humanity's moral journey. Nevertheless, I remain skeptical that simply referring to humanity's moral history in this way can overcome the arbitrariness of diagnosing and solving moral problems, since the ways in

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[19] At this point, Kitcher's pragmatist constructivism diverges from Kantian constructivism because, unlike Kantian constructivists, Kitcher emphasizes the historical nature of the construction of moral methodology and insists that it must always be open to improvement. Kitcher describes the difference between his pragmatist constructivism and Kantian constructivism as follows: "To my mind, the principal differences between these approaches and my own are as follows: first, that Kant, Rawls, and Habermas all adopt the perspective of ideal theory, while I am concerned with historical situations that are far from ideal; and second, that, where they envisage general conditions on the decision-making of an idealized abstract individual, I am concerned with diverse individuals, with varying levels of knowledge, and with attempts at sympathetic mutual understanding." Kitcher, *Moral Progress*, p. 38.

[20] See Ibid., p. 143.

which we can expand sympathy and adopt the perspective of others to diagnose and overcome moral blindness are in principle infinite. Nor does Kitcher's account provide a basis for judgment about whether a state of consciousness is false or legitimate.

Let's take slavery as an example. On a principled level, we might empathise more with the mental anguish caused by the economic losses that slave owners would suffer if slavery were abolished than with the suffering of slaves under slavery. We may also decide that it is right to maintain slavery because it is more important to prevent the slave owners' suffering and losses. How can Kitcher's naturalistic metaethics exclude the possibility that a methodology that gathers sufficient information about the realities of slavery, fully incorporates the perspectives of slave owners and slaves, and engages in dialogue with those who would be affected by its maintenance and abolition might produce conclusions that support the maintenance of slavery? The command to simply "consult the history of ethical practice" is not a sufficient answer, because the ways in which such a history can be interpreted are in principle infinite; that is, such a demand begs the question of the basis for what constitutes progress or what constitutes a problem in moral history. I hold that the basis for this naturalistic moral inquiry is moral sensibilities. I will examine how moral sensibilities can serve as a source for the understanding of moral problems and inventing solutions for them.

4. Humean Crews

In a naturalistic framework that rejects "external constraints," I argue that it is our "moral sensibilities," or "moral understanding," that can and should be the source and constraint for

our moral inquiry and judgment. That our inquiry and judgment are influenced, in part or in full, by our moral sensibilities seems to me to be uncontroversial as a psychological or causal explanation. However, the level of discussion in this chapter is not that of causal explanation, but of normative justification. Therefore, I need to demonstrate that moral sensibilities can be the basis of justification for moral judgment or inquiry. I will argue that these problems can be overcome based on the elucidation of moral judgment and moral justification of Blackburn's quasi-realist expressivism and Lenman's Humean constructivism.

According to Blackburn, human morality can be illuminated in terms of inputs and outputs. We characterize the situations we find ourselves in in one way or another. We can also identify or infer what the main characteristics of those situations are. This relates to the aspect of Input. On the other hand, how we react to these situations is also the domain of morality. The question of how we should feel or what we should do in these situations is an aspect of output. Blackburn accepts a division between states of soul, one of which is the representational or doxastic state, and the other is the appetitive state. The representational state sees its role as representing how the world exists. The appetitive state, on the other hand, is concerned with changing the world in some way. Therefore, it can be said that the representational state plays a role related to input in human morality, and the appetitive state plays a role related to output.[21] What should be noted here is that the understanding and representation of moral problematic situations are never irrelevant to our feelings or attitudes. They certainly intervene in our understanding of what is a problematic situation or

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[21] Simon Blackburn, *Ruling Passions: A Theory of Practical Reasoning* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 4-8.

what makes it a problem. On this, Blackburn says:

> Attitudes and emotions determine the features of things and people that we notice. They organize our experience, determining how we construe situations. Loving or hating someone we highlight, perhaps unconsciously, features that make them lovable or hateful, sometimes even inventing ones for the purpose and suppressing what does not fit. In the light of emotion things which we would otherwisesee become invisible, while others thrust themselves onto our attention.[22]

Within the framework of Humean sentimentalism, emotions, attitudes, desires, and passions do not merely influence our moral behaviour, but also directly affect our understanding or representation of problematic situations. However, Blackburn's claim that passions and desires have a profound effect on our representations of moral problems and our moral behaviour seems to me to be a causal account of human morality, not a normative justification for it. Again, the aim is not to provide a causal account of morality, but rather to argue that it is possible to make moral progress we need, even if external constraints such as non-natural reality and pure practical reason are illusory. Blackburn and Lenman, however, argue that human passions and desires are not irrelevant to better or justifiable moral judgements. More positively, their position can be interpreted to imply that moral progress is impossible without human passions and desires. This is because it is precisely passions and desires that are necessary to overcome erroneous or harmful passions or judgments. To demonstrate this, we need to take a closer look at how human desires frame and constrain our moral judgements or moral reasons within the framework of Humean

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[22] Ibid., p. 6.

sentimentalism.

Suppose I was pickpocketed while traveling in London. I have the urge to beat the pickpocket to death, if I ever find him. Meanwhile, someone (it's highly unlikely he's the pickpocket) bumps into my shoulder as I'm waiting for the train. He doesn't say sorry, he just walks away, ignoring me. I want to kick him in the back as he walks away. If I lose my temper here and kick him, it does not appear to be an act with legitimate reasons. The anger I feel towards him is very temporary. Maybe half an hour later, I won't even think about him hitting my shoulder. Of course, my anger at the pickpocket would still be there. If I had been unable to control my aggressive impulses in that moment and assaulted him, I would have regretted it, because my web of desire does not support such behaviour.[23] My web of desire is saying I don't want to cause uncomfortable problems with someone by reacting violently to an unintentional wrong. I don't want to hurt someone through my direct actions, and I don't want to inflict a punishment that is disproportionate to the degree of wrongdoing. It seems strange to say that the expression of these desires is unrelated to moral reasons. It also seems unnecessary to introduce elements that are essentially completely different from these desires in order to show the normativity that I should not kick him. Even though the reason that I shouldn't kick him is not reducible to my desire that I shouldn't, it seems that I shouldn't deny some sort of relationship between the two. As Lenman puts it, "stability and coherence

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[23] Calling the structured system of desires a "big web of desire" that is holistic in nature, Lenman states that: "Normativity is grounded in desire, not in individual desires considered one by one but in a Big Web of desire that, viewed, as it were, from within, takes on the character of a space of reasons. We escape the charge of arbitrariness because of the horizontal connections that furnish unity and coherence to the web as a whole. And the pattern is not just intrapersonal but, of necessity, interpersonal." James Lenman, "The That," in *Methodology and Moral Philosophy*, ed. Jussi Suikkanen and Antti Kauppinen (New York: Routledge, 2019), p. 157.

is in place, it seems hard to deny some normative weight to what I firmly and stably desire."[24]

Our desires can be distinguished. Crudely speaking, I have desires that I willingly embrace and cherish, and I have desires that I criticize and repudiate. The desire to kick someone just because I'm angry is a desire I reject, or it's a desire I criticize. The desire not to make people who have believed in me, supported me, and helped me sad is not only a desire I embrace, it's a desire I don't want to lose if I get dementia. And according to Blackburn and Lenman, it is this structured web of diverse desires that is the basis of normativity. Our concerns, aims, and desires are never monolithic. The desire for economic gain, the desire to be attractive to the opposite sex, the desire to maintain good relationships with friends, the desire to help those in need, and so on. To borrow Blackburn's phrase, the ship as a human mind is populated by a variety of Humean or Smithian crews. These crew members represent human desires, sentiments, and dispositions. The direction of this Humean or Smithian ship is determined by "the resolution of conflicting pressures among the crew." Crews can interact with each other, and in this interaction, the voice of one sailor or group of sailors may emerge as more dominant and important. Other crews may then be forced to leave the ship. On the other hand, they may rebel against them. In other words, we reflect and ponder our desires, concerns, and aims in light of our desires, concerns, and aims.[25] From the perspective of Humean naturalism, it is this wholehearted and stable endorsement of certain desires that we often refer to as value judgments or moral judgments. Blackburn and Lenman say the

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[24] Lenman, "The Primacy of Passions," in *Evaluative Perception*, ed. Anna Bergqvist and Robert Cowan (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2018), p. 284.

[25] See Lenman, "Achieving Objectivity," *Philosophical Perspectives* 23, no. 1 (2009), p. 295.

following:

In the sense in which it is right, it means only that one can stand back from a particular desire or impulse, and accept or reject its pressure on one. Certainly we can do this, in the light of other desires and concerns. What is not thereby given is that we can do it from a standpoint independent of any desire or concern: independent of a desire for our own good, or for the happiness of humanity, or respect for this or that, or the myriad other passions that make up our individual profiles of concern and care.[26]

There are passions in my soul that I reflectively endorse, others I reflectively reject. Indeed it is natural to suppose that such reflective endorsement when it is decisively wholehearted and stable, is what valuing is. That thought in turn invites an expressivist picture where what judgements of value express is just such states, stable higher-order desires and/or ground-floor desires ratified at the court of stable reflection.[27]

This expressivist understanding of moral judgment can be further clarified by Blackburn's notion of an "emotional ascent." The system of human emotions can be viewed in terms of a "staircase." At the bottom are "simple preferences, likes, and dislikes."[28] At a higher level are the emotions on which our moral judgments are based. Suppose I see someone spilling a significant amount of rice grains on the table while eating fried rice. I may feel dissatisfaction, displeasure, or revulsion about it, but I probably do not feel any moral condemnation about it. Suppose I see a grain of rice sticking out of that person's mouth and

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[26] Blackburn, *Ruling Passions*, p. 252.

[27] Lenman, *"The Primacy of Passions,"* p. 285.

[28] See Blackburn, *Ruling Passions*, pp.8 -14.

bouncing onto the face of the person in front of him. At this point, I can think that he should be more careful beyond simply being uncomfortable. If I realize that the person is intentionally causing grains of rice to splatter on the person in front of him, and that it is done to humiliate the person in front of him and to show off the superiority of his position, I would feel anger at him and want to morally condemn him. I would also think that not only am I entitled to feel those feelings of blame, but that they are feelings that others should share as well. Furthermore, I would think that no one should do such an act. In other words, I would think he is violating some sort of duty. And if someone were to say that such an act is not morally reprehensible, I would be inclined to argue with him. It is these sentiments that allow us to recognise the reasons for our moral judgements. The disgust we feel when we see someone spilling their food while eating can be distinguished from the emotion we feel when we see someone intentionally spitting grains of rice in someone's face. Thus, at the top of the emotional staircase, the emotions that underlie the recognition of reasons for moral judgement can be distinguished from mere preferences at the bottom of the staircase. And at the top of the emotional staircase, the desires that form the reasons for moral judgement are supported by a structured system of the various desires we have.

We can synthesize Blackburn and Lenman's positions on moral judgment as follows: Moral judgments reflect desires. But that does not mean that all desires should be given equal weight in moral judgment. Some desires may not be directly involved in our moral judgment. And some desires may be things we need to suppress in order to make better moral judgments. This understanding of moral judgment, or the basis for it, is clearly naturalistic in the sense that it does not posit any supernatural or non-natural entities or facts.

The question, however, is how this sentimentalist position overcomes the problem of arbitrariness. (Recall that it is to overcome the problem of arbitrariness that the discussion moves from Kitcher's position of moral progress to elucidation on the moral judgments and reasons of Blackburn and Lenman.) The bottom line is, our moral judgments and moral inquiry as a codeliberation based on those judgments can overcome the problem of arbitrariness in that our aims, concerns, and desires have a pattern as a big web. For they have the character of facts of commonality and facts of stability. Lenman defines them as:

> I now want to stress the importance of two other basic facts about our condition, which I will call the Fact of Stability and the Fact of Commonality. The Fact of Commonality is what it looks like. It is the fact that we are very often indeed very alike indeed in a very great many of the things we like, want and care about, both prior to and subsequent upon reflection and codeliberation. And the Fact of Stability is, again as the name implies, what we could think of as the cross temporal analogue of the Fact of Commonality, both intra- and inter-personally.[29]

I propose to view the importance of the Fact of Stability and the Fact of Commonality, which Lenman emphasizes, in two dimensions. One is that they are important conditions for us to live morally. Without these two conditions, it is nearly impossible for any individual or society to live morally. The other is that stable and common moral understandings are important resources for better moral judgment and moral progress. Commonality is crucial because if we do not share any moral understanding, it will be almost impossible for us to

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[29] Lenman, "Achieving Objectivity," p. 296.

succeed in conflict resolution, because if we cannot agree on any moral claims or positions, it will be impossible for us to voluntarily modify our own claims to reflect the other person's position. Such a state of affairs would be one in which only power dominates the mediation of conflict. If there were no stable part of our moral understanding, we would have to face moral inquiry at every moment of our lives, and we would be plagued by constant moral guilt and anxiety. This is because there are no relatively more stable moral understandings, so all moral understandings or judgements would have to face equal levels of doubt. Commonality and stability of moral understanding is a condition for living morally.

Of course, the commonality and stability of human desires cannot be perfect. That is, some of our concerns and desires may change over time. Likewise, we can encounter people with different or incompatible desires. In other words, differences or conflicts caused by them are inevitable. And what we invented to overcome those conflicts is morality. Therefore, we need to examine the conflicts and invent better solutions to overcome those conflicts based on our commonality and stability of our desires. Such commonality and stability can be the sources of objectivity in the naturalistic framework, and overcoming conflict based on such commonality and stability is moral problem-solving and moral progress. What should not be overlooked here is that the pattern formed by the web of desires that reflects normative reasons is neither isolated nor ahistorical. That is to say, the web of desire is influenced not only by biological conditions, but also by social interactions and the cultural environment. At this point, the Humean ship as the agent of the web of desire advocated by Blackburn and Lenman contrasts with the Kantian ship dominated and led by the Kantian captain. Blackburn describes the Kantian captain as follows:

Thus the Kantian Captain. He is a peculiar figure, a dream—or nightmare—of pure, authentic self-control. He certainly appeals to our wish to be, ourselves, entirely the masters of our own lives, immune in all important respects from the gifts or burdens of our internal animal natures, or of our temperaments as they are formed by contingent nature, socialization, and external surrounds.[30]

In other words, the Kantian ship as an agent of autonomy and moral law can be moral because it is ruled by a Kantian captain. While the captain is essentially different from the Humean crews as all desires and passions, he can and must rule over them. Furthermore, the Kantian captain as a source of such moral authority and objectivity is, as Blackburn puts it, completely free from factors such as "contingent nature" and "socialization." But for Blackburn, such a Kantian captain is a mirage. For Humean naturalists, it is the sentiments of empathy, sympathy, benevolence, and altruism that are necessary for morality, not the noumenal self, autonomy, or pure practical reason. And, the web of desire as a source of morality is fundamentally historical. It cannot be free from cultural influences. For the naturalists who succeeded Hume, Smith, and Dewey, moral characteristics, principles, and rules can never be independent of the accumulated moral lore of history, social interaction, and moral education. In other words, the desires that resource our moral inquiry reflect tens of thousands of years of moral navigation. And in this respect, the stability and commonality of desires as a basis for moral inquiry is not just a formality, but has concrete content.

Then, how should the moral inquiry based on the commonality and stability of the web of

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[30] Blackburn, *Ruling Passions*, pp. 247-48.

desire be conducted? Whose orders should the ship follow? Humean crews have different voices and different aims. Isn't a Kantian captain, noumenal self that is essentially different from the crews and must command and control them, necessary to adjudicate the primacy of these various voices? Isn't moral deliberation and inquiry without it ultimately unable to overcome the criticism that it is arbitrary?

At this point, a Kantian like Kosgaard would argue that we need to bring in the Kantian captain, saying that blind desires cannot be the agent of objective moral imperatives. According to her, the source of moral reasons and authority is "the reflective structure of human consciousness."[31] In her Kantian ethics, reflection "gives us a kind of distance from our impulses which both forces us, and enables us, to make laws for ourselves, and it makes those laws normative."[32] According to her, this process of reflection forces us to recognize the identity behind our various identities, which she calls "moral identity."[33] And without that moral identity, she says, no other identity can be normative. She goes on to say that "moral identity exerts a kind of governing role over the other kinds."[34] To me, the moral identity Kosgaard speaks of seems to epitomize what Blackburn calls the Kantian captain. For it governs our passions, desires, and concerns, yet enjoys a status of its own that is intrinsically different from them, and its absence would mean nihilism. In her ethics, moral identity is the source of normativity and the basis for making morality objective. For it regulates our desires in the way that every rational being must regulate them.

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[31] Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity*, p. 103.

[32] Ibid., p.129.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., p. 130.

So can't a ship with only Humean crews, lacking a Kantian captain, overcome the problem of arbitrariness? It can! We can dispel these concerns and anxieties by noting the holistic nature of the web of desire: the evaluation of our specific aims, concerns, and desires can and should be done by facing the web as a whole. Whereas the Kantian ship moves according to the dogmatic authority of the captain, the Humean ship sails according to the democratic authority of the entire crew. This holistic verdict not only applies to individual deliberation, but can and should be applied at the level of collective deliberation.

For example, suppose someone argues that slavery should be reintroduced. Someone might actively favor it, focusing only on the economic benefits it would bring. On the other hand, even those who could benefit from it might want to speak out against it. This is because the desire to make a lot of money from such a system is subject to reflection in the light of the other desires they have. A wide variety of passions and desires can lead to a refusal to revive slavery: the desire not to deprive someone of their freedom, the desire not to hear the groans of those who would be made miserable by the loss of their freedom, or the desire not to live in contradiction to the concept of human rights, which states that discrimination should not be justified on grounds such as race, gender, etc, or the desire not to witness the accumulation of wealth through exploitation. And the voices of these desires can resonate not only within individuals, but also between individuals. And these desires are too complicatedly structured to be reduced to simple exclamations of the Ayer style, such as "Boo!" and "Hooray!" This is because they not only form a web while maintaining stability and commonality, but also reflect the process of various moral codes and moral desires appearing and disappearing and

being modified in the long history of morality. In other words, the objectivity that we can and should pursue within a naturalistic framework is more ingrained in us than we realize, as Lenman writes:

> Where there is stability and commonality to our concerns, aims and desires, there is a kind of objectivity to our normative engagement with the world, a objectivity constituted by our stable and shared normative understandings, understandings on which we rely in shaping our lives through reflection and codeliberation. Our inhabiting of much of this shared understanding can go quite deep, shaping as it often does the concepts and the vocabulary with which we engage it.[35]

I follow Blackburn and Lenman in saying that the objectivity of morality that we should pursue from naturalistic perspective reflects the big web of desire that constitutes the space of our moral reason. More precisely, the objectivity that naturalistic ethics can and should pursue reflects the commonality and stability of our desires. The argument that we should pursue this naturalistic objectivity for the sake of moral progress can be further refined by answering two questions. First, what range of normative judges' desires should we reflect? Second, what range of issues should we ponder and discuss? I will address these questions in the following.

5. Modest Objectivity and Local Progress

5-1. Psychopath and Sensible Knave

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[35] Lenman, "Achieving Objectivity," p. 302.

If naturalistic moral inquiry is about reflecting our desires, aims, and concerns, who is the "we" here? First, without overlooking any arguments, it can be argued that in order to reflect a variety of positions and perspectives, we must reflect the desires of all beings capable of making moral judgments. Should we also consult the desires of psychopaths and sensible knaves in our moral inquiry? There is no need to exclude them, for their positions and desires can serve as objects of criticism and vigilance to which we should always refer. Referring to them does not imply that we view them positively. For example, we can see the enormous level of harm and cruelty of their evil deeds and realize the importance of education for moral progress and the urgency of introducing laws to prevent crime. In other words, we can refer to their desires in our moral inquiry without giving positive weight to their moral perspective. Of course, these judgments also emerge from critiquing, reflecting, and pondering in terms of the holistic web of our desire.

One could argue that a moral inquiry that presupposes that we should look critically at the moral positions of psychopaths and sensible knaves is not a proper moral inquiry because it is not neutral and presupposes a particular moral perspective. But morally neutral moral inquiry is neither possible nor desirable. The purpose of moral inquiry is not contemplation but action. That is, we must need to decide what to do or how to live. If we choose one alternative as a result of our moral inquiry and live our lives according to that alternative, we are forced to give up the other alternatives. Therefore, we must pursue a better alternative. The choice to pursue a better alternative can never be value-neutral. We must choose which alternative is more effective in solving moral problems, and the inquiry process to determine

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this is again in light of our desires, concerns, and aims. However, due to the holistic nature of the web of desire, not all desires, concerns, and aims can be considered equally important.

Our moral inquiry is also historical. By historical, I don't just mean that new moral problems arise in the course of time, requiring new solutions. It is also historical in the sense that the quest to solve new problems must rely on the moral lore of the past, because moral inquiry presupposes certain moral positions, and those positions cannot be independent of the history of morality. That is, we cannot proceed with our moral projects in isolation from our entire moral heritage. We can't and shouldn't risk abandoning the boat over the open sea and jumping into the water to build a whole new boat. In the process of repairing the boat as sailors on a Neurathian boat, we can consider and dispose of the desires of psychopaths and sensibe knaves as parts that interfere with the balance and safety of the ship. And we should be careful not to cause the ship to break down with similar problems.

5-2. Aliens

It is moral inquiry to solve the problems encountered in living together, and it is to determine the direction of action. Therefore, it requires consensus. However, I am not arguing that consensus is necessarily required or that we should seek it because it has intrinsic value. This is because acting on our own beliefs and desires without consensus can cause harm by exacerbating social conflict and discouraging cooperation. However, consensus is not required on all issues. Different communities may face different kinds of problems in their long moral histories, and may progress in different ways to overcome them. This is because

moral problems and their solutions cannot be free from various natural, social, and cultural constraints. In this direction, communities with different or incompatible moral codes can emerge. If each society seeks to overcome the failures of altruism and prosper in its own way within a different moral framework due to its cultural, historical, and social specificities, then one moral code need not be discarded just because incompatible moral codes are maintained in different communities. Different countries have different rates of indirect taxation, or we can imagine a country where indirect taxation is completely abolished. Different communities need not agree on a single indirect tax rate, nor can we say that there is necessarily a superiority between them, if the economic and social conditions of those communities have shown that they are effective in overcoming problems of economic inequality or problems related to economic growth. Of this pluralism, Kitcher says the following:

> Pluralism, as I conceive it, proposes there are (1) some pairs of codes for which one is objectively better than the other; (2) some pairs of codes for which neither is objectively better than the other, but there is a third code constructible from elements of both, objectively better than either; and (3) some pairs of codes for which neither (1) nor (2) obtains.[36]

However, this acceptance of pluralism does not imply that consensus is unnecessary in all situations. While different laws and institutions are allowed in different countries, uniform rules are required within a country or a city. In addition, international agreements are required in certain areas, such as war and international trade. To what extent, then, should

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[36] Kitcher, *The Ethical Project*, p. 210.

we take into account the positions of moral agents in devising and evaluating alternatives for solving problems in these areas? At a principled level, we can take into account the positions of all beings capable of normative judgment in determining the direction of our moral progress. That is, we can argue that we should pursue what Allan Gibbard calls "grandiose objectivity"[37] by accepting only those moral judgments that would be acceptable to any conceivable "ideal normative judge."[38] But should we pursue such objectivity?

In a galaxy 100 million light-years from Earth, there are aliens who are more intelligent than the human species. They have not only a higher level of science and technology than we currently have, but they also have a completely coherent moral code, and they have built an advanced civilization out of that science and code. They believe that individuals below the average intelligence of their species are not worth living, and they have a moral code that measures their intelligence at age 12 and euthanizes individuals below the average intelligence. Another alien species, living in a galaxy 200 million light-years from Earth, feels immense guilt if their actions cause another individual to shed even a drop of blood, intentionally or unintentionally, and chooses suicide as punishment. They also have a culture that encourages those who don't commit suicide to do so.

Suppose we learn that these aliens are not only fully informed about their situation and conditions, but that they also have a very coherent system of morality. Should we seriously

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[37] Allan Gibbard, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings: A Theory of Normative Judgment* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 201.

[38] Ibid., p. 203.

consider their moral position? Should we seriously consider euthanizing children with low intelligence, or should we seriously discuss how much self-harm we should inflict when we accidentally bump into someone? We don't need to, and we shouldn't. They have a completely different moral sensibility than we do. The morality we need is a morality based on our moral sensibilities. To quote Gibbard, "What matters chiefly is not what we can say to strange beings who are merely conceivable, but what we can say to each other."[39]   We don't need to be concerned with the judgment of beings whose moral sensibilities are completely different from our own, because our moral inquiry cannot take place entirely outside of our own moral sensibilities. Again, it's too dangerous to jump off a boat and try to build a whole new one from scratch.

5-3. The Primitive

Finally, there is one sceptic to deal with. His scepticism arises when two or more variables are involved in the solution of a moral problem. Sometimes a moral problem calls for a new function of morality, and certain moral norms are introduced and put into practice to realise that new function. These new norms fulfil the function of morality in solving the initial moral problem, but they may also introduce another problem, which in turn requires a different function of morality: we cannot completely block out the possibility that an improvement in one dimension may result in a loss in another. Kitcher calls this problem a "functional conflict."[40]   The problem is how to determine which of the gains in a specific variable and

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[39] Ibid., p. 201.

[40] See Kitcher, *The Ethical Project*, p. 241.

the losses in other variables should be given more weight when such a functional conflict occurs. Or it arises from the fact that there is no way to reduce the gains and losses between those variables to a common scale. The following example illustrates the difficulty of solving this problem.

Our ancestors had great difficulty meeting their basic needs: food, shelter, and protection. Over the centuries, they have effectively overcome this problem by introducing a system of division of labour. However, division of labour means the specification and subdivision of roles and the distribution of such subdivided jobs, positions, and roles according to each person's talents. The more sophisticated this level of division of labour is, the more materially affluent mankind can live. As the system of division of labour becomes more elaborate—that is, as concerns about food, shelter, and protection die down—different occupations and positions emerge. And people come to find some roles more attractive than others. They are not satisfied with a warm and safe shelter and enough food to eat. That is, an expanded conception of the good life emerges. However, the system of division of labour does not allow everyone to work in the jobs they find attractive.

Primitive people struggle to meet their basic needs, but they don't feel alienated and hopeless because they don't get an attractive role. Civilized people, on the other hand, are able to satisfy their basic needs, but many of them feel alienated and hopeless that they cannot rise to the positions they have hoped for. Which of these two societies can we consider more morally advanced? To answer this question, we need to be able to weigh the gain of the introduction of the division of labour, which is the satisfaction of basic needs, against the

loss, which is the alienation and despair caused by frustration in obtaining a position. One could argue that the fulfilment of basic needs is more fundamental to our survival as a species or organism, and therefore their fulfilment should be considered far more important than the cost of frustration in gaining status and the resulting social conflict. However, people sometimes take their own lives because they feel that they are not living a sufficiently meaningful life in society. As Kitcher says, "participatory desires are as central to the psychological lives of the civilized as basic desires are to the lives of the primitive."[41]

We can resolve this conundrum by changing the subject. Indeed, before comparing the merits and demerits of each society in order to judge which society is morally better, the society of primitive man or the society of civilized man, we must ask whether it is necessary for us to answer such a question. It is to ask whether we, who have benefited from thousands of years of division of labour, abolish all division of labour and return to a self-sufficient primitive life. If that is not likely, we need not struggle to determine whether primitive societies are better than present-day societies of division of labour. Asking us which of the impossible alternatives or the status quo is superior is, as Kitcher puts it, "idle" to the pragmatist.[42]

So what kind of progress do we need, what kind of progress should we care about? It's not "global progress," it's "local progress." A progress concept is global if "it generates a verdict in comparing any two states of the focal system." On the other hand, "a local progress

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[41] Kitcher, *The Ethical Project*, p. 244.

[42] See Ibid.

concept offers a judgment about some pairs of temporally adjacent states of the system."[43] We do not need to determine the superiority of every moral code in history or every conceivable code. What we need to do is contrast the norms we have with the alternatives available to us. That is, we need to work to invent and evaluate norms that are expected to heal the alienation and loss of those who have not had their participatory desires fulfilled, not the norms of primitive people in societies without a division of labour.

In the process of improving our practices, we cannot foresee everything. In Kitcher's words, "[a] messianic perspective evaluating their evolution in the indefinitely long run is impossible for us."[44] However, the goal of Deweyan ethics is not to discover a first principle against which all moral norms and principles can be evaluated, but to make actual moral progress more systematic and more sure-footed. Thus, promoting an understanding of local progress and evaluating the better alternatives that are "available" to us is fully consistent with the Deweyan ideal. And this dimension of "local progress" is not only what we need, but what is possible.

6. Conclusion

I'm not sure that philosophical argumentation can quench the celestials' aspiration for things like Kantian autonomy, non-natural fact, and impersonal perspectives. Perhaps it is a

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[43] See Kitcher, *Moral Progress* pp. 23-24.

[44] Kitcher, *The Ethical Project*, p. 245.

manifestation of the philosopher's temperament, and those aspirations may never die as long as philosophical inquiry continues. But the ultimate purpose of ethics is not contemplation, but action. Or, to put it more pragmatically, to promote our moral progress by providing us with an understanding of better methodologies for moral inquiry. If the promotion of moral progress is more important than the discovery of objective truth, then I am convinced that we have no reason to be disappointed with the naturalistic understanding and elucidation of morality in terrestrial ethics.

If the objective truth we have discovered commands something that our moral sensibilities find utterly unacceptable, should we follow it? If the content of objective truth is "kill the person you love most right now," would you follow it? Someone might say that such a thing cannot be objective truth. I don't see his judgment as stemming from some mysterious ability other than his own moral sensibilities, so I don't think we need to be disappointed or saddened by our inability to cognize objective reality. What we should grieve or be disappointed about is not that we cannot be autonomous agents in the Kantian sense. We need not be disappointed that we cannot occupy what Nagel calls the view from nowhere.

What we should grieve and be wary of is that we do not have the empathic capacity to be sufficiently sensitive to the suffering of others, or that we empathize only with certain people to the exclusion of others. But we can be sensitive enough to respond to the suffering of others and still pursue impartiality, either by taking Humean general point of view or by forming Smithian impartial spectator. The world is sufficient for the formation of these perspectives. However, sometimes actions based on value judgments made from a general

point of view or from the perspective of an impartial spectator can lead to regret or tragic consequences. Therefore, as Dewey suggests, we need to predict the consequences of different directions of actions through a kind of thought experiment as a dramatic rehearsal on an individual or collective level. What is needed for this is intelligence, imagination, and empirical knowledge, not knowledge of reality beyond this world or noumenal self.

What we need for moral inquiry is sufficiently provided in this world. Celestials might feel or express sadness, disappointment, anxiety, or dissatisfaction that my position lacks the most significant and vital elements of morality. But rather I think the people who should be disappointed are the terrestrials looking up at the celestials. For to me, celestials seem to be greedy people who can't be satisfied even when they have everything they need.

Chapter 4. Hume's General Point of View: Convergence of Sentiments and Conflict Resolution

1. Introduction

Philip Kitcher says that moral progress is achieved by solving moral problems. He argues that the various moral problems throughout history share a common problem: the "failure of sympathy."[1] If Kitcher's diagnosis is correct, then the way to promote moral progress is directly linked to overcoming the failure of sympathy. Kitcher's diagnosis would also sound more convincing in light of the work of contemporary moral philosophers and moral psychologists on the role of moral sentiments in moral judgement and moral practice.[2] However, it seems obvious that unconditional conformity to unconstrained sympathetic responses is not the ideal we should strive for, because uncorrected sympathy appears to be biased, and such bias appears to be at odds with an important element of morality, impartiality. Furthermore, the ascendancy of biased morality can profoundly undermine coordination and cooperation. Morality that undermines long-term coordination and cooperation cannot be justified.

Moral progress thus requires the correction of sentiments. But the ways in which our

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[1] Philip Kitcher, *Moral Progress* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), p. 29.

[2] See Simon Blackburn, *Ruling Passions: A Theory of Practical Reasoning* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009); Allan Gibbard, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings: A Theory of Normative Judgment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2016); Martin Hoffman, *Empathy and Moral Development: Implications for Caring and Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (Vancouver, B.C.: Langara College, 2020); Joshua Greene, *Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason, and the Gap between Us and Them* (London: Atlantic Books, 2015).

sentiments can be modified, withdrawn, and replaced are, in principle, infinite. Therefore, we need to pursue better methods of correction. Because if all methods of correction are equally correct, we cannot avoid nihilistic relativism in the sense of "anything goes." If all methods of correcting sentiments are equally valid, then it follows that all sentiments and consequent moral judgements are equally morally valid. But is there such a thing as a method or principle of correcting sentiments within a naturalistic framework? The need to correct sentiments leads us back to the temptation of objective, ahistorical principles or entities, because it seems that the correction of emotions must be done by something higher than emotions.

However, I take it that it is possible to pursue a method of correcting sentiments for moral progress without positing ahistorical, non-natural entities. And that is to take Hume's "general point of view." This chapter aims to justify the general point of view as a method of moral problem-solving within a naturalistic framework. To do so, I will first expound on the features and functions of the general point of view in Hume's ethics. It serves as a mechanism to prevent moral judgements based on sympathy from being distorted by principles of association such as contiguity and resemblance. It also enables us to base our judgement on its tendency to produce "usual effects" rather than on the actual effects of any character trait. Next, I discuss why it is necessary for our lives. That is, I attempt to justify the general point of view. The general point of view is justified because it contributes to the resolution of our conflicts. Finally, I discuss how the problem of relativism from the general point of view can be overcome. The general point of view is a view that can be adopted on the basis of conversation or codeliberation, which contributes to overcoming the subjective biases of individual judges.

2. Sympathy and Moral Judgement

As a naturalist, Hume not only never appeals to non-natural, transcendental entities in explaining the origins of morality and the principles that govern our everyday moral judgements, but also insists that the moral instructions and ideals we ought to pursue reflect our own human nature. In other words, he is a thorough naturalist, not only in the explanation of moral phenomena but also in the moral justification. In particular, he argues that reflection and contemplation on the moral sentiments that underlie our everyday moral judgements, or the capacity for "sympathy" as the sources of moral sentiments, will bring morality closer to our hearts. Indeed, he is convinced, the sense of morals "must certainly acquire new force, when reflecting on itself, it approves of those principles, from whence it is deriv'd, and finds nothing but what is great and good in its rise and origin."[3] He has the ambition to demonstrate that the moral truths revealed by his ethics "represent virtue in all her genuine and most engaging charms, and make us approach her with ease, familiarity, and affection."[4]

And I think one of the things that makes Hume's understanding of morality so compelling in the context of his ethics is that it functions as a way to overcome conflict. Specifically, Hume emphasises that each person has his own particular interests, and says that we can never have a smooth conversation if we judge only from our own "peculiar point of view."[5] And he says, we must avoid inconsistency of attitude and prevent "contradiction."[6] As an example of a "peculiar point of view," Hume gives the view that we make moral judgements

[3] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 619.

[4] Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 279.

[5] Hume, *Treatise*, p. 581.

[6] Ibid., p. 583.

about people "merely from the tendency of their characters to our own benefit, or to that of our friends."[7] If we form moral and political judgements based solely on the interests of ourselves, our families, or our friends, we will not be able to overcome the constant moral problems and conflicts that arise in living together.

And the concept that lies at the heart of morality as a mechanism for conflict resolution is the general point of view. An understanding of the need for a general point of view should begin with an appreciation of Hume's account of moral judgment and sympathy. Hume makes the strongest and most convincing argument that the source of morality is not reason but sentiment. In particular, sympathy, as a pro-social emotion, is seen not only as a source of moral motivation, enabling moral action, but also as a source of moral distinction. In Hume's ethics, sympathy is the primary mechanism for explaining moral phenomena and a source of moral justification. Hume defines sympathy as the "propensity" we have "to receive by communication [the] inclinations and sentiments [of others], however different from, or even contrary to, our own."[8] In other words, this psychological mechanism of sympathy allows us to enter into the opinions and feelings of others.

More specifically, in the Treatise, Hume explains the mechanism of sympathy on the basis of associationism. According to associationism, the understanding of others through sympathy occurs through the following process. We first perceive the emotions or mental

[7] Ibid.

[8] Hume, *Treatise*, p. 316.

states of others through the results of their emotions, or "external signs" in their "countenance and conversation."[9] We form ideas about other people's passions through external signs. And these ideas are converted into corresponding impressions.[10] For example, if we see someone laughing out loud, we may form a notion of joy from their facial expression and voice, which is then converted into an impression of joy. That is, we feel joy just by perceiving someone laughing. On the other hand, the perception of someone who has suffered a severe physical injury and is groaning and making a contorted face forms an idea of pain, which can be converted into an impression of pain for us. This mechanism of sympathy also allows us to feel the effects of a person's character or action. If a characteristic or action causes someone pain, we can sympathise with that pain, and conversely, we can sympathise with the pleasure that a particular characteristic or action brings. These sympathetic pains and pleasures are the basis of our moral judgments. The pain and pleasure that certain characters, intentions, or actions can evoke is the source of moral distinction. Hume says:

Now since the distinguishing impressions, by which moral good or evil is known, are nothing but particular pains or pleasures; it follows, that in all enquiries concerning these moral distinctions, it will be sufficient to show the principles, which make us feel a satisfaction or uneasiness from the survey of any character, in order to satisfy us why the character is laudable or blameable. An action, or sentiment, or character is virtuous or vicious; why? because its view causes a pleasure or uneasiness of a particular kind. In giving a reason, therefore, for the pleasure or uneasiness, we sufficiently explain the vice or

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[9] Ibid., p. 317.

[10] Hume's explanation of the mechanism of this sympathy is as follows: "When any affection is infus'd by sympathy, it is at first known only by its effects, and by those external signs in the countenance and conversation, which convey an idea of it. This idea is presently converted into an impression, and acquires such a degree of force and vivacity, as to become the very passion itself, and produce an equal emotion, as any original affection. See *Treatise*, p. 317; When I see the effects of passion in the voice and gesture of any person, my mind immediately passes from these effects to their causes, and forms such a lively idea of the passion, as is presently converted into the passion itself. In like manner, when I perceive the causes of any emotion, my mind is convey'd to the effects, and is actuated with a like emotion." See *Treatise*, p. 576.

virtue. To have the sense of virtue, is nothing but to feel a satisfaction of a particular kind from the contemplation of a character.[11]

Moral approval is based on our sympathy with the pleasure the character of an actor or his or her actions bring to others, and disapproval is based on the pain they cause. Thus, sympathy is the source of moral distinction. The primary focus of this sympathy-based approval and disapproval is the character of the actor. What character is felt to be virtuous, and conversely, what character is felt to be vicious? As he says in his Treatise virtue is "whatever mental quality in ourselves or others gives us a satisfaction, by the survey or reflexion, is of course virtuous; as everything of this nature, that gives uneasiness, is vicious. [12]

So what character traits give us satisfaction and pleasing sentiment, and what traits give us uneasiness? A person's character trait can give us pleasure if it is useful or agreeable to himself. It can also give us pleasure if it is useful or agreeable to others. On the other hand, if a quality is "harmful" or "disagreeable" to the owner of the quality or to others, it gives "uneasiness" to those who perceive it.[13] So why do we feel differently about a character based on these criteria?

The mechanism of sympathy is the basis of this perception. As mentioned earlier, sympathy

[11] Hume, *Treatise*, p. 471.

[12] Ibid., pp. 574-75. A similar statement appears in the *Enquiry*: "It maintains, that morality is determined by sentiment. It defines virtue to be whatever mental action or quality gives to a spectator the pleasing sentiment of approbation; and vice the contrary." *Enquiry*, p. 289.

[13] See Hume, *Enquiry*, p. 268.

allows us to vicariously experience the inclinations and sentiments of others. Thus, the mechanism of sympathy allows us to vicariously experience the pleasure and pain of those who will be affected by a character trait. It is this sympathy for pleasure and pain that is the moral sentiment.[14] In summary, we judge as virtuous those things that bring pleasure and happiness to others and to the possessors of those traits, and, conversely, we judge as vicious those things that cause pain and displeasure. And these judgements are based on the pleasures and pains that the character traits evoke, which arise because we sympathise with those who would be affected by them. Hume's characterisation of these moral sentiments makes clear what Hume's ethics is all about. He argues that the objects of moral judgement are those that cause pleasure and pain to people in a more or less stable way, and that we judge them because we are sympathetic beings. So utility is the reason for moral judgement, and sympathy is the source of moral judgement. However, reducing the basis of moral judgement to a purely sympathy raises two problems, which I will discuss below.

3. Limitations of sympathy

Uncorrected sympathy does not seem to conform to our actual moral judgements, nor does it seem to be the standard of moral judgement that we should seek: it is neither sufficient as an explanation of moral phenomena nor as a standard of justified moral judgments. For the way in which sympathetic responses are manifested seems to be highly subjective and

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[14] Hume clearly argues that it is inconsistent with our morality that self-love or private interest is the basis of our morality, because our moral judgements sometimes praise a person's actions as virtuous even when they may be harmful to us. In this respect, Hume says: "[T]he voice of nature and experience seems plainly to oppose the selfish theory. We frequently bestow praise on virtuous actions, performed in very distant ages and remote countries; where the utmost subtilty of imagination would not discover any appearance of self-interest, or find any connexion of our present happiness and security with events so widely separated from us. A generous, a brave, a noble deed, performed by an adversary, commands our approbation; while in its consequences it may be acknowledged prejudicial to our particular interest." *Enquiry*, p. 215-16.

variable. Our common sense tells us that moral judgements are not solipsistic and unstable, but rather more or less universal and stable. Furthermore, if highly contingent and subjective moral judgements were all we had to rely on, we would not be able to resolve situations of moral conflict, or problematic situations. For the individual circumstances and interests of each person would be so diverse. Thus, for Hume's ethics to succeed in claiming that sentiments are the source of moral distinctions, judgements, and moral problem-solving, it must be shown how the variability and subjectivity of moral sentiments can be overcome. This is the role of the general point of view in Hume's ethics. So why is the operation of our sympathy unstable and subjective? It is because the operation of sympathy is influenced by the associative principles of resemblance, cause and effect, and contiguity. Hume says that when these principles are applied to morality, the following phenomena emerge.

> But as this sympathy is very variable, it may be thought, that our sentiments of morals must admit of all the same variations. We sympathize more with persons contiguous to us, than with persons remote from us: With our acquaintance, than with strangers: With our countrymen, than with foreigners. …… Now 'tis evident, that these sentiments, whence-ever they are deriv'd, must vary according to the distance or contiguity of the objects; nor can I feel the same lively pleasure from the virtues of a person, who liv'd in Greece two thousand years ago, that I feel from the virtues of a familiar friend and acquaintance.[15]

That is, "all sentiments of blame or praise are variable, according to our situation of nearness or remoteness, with regard to the person blam'd or prais'd, and according to the present disposition of our mind."[16] For instance, sympathy seems to operate more readily and strongly between persons neighbouring each other than between persons at a distance,

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[15] Hume, *Treatise*, pp 580-81.

[16] Hume, *Treatise*, p. 582.

between acquaintances than strangers, and between countrymen than foreigners. However, our moral judgements seem to be less influenced by contiguity and similarity between the judge and the judged. That is, Hume says in the Treatise, "notwithstanding this variation of our sympathy, we give the same approbation to the same moral qualities in China as in England."[17] This variability in sympathy seems to refute the claim that the capacity for moral judgment is based on sympathy. This is because sympathy is directly influenced by the associative principles of resemblance, cause and effect, and contiguity, whereas moral judgment seems to be much less affected by them. In other words, uncorrected sympathy, as Geoffrey Sayre-McCord puts it, "remains parochial and variable in ways moral judgement is not."[18] In this sense, it can be argued that viewing sympathy, or sentiment, as a basis for moral judgment is an untenable position. I will call this objection the "variability objection" after Rachel Cohon.[19]

Along with the variability objection, Hume's counter-argument to the claim that sympathy is the basis for moral judgement is the "virtue in rags" objection.[20] The gist of this objection is as follows: The operation of sympathy is strongly influenced by the actual consequences of pleasure and pain caused by a character. For example, consider two soldiers with similar levels of patriotism. One is physically injured and unable to do much in the war, while the other is relatively healthy and able to serve his country. In this situation, our common sense

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[17] Ibid., p. 581.

[18] Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, "On Why Hume's 'General Point of View' Isn't Ideal–and Shouldn't Be," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 11, no. 1 (1994), p. 207.

[19] See Rachel Cohon, *Hume's Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 131.

[20] The term "virtues in rag objection" also follows Cohon's usage. See Cohon, *Hume's Morality,* p. 131.

moral judgement would be to judge them similarly, even though the outcomes of their actions are different, reflecting their physical differences. Uncorrected sympathy, on the other hand, is markedly influenced by the results it produces in practice, approving only the character of those whose actions have produced substantially beneficial results based on the results they have produced in practice, even if those actions are based on the same character and the same intentions. Our common sense moral judgement would be that "[v]irtue in rags is still virtue."[21] But a purely sympathetic judgement would fail to evaluate "virtue in rags" as "virtue." In other words, our moral distinctions and judgements seem to be based on the consequences that a character can have beyond the intervention of contingent events and conditions, when those events and conditions prevent the exercise of a particular character, whereas sympathy operates without removing the constraints of contingent events and conditions. Unmodified sympathy is concerned with the actual effects of a character, whereas moral judgement is concerned with its usual rather than its actual effects. Putting the two objections together, to borrow from Jacqueline Taylor, both the "variability objection" and the "virtue in rags objection" show that sympathy "makes possible or facilitates many of our non-moral affections as well."[22] Of course, as a sentimentalist, Hume's intention in presenting the "variability objection" and the "virtue in rags objection" is to make his sentimentalist position stronger by rebutting these objections. And the basis for rebutting these objections is the "general point of view." Hume explains the general point of view as

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[21] On this, Hume says: "Where a person is possess'd of a character, that in its natural tendency is beneficial to society, we esteem him virtuous, and are delighted with the view of his character, even tho' particular accidents prevent its operation, and incapacitate him from being serviceable to his friends and country. Virtue in rags is still virtue; and the love, which it procures, attends a man into a dungeon or desart, where the virtue can no longer be exerted in action, and is lost to all the world." *Treatise*, p. 584.

[22] Jacqueline Taylor, *Reflecting Subjects: Passion, Sympathy, and Society in Hume's Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 104.

follows.

> Our situation, with regard both to persons and things, is in continual fluctuation; and a man, that lies at a distance from us, may, in a little time, become a familiar acquaintance. Besides, every particular man has a peculiar position with regard to others; and 'tis impossible we cou'd ever converse together on any reasonable terms, were each of us to consider characters and persons, only as they appear from his peculiar point of view. In order, therefore, to prevent those continual contradictions, and arrive at a more stable judgment of things, we fix on some steady and general points of view; and always, in our thoughts, place ourselves in them . . ..[23]

The "general point of view" is presented as a way to correct our sentiments by reducing the effects of contiguity, resemblance, and causality on our moral judgements. So how does the general point of view specifically correct and constrain our sentiments so that we can overcome the intervention of principles of association in our moral judgements? Hume says that in occupying the general point of view, we judge the actor's character traits by confining ourselves to and sympathizing with the people with whom he regularly interacts; that is, we "confine our view to that narrow circle, in which any person moves, in order to form a judgment of his moral character. When the natural tendency of his passions leads him to be serviceable and useful within his sphere, we approve of his character . . ."[24] Here, Hume's "narrow circle" refers to the people with whom the actor regularly interacts. Thus, from a general point of view, we make a moral judgement about an actor's character based on whether the actor's character tends to benefit or harm those in the narrow circle on a regular

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[23] Hume, *Treatise*, pp. 581-82.

[24] Hume, *Treatise*, p. 602.

basis. Consequently, we approve or disapprove of a person on the basis of the influence of his character "upon those who have intercourse with" him, without regard to whether those in his group of associates are far from or close to us, our foreigners or countrymen.[25]

To the second objection, the virtue in rags objection, Hume responds by emphasising the workings of the imagination, which the general point of view presupposes: "Where a character is, in every respect, fitted to be beneficial to society, the imagination passes easily from the cause to the effect, without considering that there are still some circumstances wanting to render the cause a complete one."[26] In other words, when we adopt the general view, our imagination passes from the cause(character) to the effect, even if the effect is not realised. The imagination required by the general point of view allows us to make moral judgements based on outcomes that do not actually happen. In short, the general point of view prevents morally contingent factors such as closeness and similarity to the actor, personal interests, and interference with the effectiveness of the actor's character from intervening in moral judgements.

The general point of view has three morally important characteristics. It is other-directed, not self-absorbed, in that it considers not the effect of a character on the spectator but its effect on a narrow circle; it is a perspective that promotes prosocial judgement; and for Hume, the general perspective is a perspective that promotes prosocial actions in that moral distinctions

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[25] See Ibid., p. 606.

[26] Ibid., p. 585.

or judgements directly affect moral motivation. Second, it reduces the influence of principles of association such as resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect on moral judgment; that is, it reduces the influence of subjective and contingent differences in judges on moral judgment. Third, it reduces the influence of external factors, such as luck, on moral judgements, since judgements are based not on the actual results of acts of a certain character, but on the tendency of that character to produce usual effects.

The problem, however, is that Hume's ethics is not content to merely explain moral phenomena; it aims to justify morality. In particular, I argue that Hume's ethics attempts to justify the function of morality in terms of the resolution of moral conflicts. It is an important pillar of this chapter to argue that a key concept for the justification of morality is the general point of view. Therefore, I will discuss why judgements about an actor's character, based on their impact on those with whom he regularly interacts, are necessary for conflict resolution.

4. **Why do we need a general point of view?**

Hume's ethics is a project that involves not only the explanation of moral phenomena but also the justification of morality. I will argue that the general view can be justified by giving reasons why the three features of the general point of view presented above are necessary for moral dialogue and the resolution of moral problems.

4-1. Why do we need sympathy?

First, why should our moral judgments be based on sympathy, or other-directed emotions,

rather than on aggression towards others or concern for self-interest? Consider first the case where aggression, the destruction and suffering of others' lives, is the source of morality. Indeed, Hume seriously considers the moral judgements of people who are "absolutely malicious and spiteful."[27] Their moral judgements would take the opposite form to those we usually think of as moral. They will want to encourage things that cause suffering and disorder in others, and they will want to be of that character themselves. Conversely, such people will condemn those things that benefit others and contribute to their happiness. Therefore, as Hume's diagnosis suggests, a moral judgement based on sympathy rather than aggression and malice towards others is much better in terms of contribution "to the good of mankind."[28]

Another case is when moral judgement is reduced to a purely self-interested consideration rather than aggression towards others; that is, when moral judgement reflects only the effect of an act or character on the spectator himself, rather than the effect on others. For Hume, this would be considered a situation in which everyone would only "speak the language of self-love."[29] The problem with speaking only the language of self-love is that a society in which self-love dominates judgement, action, and language becomes incapable of moral conversation and therefore incapable of resolving conflict.

There is a police officer who faithfully patrols the town every night. He feels responsible

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[27] Hume, *Enquiry*, p. 226.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Hume, *Enquiry*, p. 272.

for his job and believes that it is worthwhile to fight fatigue and dedicate himself to his profession because what he does contributes to the welfare of others. The moral judgements of the villagers, except for him, are made solely on the basis of 'self-interest'. This character and sense of responsibility would be considered a moral virtue for someone who carries large amounts of money for business every day. Conversely, it would be considered a vice that should be condemned and punished by those who make their living by stealing. The families of businessmen would praise such a police officer and say that he should be paid more. The families of the thieves, on the other hand, would say that he should be expelled from the society. In other words, if only self-interest or self-love is the basis for moral judgements, it becomes impossible to discuss and agree on what is morally better. In such a situation, the conflict will, at best, end with the victory of the side with the larger number of people, or the side with the greater physical strength, winning by oppression.

On the other hand, if we allow sympathy-based moral judgements to serve as the basis for moral dialogue, the situation is much better. We can judge that a police officer's integrity and concern for others generally contribute to the happiness of others. This is because we can sympathise with the suffering of the victims of theft, the relief when such a crime is prevented, and the joy when the perpetrator of a crime that has already been committed is caught and the money is recovered. On the other hand, sympathy for the physical and psychological pain that stealing causes people will generate disgust and antipathy towards the thief. In other words, we will be able to reach sentimental convergence more easily with a dialogue based on sympathy for the happiness and pain of others than with a dialogue based on the language of "self-love."

More specifically, we all have different conditions of life, different circumstances, different

interests and different concerns. Accordingly, there is no consensus on moral judgements based purely on self-interest. As Hume said, "[o]ur situation, with regard both to persons and things, is in continual fluctuation."[30] Therefore, if moral judgements are based solely on the private interests of the judges, univocal agreement on character traits would be impossible. In order to secure a non-arbitrary "rule of right"[31] and to evaluate characters as virtuous and others as vices in a certain stable way, we need to go beyond judgements based on self-interest. To ensure that there is a nonarbitrary way to distinguish "a right or a wrong taste in morals,"[32] we need to avoid reducing judgment for moral discourse to the "language of self-love."

4-2. Why do we need to overcome the limitations of sympathy?

As we have seen, the general point of view has a morally important feature in that it must be based on sympathy, because judgements based on sympathy contribute in a better way to the overcoming of conflict and to socially harmonious living than judgements based on aggression or self-interest. However, we should note that the general point of view is introduced to overcome the limitations of sympathy. And what Hume recognises as one of the limitations of sympathy is the problem of variation. Although better than judgements based on pure self-interest, as we have seen, the variations of contiguity, cause and effect, and resemblance that operate in sympathy make it difficult to expect a convergence of our moral judgements, because different people are affected by variations of contiguity, cause

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[30] Hume, *Treatise*, p. 581.

[31] Hume, *Enquiry*, p. 272.

[32] Hume, *Treatise*, p. 547.

and effect, and resemblance to different degrees and in different directions with respect to the character trait.

For example, if only uncorrected sympathy is at work, a Chinese person will more easily and strongly sympathise with the pleasures and pains of a Chinese person, and an English person will more readily sympathise with those of an English person. Thus, uncorrected sympathy may lead a British judge to rate a British benefactor and a Chinese judge to rate a Chinese benefactor as having a higher level of character, even though the benefactors are of equal quality. Imagine a global award for contributions to the well-being of humanity, with nominees coming from many different countries for contributions to peace and well-being. If judges insist on giving high marks only to those who contribute to their own country based on uncorrected empathy, it is difficult to expect a stable consensus on the outcome of the judgement. Thus, judgements based on uncorrected sympathy may differ in content from those based on self-interest, but they do not lead us to a common understanding. Therefore, mechanisms to overcome variations of contiguity, cause and effect, and resemblance are required for smooth moral discourse and conflict resolution.

Another thing we should note is that the general point of view requires us to base our moral judgements not on the actual effects of a character, but on its tendency to produce usual effects. Why, then, should we judge a character on the basis of its tendency to produce usual effects in a narrow circle, and not on the basis of the actual effects it will produce on mankind as a whole and in the future? In order to maximise welfare or happiness, shouldn't we judge a character or action based on the actual effects it will produce? In Hume's view, we shouldn't, because we can't know how an act or character will affect the universe in the long run. Hume will use the limits of human capacity as a basis for his answer. Hume understands

morality to be grounded in, and must be grounded in, human nature, and therefore it must reflect human limitations, because morality is a matter of practice, and there are limits to human practice. Therefore, demands for the physically, psychologically, or epistemologically impossible cannot be legitimate moral demands. Moral judgements based on the actual consequences of actions to which we have no epistemological access cannot be the basis for conflict resolution. As Sayre-McCord puts it, "[i]gnorant as we all inevitably are of the actual, subtle, and long-term effects of each person's character on everyone who might be affected, even earnest attempts by all to determine how an Ideal Observer would respond would leave us without a common standard around which to coordinate our actions and evaluations."[33]

Imagine if we made moral judgements about an action or character based on the actual consequences of that action or character: would we be able to condemn the brutal character of a murderer who committed premeditated murder with a univocal, stable voice? Suppose that the man he killed was in fact planning a bombing, and that it cannot be ruled out that without the murder, the bombing would have killed at least 500 people. The murderer, of course, had no idea that he was planning a bombing when he committed the crime. So, based on the actual consequences of the murder, should we judge his action of murder to be morally praiseworthy and his character to be virtuous? Judgements based on actual outcomes cannot so easily converge on a single point, because it cannot be said with certainty that the murder victim's bombing would have succeeded. We cannot completely rule out the possibility that he would have been caught by the police in the act, that he would have abandoned his plan,

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[33] Sayre-McCord, "On Why Hume's 'General Point of View' Isn't Ideal–and Shouldn't Be," p. 218.

or that the bomb would have misfired due to physical or chemical mutations. There are further complicating factors. We cannot rule out the possibility that one of the people who would have been killed in the bombing would have been a person who would have made a revolutionary contribution to solving the world's hunger by completely solving humanity's food problem. Conversely, we cannot rule out the possibility that one of the people who would have died would have become the next Hitler.

We can never know the full actual effect of any character or action on the whole universe, for there are so many different pathways by which a particular character or action may ripple through the universe over a long period of time. Therefore, if moral judgements were based on actual consequences, "each would still be speaking from her own peculiar take on a point of view she could not possibly occupy."[34] Therefore, it would be impossible to resolve conflicts on that basis. We can therefore understand Hume's statement that "the tendencies of actions and characters, not their real accidental consequences, are regarded alone in our moral determinations"[35] along these lines.

4-3. Why overcome conflict?

There are two main reasons why a general point of view should be oriented toward other-oriented sympathy rather than self-interested desire, should overcome differences caused by distance and resemblance, and should consider the tendency of a character or action to produce usual effects rather than its long-term actual consequences. First, judgements based on sympathy are more effective in creating a mutually beneficial society than judgements

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[34] Sayre-McCord, "On Why Hume's 'General Point of View' Isn't Ideal–and Shouldn't Be," p. 218.

[35] Hume, *Enquiry*, p. 228.

based on aggression or self-interest. Second, uncorrected sympathy-based judgements cannot lead to consensus on moral language. The first point can be taken relatively unquestioningly. A society that seeks contributions to the well-being of others and praises the act and character that produces them is likely to be a more reciprocal society than one that seeks the pain, misfortune and misery of others and encourages the action and character that produces pain and misery. It seems plausible that a society that values the welfare of others, and praises those character traits that value it, is likely to be more mutually beneficial than a society in which judgments and actions that value only self-interest and have no regard for the suffering and happiness of others prevail.

But the question is: why do we need to be able to communicate and agree on moral standards of virtue and vice, right and wrong, good and bad? If each person judges and acts according to their own perspective and capacity for sympathy, why do we need to agree on moral standards? Disagreements, differences, or conflicts in social life sometimes seem to be inevitable, and I don't see them as bad things. I like to play the piano in my spare time, you prefer to play tennis, and we may not understand why each other's hobbies are attractive. There doesn't seem to be any problem here. In fact, enjoying a variety of hobbies seems rather desirable. Let's say you and I are sitting across from each other eating chicken, and I like chicken thighs and don't like chicken breasts. You, on the other hand, find chicken thighs disgusting and chicken breasts a delicacy. I welcome these differences. Why does moral language need to converge at a certain point? Because there are times when our judgements and our actions cannot be realised simultaneously: there are conflict situations that necessarily require some kind of coordination.

Imagine that my family and your family live in a small town with only one doctor. One day,

my daughter has a severe case of measles, and we go to the doctor for treatment. Less than five minutes after we arrive, you arrive at the hospital carrying your daughter, who has been in a serious car accident. I know that your daughter is more critical, but the sympathy I feel for my daughter's pain overwhelms my sympathy for your daughter's pain. You, on the other hand, are so focused on your daughter's pain that my daughter's pain doesn't even register. My sympathy judges that my daughter should be treated first, and your sympathy does the opposite. One of the two judgements cannot be true. Someone's sympathy must be abandoned.

In the above situation, the conflict would be unlikely to be resolved peacefully if each side insisted on basing their judgements on their uncorrected sympathy. These moral situations require us to come to a common ground of understanding that is mutually acceptable and shared. And such a shared understanding would be possible by reducing the impact of variations that bias sympathy. In the above problematic situation, the distribution of medical services should reflect facts such as who gets to the hospital first or whose condition is more serious, rather than whether the people who need them are your daughter or my daughter. In other words, not only judgment based on simple selfishness but also uncorrected sympathy is insufficient to overcome conflict and adjust interests. It requires "some steady and general points of view."

To see the need for the general point of view from another angle, let me add some conditions to the above problematic situation. My daughter's condition is less severe than your daughter's. However, my daughter's grandson later became a biologist who made a major contribution to solving humanity's food problem, while your daughter's grandson became the most sophisticated and organised arsonist, responsible for the deaths of more than 3,000

people in a series of arsons. If this was the reality, when the two girls arrived at the hospital at almost the same time, should the doctor have been unconditionally committed to my daughter's treatment and actively refused to treat your daughter? From an omniscient perspective, we might say that's what the doctor should have done at that time. But when we have to make judgements and take action, when we have to reconcile our interests, we cannot know the full extent of the consequences of the traces of the girls' lives. We cannot know what the actual consequences of any character or action will be for the whole of humanity or the whole of the universe in the infinite passage of time; that is, it is impossible for us to approach it. Therefore, we cannot resolve conflicts on the basis of the actual consequences of certain characters and actions.

To summarise, if all our judgements and actions were based solely on self-interest and not on sympathy as any kind of altruistic or prosocial emotion, we would never be able to overcome conflicts due to constant conflicts of interest. If our sympathetic responses become moral judgments in themselves because of the resemblance, cause and effect, and contiguity, that affect our perceptions, we will not be able to reach an agreement to resolve disagreements. If we try to base our moral judgements on the actual consequences, rather than the tendency to the usual consequences of a character, act, or institution, we will never know what character, act, or institution to pursue. And this failure to reconcile consensus will lead to intense division and conflict. The normative basis for taking a general point of view, so to speak, is that it contributes to resolving conflicts and living in harmony.

5. Overcoming Relativism

Hume's primary object of moral judgment is character. But Hume's ethics does not preclude

moral judgements about actions, in the sense that someone's actions reflect his character.[36]

And I think Hume's general point of view can be applied not only to character and actions, but also to institutions and policies, because institutions and policies, like people's character, can cause people pain and pleasure in a stable way, and we can improve or worsen them through our reflection and actions. They are properly subject to moral judgement in the sense that they are under our influence and have a constant tendency to cause us pleasure and pain.[37]

But there's a problem with applying a general point of view to characters, acts, or institutions. It is relativism. The general point of view is a means of overcoming interpersonal conflict, and its justification, therefore, lies in the fact that it allows us to overcome completely contingent, subjective, and relative judgements and positions, and arrive at more stable, accessible, and univocal judgments. But simply because it is better than selfish judgements, judgments based on principles of association, and judgments based on long-term practical consequences, does not mean that it is completely free from the charge of relativism, for relativity and subjectivity can appear among general points of view. In other words, even if we base our judgements on altruism, overcome the principles of association, and base them

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[36] See Hume, *Treatise*, p. 575.

[37] This position resonates with Cohon's position that we need to interpret Hume as saying that the general point of view serves as the basis for judging not only natural but also artificial virtues. Cohon has the following to say about this: "[T] he artificial and natural virtues are not divided into separate groups for separate examination (indeed, the distinction is barely present in that work), and the "social" virtues of benevolence and justice are handled together. Consequently, Hume has to include the proper perspective from which to evaluate justice and injustice (that of the whole community), as well as the proper perspective from which to evaluate benevolence (that of the benevolent person and his direct associates) in his discussion of the common point of view. And his detailed account of the enlivening of ideas as a result of their relations to self is left out of the second Enquiry. So Hume's emphasis there is simply on finding a point of view that will be the same for all evaluators and will apply to all persons as potential evaluees. What he says on this topic, though, is perfectly consistent with his holding the view that with respect to the natural virtues, the common point of view is that of the person evaluated and those who have direct dealings with him." Cohon, *Hume's Morality*, pp. 149-50.

on the "tendency" of the usual effects of a character or act, we may not be able to overcome the relativity between judges. What, then, is the exact nature of the relativity between general points of view?

A general point of view is one based on sympathy for those affected by a character, act, or institution. People in the circle of influence may have different reactions to the same character and institution. For example, faced with the same economic hardship, people react differently. Some are willing to accept it and work to overcome it. Others become despondent and blame the irresponsible community for their poverty. So, should our general points of view be to focus our sympathy on those who are trying to overcome economic hardship on their own, or should we listen to the voices of those who are filled with animosity towards the community? Of course, the simple answer is that we should listen to and reflect equally the reactions and opinions of a wide range of people whenever possible. But that would be woefully naive. For resources and human effort are finite. It is not possible in most cases to carry out an act or policy that equally reflects the opinions of all people. But we still have to make decisions in conflict situations. It's not enough to simply listen to opinions; we need to incorporate their responses into our judgements. So how should we weigh the various opinions?

There is one simple way to do this. The moral significance of a response is calculated by placing all responses on an equal footing and multiplying the response by the number of people. If there are 100 people arguing for a drastic redistributive policy in the face of economic hardship, and 1 person denying the need for it, then the person taking the general point of view should be 100 times more sympathetic to the voice of the person emphasising

the need for a redistributive policy. But this is clearly problematic, because, as we have seen, the general point of view is presented not simply as a way of explaining how we make moral judgements, but as a way of deriving justified moral judgements.

Suppose we are considering whether slavery should exist or not from a general point of view. The owners of slaves argue for the continuation of slavery by appealing to the economic hardship that its abolition would cause them and their families. From a general point of view, we can sympathise with the suffering that the abolition of slavery would cause them; that is, a person who has taken a general point of view can sympathise with their difficulties and adversity in terms of what such an institution tends to do to the slaveholders, regardless of the consequences it would have for himself as a judge. It cannot be ruled out that even the slaves themselves under slavery might advocate the continuation of slavery. They are anxious that they cannot lead an autonomous life after the abolition of slavery, and that life without a master would be painful. Likewise, we can sympathise with their anxiety and frustration from a general point of view. In this way, there are 100 people who approve of slavery, including slave owners and slaves. On the other hand, there is only one slave who is against slavery. He asks us to sympathise with the suffering of the slaves, including their physical pain, deprivation of opportunities, and the misery of a life of servitude. Not only do "sometimes the wounded do not even cry,"[38] as Kitcher puts it, but they sometimes have a "false consciousness"[39] that their unjust oppression is justified. One voice of suffering, no matter how desperate, seems unlikely to overwhelm 100 voices of anxiety and despair. Even

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[38] Kitcher, *Moral Progress*, p. 30.

[39] Ibid., p. 41.

if the judgement is not based on self-interest, we may be more easily drawn to the 100 voices, even if they do not particularly resemble the judge, do not have a special connection with the judge, or are not particularly close in space and time with the judge.

Of this limitation of the general point of view, it may be said that it is a limitation which the general point of view can overcome since it requires us to consider the tendency to usual consequences rather than the actual long-term consequences of any character or institution. However, it is questionable whether consideration of the usual consequences of an act can be independent of the reactions of those in front of us. That is, consideration of the usual consequences of an act or institution seems to depend on the reactions of those who are affected by that act or institution or similar acts or institutions. Consequently, in these circumstances, even if the general point of view emphasises the consideration of the general consequences of a character, act, or institution, it seems unlikely that it can be expected to overcome immoral bias. In other words, even if we take the general point of view, we cannot completely eliminate bias from our understanding of those affected by an action, character, or institution.

They can arise from ignorance of facts about the impact of particular characters, actions, or institutions. It can also occur when individuals who take a general point of view display an over- or under-sympathetic attitude towards a particular issue. Even if we take a general point of view, we may still be ignorant of the specifics and aspects of slaves' lives under slavery, and even if we know a lot about it, we may sympathise more strongly with the slave owners' economic losses than with the reality of the slaves' miserable lives.

It is important to note that there are mechanisms in Hume's ethics to overcome the limitations of this general point of view. Hume does not use the phrase "the general point of view" but rather "general points of view."[40] From the outset, Hume knows that there is no single general point of view, and as a device for constraining the unrestricted branching of these various general points of view, he emphasises reasoning and conversation for a clearer understanding and better deliberation of moral problematic situations. Hume argues that the fullest possible understanding of natural facts is a prerequisite for moral deliberation and judgement. He states that moral inquiry requires an understanding and exploration of the facts involved in a problematic situation.

But in moral deliberations, we must be acquainted, before-hand, with all the objects, and all their relations to each other; and from a comparison of the whole, fix our choice or approbation. No new fact to be ascertained: No new relation to be discovered. All the circumstances of the case are supposed to be laid before us, ere we can fix any sentence of blame or approbation. If any material circumstance be yet unknown or doubtful, we must first employ our enquiry or intellectual faculties to assure us of it; and must suspend for a time all moral decision or sentiment. While we are ignorant, whether a man were aggressor or not, how can we determine whether the person who killed him, be criminal or innocent?[41]

But in order to pave the way for such a [moral] sentiment, and give a proper discernment of its object, it is often necessary, we find, that much reasoning should precede, that nice distinctions be made, just conclusions drawn, distant comparisons formed, complicated relations examined, and general facts fixed and ascertained. … There are just grounds to conclude, that moral beauty partakes much of this latter species, and demands the assistance of our intellectual faculties, in order to give it a suitable influence

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[40] Hume, *Treatise*, pp. 581-582.

[41] Hume, *Enquiry*, p. 290.

on the human mind.[42]

Hume emphasises that moral inquiry requires an understanding of the situation in question, which in turn requires a rigorous process of reasoning. His emphasis on the role of sentiment in morality in no way implies that he denies the role of reasoning. Proper criticism and punishment of a criminal requires a clear understanding of his intentions and plans at the time of the crime, as well as the extent of the harm caused to the victims of the crime. Similarly, moral reflection on the existence of slavery requires an understanding of the details of how it works for slaves, what suffering it causes, and what opportunities it deprives them of. This understanding, however, requires the active exercise of the intellectual faculty of reasoning. Hume emphasises that reasoning and reflection are necessary for justified moral judgements. In Simon Blackburn's words, Hume and the Humeans emphasise the need to overcome "failures of memory, of knowledge, of attention to relevant factors, of balance, of foresight"[43] for better moral reflection and judgement.

The problem, however, does not lie in our understanding of non-normative facts. It seems that even if we take a general point of view as described above, our sympathy can still be subject to bias. In order words, even if we remove the variables of contiguity, resemblance, and causality to the objects of our sympathy, our sympathy can vary considerably from judge to judge. This is because our innate nature and upbringing can determine how much we sympathise with others and what issues or situations make it easier or harder for us to sympathise. For example, some judges may be more sensitive to the mental anxiety of others

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[42] Ibid., p. 173.

[43] Blackburn, *Ruling Passions,* p. 261.

than others, while others may be quite insensitive to the physical pain of others. Some people may even be less sensitive to hunger of people than others, while others may be more sensitive to sleep deprivation and fatigue of people than others. If you can't overcome these variations, you may not be able to overcome the contradictions between the "general point of view." What is needed to overcome the contradictions between these general points of view is conversation. Hume argues for the necessity of conversation as follows.

> The more we converse with mankind, and the greater social intercourse we maintain, the more shall we be familiarized to these general preferences and distinctions, without which our conversation and discourse could scarcely be rendered intelligible to each other. … . The intercourse of sentiments, therefore, in society and conversation, makes us form some general unalterable standard, by which we may approve or disapprove of characters and manners.[44]

If we accept Hume's position, in what way does more intercourse and more conversation contribute to better moral understanding and eventually to the formation of a "general unalterable standard?" Hume is a metaethical anti-realist. As such, he cannot accept that the formation of moral standards is achieved by recognising or representing objective reality that is external to our moral understanding. As an empiricist, Hume also rejects the idea that the perception of a priori principles inherent in reason provides moral standards. He sees morality as having to be based strictly on "the particular fabric and constitution of the human species." So how does human nature contribute to moral reflection and deliberation? I think the insights of contemporary Humeans such as Blackburn, Valerie Tiberius, and James Lenman help to address this question.

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[44] Hume, *Enquiry*, p. 228-29.

As a Humean, Blackburn emphasises that our desires and identities as sources of moral deliberation and reflection are never free from our "natural and acquired dispositions." If there is no transcendental self or will of some sort that can reflect and command beyond our natural and acquired desires and identities, how can we make better moral choices and deliberations? Doesn't the denial of such a perspective or capacity eventually lead to the position that our moral choices are only "arbitrary?" No, because we can reflect on desires and concerns "in the light of other desires and concerns."[45] But our moral deliberation is not solipsistic. This is not just because morality is inherently about solving interpersonal problems. It is because the moral vocabulary, the concepts we must use for moral deliberation, are inherently social and historical. Moral deliberation and reflection that completely transcends the accumulated moral history is neither possible nor desirable. And these moral vocabularies and desires are not completely arbitrary, because "we share enough of a common nature for it to be practically certain that we can find common ground with others when conversation about our aims arises."[46] Reflection and dialogue based on this common ground overcomes our prejudices in the following ways:

> But we, accustomed to society, and to more enlarged reflections, consider, that this man is serving his own country and community; that any man, in the same situation, would do the same; that we ourselves, in like circumstances, observe a like conduct; that, in general, human society is best supported on such maxims: And by these suppositions and views, we correct, in some measure, our ruder and narrower passions.[47]

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[45] Blackburn, *Ruling Passions,* p. 252

[46] Ibid., p. 253.

[47] Hume, *Enquiry*, pp 274-75.

Another thing to note is that some of our desires and commitments are much more stable than others. Some desires are very fleeting and fade away quickly. Some desires are clearly my desires, but I never want to follow them. Others, on the other hand, define who I am and survive the long process of reflection. Tiberius characterises this characteristic of desires as "diachronic stability." And what we cannot give up, what we cannot help but give legitimacy to, even in an ongoing reflective process, qualifies as a candidate for normativity. In this regard, Tiberius says the following:

> Rather, my commitments are normative if I can reflect on them and see that they are stable under scrutiny, and, in fact, it is not the case that I can choose to change just any of the attitudes I have. This scrutiny involves consideration of my reasons for having the commitments I have, and of the relationships between my various commitments, reasons, and attitudes. Reflective scrutiny, on my view, does not result in discovering a law of reason, but it does result in examining the reasons one has in light of the facts, and in coming to develop commitments that are supported by the most refined set of reasons one can find.[48]

These insights from Blackburn and Tiberius resonate with what Lenman calls "the Fact of Stability and the Fact of Commonality"[49] as a justification for a Humean theory of normativity. There are certain things about our aims, concerns, and desires that remain stable over time. There are also aims, concerns and desires that are unique to one's self, but there are also aims, concerns and desires that are shared on a fairly universal level. We can examine them in light of our own aims, concerns, and desires. It seems somewhat circular to

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[48] Valerie Tiberius, "Humean Heroism: Value Commitments and the Source of Normativity," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 81, no. 4 (2000), p. 443.

[49] See James Lenman, "Achieving Objectivity1," *Philosophical Perspectives* 23, no. 1 (2009), pp. 296-97.

reflect on our aims, concerns and desires based on our aims, concerns and desires. However, we can overcome this problem by understanding the holistic structure of our desires. When a project is subject to reflection and codeliberation, it confronts the holistic structure of our desires, because reflection and codeliberation based on holistic desires will make us realise what are the stable and common desires. And the stability and commonality of our desires prevents our projects from falling under the spectre of nihilistic relativism, in the sense of "anything goes." To overcome partiality, we must rely on the holistic nature of our desires, or what Lenman calls "a Big Web of desire."

> Normativity is grounded in desire, not in individual desires considered one by one but in a Big Web of desire that, viewed, as it were, from within, takes on the character of a space of reasons. We escape the charge of arbitrariness because of the horizontal connections that furnish unity and coherence to the web as a whole. And the pattern is not just intrapersonal but, of necessity, interpersonal. We are social creatures who cannot, if we are to have any hope of flourishing, make our normative lives in isolation from each other.[50]

When faced with the question of whether slavery should continue, we can take general points of view. Even if we overcome the principles of association and make moral judgements based on sympathy rather than self-interest, we may still have considerably diverse perspectives and consequent judgements. This is because we have different amounts and levels of information about moral problems, and the scope and extent of our sympathy is significantly influenced by our "natural and acquired dispositions." Overcoming these limitations and achieving emotional alignment for moral conflict resolution requires reflection and conversation. Overcoming the bias of sympathy does not necessarily require objective,

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[50] Lenman, "The That," in *Methodology and Moral Philosophy*, ed. Jussi Suikkanen and Antti Kauppinen (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), p. 157.

absolute moral truth, because some of our desires are influenced by the principles of "the Fact of Stability and the Fact of Commonality." A conversation based on the stability and commonality of passions will contribute to the realisation of the following Humean ideals:

> The intercourse of sentiments, therefore, in society and conversation, makes us form some general inalterable standard, by which we may approve or disapprove of characters and manners. And tho' the heart does not always take part with those general notions, or regulate its love and hatred by them, yet are they sufficient for discourse, and serve all our purposes in company, in the pulpit, on the theatre, and in the schools.[51]

Through reasoning, reflection, and conversation, an expanded understanding of natural facts and the overcoming of biases can lead to better judgements based on general points of view. Importantly, these judgements are also provisional and can be used as a basis for judgements on other ethical problems. For example, a general point of view based on sympathy refined through reasoning and codeliberation might lead to a conclusion that supports the abolition of slavery. And the basis for such a conclusion could be the suffering and deprivation of opportunity of the passive life. The understanding of the suffering of passive life through reasoning, conversation, and the adoption of a general point of view can be applied not only to slavery but also to the understanding of the subordinate life of women in patriarchal societies. The process of conversation and the adoption of general points of view for moral understanding and judgement is continuous and historical.

Moral inquiry as an ongoing deliberation and conversation will expand our understanding of

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[51] Hume, *Treatise*, p. 603.

natural facts and overcome our prejudices. In Hume's words, "the more we habituate ourselves to an accurate scrutiny of morals, the more delicate feeling do we acquire of the most minute distinctions between vice and virtue." [52] However, the perspectives and judgements that this process leads to will be different from those of what Roderick Firth calls the ideal observer, or judgements made from that perspective. According to Firth, the ideal observer is not only omniscient and omnipercipient, but also completely disinterested and completely dispassionate. [53] To borrow a phrase from Max Khan Hayward, such a perspective may be something "we want might want", but it is not something "we need genuinely need."[54] For we are not such divine beings, and we do not seem to have the capacity to identify ourselves as having arrived at such a perspective, even if we did so by accident. Therefore, directing our judgements and actions in ways that fulfil such divine conditions is not a good way to resolve interpersonal or political conflict.

Rather, aside from the fact that a perspective such as the ideal observer does not contribute to the resolution of moral conflicts, I see the general point of view as preferable to a position that presupposes robust objectivity or God's eye point of view as a "perspective we need" rather than a "perspective we want" for two reasons. First, it is fundamentally based on sympathy as a capacity that humans have and can have, an emotion that can be said to be the decisive factor for moral action. To borrow a phrase from John Dewey, if any moral methodology or moral judgement had no practicability, it would be nothing more than

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[52] Hume, *Enquiry*, p. 217.

[53] See Roderick Firth, "Ethical Absolutism and the Ideal Observer," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 12, no. 3 (1952).

[54] Max Khan Hayward, "Terrestrial Ethics" (Manuscript Submitted for Publication), http://maxkhanhayward.com, p. 4.

"sentimental indulgence for the few."[55] Therefore, the fact that it is based on human emotion has a decisive advantage as a moral methodology.

Second, it overcomes the biases of individuals and cultures, but does not transcend the human perspective. As Bernard Williams said, the aim of morality "is to help us to construct a world that will be our world, one in which we have a social, cultural, and personal life."[56] Morality is thoroughly for our lives, not for us to live for. If it were to completely alienate human moral sensibilities, not only would it be very difficult to follow, but it would be devastating to our lives in terms of suppressing our nature. Therefore, morality must not be something that completely transcends human perspective or sensibility. What the general point of view requires is the overcoming of the prejudices of individual moral agents or of particular groups, but it does not require the transcendence of the human point of view. In Hayward's words, it doesn't ask us to "transcend human perspectives," it asks us to "combine them."[57] Consequently, moral judgements based on it do not easily fall into moral judgements that thoroughly suppress human nature.

If the role of morality is to overcome the problems we face in living together by using our abilities, rather than blindly following objective reality or a priori principles, then I think the "general point of view" is a promising moral methodology for us to pursue, because it functions as a methodology for overcoming the moral problems and conflicts we face without requiring divine agency. It does not require omniscience, nor does it require us to be

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[55] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education 1916: The Middle Works of John Dewey, 1899-1924, Volume 9*, ed. JoAnn Boydston (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), p. 338.

[56] Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 123.

[57] Hayward, "Terrestrial Ethics," p. 31.

sympathetic to everyone who will be affected by any character or institution. It asks us to expand our capacity for sympathy through imagination, and to overcome the biases of individual judges and particular cultures through conversation and codeliberation.

6. Conclusion

All methodologies for moral progress as the overcoming of moral problems are necessarily provisional, for the number of possible directions of human error is in principle infinite. Therefore, the methodologies for overcoming them are also in principle infinite. Nevertheless, within the naturalistic framework, I believe that one of the moral methodologies we need for moral progress, that is, for the solution of moral problems, is Hume's "general point of view" because it allows us to resolve interpersonal or political conflicts within the bounds of our capacities. It recognises and utilises human sensibilities and capacities. It allows us to overcome our prejudices without demanding that we transcend human capabilities and perspectives. It is a perspective that allows us to overcome human problems from a human perspective.

Chapter 5. Impartial Spectators' Experiments and Pleasurable Progress

1. Introduction

In order to avoid falling into nihilistic relativism, which means that any moral norm or action is permissible, we need criteria for judging which moral commitments are better or worse. Of course, the criteria can be very specific or relatively general. If there is no non-arbitrary standard or basis for determining which of conflicting beliefs or norms is better or worse, then any moral position would be equally permissible. All moral change would have to be regarded as mere arbitrary change. Furthermore, there is no progress or regression, because all moral norms and commitments are equally right or wrong. The naturalistic view of morality has been regarded as fatally flawed in terms of moral justification, despite its ontological and epistemological advantages, because it tends to deny any objective, transcendent reality or truth. However, if naturalistic ethics can provide a methodology for genuine progress rather than mere change, then this is not only something to be welcomed in practice, but can also serve as a rationale for supporting naturalistic ethics on a meta-ethical level.

The purpose of this chapter is to present a normative methodology for moral progress that is grounded in a naturalistic perspective, showing that genuine progress is possible within a

naturalistic framework. It does not aim to demonstrate that anti-naturalist or non-naturalist ethics are wrong. That is to say, it does not claim that such positions cannot provide adequate explanations or methodologies for moral progress. Nor does it claim that such positions are epistemologically or psychologically implausible. Thus, this chapter does not defend the claim according to which only naturalistic positions are absolutely correct. Its purpose is much more modest. It aims to show that a naturalistic view can be constructed as a methodology for moral progress, and that it can positively contribute to our practice and life. Of course, if this chapter succeeds in its aims, we may consider that it will provide one more argument in favour of naturalistic ethics.

Even if we do not postulate sui generis, mind-independent moral facts and do not count getting closer to them as moral progress, we can still understand and achieve moral progress.[1] It is possible to solve moral problems in a better way without taking Nagelian "view from nowhere"[2] that abstracts away from all the particularities of human nature. Even if we do not take a rational perspective based on pure rationality, espoused by the contemporary Kantian, Christine Korsgaard,[3] we can overcome the problems we face in a more satisfying way. I will draw insights into this naturalistic methodology of moral problem-solving from Adam Smith and John Dewey.

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[1] See Russ Shafer-Landau, *Moral Realism: A Defence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); David Enoch, *Taking Morality Seriously: A Defense of Robust Realism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[2] See Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[3] See Christine M. Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Smith's impartial spectator and Dewey's process of moral deliberation as inquiry show how better ways of solving problems are possible within the human perspective and limitations. In particular, Smith's insights into human moral psychology, combined with Dewey's experimentalist view of the general nature of problem-solving, can provide methodological guidance for overcoming emerging moral problems of various dimensions.[4]

The structure of this chapter is as follows. I first address the functions and limitations of the impartial spectator that Smith presents as a perspective for solving moral problems. It enables us to overcome ignorance and error in factual information, and to overcome partiality due to personal interest. However, the isolated impartial observer is ill-equipped to utilise the specialised knowledge required to solve problems that reveal complex moral functions. Above all, it is limited in its ability to overcome certain historical and cultural partialities. This limitation of the impartial spectator leads to the conclusion that it has trouble resolving functional conflicts.

Next, I argue that Dewey's theory of moral inquiry can contribute to overcoming these impartial spectator problems. The process of reflection and dialogue as an experiment in the consequences of each moral function can contribute to a more satisfactory resolution of functional conflict. This is because, through cooperation, sufficient expertise can be

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[4] These points resonate with the following position of Max Khan Hayward: "they[pragmatism and sentimentalism] offer mutual support. Sentimentalism can benefit from the more detailed theory of moral inquiry offered by the pragmatic focus on inventive problem-solving; Pragmatism can benefit from the rich moral psychological theories of the sentimentalists." Max Khan Hayward, "Ethics as a Humanistic Inquiry" (dissertation, Columbia University, 2017), p. 2.

acquired. Furthermore, cultural and historical partialities can be overcome through collective reflection on the consequences of following each alternative.

Finally, this chapter addresses how participation in a process of cooperative inquiry can be justified from a Deweyan perspective and how the pleasure of mutual sympathy emphasised by Smith can facilitate such cooperation. Cooperative inquiry contributes to better conditions for us and our descendants to live in. The process of engaging in such inquiry also nurtures the participants, enabling them to better solve other problems in the future. The pleasure of mutual sympathy sought by the impartial spectator makes him eager to correct not only his own moral limitations and errors but also those of others. This combination of Smith's and Dewey's ethics shows one way in which moral progress can occur in a naturalistic way.

2. <u>Sympathy and Judgment</u>

At the heart of Smith's ethics is a detailed naturalistic account of the mechanisms by which human moral judgements are made. An indispensable component of moral judgements and actions is sympathy. For Smith, we sympathize with the sentiments of others via an imaginative projection mechanism.[5] To sympathize with someone else is to put oneself in someone else's shoes. That is, it means imagining how I would feel if I were in your circumstances and therefore for me to feel what I assume you feel (or, alternatively, what I

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[5] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976). I.i.1.2-10. *TMS*(Theory of Moral Sentiments) is referenced with the relevant part, section, chapter, and paragraph in the Glasgow Edition.

assume you should feel). This Smithian projection or simulation account of sympathy is different from Hume's contagion account of it.

For Hume, the sentiments of others are transmitted to us via "contagion." When I observe the outward expressions of a person's passion in his "countenance and conversation"[6], this brings into my mind the idea of the passion he is feeling. In order words, the external signs of sentiments felt by another allow us to have ideas of them. This idea is then converted into an impression which is felt with more or less vivacity depending upon the perceived relationship between ourselves and the person with whom we are sympathizing. That is, for Hume, to sympathize with someone else is to feel what we imagine they feel, where, crucially, the other person's affective experience is seen to be the source of what we now sympathetically feel. For Smith, on the other hand, sympathy is never reduced to the feelings or experiences of others per se. Rather, what is more important is the spectator's understanding of the agents' situation.[7] The following shows that in Smith's theory, understanding context is a key component of sympathy:

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[6] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Peter Nidditch and Lewis Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 317.

[7] For a more detailed explanation of the difference between Humean and Smithian Smpathy, see Stephen Darwall, "Empathy, Sympathy, Care," *Philosophical Studies* 89, no. 2/3 (1998): 261–82, https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1004289113917. However, it is an undeniable historical fact that Smith's ethics was influenced by Hume's philosophy. Smith's ethics is similar to Hume's in the following four ways (though these are by no means exhaustive of the characteristics they may share): First, sentiments are essential for moral judgement. Second, sentiments are required to cause moral actions. Third, moral sentiments are essential for the maintenance and development of communities. Fourth, They were careful to distinguish between what is approved and disapproved of, on the one hand, and what deserves approval and disapproval, on the other. For a more detailed explanation of what the two ethics have in common, see Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, "Hume and Smith on Sympathy, Approbation, and Moral Judgment," in *Sympathy: A History*, ed. Eric Schliesser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

We sometimes feel for another, a passion of which he himself seems to be altogether incapable; because, when we put ourselves in his case, that passion arises in our breast from the imagination, though it does not in his from the reality.[8]

Even our sympathy with the grief or joy of another, before we are informed of the cause of either, is always extremely imperfect. General lamentations, which express nothing but the anguish of the sufferer, create rather a curiosity to enquire into his situation, along with some disposition to sympathize with him, than any actual sympathy that is very sensible. The first question which we ask is, What has befallen you? Till this be answered, though we are uneasy both from the vague idea of his misfortune, and still more from torturing ourselves with conjectures about what it may be, yet our fellow-feeling is not very considerable.[9]

According to Smith, we do not have direct access to the emotional states of others, so in order to fathom their feelings, we must focus on the situation they are in. This focus on the situation allows the spectator to imagine the feelings and behaviour of different agents in a single situation. Suppose I am witnessing a friend of mine beating his wife in front of me. I can imagine his emotions and judgements in light of his usual personality and behaviour. I can also imagine what I might feel and do if I were in his situation. Furthermore, I can imagine how a third party, someone who is neither me nor my friend, might react in such a situation. Of course, this imaginative exercise can also be directed towards my friend's wife who is being assaulted. Imagining how one would feel in a particular situation implies that the spectator's sympathetic passions may differ from the agent's own original passions. That

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[8] *TMS*, I.i.1.10

[9] *TMS*, I.i.1.9

is, Smith's account of sympathy opens up a potential gap between what we feel on behalf of another person and what he himself seems to feel. And whether the judge's sympathetic passions match the original passions of the evaluated person is the basis for value judgement. On this, Smith says:

> When the original passions of the person principally concerned are in perfect concord with the sympathetic emotions of the spectator, they necessarily appear to this last just and proper, and suitable to their objects; and, on the contrary, when, upon bringing the case home to himself, he finds that they do not coincide with what he feels, they necessarily appear to him unjust and improper, and unsuitable to the causes which excite him. To approve of the passions of another, therefore, as suitable to their objects, is the same thing as to observe that we entirely sympathize with them; and not to approve of them as such, is the same thing as to observe that we do not entirely sympathize with them.[10]

In this passage, Smith distinguishes between "sympathetic emotion" and "sympathy." A "sympathetic emotion" refers to an emotion that the spectator would feel if he were in the agent's situation. This "sympathetic emotion," a reflected sentiment, is the point of comparison with the emotion the agent expresses in his observable behaviour. In the above paragraph, on the other hand, sympathy is triggered by the discovery of emotional concord between the spectator involved in his imaginative change of position and the agent. If the spectator's sympathetic emotion does not match the emotion expressed directly or indirectly by the agent, the spectator will have an "antipathy" towards the agent. In other words, sympathy and antipathy are secondary emotions that arise from comparing an agent's emotions or actions with how the spectator or a third party would feel or act in the agent's

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[10] *TMS*, I.i.3.1.

situation. Smith thinks that sympathising with another's feelings is to approve of those feelings. Conversely, antipathy is the basis for disapprobation. In other words, sympathy and antipathy as a result of the comparison of these feelings and opinions become the source of moral judgements. [11] So what do we make moral judgements about through these mechanisms? Smith says about this:

The sentiment or affection of the heart from which any action proceeds, and upon which its whole virtue or vice must ultimately depend, may be considered under two different aspects, or in two different relations; first, in relation to the cause which excites it, or the motive which gives occasion to it; and secondly, in relation to the end which it proposes, or the effect which it tends to produce.[12]

In the suitableness or unsuitableness, in the proportion or disproportion which the affection seems to bear to the cause or object which excites it, consists the propriety or impropriety, the decency or ungracefulness of the consequent action.[13]

In the beneficial or hurtful nature of the effects which the affection aims at, or tends to produce, consists the merit or demerit of the action, the qualities by which it is entitled to reward, or is deserving of punishment.[14]

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[11] What Smith is mainly interested in are not cases of automatic, non-reflected "transfusion" of passions from the agent to the spectator. Rather, the sympathetic process he emphasises involves a reflective process of understanding a situation and considering what an appropriate response to it might be. Thus, his definition of "sympathy" includes an intellectual as well as an emotional component. In this sense, Michael Frazer characterises his ethics as reflective sentimentalism. See Michael L. Frazer, *The Enlightenment of Sympathy: Justice and the Moral Sentiments in the Eighteenth Century and Today* (Oxford : Oxford University press, 2012).

[12] *TMS*, I.i.3.5

[13] *TMS*, I.i.3.6

[14] *TMS*, I.i.3.7

In sum, we evaluate the "propriety" of his response to a situation by putting ourselves in his shoes and seeing if we would react the same way. If his reaction is the same as our own reaction we would expect in such a situation, we would approve of his reaction and judge it appropriate. By adopting the position of those affected by someone's behaviour, we can also assess the "merit" of his behaviour. If we anticipate that we will be grateful for his behaviour, we will judge it to be worthy of praise or reward. On the other hand, if we would be expected to feel anger in such a situation, we would judge the behaviour as deserving of blame or punishment. The question is, even if Smith's insight into the mechanisms of moral judgement is true, does it have normative justification? This is because the aim of this chapter is not simply to provide causal explanations for moral judgements, but to present a normatively justifiable methodology. And it should be noted in this regard that in Smith's theory not all sympathy or antipathy is justified as a moral judgement. In other words, feelings of approval and disapproval through sympathetic processes are not themselves a sufficient condition for justified moral judgements. For Smith's explanation of justified moral judgement, we must explore his concept of the "impartial spectator."

3. Moral Judgment and the Impartial Spectator

According to Smith, the moral judgement we should seek is the moral approval of an impartial spectator. To understand the nature of the "impartial spectator" and why its perspective is required for moral judgment, it is necessary to understand the process by which

it is formed. According to Smith, humans are social beings by nature.[15] Human happiness depends to a significant degree on the degree of cooperation and harmony between people. However, in addition to the capacity for sympathy that enables us to feel "fellow-feeling," humans also have a natural self-love that seeks their survival and benefit.[16] And this self-love is the source of immoral actions and partiality. As social beings, humans fear condemnation and punishment from others for immoral actions. Actions that stem from properly controlled self-love become objects of praise and reward. Therefore, children must learn to discipline their self-love as a source of this immorality, and fear of condemnation enables such discipline.[17] In this process, children internalise social rules and norms. They are able to morally evaluate themselves and others in light of these internalised norms. The problem is that in many cases, our actions and attitudes are impossible to please everyone. These experiences will teach us that people's moral judgements are never infallible or perfect, because if two completely different moral judgements are made about the same act performed by the same person under the same circumstances, one of them should be rejected. This experience will lead people to devise ways to overcome errors and imperfect judgements. Regarding this, Smith says:

> When we first come into the world, from the natural desire to please, we accustom ourselves to consider
> what behaviour is likely to be agreeable to every person we converse with, to our parents, to our masters,
> to our companions. We address ourselves to individuals, and for some time fondly pursue the impossible

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[15] See *TMS,* III.2.6

[16] Smith says: "Every man [. . .] is much more deeply interested in whatever immediately concerns himself, than in what concerns any other man [. . .]" *TMS* II.ii.2.2

[17] See Robert L. Heilbroner, "The Socialization of the Individual in Adam Smith," *History of Political Economy* 14, no. 3 (1982): 427–39, https://doi.org/10.1215/00182702-14-3-427, p. 431.

and absurd project of gaining the good-will and approbation of everybody. We are soon taught by experience, however, that this universal approbation is altogether unattainable. As soon as we come to have more important interests to manage, we find, that by pleasing one man, we almost certainly disoblige another, and that by humouring an individual, we may often irritate a whole people. The fairest and most equitable conduct must frequently obstruct the interests, or thwart the inclinations of particular persons, who will seldom have candour enough to enter into the propriety of our motives, or to see that this conduct, how disagreeable soever to them, is perfectly suitable to our situation. In order to defend ourselves from such partial judgments, we soon learn to set up in our own minds a judge between ourselves and those we live with. We conceive ourselves as acting in the presence of a person quite candid and equitable, of one who has no particular relation either to ourselves, or to those whose interests are affected by our conduct, who is neither father, nor brother, nor friend either to them or to us, but is merely a man in general, an impartial spectator who considers our conduct with the same indifference with which we regard that of other people.[18]

The awareness that the judgements of those who evaluate him morally are never perfect leads him to search for the sources of moral mistakes and errors. In doing so, he realises that a lack of understanding and information about a problematic situation or the motives or actions of others can be a source of moral error. He finds that personal stakes lead people to commit moral errors. But human beings are not merely praise-seeking and blame-fearing creatures; they desire to be praiseworthy and fear being blameworthy. The realisation that the moral judgements of our peers, teachers, and parents are not always right, combined with the desire to be praiseworthy and not to be blameworthy, leads us to seek the formation of an "impartial spectator." For we can only be praiseworthy by doing things or having a character that conforms to the judgement of an impartial spectator. Passively speaking, one may not be

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[18] *TMS*, III.2.31

blameworthy. This impartial onlooker perspective becomes the perspective from which one morally judges one's own character and actions. Judgments based on that perspective would be as follows:

> We endeavour to examine our own conduct as we imagine any other fair and impartial spectator would examine it. If, upon placing ourselves in his situation, we thoroughly enter into all the passions and motives which influenced it, we approve of it, by sympathy with the approbation of this supposed equitable judge. If otherwise, we enter into his disapprobation, and condemn it.[19]

The impartial spectator becomes the point of view of moral judgment that judges not only oneself but also the actions and character of others. It is a perspective that corrects perspectives and judgements that are distorted by a lack of information, or errors about it. More specifically, we must first rule reactions from people who misunderstand the situation or the intention of the action. For example, if a child breaks a dish while trying to help his mother with her chores, and someone regards the child's behaviour as entirely playful and scolds him for it, the child will not recognise the judgement and scolding as fair. Conversely, suppose that I throw a piece of clothing on the street that I simply don't want to wear, but a homeless man sees it immediately and takes it and wears it. Someone sees it from a distance, assumes that I donated the clothes to him, and compliments me. I might realise that his praise is not justified.[20]

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[19] *TMS*, III.1.2

[20] On this, Smith says: "The most sincere praise can give little pleasure when it cannot be considered as some sort of proof of praise-worthiness. It is by no means sufficient that, from ignorance or mistake, esteem and admiration should, in some way or other, be bestowed upon us. If we are conscious that we do not deserve to be so favourably thought of, that if the truth were known, we should be regarded with very different sentiments, our satisfaction is far from being complete. The man who applauds us either for actions which we did not perform, or for motives which had no sort of influence upon our conduct, applauds not us, but another person. We can

It must overcome not only errors due to lack of information or misunderstanding of the situation, but also partiality due to personal stake. Consider a case in which judgement is distorted by personal interest: suppose a teacher who discovers my good deed praises me, and a classmate who wants to monopolise the teacher's attention and love condemns my good deed. I might conclude that the friend's moral judgement is distorted by his personal desire for the teacher's attention, and therefore his judgement is morally unjustified. The impartial spectator as a perspective to protect oneself from "partial judgements" is a perspective that is not distorted by personal interests and a clear understanding of one's own situation and intentions, which becomes the perspective from which one judges the sentiments and actions of others as well as oneself. When you put yourself in the position of an impartial spectator, if you approve of the actions or character of yourself or others, they are morally right; if you disapprove, they are wrong. The congruence of the impartial observer's judgements, opinions, and feelings with those of the judged is the measure of approval. Thus, "what is agreeable to our moral faculties, is fit, and right, and proper to be done; the contrary wrong, unfit, and improper."[21] This impartial spectator is based on the judge's own capacity for sympathy and the ability to gather and understand information. It does not involve any non-natural entities or transcendent principles. The perspective of it is thoroughly naturalistic.

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derive no sort of satisfaction from his praises." *TMS*, III.2.5

[21] *TMS*, III.5.5

Smith consistently argues that both moral judgments about oneself and others require an impartial spectator, and that it must be not only impartial but also well-informed. It is important to note, however, that Smith's impartial spectator does not require the same abilities as omniscience, omnipercipience, or equal concern for all sentient beings. In this respect, Smith's impartial spectator is clearly distinct from Roderick Firth's ideal observer.[22] About this Samuel Fleischacker says:

> [T]here too he(Smith) does not suggest that it needs *perfect* information: merely to know the relevant facts about the situations it is brought in to judge. […] The impartial spectator enters TMS as a bit of common sense, something that we are supposed to recognize ourselves as using in daily life. […] The word "impartial" seems in these passages to be thrown in just as a reminder that, when looking to spectators as a guide to how we should feel or act, we of course don't want to rely on a spectator who happens to be our mother, or best friend, or bitter rival in love or business. When we look to the sympathetic feelings of actual spectators as a way of correcting for the excesses or errors in our own feelings, we want impartial spectators rather than partial ones. Again, this is supposed to be a bit of uncontroversial common sense, not something that requires us to engage in abstruse philosophical argument. And the impartial spectators we look to are real people—just not our mothers or hated rivals—with real passions and capacities, not Platonic paragons of virtue or moral judgment.[23]

Smith's impartial spectator does not demand foresight that ordinary people do not possess, or equal benevolence and concern for all human beings that is thought to be psychologically impossible. Rather, it is a perspective that presupposes the capacity of the average person's faculties and calls for their improvement. The direction and extent of that improvement, of

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[22] See Roderick Firth, "Ethical Absolutism and the Ideal Observer," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 12, no. 3 (1952): 317.

[23] Samuel Fleischacker, *Adam Smith* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021). pp. 108-109.

course, does not require that it be beyond human capacity. He is merely a person who seeks to be as informed as possible about the matter on which he is to judge, and who is wary of his judgement being distorted by personal relationships or concern for his own interests. However, while this modest view of the impartial spectator can be appreciated for being psychologically and epistemologically plausible, it also reveals two serious problems. First, the information available to individual impartial spectators appears to be very limited. Second, his meaning of "impartiality" is not concrete enough, and its content can vary depending on the cultural or historical context.

Let's start with the second problem. Smith argues that the judgement of an impartial spectator who has overcome partiality is morally justified. However, Smith's impartial spectator is also socially constructed, essentially by internalising the norms of the existing society and learning about the moral judgments of others. The standards of what is partial and what is relatively impartial are also based on the moral norms of the existing society and the character of the people in a specific society.[24] In other words, the impartial spectator perspective is meant to correct and refine judgements that are distorted by the interests of the judge in a particular problematic situation, but it is not an infallible and complete standard in itself. The impartial spectator's understanding of impartiality is rooted in the moral understanding of people in a particular society. So, if the norms of the existing society are wholly evil, shouldn't the impartial spectator's judgment also be subject to such limits?

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[24] Smith asks us to imagine a human being who lives in isolation, unable to interact with any other human being. Such a person, Smith says, would not only be unable to make an assessment of his own appearance, but would also be unable to make moral judgements about his own behaviour or character. In order to make moral or aesthetic judgements possible for a person living in isolation, he says, they must be brought into society, and it is only through social interaction that an impartial spectator can be formed. See *TMS* III-i-3.

The development of moral judgements takes place within specific social and historical conditions. The formation of an inherently impartial spectator is based on our observation of what our parents and teachers say about how people should behave and our efforts to gain their approval. Not just the approval of others, but also the standards of what is approvable, depend on the moral standards of a particular society. Smith's concept of the impartial spectator does not provide any specific conditions or content for impartiality or moral ideals. And it seems to allow for certain historical and cultural relativities. In this respect, judgements based on the impartial spectator seem to have a relativistic character. On the nature of the impartial spectator, Allan Gibbard and Fleischacker say the following, respectively:

It is the detached observer belonging to the person's own culture, after all, whose feelings others who matter to the person might share. Smith's theory, then, should be put in the form its rationale supports. The proper feelings for a person, the things it makes sense for him to feel, are the ones a detached observer who shares his culture would feel.[25]

The impartial spectator is disinterested, well-informed and "candid", but is otherwise just like actual, partial spectators. It is built out of actual spectators; it is built, in particular, out of the basic reactive attitudes, the basic modes of moral judgment, that our actual friends and neighbors have. There is little in Smith's construction of the idealized spectator to correct for the surrounding society's standards of judgment; the idealized figure takes over those standards and corrects merely for their partial or illinformed use. If the moral standards, the basic moral sentiments, of a society are profoundly corrupt—

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[25] Allan Gibbard, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings: A Theory of Normative Judgment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990). p. 280.

if a feeling of contempt for Africans or hatred for Jews or homosexuals, say, has been taken for a moral feeling, and a society's judgments of these people's actions have been comprehensively skewed as a result—the impartial spectator within each individual will share in, rather than correcting for, that corruption.[26]

How can an impartial spectator, formed by internalising the norms of the existing society, overcome social, cultural and historical biases? This concern is shared by Smith, who entitled one of the chapters of his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* "Of the Influence of Custom and Fashion upon Moral Sentiments."[27] In that chapter, he argues that "[t]he different situations of different ages and countries are apt [...] to give different characters to the generality of those who live in them."[28] He describes these as "wide" and "essential" differences in the morals of different peoples, noting that the standard of politeness is different in Russia and France, and the balance of mild and terrible virtues is different in civilised and barbarian nations.[29] Crucially, Smith cites the example of "the murder of new-born infants,"[30] which was practised and approved in ancient Greece in the name of the national interest. However, he does not provide a detailed explanation of how his moral standard of the impartial spectator can overcome such practices. All Smith says is this: "No society could subsist a moment, in which the usual strain of men's conduct and behaviour was of a piece with the horrible practice I have just now mentioned."[31]

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[26] Fleischacker, *Adam Smith*, pp. 28-29.

[27] *TMS*, V,2,1-16.

[28] *TMS*, V,2,7

[29] See, *TMS,* V,2,7-16.

[30] *TMS,* V,2,15.

[31] *TMS,* V,2,16.

As Philip Kitcher says, Smith's answer is "blunt."[32] However, I think that the practice of infanticide can be seen as a cultural limitation that can be overcome if we focus on the human capacity for sympathy, which Smith emphasises as a key and universal element of morality. Death, or the pain of dying, is something that most people want to avoid and are most afraid of. Death also represents the loss of the infinite possibilities of life that lie ahead. If we project these emotions and thoughts into the position of an infant, we have the resources to criticise the culture. However, even if the moral deliberation process of an impartial spectator could solve a problem like "infanticide," it does not seem to be able to solve more complex moral problems. Consider the following situation.

Suppose the conditions in a country's correctional facilities are very poor. The square footage given as living space per person is 1.3Mx2.32M. This includes toilets. Of course, the toilets are not equipped with showers. If one person lies down, the room is full. In addition, inmates are required to participate in an average of 16 hours of labour per day, and are provided with only two 400 calorie meals per day. Showering is only allowed once every two weeks in a communal shower room. Some prison service workers in the country argue that these conditions and administration need to be improved. However, others say that the current level of treatment is adequate for offenders and that better conditions and treatment would not help prevent crime. They also say that improving the treatment of prisoners would be committing another crime against the victims of crime and their families. Some say their tax

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[32] Philip Kitcher, "The Hall of Mirrors," in *Preludes to Pragmatism: toward a Reconstruction of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 331.

dollars should not be spent on thieves, robbers, rapists, and murderers, and that current correctional facilities and treatment are too lavish for them.

What would an impartial spectator say is the right kind of correctional facility and administration under these circumstances? We hope that judicial punishment will reform offenders and contribute to their becoming more upstanding members of society. We also hope that it will alleviate some of the grief and anguish of victims of crime and their families. We also hope that the fear of punishment will serve as a deterrent, and thus be effective in preventing crime. We also have a moral conviction that even criminals deserve a life of dignity. We assign and expect various moral functions to judicial punishment and imprisonment. But giving greater weight to one function can undermine the other. Allowing offenders to live in better correctional facilities may raise the ire of victims and their families. Qualitatively better treatment of inmates may spread the perception that prisons are decent enough places to live, potentially increasing crime rates.

Kitcher refers to this aspect of the problem as "functional conflict."[33] The promotion of one function comes at the expense of another. If one function could be fulfilled more fully, with no loss of other functions, the moral question might not be so difficult to address. However, this functional conflict requires the loss of some of the functions that we value within our moral understanding. How can an impartial spectator determine how much weight should be given to ensuring the human rights of offenders in prison, promoting crime prevention

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[33] See Kitcher, *The Ethical Project* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 241.

through punishment, responding to the cries of victims, and facilitating the smooth reintegration of offenders into society? It seems hopelessly difficult for an impartial spectator, as an isolated onlooker, to address these issues through the information that can be gathered and the elaboration of internalised norms and attitudes.

This is where the first limitation of the impartial spectator mentioned earlier comes into play. To overcome the complex problems of contemporary society involving functional conflicts, a wide range of social science knowledge is required. To apply the above examples, we need to know the relationship between the level of welfare in correctional facilities and the rate of recidivism among inmates, the relationship between the quality of life of crime victims and the harshness of punishment for offenders, and the impact of humane correctional practices on crime rates in society as a whole. In some cases, such as environmental issues, natural science knowledge may also be required. And in this age of technological advancement, even an understanding of engineering may be required for moral progress. It is impossible for any one individual, no matter how intellectually brilliant, to fully comprehend and acquire such a wide range of specialised knowledge.

Even if impartial spectators are fully informed about the problems faced and the practical effects of each moral function, a problem remains. Even if the various spectators are maximally informed about the relevant factual information in a situation of functional conflict, the conflict may still remain. Even with sufficiently shared knowledge about the correlation between poor correctional facilities and crime prevention effectiveness, impartial spectators may hold completely different views about improving facilities. Even if sufficient

knowledge is shared about the correlation between the quality of victims' lives and the quality of correctional life, there is no guarantee that consensus will be reached. Someone with a strong classical retributivist sense of justice would never agree to improve prisons, even if it turns out that better prisons and human rights guarantees for prisoners can have a more positive effect on crime prevention and social rehabilitation, and that the quality of life of victims is not correlated with the standard of living of criminals in prison. Smith's theory seems to lack a methodology to resolve this conflict. In other words, when judgments among impartial spectators conflict with each other, there is no explanation as to what criteria the judgment should be made by. I will maintain that the way to solve these problems is for impartial spectators to actively engage in conversations as cooperative inquiry. Now it's time to meet the philosophical hero of cooperative inquiry.

4. Inquiry in Experimentalism

According to Charles Sanders Peirce, inquiry is the "struggle" to move from a state of "doubt" to a state of "belief." In his philosophy, "belief" is meant to guide our desires and shape our actions.[34] At the same time, the state of belief is "a calm and satisfactory state which we do not wish to avoid."[35] In contrast, the state of "doubt" is a state of confusion about the course of action we should take. This state of confusion is a problem that cannot be overcome or solved by existing beliefs and habits. Therefore, inquiry is the process of removing doubt so

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[34] See Charles Sanders Peirce, "The Fixation of Belief," in *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings Vol. 1* , ed. Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 114.

[35] Ibid.

that we can act more successfully.[36] Dewey, who was greatly influenced by Peirce's concept of inquiry, proposes his own definition of the word:

> Inquiry is the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituent distinctions and relations as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified whole.[37]

It is important to note that Dewey introduces the element of "situation" in defining the concept of inquiry. It means "not a single object of event" but the "contextual whole our experience."[38] A situation becomes problematic when a situation that is "uncertain, unsettled, [and] disturbed" begins to be apprehended as a problem.[39] Dewey argues that the concept of inquiry as the overcoming of problematic situations should be applied not only to maths and science, but also to moral and political problems. Of course, each academic discipline or technical discipline has different objects of inquiry. Moreover, each problematic situation has its own qualitative character, so there is no such thing as an identical problem. However, all such activities share a "generic pattern," which can be summarised as follows:

> (1) Perplexity, confusion, doubt, due to the fact that one is implicated in an incomplete situation whose full character is not yet determined;

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[36] See Ibid., pp. 114-119.

[37] John Dewey, *LW 12*, p. 108. Dewey citations are from *The Collected Works*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Southern Illinois University Press), indicated by series (*EW* for *Early Works*, *MW* for *Middle Works*, and *LW* for *Later Works*), volume, and page number.

[38] Ibid., p. 72.

[39] See Ibid., p. 109

(2) A conjectural anticipation – a tentative interpretation of the given elements, attributing to them a tendency to effect certain consequences;

(3) A careful survey (examination, inspection, exploration, analysis) of all attainable considerations which will define and clarify the problem at hand;

(4) A consequent elaboration of the tentative hypothesis to make it more precise and more consistent, because squaring it with a wider range of facts;

(5) Taking one stand upon the projected hypothesis as a plan of action which is applied to the existing state of affairs: doing something overtly to bring out the anticipated result, and thereby testing the hypothesis.[40]

The essential nature of inquiry is to understand a situation as problematic, determining the nature of the problem, and formulating a hypothesis, which we then test it in order to overcome a problematic situation; this is an experimentalist understanding of inquiry. The goal of inquiry is not infallible knowledge that guarantees certainty, but rather to arrive at a working hypothesis for more successful actions. In other words, inquiry is a process to achieve "a decisive directive of future activities."[41] Taking a fallibilist stance, following Peirce and William James, Dewey considers all of these hypotheses to be provisional as a result of all of our inquiries. There is no certain knowledge or truth, as even our best present beliefs could turn out to invite problematic situations or simply be false, and the conclusions of any inquiry must be open to further exploration. Whether a hypothesis, as a conclusion reached through inquiry, should be the subject of further inquiry depends on whether acting on that hypothesis leads to satisfactory results.[42] The application of hypotheses is possible in

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[40] *MW 9*, p. 157.

[41] *LW 12*, p. 124.

[42] He prefers to use the term "warranted assertability" rather than the label "truth" to contrast his experimentalism with the objectivist philosophy that can be characterised as the quest for certainty. "Warranted

practice, but also in the field of imaginative thought experiments. If the general nature of this inquiry is applied to moral questions, how does it proceed? Dewey's ethics answers this question.

Dewey's understanding of ethics follows James's maxim that "there is no such thing as an ethical philosophy dogmatically made up in advance."[43] The phenomenon of morality itself and the objects of moral inquiry are not, nor should they be, subordinate to an a priori order or divine will. It is a thoroughly human and historical phenomenon, arising from human needs and desires: "Moral conceptions and processes grow naturally out of the very conditions of human life."[44] His ethics can be understood as the "practical science of community organisation, specifically of the engineering of cooperation under conditions of moderate scarcity and limited generosity, for enhancing human flourishing."[45] He also thinks that the exploration of human nature and capabilities will contribute to a better way of solving moral problems. In this respect, Jennifer Welchman notes that his view of ethics is similar to that of Hume. Moral philosophy is concerned with understanding the nature of moral problems and the methodology and human capacity to solve them, and Dewey sees philosophical understanding of these factors as promoting moral progress as moral problem-solving. In this sense, ethics should play a role in ensuring that moral "experimentation may go on less blindly, less at the mercy of accident, more intelligently, so that men may learn

assertability" is the provisional terminus of inquiry and does not guarantee certainty. In that respect, the results of any inquiry are open to further criticism and inquiry.

[43] William James, "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," in *The Will to Believe: And Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (Auckland: The Floating Press, 2010), p. 208.

[44] *LW* 7, p. 308.

[45] Jennifer Welchman, *Dewey's Ethical Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 1.

from their errors and profit from their successes."[46]

This understanding of Dewey's ethics implies an abandonment of the belief that philosophical inquiry into morality can and should provide "final principles." Rather, in the words of Joshua Forstenzer, the role of ethics is "to help us make sense of how to think about what to do in precisely this kind of world, a world marked by limitation, contingency, and uncertainty." [47] More specifically, it can only help improve our methodological understanding of how we can more effectively overcome moral problems by utilising our existing inherited moral habits and useful principles. In this context, Dewey suggests that moral theory "can render personal choice more intelligent, but it cannot take the place of personal decision, which must be made in every case of moral perplexity."[48] Dewey's position on theories and principles in no way implies their uselessness. For Dewey, they can be used as aids to more stable moral reflection and inquiry.[49] Dewey says:

> A moral principle, such as that of chastity, of justice, of the Golden Rule, gives the agent a basis for
> looking at and examining a particular question that comes up. It holds before him certain possible aspects
> of the act; it warns him against taking a short or partial view of the act. It economizes his thinking by
> supplying him with the main heads by reference to which to consider the bearings of his desires and

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[46] *LW 2*, p. 257.

[47] Joshua Forstenzer, *Deweyan Experimentalism and the Problem of Method in Political Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2019), p. 223.

[48] *LW 7*, p. 166.

[49] Gregory Pappas has this to say about the role of principles in Dewey's ethics: "Principles, as he uses the term, are not fixed or universal maxims that prescribe and determine what an agent ought to do. They are instead inherited instrumentalities for analyzing individual and unique situations. […] They are part of the stable resources needed to confront the more precarious and novel elements of experience." Gregory Fernando Pappas, *John Dewey's Ethics: Democracy as Experience* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), p. 49.

purposes; it guides him in his thinking by suggesting to him the important considerations for which he should be on the lookout.[50]

Principles can help us understand which aspects of a situation reveal problems. They can also serve as a frame of reference for judging whether an action is better than other alternatives. They can, as Richard Rorty puts it, "remind us of some of our previous intuitions and practices."[51] But principles are not the final authority on moral choices and actions.[52] This is one of the pillars of Dewey's critique of existing ethics. As Steven Fesmire says, "Dewey found the baby in the bathwater of classic systems, but he was especially intent on criticizing those who point to the baby as proof that the system was right all along."[53]

We have seen Dewey's understanding of ethics and his critique of the existing ethics, but we do not yet know how his ethics can contribute to solving the problems faced by Smithian impartial spectators. So what specific methodological suggestions does a Deweyan understanding of ethics and moral inquiry have? In what ways can it contribute to solving the problem of relativism faced by Smithian impartial spectators? To do this, we need to know what moral inquiry as an experiment is.

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[50] *LW 7,* p. 280.

[51] Richard Rorty, "Trapped between Kant and Dewey: The Current Situation of Moral Philosophy,", in *New Essays on the History of Autonomy a Collection Honoring J.B. Schneewind*, ed. Natalie Brender, Larry Krasnoff, and J. B. Schneewind (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004), 195–214, p. 202.

[52] See Ibid.

[53] Steven Fesmire, *Dewey* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 139.

5. Habit and Deliberation

Because situations are the "contextual whole" we experience at any given moment, they include not only physical objects and mechanical forces, but also social factors such as habits, customs, and values. In particular, moral inquiry is called for when our existing habits and beliefs make it impossible for us to solve the moral problems we face in a satisfactory way. Thus, in Dewey's system, the understanding of moral inquiry and moral problems requires an understanding of habits. For Dewey, habits are socially constructed dispositions that allow us to respond to certain problematic situations in a stable and consistent way. Habits prescribe certain behaviours and use certain means in certain situations, directing impulses in a certain direction and towards a certain outcome. While individuals may have idiosyncratic habits, there are also habits that are universally shared within a community. They are passed down through socialisation and act as customs. As habits and shared practices, customs are all formed in response to specific natural and social circumstances and therefore reflect to some extent the natural and social environment in which they live, for better or worse. They also have a plasticity that allows them to change in response to changes in the environment, even though they can be characterised as stable modes of response.

The moral life begins with customs as these shared habits. As Dewey put it, "an individual usually acquires the morality as he inherits the speech of his social group."[54] Moral virtues, principles, vocabulary inherited from the past are used as moral resources to overcome the problems of the future. Many of the problems we face can be solved at the level of habits.

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[54] *MW 14,* p. 43.

Many of the situations we experience in society have a moral dimension, and if we were to undertake a full-fledged and serious moral deliberation in every situation in which our actions have a moral dimension, our lives would consist of nothing but a series of moral inquiries. We cannot completely discard our inherited moral resources. However, we face moral problems that cannot be resolved in a satisfactory way by the application of existing moral resources, because there are situations in which the beliefs and habits we have inherited and formed are in conflict. Dewey gives the example of the case of a citizen of a nation which has just declared war on another nation as the epitome of a moral problem as a conflict between these existing moral resources. It is as follows:

> He is deeply attached to his own State. He has formed habits of loyalty and of abiding by its laws, and now one of its decrees is that he shall support war. He feels in addition gratitude and affection for the country which has sheltered and nurtured him. But he believes that this war is unjust, or perhaps he has a conviction that all war is a form of murder and hence wrong. One side of his nature, one set of convictions and habits, leads him to acquiesce in war; another deep part of his being protests. He is torn between two duties […] Now he has to make a choice between competing moral loyalties and convictions. The struggle is not between a good which is clear to him and something else which attracts him but which he knows to be wrong. It is between values each of which is an undoubted good in its place but which now get in each other's way. He is forced to reflect in order to come to a decision.[55]

Morally problematic situations that require deliberation arise when our moral resources command different actions or choices. The nature of such situations can be characterised as "between values each of which is an undoubted good in its place but which now get in each

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[55] *LW 7*, p. 164-65.

other's way."[56] The nature of this moral problem is similar to what Kitcher calles a "functional conflict." The moral resources we have command or recommend different ways of acting or choosing, but the different actions or choices cannot be made simultaneously. Thus, one of them must be given up. And we have no a priori guidance as to which of them, or which habit or principle, should take precedence. What we can and should do in these circumstances is moral deliberation as an inquiry, utilising the resources and capacities we have. He says this about deliberation:

> Deliberation is a process of active, suppressed, rehearsal; of imaginative dramatic performance of various deeds carrying to their appropriate issues the various tendencies which we feel stirring within us. When we see in imagination this or that change brought about, there is a direct sense of the amount and kind of worth which attaches to it, as real and direct, if not as strong, as if the act were really performed and its consequences really brought home to us.[57]

Through this process, which Dewey calls "dramatic rehearsal," we discover, by imagining ourselves acting on the various courses of action open to us, how certain dispositions would be expressed. The resulting "direct sense of worth" is either relief or frustration, pleasure or pain, which is a subjective signal that the anticipated action will express one of our active dispositions. Dewey goes on to say that "[w]hen many tendencies are brought into play, there is clearly much greater probability that the capacity of self which is really needed and

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[56] Ibid., p. 165.

[57] *MW 5,* p. 292.

appropriate will be brought into action, and thus a truly reasonable happiness result."[58] In other words, in a situation where various goods are in conflict, we can conceive of various ways of acting, and each of the ways of acting conjured up by our imagination gives us a unique "sense of worth."

In a society where it is commonplace to insult and assault homosexuals simply because they have same-sex sexual attraction, we can rehearse different pathways of actions. We may condone such oppression and persecution, even if we have an intuitive response that it is wrong. These actions will reflect our desires and habits to conform to practices that are supported by the majority. On the other hand, we can try to persuade the homophobes we encounter in our daily life to abandon their homophobic behaviour. Or we could form a group to produce a film or drama to change homophobes' views or attitudes regarding homosexuality. We could also complain to human rights organisations at the international level. Each direction of action reflects different customs and habits, which may conflict with each other. And each imagined path of action gives us a unique "sense of worth." For example, imagining a life in which you tolerate a society with extreme levels of homophobia may allow you to feel that such a life would make you feel guilty or frustrated. Of course, this "sense of worth" will be strongly influenced by similar experiences in the past. For example, if a person has seen homosexuals, or any other type of minority or socially disadvantaged person, being assaulted in the past, this may affect their sense of worth in this case, as all processes of reflection involve "habit." On the other hand, taking steps to stop homophobia and imagining what it would be like to do so may be associated with a sense of

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[58] *MW 5,* p. 293.

relief or satisfaction.

What should not be overlooked is that Dewey never regards subjective satisfaction with particular acts and situations as the final basis for moral judgment. It may be a sufficient condition for establishing what is "the valued," but it is never a sufficient condition for establishing what is "the valuable." As Hilary Putnam puts it, "no distinction is more insistent in Dewey's writing than the distinction between the valued and the valuable."[59] In a similar vein, Matthew Festenstein says that the purpose of Dewey's ethics is to contribute to supplying "a means of resolving conflicts and distinguishing the merely desired from the desirable."[60] Solving a morally problematic situation cannot be reduced to simply following a subjective feeling or appealing solely to intuition. The mere subjective feeling that one has cancer can never be the final basis for the conclusion that one has cancer; similarly, the feeling or belief that one has been cured can never be the final basis for the conclusion that one has been cured of cancer. This requires either an actual reduction in the number of cancer cells or an active process of their elimination. In the same vein, moral problems can be overcome by improving the situation in front of us. Thus, when faced with a morally problematic situation involving conflicting values, the justification of a moral judgement depends on whether or not it improves the problematic situation, or has the potential to do so, and what is needed to improve this situation is experimental inquiry.

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[59] Hilary Putnam, *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy: And Other Essays* (Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 103.

[60] Matthew Festenstein, *Pragmatism and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997), p. 31.

By first imagining the consequences of extreme levels of homophobia if left unaddressed, we can provide a basis for judgment on whether or not we should actively intervene against it. You can do this by collecting data on the realities of victims of homophobia in other countries or other communities. Alternatively, you could draw on examples from other types of discriminatory hatred, such as sexism or racism. Suppose that deliberations based on these sources lead to the conclusion that the neglect of homophobia can lead to miserable lives for individuals and a significant reduction in social solidarity. The next step is to explore actions or policies to overcome homophobia. A variety of social science sources can be consulted on what measures are most effective in overcoming such discriminatory cultures and practices. You can also research the psychology and psychopathology of discriminatory actions. You can also look to historical sources to understand the extent to which political and institutional interventions have contributed to overcoming it. You might also explore how artistic works, such as film and drama, have contributed to overcoming sexism or homophobia. And based on each of these social science sources, we can imagine how certain behavioural pathways or social policies might have an effect on overcoming homophobia. In other words, we need to test the practical effects of different hypothesised courses of action to overcome homophobia. It is possible and necessary to experiment in a way that reflects the real consequences of applying each pathway of action. But before that, we need to experiment with what they can do as imaginative thought experiments. Moral deliberation is "an experiment in making various combinations of selected elements of habits and impulses, to see what the resultant action would be like if it were entered upon."[61] But the process of such experimentation can be "in imagination, not in overt fact."[62] This is because the

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[61] *MW 14*, pp. 132-33

[62] *MW 14*, p. 133.

practical application of erroneous hypotheses has the potential to cause enormous moral harm and social costs.

But can estimation and evaluation of the possible consequences of alternatives provide a final answer as to which alternative should be chosen? Is it possible, even if there are no general principles that can be applied to all cases, or definitive principles that can be applied to specific cases? According to Dewey's theory, not only is it possible, but we should not be guided by final principles or by a definitive timetable that says we must follow these principles in this or that situation. Dewey emphasises that the moral inquiry is never reducible to "a catalogue of acts nor a set of rules to be applied like drugstore prescriptions or cook-book recipes."[63]

6. **Desires Open to Reflective Process**

What we must fundamentally appeal to is an understanding of the moral resources embedded in our habits and desires. According to Dewey, moral inquiry reflects our desires. But these desires involve an understanding of situation and context. It also has a cognitive and reflective aspect, so we can modify or withdraw our desires by imagining and reflecting on the consequences of acting on certain desires. Festenstein describes Dewey's position on the relationship between desire and moral judgement as follows:

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[63] *MW 12*, p. 177.

> We revise our desires in the light of our understanding of the consequences that might follow from acting on them. Through investigation of the consequences of acting in a way that I happen to desire, I distinguish between desired and desirable courses of action: I may desire to smoke heavily, but if I examine the possible consequences of this course of action, I come to see that it is undesirable. Once we recognize that particular desires and interests exist in a context of interaction between organism and environment, we can see that they are forms of practical judgement.[64]

Moral inquiry does not have to be conducted in a way that unconditionally excludes or represses desire. Rather, as Dewey says, "reasonableness is in fact a quality of an effective relationship among desires rather than a thing opposed to desire."[65] Modification of our specific desires is possible through reflection and deliberation based on more desires. If the consequences of following a particular desire are deemed undesirable in light of "a Big Web of desire", we can modify or withdraw the object of that desire.[66] And such a desire is not a blind impulse toward any object; it reflects, and must reflect, a particular situation. Therefore, there is no such thing as a fixed end, for the object of desire, or the end itself, may change according to circumstances and the results of reflection.

For example, suppose I have the desire to completely eradicate homophobic culture

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[64] Festenstein, *Pragmatism and Political Theory*, p. 36.

[65] *MW* 14, p. 135

[66] The phrase "a Big Web of desire" is borrowed from James Lenman, a contemporary Humean constructivist. He views the process of normativity, or the process of moral judgement, as being based on a "Big Web of desires" that has the characteristics of unity, coherence, stability, and commonality. This web of desires is a source of active reflection and deliberation. I see Dewey's emphasis on the importance of desires in moral reflection and inquiry as resonating with this contemporary Humean position. See James Lenman, "The That," in *Methodology and Moral Philosophy*, ed. Jussi Suikkanen and Antti Kauppinen (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019).

overnight. But the only way I can do that is to wipe out the entire human race, because there is no way to know for sure who is homophobic and who is likely to promote it. But I would never wish such a result on anyone. In such a case, I might modify my desire to completely eradicate a homophobic culture overnight so that I can have a desire to gradually improve that situation. In this case, the modification of the desire and its purpose would be based on my desire not to wish for the destruction of the human race. We imagine the consequences of acting on certain desires, and we refine our desires in light of those consequences in our web of desires. That is a crucial part of moral inquiry, and so it is not "a force to evoke against impulse and habit"[67] that we should seek; it is "the attainment of a working harmony among diverse desires."[68] As, Dewey puts it, "[m]ore passions, not fewer, is the answer."[69]

7. **Cooperative Inquiry**

The above examples relating to overcoming homophobia demonstrate that the inquiry for moral progress is virtually impossible to carry out in a "monologue" in three ways. First, in order to understand the nature and specifics of the moral problem of homophobia, we need to listen to the voices of its victims. Second, overcoming such problems requires an understanding of the behaviours and attitudes of the perpetrators as contributors to the problem, and an understanding of the conditions that foster such behaviours and attitudes. Third, overcoming moral and political problems can require expertise from many different

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[67] *MW 14,* p. 136.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

disciplines. The examples above represent only a very limited part of the exploration process to overcome moral and political problems. Nevertheless, it requires expertise in many different areas. It is not realistically possible for a single individual to have such multidisciplinary expertise. It requires the cooperation of experts in various fields.

I hold that an impartial spectator is necessary as the perspective of the participants in a cooperative effort to solve a moral problem. Of course, the impartial observer is only one mechanism for overcoming moral bias and partiality, not an absolute standard to be followed unconditionally. Nevertheless, I believe that conceiving of the impartial spectator as a participant in moral cooperation and conversation has important advantages in two ways. First, it places the role of sympathy, which is required in most moral problem-solving, at the centre of judgement and inquiry. Second, in Smith's theory, judgement on the basis of an impartial spectator is tied to a process of persuasion of others' moral commitments and correction of one's own moral errors. And the achievement of such persuasion and correction gives rise to pleasure.[70] Let's start with the first advantage.

Kitcher suggests that overcoming the "failure of sympathy" is required to promote moral progress.[71] The problems "with slavery, or with the confinement of women, or with the persecution of homosexuals," were caused by our failure to sympathise with the suffering and despair of slaves, women, and homosexuals.[72] Some of them expressed their grief and

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[70] This second point will be covered in section 9.

[71] See Kitcher, *Moral Progress* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021). p. 29.

[72] Ibid., p. 33.

despair; some of them never cried out in their suffering. Some thought that such persecution and oppression was morally unproblematic or even justified. The problem is especially hopelessly difficult to solve if those suffering from moral error believe that their trials are justified. In such cases, the victims of moral error are unlikely to appeal that their suffering is unjust, and the perpetrators are unlikely to feel guilty about their actions. It is difficult to generate a sense of the seriousness and urgency of the problem.

To overcome this, Smithian sympathy is actively required. Smithian sympathy plays a central role in our understanding of victims and perpetrators. We can imagine how we would feel if we were homosexual and were discriminated against and oppressed solely because of our sexual orientation. We can experience that life indirectly. Furthermore, in conversation with homophobes, it is necessary to understand them from their perspective, rather than simply projecting my perspective, my circumstances, and my standards onto them, in order to understand what it is that has led to their feelings of hatred. Moral progress requires the correction of actions, and this requires an understanding of the beliefs and attitudes of the erring. Smith's sympathy encompasses both understanding others from the perspective of the judge and understanding others from the perspective of the judged. This role of Smithian sympathy is not lost on Dewey. Dewey writes about the importance of sympathy in moral inquiry:

> To put ourselves in the place of others, to see things from the standpoint of their purposes and values,
> to humble, contrariwise, our own pretensions and claims till they reach the level they would assume in
> the eye of an impartial sympathetic observer, is the surest way to attain objectivity of moral knowledge.
> Sympathy is the animating mold of moral judgment not because its dictates take precedence in action

over those of other impulses (which they do not do), but because it furnishes the most efficacious intellectual standpoint. It is the tool, par excellence, for resolving complex situations.[73]

Of course, as both Smith and Dewey recognised, immediate sympathy never of itself justifies moral judgement. Within the perspective of Smith's impartial spectator, we can overcome prejudice and partiality within our inherited moral perspectives and understandings. But when the various moral functions we inherit are in conflict, there seems to be no standard to which an isolated impartial spectator can appeal to make a better moral judgement on the question of which should be prioritised. We can overcome these problems through experimentation as cooperative inquiry. Conversation as cooperative inquiry will have the dimension of an exchange of information about the practical effects of each moral function; it will also involve which moral functions to prioritise and at what level to sacrifice other functions. Resolving functional conflicts involves determining whether an act or policy that prioritises a function is better than other alternatives.

In sum, the process by which the Smithian impartial spectator engages in Dewey's experimentalist inquiry can be summarised as follows: (1) An impartial spectator has a unique feeling about a problematic situation. This feeling is a reflection of existing experiences and habits, and among other things, Smithian sympathy plays an active role in problem recognition. (2) Moral problems can be formulated with the help of sympathy, habits, and principles. We will concentrate on how ignorance of the factual information of a problematic situation and distorted judgement due to personal interests may enter into such

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[73] *LW 7*, p. 170.

matters. Of course, this formulation can be modified by the process of inquiry and its conclusions. The process and results of all inquiry are provisional. (3) Formulate potential hypotheses for solving the problem. The process of formulating these hypotheses involves information exchange and conversation among impartial spectators, as well as reflection to overcome their own information limitations and biases. (4) Imagine the practical consequences of acting on the tentative hypotheses that have been developed. In this imaginative process, a range of expertise should be reflected. (5) Deliberate and communicate about what outcome of an action would be most satisfying and desirable. In this process of deliberation and conversation, various desires are actively reflected. They are, of course, subject to modification and withdrawal. As Dewey says, "more passions" is the answer. (6) Actions are taken as a result of the enquiry, and the chosen hypothesis may be revisited or revised in the light of its practical effects.

8. Normativity of Cooperation

As discussed earlier, functional conflicts must be overcome through cooperative and experimental inquiry. But why should we work together to solve problems? Why should we not pursue life in our own way, in our own isolated rooms? Why should I participate in solving problems faced by others or by the communities or associations to which I belong if there is no benefit to me in doing so? I see two possible pragmatist answers to these questions. First, my survival and growth are inextricably linked to the community. More specifically, in most cases, the advancement of the community is a necessary condition for

the growth of the individuals in it. Second, participation in the community's problem-solving is itself a process or part of growth; that is, participation in the community's moral and political problem-solving constitutes personal growth.

Let's start with the first aspect. The neglect of social conflicts and divisions faced by a community can break down its cooperative structures and political order. When these divisions and conflicts are extreme, the survival of community members can become problematic. We are all too familiar with the tragic incidents that have resulted from violent protests and riots. And even if such conflicts and divisions do not lead to direct physical violence, the disruption of cooperation and solidarity can reduce the quality of life. Other things being equal, communities that work together and solve problems intellectually are more likely to be economically and spiritually prosperous than those that do not. The prosperity and development of a community is not unrelated to the quality of life of its members.

At a more fundamental level, we can also consider how the growth of the individual is fundamentally dependent on the community. This is very evident in the importance of education. Humans need language to understand themselves, to express their opinions and feelings. Through language, we are able to grasp symbolic meaning and interact with others on a higher level. Understanding ourselves, expressing our feelings and opinions, and interacting at a higher level through language are essential for human life. It seems extremely difficult to have a high level of purpose and hope in the complete absence of these abilities. However, the acquisition of these abilities must be based on education within a community.

If we acknowledge that what someone "believes, hopes for and aims at is the outcome of association and intercourse,"[74] then we cannot deny that the life of an individual is crucially dependent on community. Furthermore, through education in community, we learn not only language skills and an understanding of ourselves and others, but also more refined and advanced disciplines and skills. The environment in which these skills and abilities can be exercised is also dependent on community. It would be impossible for someone to become a great footballer if they had to live in constant fear of civil war, no matter how much physical ability they were born with. In serious cases, he could die without ever knowing that football even existed. He will never be an English Premier League player. The formation of our hopes and aspirations and the conditions for their realisation all depend on community.

However, emphasising the dependence of the individual on the community does not guarantee that every individual will inevitably take an active part in solving the problems of their community or association. For example, suppose that the number of depressed people in a city has risen sharply. People in the city realise the seriousness of the problem and decide to design a project to improve the condition of depressed people. After much psychological, clinical, and medical research, they realise that "art therapy" is the most suitable and effective way to treat depressed people in the city, so they ask the best art therapy expert from the city to join the project. The idea is to be a part of a policy-making process that can effectively improve the condition of depressed people. But he doesn't have the motivation or incentive to participate in the project. He is an art therapist and an accomplished painter, and he wishes that his artistic inspiration and abilities could be fully realised on a deserted island or in a

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[74] *LW* 2, p. 251.

closed room. He is no longer interested in the practice of art therapy. The problems of his family, the city he lives in, and the country he belongs to have no positive effect on him, and he considers them a nuisance. Of course, he has received many benefits from his community. His ability to appreciate art, his posture and attitude to be inspired by nature, his ability to handle a paintbrush with delicacy, and his capacity for growth and self-realisation would not have existed without his community and his education within it. He is, of course, fortunate to have had the opportunity for such education and growth and considers it a good thing. But now, he no longer wants to participate in or get caught up in the tiring and troublesome work of the community. Even if his active involvement and participation would help many people tremendously with their depression, he has no interest or passion for it. Some might accuse him of being a free rider. But he doesn't care about being labelled a free rider. Warnings that he will go down in history as a vile egotist are just empty cries of the ignorant and pitiful who don't know art. That he should be allowed to develop his artistic talents in the tranquillity of his own home, without any interference or restriction, is all that matters to him. There are so many examples of people who are indifferent to the work of any group to which they belong for their own benefit. The emphasis on the fact that community is indispensable for individual growth and self-realisation is too naive to make everyone a participant in solving community problems.

So, can the argument that engaging in a process of inquiry to solve a social problem constitutes growth be effective enough to encourage engagement in it? To address this aspect, a clarification of the Deweyan concept of growth is necessary. Dewey's concept of growth is notoriously vague. This is because Dewey's notion of growth does not refer to a definitive state. It refers to the process of getting better at solving the problems we face. But

every problem we face has a specific situation and context. Therefore, no two problems are the same. In this sense, the goal of better problem-solving, which is growth, cannot exist in isolation from context. As Forstenzer says, it "is best understood as a sustained effort to engage in intelligent problem-solving."[75]

The problems we need to solve can include moral and political issues. Engaging in social problem-solving gives us the opportunity to grow because solving such problems in a better and more intelligent way can contribute to our growth. In this respect, Dewey argues that "growth involves becoming responsible, that is, responsive to the needs and claims of others."[76] In other words, a self that actively participates in solving the problems of the group to which it belongs "will be a fuller and broader self than one which is cultivated in isolation from or in opposition to the purposes and needs of others."[77] Dewey's argument can be fleshed out through the example of the "robber" he gives. Dewey says:

> A member of a robber band may express his powers in a way consonant with belonging to that group and be directed by the interest common to its members. But he does so only at the cost of repression of those of his potentialities which can be realized only through membership in other groups. The robber band cannot interact flexibly with other groups; it can act only through isolating itself. It must prevent the operation of all interests save those which circumscribe it in its separateness. But a good citizen finds his conduct as a member of a political group enriching and enriched by his participation in family life, industry, scientific and artistic associations. There is a free give-and-take: fullness of integrated personality is therefore possible of achievement, since the pulls and responses of different groups

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[75] Forstenzer, *Deweyan Experimentalism and the Problem of Method in Political Philosophy,* p. 2.

[76] *LW* 7, p. 304.

[77] Ibid., p. 299.

reenforce one another and their values accord.[78]

Dewey believes that participating in the communication process of different kinds of associations not only allows for rich experiences in itself, but also contributes to the formation of a better self. He says that such diverse experiences and a developed self will contribute to overcoming other problems in a more intelligent way in the future. I agree with Dewey in that participating in collaborative projects in various ways can be educational. However, it is questionable whether this argument can in itself stimulate a willingness to engage in communal problem solving, since this philosophical view seems unlikely to prevent many people from placing a greater value on the benefits that can be gained by devoting time and effort to very private for-profit activities. Even if social participation for the sake of moral progress itself contributes to personal growth or self-realisation, philosophical arguments alone are unlikely to dissuade artists who wish to remain in the closet.

I do not think Dewey believed in the first place that an elucidation of the organic relationship between the individual and society, and an argument that participation in the process of social problem solving can itself contribute to personal growth, would convince free riders or artists who enjoy solitude and art alone. He must have realised that it is not uncommon for the pursuit of private interests and comfort to overwhelm the motivation for collective problem-solving, and that in many cases philosophical arguments will not have sufficient power to persuade people in such cases. To use Festenstein's words, he would never have been such

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[78] *LW 2*, p. 328.

a "simpleton."[79] Nevertheless, I think Dewey's position that the social environment acts as a condition for individual growth, and that participation in solving social problems constitutes individual growth in itself, is an important one, because such philosophical clarifications can reassure those who are already working to overcome problems in their communities. Participation in solving moral problems that arise at a societal level can contribute to a better environment for oneself, one's peers, one's family, and future generations to experience a higher level of growth. Furthermore, participation in it not only contributes to growing into a better version of oneself, but also contributes to better solving the problems that will be faced in the future. These two facts not only serve as justifications for a cooperative inquiry into moral progress, but also reassure participants in the conversations and problem-solving that the process of moral reflection and dialogue is not a form of fetishism or rule-worship, but a process of action for human growth.

9. Good News from Smith: Pleasurable Cooperation

Even if this pragmatist elucidation of the relation of individual life to the moral project of the community is sufficient to justify its participation, it would be even better if the philosophical explanation actually suggests that there is some sort of inducement or motivation to actively participate in the process of collaborative inquiry. Happily, according to Smith, our participation in the moral progress of the community gives us pleasure in itself. Our psychology offers the possibility of solidarity. Here's the crux of good news from Smith:

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[79] Festenstein, "John Dewey: Inquiry, Ethics, and Democracy," in *The Oxford Handbook of American Philosophy*, ed. Cheryl J. Misak (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 104.

> Nothing pleases us more than to observe in other men a fellow-feeling with all the emotions of our own breast, nor are we ever so much shocked as by the appearance of the contrary.[80]

Smith says that the concordance of opinion and emotion itself gives us pleasure. For example, if you like a poem and someone else likes it too, we can derive pleasure from that experience of unity. Similarly, if I see a situation and feel injustice, and I realise that my friend next to me also feels injustice, that experience of harmony is also a source of pleasure. On the other hand, I would be puzzled or disappointed if no one laughed at my humour and everyone gave me cold looks. The frustration caused by this lack of harmony would lead me to seek concordance of opinion and emotion, and the success of such an endeavour would bring pleasure in itself. Smith argues convincingly with concrete examples that this pleasure of mutuality occurs in a wide range of domains. Just as importantly, this pleasure of mutuality does not only occur in relation to pleasant emotions. We can also feel pleasure when we share anger or sadness.

Of course, according to Smith, this pleasure of mutual sympathy can also be applied to the agreement of moral judgements. However, as we have seen, in social interaction we are wary of making moral judgements based on ignorance and partiality, and we are inclined to make judgements from the perspective of an impartial observer who has overcome ignorance and partiality. Suppose that members of a community idealise that each person makes moral and political judgements from the perspective of an impartial observer, and at the same time seek

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[80] *TMS*, I.i.2.1

the pleasure of mutual sympathy. They will seek to overcome ignorance and partiality and converge on judgements made from the perspective of an impartial observer. This pleasure in mutual sympathy stimulates the desire for mutual correction of moral errors. Remember that the formation of the impartial spectator's perspective stems from the insight that no human being is morally infallible in the first place!

Imagine two people with different attitudes and behaviours towards homosexuality. One person considers it a sin and claims that it is something to be despised. The other says that a person's sexual orientation can never be a basis for discrimination and oppression. How might they interact if they both aspire to take an impartial bystander's perspective and simultaneously seek the pleasure of mutual sympathy? Again, taking an impartial bystander's perspective involves acknowledging the moral fallibility of oneself and others. They may suspect that their views are biased or based on misinformation, and they may feel frustrated that their opinions about homosexuality are so different.[81] They will want to correct their errors of partiality and ignorance, and they can do this by gathering information, reflecting, and communicating. When they overcome their frustration and both arrive at a correct moral judgement, they will feel the pleasure of mutual sympathy. This pleasure may itself be a factor in driving their inquiry. Impartial spectators are transformed into enthusiastic inquirers and participants.

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[81] Hayward argues that critical responses to the irrational should be understood as reactive attitudes that express frustration at the failure to sympathise with the irrational, in line with Adam Smith's sympathy. In other words, he argues persuasively that critical responses, including moral responses, can be seen as grounded in Smithian sympathy rather than in the practical rationality of rationalists, and that this is a better explanation. See Hayward, "Practical Reason, Sympathy and Reactive Attitudes," *Noûs* 53, no. 1 (2017): 51–75, https://doi.org/10.1111/nous.12203.

Those who make judgements as impartial observers acknowledge that both themselves and others are morally fallible. At the same time, they desire to experience the pleasure of mutual sympathy by converging on the perspective of the impartial judge. This combination of belief and desire can lead to a desire to correct errors and partialities in both oneself and others. To overcome ignorance of factual information, one may seek information on one's own, but complex moral problems involving conflicting moral functions require cooperation with experts in various fields, and dialogue with people of different backgrounds and beliefs is necessary to overcome the limitations of one's own social and cultural partiality. This process is not limited to simply correcting one's own moral errors. It involves a process of "discussion, consultation and persuasion"[82] to help other dialogue participants come to better moral positions and beliefs through a process of collaborative inquiry. In other words, the pleasure of mutual agreement can act as an incentive to engage in collaborative inquiry for moral progress. Such mutual enjoyment can contribute to what Dewey calls democracy as a way of life. In describing the kind of democracy that can be enlivened by the pleasure of mutual agreement, Dewey writes:

> [D]emocracy as a way of life is controlled by personal faith in personal day-by-day working together
> with others. Democracy is the belief that even when needs and ends or consequences are different for
> each individual, the habit of amicable cooperation—which may include, as in sport, rivalry and
> competition—is itself a priceless addition to life. To take as far as possible every conflict which arises—

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[82] Dewey writes to emphasise that democracy is never reducible to a form of government or a particular set of institutions: "The ballot is, as often said, a substitute for bullets. But what is more significant is that counting of heads compels prior recourse to methods of discussion, consultation and persuasion, while the essence of appeal to force is to cut short resort to such methods. Majority rule, just as majority rule, is as foolish as its critics charge it with being. But it never is merely majority rule." *LW* 2, pp. 364-65.

and they are bound to arise—out of the atmosphere and medium of force, of violence as a means of settlement into that of discussion and of intelligence is to treat those who disagree—even profoundly—with us as those from whom we may learn, and in so far, as friends. A genuinely democratic faith in peace is faith in the possibility of conducting disputes, controversies and conflicts as cooperative undertakings in which both parties learn by giving the other a chance to express itself, instead of having one party conquer by forceful suppression of the other—a suppression which is none the less one of violence when it takes place by psychological means of ridicule, abuse, intimidation, instead of by overt imprisonment or in concentration camps. To cooperate by giving differences a chance to show themselves because of the belief that the expression of difference is not only a right of the other persons but is a means of enriching one's own life-experience, is inherent in the democratic personal way of life.[83]

For Dewey, democracy is not simply "a form of government." Deweyan democracy is a moral way of life that overcomes the problems facing society in a more intelligent way. At its core, we find "social hope,"[84] to borrow Forstenzer's phrase. It "consists in believing that we can resolve tensions and problems experienced within human groups in peaceful, intelligent, and truly satisfying ways."[85] His experimentalism shows that creative inquiry, grounded in our inherited habits and customs, can solve common social problems. No transcendent, divine element is called for here. Dewey's insights into the individual and society also show that processes of conversation and cooperation to solve moral and political problems are naturalistically justifiable. Likewise, Smith's moral psychology and sentimentalist ethics show how human beings, as perspectival or fallible beings, can

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[83] *LW* 14, p. 228.

[84] Forstenzer, *Deweyan Experimentalism and the Problem of Method in Political Philosophy,* p. 115.

[85] Ibid.

overcome moral error. It also shows that we are motivated not only to want to overcome those errors, but also to want to help others overcome them.

10. Conclusion

Two criticisms of the methodology presented here can be anticipated. One is that neither the methodology itself, a Deweyan inquiry based on the perspective of an impartial observer, nor the results of that inquiry can guarantee certainty or objectivity. I argue that the purpose of moral inquiry is action, not contemplation of absolute knowledge, and that we need to settle for better options than the best options that can guarantee certainty. If the recognition of objective truth is the ultimate and only purpose of moral inquiry, then it may be pointless to follow a methodology that cannot guarantee certainty. But if our goal is to make the world a better place, we need to improve our deliberations and the choices we make, even if our deliberations and actions do not conform to absolute truths.

This position does not mean that we should deny ideals or truths that we should pursue. I suggest that the understanding and pursuit of them should be on a practical or pragmatic level, as Simon Blackburn calls it. In Blackburn's words, believing in the existence of truth and inquiring into it is just following one practical piece of advice: "when there are still two things to think about, keep on worrying." [86] Seeking truth means nothing more than

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[86] Simon Blackburn, "Antirealist Expressivism and Quasi-Realism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory*, ed. David Copp (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 155.

embracing "the optimism that our best efforts can, in the end, close any issue, provided we keep at it long enough."[87] If the truths we should strive for are understood in this way, then it may be more important to construct a methodology that allows us to better address the moral conflicts and problems we face than the content that occupies existing metaethical discourse. It may not matter so much whether our norms correspond to mind-independent non-natural reality, whether they can be approved by all rational agents, or whether they can be recognised as truth from a perspective stripped of all particularities and contingencies. Indeed, as a Deweyan, Kitcher says that in this context, existing metaethical discussions are "(at best) secondary."[88]

Another anticipated objection is that the premise that humans can actively correct not only their own errors and biases but also those of others is overly optimistic. I think this is a much more important objection than the first one, as it addresses the workability of the methodology. The answer to this objection is to acknowledge that even the construction and understanding of the methodology of conversation and inquiry for moral progress is secondary to its actual application and the achievement of moral progress. This is because, as the philosophy of Smith and Dewey suggests, the process of moral problem-solving is thoroughly based on human sympathy, imagination, and habit. Moral progress cannot be made by people who lack sufficient moral sensitivity and imagination, even if they are presented with a coherent and useful methodology of inquiry. This is why political reform in a country like North Korea, where the curriculum is tightly controlled by an authoritarian

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[87] Ibid.

[88] Kitcher, *Moral Progress,* p. xii.

regime, seems hopelessly difficult.

But we have overcome major moral problems, such as slavery and the discriminatory treatment of women. We have more access than any generation before us to the literary works that Smith and Dewey so emphasised for moral development. In addition, the dramas and movies we are exposed to often make our moral sensibilities more acute. Thanks to scientific advances, we can more accurately assess the consequences of our actions than at any other time in history. Through cooperative inquiry, we can contribute to a better life for ourselves and future generations. By engaging in such experiments, we can become better people and solve other problems in a better way. Best of all, the process of standing in solidarity for better judgements and actions is enjoyable in itself. I believe we have sufficient reason to be optimistic and to join in the pleasurable experiments of impartial spectators. I believe we can make progress.

Conclusion

Naturalistic ethics, I have argued, holds that a process of reflection and conversation based on moral understanding and sensibilities can lead to moral progress, and that the products of such reflection and conversation have the authority of morality to be obeyed. The products of naturalistic inquiry have objectivity as non-arbitrariness, which is sustained by the stable desires and desires that humans have in common. Furthermore, reflection on the practical consequences of judgements and actions based on those desires is required in the pursuit of objectivity as non-arbitrariness. This position is subject to two complaints.

The first complaint is that sentimentalist pragmatism eschews certainty. The reasons for this are as follows. Sentimentalist pragmatism views all moral judgements and norms arrived at through a process of inquiry as provisional. The moral sensibilities and understandings we must rely on to arrive at better judgements are also provisional and historical. Even the empirical sciences and their findings, which we must utilise and rely on to solve complex moral problems, are neither absolute nor certain. Moreover, our moral understanding is fundamentally historical, and certain moral norms may be effective in overcoming moral problems in one society but not in another. Thus, within the framework of sentimentalist pragmatism, norms that are judged to be norms to be pursued in one society may be norms to be rightly rejected in another. Thus, we are left with the task of reflecting on norms that are found to be authoritative in one time and place when we apply them to other times and places. Given all this provisionality, the question may be asked, why should we engage in the project of moral practice?

I do not think that infallibility and certainty should be the touchstone for determining the value of human practices. In the realm of morality, as well as in countless other areas of practice, we are fallible and imperfect beings. But we should not say that a process of endeavour is not worthwhile simply because it sometimes fails to produce the effect we had hoped for. Even if such a process leads to failure or mistakes, we can use them as opportunities to improve the process or methodology of our practice. Of course, the fact that the products of moral inquiry cannot guarantee certainty may discourage us. This fact arises from the inevitable and undeniable human condition of fallibility and imperfection. We must accept that our moral norms, our moral understandings, and our methodologies for solving moral problems are all imperfect, and that reflection on existing norms and inquiry into overcoming new problems will continue to be required. As Max Khan Hayward says, we need to distinguish between "what we might want" and "what we genuinely need."[1] One of the reasons we fail to distinguish between the two is that we overlook our conditions and limitations. The morality we genuinely need is appropriate for actual human beings, with their limited and fallible cognitive and emotional capacities.

The other complaint is that my position views the role that philosophy can play in moral progress as overly modest and trivial. I agree that we should be humble about the role that philosophy can play in moral progress, but I disagree that it is trivial. According to sentimentalist pragmatism, philosophy can never occupy a dogmatic authority or absolute primacy in the resolution of moral problems.

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[1] Max Khan Hayward, "Terrestrial Ethics" (Manuscript Submitted for Publication), p. 4.

This is because the process of solving moral problems relies on moral sensibilities, imagination, and cooperation. I do not deny the possibility that philosophy can contribute to the cultivation of moral sensibilities and imagination. But philosophy alone is not enough. In order to develop a sensitive empathy for people in different situations and positions, one must have access to a wide range of literary and artistic works with narratives, concrete situations, and detailed psychological portrayals. The cooperation required to solve moral problems and overcome limitations also requires well-structured institutional arrangements. To build and improve these institutions, we need the contributions of various social science disciplines, such as political science and sociology.

What, then, is the role of philosophy in overcoming moral problems, and why is it non-trivial? Sentimentalist pragmatism can elucidate for us the source of the authority of morality. It can reassure those involved in the project of moral practice by showing them that participating in the moral project is not merely indulging in fetishism or rule-worship. It is not trivial to reassure those involved in a moral project by demonstrating that morality is something worthy of our obedience. It can also deepen our understanding of the nature of the methodology we should pursue for solving moral problems, or suggest the conditions it should have. For example, the insight that a methodology for overcoming moral problems must be able to overcome failures of sympathy and address the problem of false consciousness suggests criteria for the processes of moral reflection and conversation we should pursue in concrete life contexts. It is not trivial to suggest criteria that we should pursue in the process of problem-solving.

The project of moving towards a better community or a better world is like venturing into the unknown in the sense that there are no guarantees of certainty. But that was also true of our ancestors, and they nevertheless made changes that should be called moral progress. Those changes were based on our desires, sensibilities, and imaginations, but the changes they brought to the world were not trivial. I believe that such achievements can and should be made in the future.

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