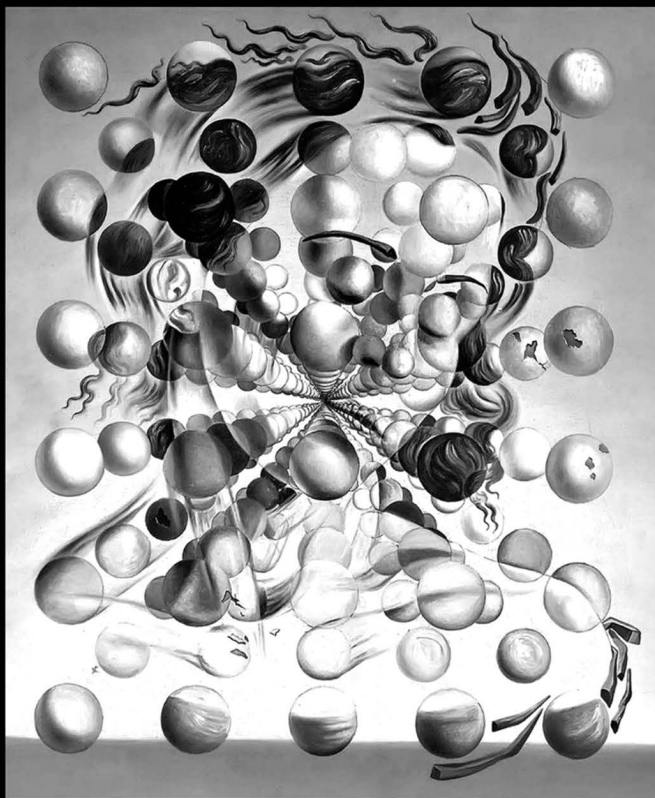


# ΑΠΕΙΡΟΝ



## Apeiron

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## **Apeiron:** [Gk., *unlimited, indefinite, indeterminate*]

- n. 1. Name used by Anaximander to refer to ultimate reality; the unformed source of all that exists.
  
2. The *arche*, that is, the beginning or principle of all things, the unlimited. (The term is capable of various constructions, depending upon how one understands the term ‘unlimited’ – indeterminate, unbounded, without form, without beginning or end, without internal limits.)
  
3. An undergraduate journal of philosophy for students of all majors at Washington College.

This *sixteenth* edition of *Apeiron* illustrates various dichotomies of the human condition: work and play, sexual purity and proclivity, illusory and true well-being, pacifism and violence, mind and body, physician and patient. Please appreciate and reflect upon these Twelve contributions to the spirit of philosophy at Washington College.

Note: The challenges of the pandemic led us to publish the Spring 2020 and Spring 2021 editions in one paper volume, now in the fall of 2021. We would like to thank all involved for their hard work and patience during these uncertain times.

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## Pascal's Proper Place for Diversions

### Stell Scott

When humans pursue a goal, they must remain vigilant against diversions. Whether the goal is expending energy outward or reflecting inward, distractions can mislead the will and waste precious energy. Blaise Pascal, philosopher and mathematician from the seventeenth century, was greatly concerned with the use of his will and energy because he feared being denied salvation by God as a result of spending energy inadequately. Acting in accordance with the purposes of God was of utmost importance to Pascal. In order to fulfill higher purposes, whether godly or mundane, becoming mindful of diversions is important because they consume energy. Diversions can either provide thoughtful, refreshing breaks from responsibility or drain the limited energy of the psyche in addictive spirals. Pascal helps to develop ideals intended to constrain the negative aspects of diversions in the *Pensées*, his famous work advocating for religious commitment. Avoiding the negative and superficial side of diversions pushes people to think and act more purposefully, creating more substantial and authentic happiness from their efforts.

Pascal identifies two conflicting human instincts concerning diversions, rooted in the desire for happiness. The first instinct reaches outwards for diversion as a means to escape the difficult or boring. Humans cannot cure their inner wretchedness, so external diversions and occupation become valued as a means to escape their awareness of the fallen human state. The second instinct is left from the nature of God and reminds humans that “true happiness lies in rest and not in excitement.”<sup>1</sup> There is an internal happiness which does not rely on external diversions, but fewer people are aware of how to produce internal happiness through rest. The luxurious concept of rest can be addictive and become unsustainable or meaningless, but is also a potentially invigorating motivator of the psyche. Pascal believes that the human potential for internal happiness through rest is inherited from the divine creative power, which instills the innate ability to be happy without needing external worldly diversions. Reaching higher happiness through rest can provide comfort but also creates paradoxical conflict with the desire for excitement. The positive disposition towards the excitement of diversions draws humans away from the pursuit of true happiness through rest. Excitement and rest both have important value in the quest for happiness, but the opposing instinctual desires can create dysfunctional behavior or thought. The innate dispositions towards excitement and rest must be brought to a naturally appealing balance, primarily through diversions.

Among the problematic thoughts and behaviors of humans is the search for false rest through further effort, stemming from the belief that more excitement and achievement is required for the satisfaction they seek. However, once the effort is spent to overcome an obstacle, the following “rest proves intolerable because of the boredom it produces.”<sup>2</sup> Actively expending energy is required to achieve happiness, and while outward action alone is not sufficient to access deeper levels of happiness, it can alleviate the weight of

existence. An unoccupied mind can slip into chaos without the aid of diversions to help frame energy. Diversions are a means of controlling energy and ought to be chosen carefully because patterns of behavior can become addicting or produce apathy. If diversions are chosen carefully, they can help keep wretchedness at bay and bring peace to the mind. If diversions are mindlessly utilized or consumed in excess, however, humans can fall even farther from divinity and God. Understanding the conflicting instincts towards excitement and rest is crucial to mindfully choosing diversions which will most reliably produce long-term happiness, through both internal rest and external pleasures. One of the larger responsibilities of humans is the development of a balanced relationship with the diversions in one's life.

The draw towards external excitement is one of the most primal instincts and can pull many people out of boredom with ease. There is a natural drive in humans to engage with the world through production and consumption. The need for external excitement can be channeled into productivity or consuming what has already been produced. Some may believe they desire the ability to rest and consume after the completion of their efforts, but they do not realize the innately insatiable cupidity of humans.<sup>3</sup> The wretchedness of human nature can spiral through overconsumption and become lost to ignorance easily. When people are lost in the ignorance of consumption and blind to the light of creation, even more work is required to rebalance their relation to their diversions. For the listeners, the world calls on them to prepare for the future and to avoid complacently waiting for the next hardship. There is always the potential for improving the organization and stability of humans on an individual or group level. Ignoring the responsibility to contribute goes against the understandings of nature according to Pascal.

Telling a man to rest is the same as telling him to live happily. It means advising him to enjoy a completely happy state which he can contemplate at leisure without cause for distress. It means not understanding nature. Thus, men who are naturally conscious of what they are shun nothing so much as the rest; they would do anything to be disturbed.<sup>4</sup>

People who are aware of their higher responsibilities understand that nature does not allow for prolonged states of complete leisure. Vigilantly attending to responsibilities keeps society and individuals prepared but also channels the need for external excitement into purposeful productivity.

Occupations and responsibilities generally are productive by nature, but not all energy should be spent maximizing production. Spending energy on meaningful leisure activities allows for a breath from the intensity of life, while keeping the mind engaged. Time spent away from productivity in rest can bring distress due to the troubling innate elements of human nature already mentioned, like mortality or social influence. Permitting no time away from productivity could drive humans into states of rigid tension, however, so finding a "novel and agreeable passion which keeps them busy" is important for healthy leisure time.<sup>5</sup> Pascal speaks more about how humans relate to and engage with diversions than about how to pick healthy hobbies, but he holds that diversions ought to engage the mind vigorously. Not all hobbies are made

equal; some leisure activities are more nourishing and connective than others. Having standards and being mindful of the quality of the leisure activities that one chooses is important. Humans should also have mindful standards for choosing energetically engaging occupations and work, beyond just being productive. Diversion is best if the following rest is not the primary goal, but the resting will still feel better as a result of the work. For Pascal, diversions also ideally bring the individual closer to higher goals, which in his case would mean divinity. Regardless of the context, diversions are able to ground the human experience and can be used to escape the existential.

Diversions are an age-old part of human life and culture. Occupations provide purpose and a stable ground from which to build happiness, but not all of life is an occupation. Distractions varying in quality are strewn across society, constantly available for when people have time outside of work and responsibilities. Diversions alone are not enough to satisfy humans, but they are an integral part of societies. Whether unconsciously or with intent, humans are drawn to diversions like moths to a light. According to Pascal, humans will avoid thinking about their wretchedness, mortality, and ignorance because they cannot cure the qualities nature has implicitly imbued in them.<sup>6</sup> Fragility and responsibility naturally drive the psyche to avoid confronting deeper level thoughts. People regularly seek diversions from the immutable or inevitable because facing the raw truths of human nature can raise difficulty. Engagement with diversions agitates the mind in a focused manner and is often preferred to the difficulty of thinking about mortality or responsibility. Unlike rest, diversions can occupy the mind intensely, which is why Pascal claims that we prefer the hunt to the capture.<sup>7</sup> The diversion of the hunt grounds humans in the present, whereas the capture places the psyche in a floating ether of questions, thought, and uncertainty.

Pascal notes that even kings depend upon diversion and are unable to sit alone with their thoughts for too long. The responsibilities of any adult would make diversions appear pleasant, but the influential weight of a king's responsibilities creates even more desire for diversions. Without distractions, he is left with thoughts of "... all the threats facing him, of possible revolts, [and] finally of inescapable death and disease..." making him "indeed more unhappy than the humblest of his subjects who can enjoy sport and diversion."<sup>8</sup> The more responsibilities mortal life involves, the greater the need for diversions. The weight of mortal life is heavy enough to bring nearly anyone to desire distractions, but the king is a strong example of a human with great responsibility and vulnerability. Life brings both sociological and existential stress which can be alleviated healthily by developing the proper mentality towards the utilization of diversion. Being a mortal human means living with potentially paradoxical impulses which must be alleviated, ideally in a balanced style.

Resting leads to existential confrontations for Pascal because he had concerns over the certainty of his salvation throughout life. Thoughts of the future or death are often intimidating to the fragile human state. When the mind ceases to be occupied with diversions and is able to focus on the



existence of the self in relation to existential concepts, panic can arise. Pascal believes that rest is reliably calming only if there is a confident connection to the divine, but humans can still get lost in the ether of resting thought because they are not immortal or omnipotent themselves. However, even in the best-case scenarios involving the most spiritually confident, any human would eventually fall from harmonic rest to boredom. Taking time away from work and diversions for long periods is often not possible because of responsibilities, but there is still unignorable value in resting moments. Irrespective of their personally held beliefs on divinity, humans have an innately given ability to find deep happiness through connecting to sheer existence in rest. Embracing the completely passive inaction of rest can bring a harmonic peace to the surface despite the many stressors of the world. Pascal claims that divinity is responsible for the deep peace rest brings, but divine belief is not necessarily required to receive the deeply connective benefits of rest. Diversions and work can reenter here in order to alleviate the boredom and manifest purpose. The dance between reflecting through rest and engaging in diversions is one which must be walked carefully in order to minimize the disadvantages and maximize the advantages of each.

Diversions are the primary tool for keeping the existential at bay, but they are a tool which must be used responsibly. Humans are naturally flawed and fallible, making mindful attitudes even more important when developing purpose and happiness. Pascal shows not just how humans deal with struggles through diversion, but also how they struggle equally with rest. Rest can bring an internal peace temporarily, but the fragile mortality of humans calls them back into external purpose. The fickle relation of humans to rest makes daily life full of diversion through responsibilities, entertainment, or hobbies. Diversion is another paradox for humans, but an easier one to engage with and manage because the nature of diversions is grounding to the human state. Once humans become aware of the futility in rest, they must recommit to diversion using a mindful perspective. Diversions must be picked carefully because they often become the behavioral patterns by which life is lived and shaped. When humans become lost in the ignorance of the lower quality diversions, people lose the ability to dig deeply and mindfully into their psyches, and they suffer as a result. However, as the awareness of an individual grows, their relationships with their diversions will mature as well. Being present and mindful has the ability to draw meaning and enjoyment out of activities on a different level. The focus of the psyche can be on the diversion itself, rather than on what comes after. Learning to mindfully choose and appreciate diversions, instead of waiting for the next chance to rest, is one of the most significant teachings that Pascal offers for reaching our full potential for deep and sustainable happiness.

## Notes

1. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. A.J. Krailsheimer (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 40.
2. Pascal, *Pensées*, 40.
3. Pascal, *Pensées*, 39.
4. Pascal, *Pensées*, 39.
5. Pascal, *Pensées*, 38.
6. Pascal, *Pensées*, 37.
7. Pascal, *Pensées*, 37.
8. Pascal, *Pensées*, 38.

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Pascal, Blaise. *Pensées*. Translated by A.J. Krailsheimer. London: Penguin Books, 1995.

# Biblical Virtue Ethics: A New Approach to Sexual Proclivity

## Julia Manaraze

Strict modern Protestant and fundamentalist Christian ethics, especially sexual purity and proclivity ethics, are riddled with the Kantian perspective that Western culture reveres. Regardless of whether one is secular or religious, the Western Kantian idea appears to be that there should be some objectively good actions or morals and that based on these narrow strictures, individuals should shape their lives. This deontological perspective, though marking Western society as a whole, has affected Christian fundamentalists' interpretations in some ways to the worst extent. Deontology is often the lens through which fundamentalists view Christianity, and this phenomenon should be reversed. Due to adopting the deontological view, strictly conservative sects of Christianity have kept (or reinstated) a work-based faith similar to that of the Old Testament; similarly, they have embraced rules, especially regarding sexual purity and proclivity, in a manner akin to what Jesus overcame and condemned in the Pharisees. One goal of modern Christianity should be to disavow the "Pharisaical" approach to modern romantic relationships while maintaining – or, perhaps, instating *more* firmly – the most central principles and doctrines found throughout the Bible. To do so, it seems one must target the root of many modern biblical interpretative errors: the strictly deontological approach (or at least the way it is taught in Western culture) which inherently supports strict moral rules that can become burdensome and somewhat obtuse to apply in every case, especially when the situation involves romantic partners. Consequently, a virtue ethics approach, which allows for a more adaptable standard based on developing righteous character, is the one supported by Scripture, the one that makes the most sense to apply in sexual ethics, and the one propounded by Jesus Christ.

To start, it would be best to outline some of Kant's core deontological principles and later show how these principles (or *rules*) are the ones that Christian fundamentalists follow. In short, Immanuel Kant, the father of modern deontology, believed that morality must stem from a sense of duty and that good actions taken by an individual are what make that individual moral. To use his exact wording from *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, the "first proposition" of morality is that "an action has moral worth only if it is done from duty."<sup>1</sup> Thus, it is a sense of duty – from inward or outward sources, we do not yet know – that should spur people to good action. Accordingly, "the second proposition is: an action from duty has its moral worth *not in the aim* that is supposed to be attained by it, but rather in the maxim in accordance with which it is resolved upon; thus that worth depends not on the actuality of the object of the action, but merely on the *principle of the volition*, in accordance with which the action is done, without regard to any object of the faculty of desire."<sup>2</sup> This immediately sidelines utilitarianism (the idea that good outcomes or consequences are what indicate morality), since Kant is saying that a "good" or "moral" outcome is not the main concern or even the goal, but rather that the flavor of the actions themselves is what matters.

Finally, the “third proposition – as a consequence of the first two – [he] would express thus: *Duty is the necessity of an action from respect for the law.*”<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Kant says that “nothing is left over for the will that can determine it except the *law* as what is objective and subjectively *pure respect* for this practical law, hence the maxim of complying with such a law, even when it infringes all [one’s] inclinations.”<sup>4</sup> It seems we have the answer to a previous question. In Kant’s eyes, an outward obligation should have control over a person’s will. Admittedly, there would undoubtedly be a good deal of careful deliberation over which outward sources should impose obligations upon a person, but nevertheless, it is a sense of duty and the actions that follow that constitute morality.

Rosalind Hursthouse, a neo-Aristotelian philosopher, offers virtue ethics as an alternative to Kant’s staunch deontology. In the introduction of her book *On Virtue Ethics*, Hursthouse explains that the term “virtue ethics” was “initially introduced to distinguish an approach in normative ethics which emphasizes the virtues, or moral character, in contrast to an approach which emphasizes duties or rules (deontology) or one which emphasizes the consequences of actions (utilitarianism).”<sup>5</sup> Since deontology is the normative ethic most commonly used in conservative or fundamentalist Christian communities, it is the one we will focus on refuting or deemphasizing in favor of a virtue ethical approach. Thus, in crude terms, agent-based virtue ethics evaluates the character (or essence) of individuals in order to determine their virtue, whereas deontology evaluates people’s actions to determine their moral prowess. Furthermore, “the concept of a virtue is the concept of something that makes its possessor good; a virtuous person is a morally good, excellent, or admirable person who acts and reacts well, rightly, as she should.”<sup>6</sup> The virtue ethical and deontological theories tend to place emphasis on different aspects of a person’s life and sometimes appear at odds with one another. In fact, part of the reason virtue ethics has made such a remarkable comeback is because “the prevailing [ethical] literature ignored or sidelined a number of topics that any adequate moral philosophy should address.”<sup>7</sup> Some of these topics include “motives and moral character... moral education, moral wisdom or discernment, friendship and family relationships, a deep concept of happiness, the role of the emotions in our moral life, and the questions of what sort of person I should be, and of how we should live.”<sup>8</sup> Consequently, people found answers to these questions more readily in the virtue ethics approach than in that of deontology or “rule-based moral processing.”<sup>9</sup>

But what exactly *is* virtue ethics and what, for that matter, is a virtue? Without getting too specific, we must illustrate what makes virtue ethics unique and better equipped than deontology (and utilitarianism) to manage situations involving Christian standards of sexual purity and proclivity. Hursthouse criticizes Kant’s preoccupation with “rights” or justice and instead emphasizes virtuous character. She says, “according to virtue ethics... what is wrong with lying, when it is wrong, is not that it is unjust (because it violates someone’s ‘right to the truth’ or their ‘right to be treated with respect’) but that it is *dishonest*, and dishonesty is a vice.”<sup>10</sup> Hursthouse provides several other

poignant examples as well, saying that “what is wrong with killing, when it is wrong, may not be so much that it is unjust, violating the right to life, but, frequently, that it is callous and contrary to the virtue of charity.”<sup>11</sup> She aims to draw less attention to the few specific (and somewhat cold) morals that Kant’s deontology places so much emphasis on, such as justice, and instead to illuminate some of the more forgotten virtues such as charity. Hursthouse utilizes one further example that is directly applicable due to its biblical undertones: “from the perspective of virtue ethics, one can say that it is ‘absolutely required’ that one does not ‘pass by on the other side’ when one sees a wounded stranger lying by the roadside, but the requirement comes from charity rather than justice.”<sup>12</sup> With this example, Hursthouse does two things: she highlights the affinity the Bible has with virtue ethics as she echoes the “Good Samaritan” story in Luke 10:25-37, and she also shows how the virtues as a whole often correlate more directly to actions than deontological morals or utilitarian ethics do.

And yet, though Hursthouse argues for the more direct correlation between virtue ethics and action, it is not the specific actions themselves that are of value (like Kant’s deontology) but rather the intention and methods behind them, or the concept of “acting virtuously.”<sup>13</sup> First of all, Hursthouse does admit that the first criterion of acting virtuously is “a certain sort of action” such as “a virtuous, good, action.”<sup>14</sup> So, the type of action *does* matter in acting virtuously. However, she soon qualifies this in her second point: merely doing a good action “unintentionally” or even in “uncomprehending obedience to someone’s instruction” does not qualify as “acting virtuously,” but one must also “know what she is doing – [i.e.,] that she is helping, facing danger, telling the truth, etc.”<sup>15</sup> In other words, if someone does something good accidentally, then it is not the same as acting virtuously, although the individual may do a good action. Thus, to Hursthouse, a person, when acting virtuously, must be acting “for a reason.”<sup>16</sup> So far, virtue ethics does not sound radically different from deontology except for the fact that an action is not good unless it is well-intentioned and purposeful; acting from duty is not enough, for each action must be carefully weighed internally, rather than being accepted from some outward instruction, law, or duty. It follows that if someone is acting “for a reason” (i.e., intentionally), then he or she must also be acting for “the right reasons,”<sup>17</sup> not ignoring the “maxim” in which they are “resolved upon.”<sup>18</sup>

This point is insufficient in Hursthouse’s estimation without clarifying that doing something good is not *actually* good or right unless the person acted *well*, a term she suggests has deeper implications that allow for greater flexibility than deontology. In her estimation, right action and acting well are different, the first being a rather linear or exacting aim and the second involving a much deeper connection to virtuous principles and careful consideration. To support this point, Hursthouse, in one section of her book, says that in irresolvable dilemmas, two people can both act “*well*” by acting “courageously, responsibly, thoughtfully, conscientiously, honestly, wisely” and yet make different decisions. In some cases, she argues, life is not as

deontology paints it, with only that which is morally “permissible” or that which is “right.” Rather, life is messy and “two people can be equally virtuous without having exactly the same standards and ideals.”<sup>19</sup> Dissimilarly, deontology has regard only for the quality of actions and the systematic rules and actions that “should” follow, whereas virtue ethics holds that for someone to act well, he or she must have well-meaning intentions and thought for the entire situation. From this care, different actions may follow. Unlike utilitarianism (which only considers the outcome) or deontology (which mainly considers the action with no regard for the outcome), virtue ethics is designed to consider the full scope of a decision and may come to different conclusions. Thus, it makes sense that acting “good” or “right” and acting “well” are fundamentally different, with different connotations. The very statements “acting good” and “acting well” seem different colloquially, as the phrase “acting good” sounds as if someone is “acting” or *pretending* in a deceitful sense, whereas “acting well” does not seem to retain these implications. “Acting well” is more positive because it is a phrase rarely used and thus does not absorb colloquial undertones that are frequent to common speech. “Acting well” also simply sounds less juvenile than words like “good” or even “right,” because it does not sound like a commandment given to a youth but more like an intentional choice on the agent’s behalf, an idea that Hursthouse firmly supports. To Hursthouse, part of acting well is that an agent rarely acts due to “glorious occurrent ideas about the rightness of what she is doing, the sacred claims of duty, the glory of the Noble,”<sup>20</sup> etc., but rather acts “from virtue – from a settled state of good character.”<sup>21</sup> This “settled state of good character” can only be achieved through experience and careful consideration and cannot, according to Hursthouse, be attained by merely following rules or even heeding what one was taught.<sup>22</sup>

Another fundamental concept that Hursthouse proposes, however, is that to be virtuous, a person must possess all the virtues; this appears unachievable unless one has a more flexible theory of the virtues, like that of another virtue ethics philosopher, Pedro Tabensky. Hursthouse controversially claims that if a person can possess one virtue then they really have all the virtues, but within Tabensky’s framework, her assertion makes sense. Tabensky candidly says that all humans are “deeply vulnerable” creatures with “skin-bag” natures,” and as such, our “fabric of ethical dispositions is always at risk of becoming corrupted” by “countervailing pressures.”<sup>23</sup> Due to this precarious predicament, we must constantly struggle against the “countervailing pressures” and it is consequently the “mark of the strong that they are able to overcome loss, even if only imperfectly.”<sup>24</sup> Unlike Hursthouse, who argues that acting virtuously should become nearly reflexive, Tabensky boldly states that humans’ “psychological structures are inherently unstable” and that the “best in us – the virtuous life” has to be “permanently at risk” to be virtuous at all.<sup>25</sup> It seems that he would support the claim that one of the largest parts of being virtuous is being tenacious enough to keep trying. Tabensky’s interpretation of virtue ethics not only allows people to fail, but also expects them to. Countering Hursthouse’s rather lofty illustration of what a virtuous

agent is, Tabensky claims that such conceptions of stable virtuous dispositions stem more from Aristotle's "conception of divinity" and "ancient perfectionisms" than from real life.<sup>26</sup> Though Hursthouse admittedly does argue against Platonic fantasies, Tabensky still seems to represent a more accurate picture of a person's life and internal experience, placing a correct emphasis on moral effort rather than moral perfection and showing that possessing a virtue might in fact mean *trying* to retain a virtue.

If one does manage to possess all the virtues, however, Hursthouse asserts that one will still not be fully virtuous unless one also has "moral wisdom" or "practical wisdom" – the cornerstone of all the other virtues and also the component that (arguably) can only be obtained through experience. A key idea in this theory is that "virtue ethics, like some forms of deontology, does not even aim to produce an 'algorithm for life' independent of judgment."<sup>27</sup> Thus, using one's "judgment" is clearly absolutely necessary to a virtue ethics theory since there is no list of moral rules or obligations to follow like in deontology, but rather broadly understood virtues and vices. Even in a system of "codifiable" moral rules, however, people "accept that such a set could only be applied correctly and efficaciously by someone with a certain amount of moral wisdom; [the rules] could not be applied just mechanically."<sup>28</sup> This is why Hursthouse does not believe that it is possible for a youth to be fully virtuous. In her words, adolescents "lack moral knowledge of what to do in [resolvable dilemmas]" because they do not understand "how the virtue (and vice) terms are to be correctly applied."<sup>29</sup> Even if an adolescent possesses a certain virtue, he or she would often not understand how to implement that virtue in many different situations, Hursthouse argues. Practical wisdom is the cornerstone of all the virtues since it informs and expands certain virtues based on context and moral understanding.

Hursthouse claims in her agent-based ethics that in order to be virtuous, one requires moral experience, the consequent development of practical wisdom, *and* the possession of the virtues themselves. On the surface, this may seem too lofty or even counterintuitive, and yet it seems remarkably clear when one considers the dynamics within romantic relationships. From anecdotal evidence, it is quite probable that most people know an acquaintance who exhibits many virtues but who has terrible sense when it comes to navigating romantic relationships. Whether that individual struggles to get into a romantic relationship, fumbles his or her way through one, or demonstrates poor judgment in not leaving a relationship that is clearly problematic, in all of these instances, what the person lacks is arguably not virtue but rather understanding. It is not that the individual is morally flawed, but rather that he or she does not have the experience and the consequent practical wisdom to understand contextually what he or she should do.

Contrary to virtue ethics, in traditional Christian thought, the Old Testament (or the *Tanakh*, as it is called by Judaic believers) is often understood as describing a "works-based" religion. Characteristically, Jews have strongly valued action guidance, as Judaism is based on codes of conduct which are outlined in the portion of the Bible that contains the Law, called the



“Torah.”<sup>30</sup> The written Torah was given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai, but the Jews were so concerned about defiling the Law in any way that they created a much more extensive addition to the Law called the Oral Law or Oral Torah.<sup>31</sup> While the written Torah contains mostly broad ordinances, such as the idea that a person should offer atonements for their sins, this Oral Torah rather includes lengthy and detailed ordinances about how religious rituals should be performed. Because Jews in ancient times repeatedly experienced periods of bondage and persecution, studying the written and especially the oral law became paramount to making sacrifices and performing certain impractical religious rites. In many traditional (i.e. Orthodox) Jewish communities, it is still this way today. Orthodox Jews, who are some of the strictest modern adherents to the Oral Torah, believe that it is the actions of a few faithful Jews that will save the world in its entirety. Thus, from the beginning of the Hebrew Bible – when God tells Abraham that his descendants, the Israelites, will “make a great nation,” and when He gives Moses the written Law – until today, faithful Jews have practiced and established God’s commandments. Consequently, one of the first plans God set was to create a people who would follow His mandates in order to be blessed by Him. A cursory glance, then, makes it appear that the Old Testament, and especially the Torah, operates according to deontological, work-based ethics.

However, even within the Old Testament, we find strong evidence of the principle that it is not so much perfect adherence to the Law, but rather, it is having the “right heart” that God respects. Few, if any, of the “heroes of the faith” that God honors later in the New Testament Epistle to the Hebrews were perfectly obedient to the Law. A great example of an imperfect life, but a righteous one according to God, is that of King David. In many instances, David displayed remarkably virtuous character, such as when he apologized for merely cutting a piece of cloth from the robe of Saul – a man who was trying to kill him – or when he volunteered to fight Goliath when he was far outmatched simply because the giant was threatening his nation and his God. Contrary to these displays of extreme virtue, King David also took his soldier Uriah’s wife Bathsheba, impregnated her, and tried to make it seem as if Uriah had impregnated her by letting him come home on leave. When the honorable Uriah would not go in unto Bathsheba because his fellow soldiers were still out on the battlefield, David sent Uriah to the front lines in hopes that he would be killed. Since Uriah did not have sex with Bathsheba, David knew he would be discovered. Despite this instance, God *still* called David “a man after [His] own heart” in 1 Samuel 13:14. Though what David did was truly terrible, his life was still marked overall by instances of extreme virtue. This was a “moment of weakness” more than a marker of extreme moral flaws, perhaps supporting Hursthouse’s idea that stable character traits determine virtuous character, or, more likely, supporting Tabensky’s claim that fighting “countervailing pressures” continually is the real sign of the virtuous.

One thing that Hursthouse misses, that Tabensky’s conclusions suggest, and that the Bible illustrates vividly, is that one of the most reliable markers of a truly virtuous person is demonstrating repentance. Tabensky’s

statement that it is the “mark of the strong that they are able to overcome loss, even if only imperfectly,”<sup>32</sup> shows that continual effort is the goal of human ethics. Hidden within this idea of continual effort, however, is that people must *want* to try and must try to correct their actions when they backslide. Aiming to correct one’s own actions indicates that the person has some kind of remorse for the wrong they have done or caused. Tabensky’s arguments for “trying,” then, support the need for the virtue of repentance. The Bible strongly emphasizes this correlation between virtue and repentance. Though the Israelites in the Old Testament indeed were required by God to obey His laws if they wanted to be blessed, in cases when His most faithful would fail such as in the story of King David and Bathsheba, the most critical thing David did that set him apart from other believers was that he repented profusely. When Saul disobeyed God, the Lord became very angry with him because unlike David, Saul showed an insincere or at least a more shallow repentance. After he made a mistake and asked for forgiveness, he would then repeat the mistake again, such as when he tried to kill David multiple times. The thing that differentiated David was that his repentance was true and deep: after sincerely begging for God’s forgiveness, he would not repeat that sin again. This effort, to try not to make mistakes and to sincerely repent after one does, is the thing that divides the morally weak from the morally “strong,” as Tabensky says.<sup>33</sup>

Another instance of virtue ethics that can be witnessed in the Bible, but in different terms, is Hursthouse’s idea of “practical wisdom.” Though the term appears, on the surface, a bit vague, it seems there are traces of this very concept within Scripture in the form of the word “understanding.” Throughout the Bible, the traits of “wisdom” and “understanding” are constantly praised. Proverbs 9:10 explains that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding” (*KJV*). A person of understanding is described in Proverbs 14:29 and 17:27 as having an “excellent spirit” and being “slow to wrath,” or in other words, as being the kind of individual who possesses discretion and knows how to react in various situations. The “knowledge of the holy” is arguably synonymous with the “practical wisdom” that Hursthouse describes. After all, Hursthouse carefully illustrates how even for deontological ethicists, just “knowing” a list of moral rules or obligations is not enough to know how to apply them, and she seems to be saying that a deep understanding of what actually is virtuous (or holy) is necessary to *be* virtuous. Similarly, though all Jews during the Old Testament era were doubtlessly aware of the Ten Commandments as well as many of the Laws recorded in the Torah, the Old Testament writers still felt it necessary to highlight the importance of understanding, showing it is not a virtue easy to obtain. Thus, Hursthouse’s “practical wisdom” and the Bible’s “understanding” are quite similar concepts.

One criticism a person may level at the virtue ethics approach in Christianity, however, is that agent-based morals are impractical for *any* religion to adopt since an agent-based approach cannot tell people how exactly to behave; thus, virtue ethics must inherently counteract the Ten Commandments, i.e., the moral framework of the entire Bible. One can start to

refute this claim by arguing that built into the idea of a virtuous agent is the refusal to participate in certain vices – or to do so only rarely and with all signs of repentance – because those things inherently lack virtue. So, in a sense, virtuous actions are, by default, built into being righteous in God’s eyes, and wrong actions are avoided. Hursthouse would agree with this claim, as she states that even people who are strict deontologists rely on “principles, and their corresponding rules” that are similar if not identical to the principles “employed in the [virtue ethics] rules.”<sup>34</sup> However, these virtuous principles are not clearly laid out, so many people still argue that agent-based ethical systems lack a certain concreteness. However, to echo Hursthouse’s ideas, a virtuous person will do what she thinks is right, which is not only “a substantial claim about the future (with respect to reliability)” but is also “most importantly, a claim about what sort of person the agent is – a claim that goes ‘all the way down.’”<sup>35</sup> Though the Ten Commandments may have the appearance of deontological rules, they are in fact substantially different since they are not attached to any specific description of action but rather to core principles of decent humanity. From this, readers can infer that virtue ethics itself could very well endorse or even propose a list of commandments: what virtuous person would consider adultery to be a virtuous act? The answer is that none would, and thus the Ten Commandments are not in tension with virtue ethics, but instead serve as a kind of list of the virtues themselves (with the exception being, in some people’s eyes, the commandments to give credence to God).

Interestingly, however, virtuous people throughout the Bible are not always recognized by others as such, which complicates our biblical virtue ethics portrait in an interesting way. From Hursthouse’s descriptions, one would think that virtuous people would be noticed and praised by others for their virtue, but this is not always the case in the Bible. Though King David was highly esteemed by those surrounding him, the prostitute Rahab would have been poorly valued by the society that enveloped her, and yet God used Rahab to further His plans. Rahab was a Canaanite woman – a traditional enemy of the Israelites – as well as a prostitute, yet we see in Joshua 2 that she was sensitive to God’s call and helped His men flee to safety. We do not know what circumstances led Rahab to prostitution, but the fact that she protected two men who were in danger led God to use her lineage to birth King David. Clearly, Rahab lacked certain virtues or at least did not follow all of the Torah, but God saw her heart and honored her for her bravery, even mentioning her as one of His faithful followers in the New Testament Hebrews 11. This shows that righteous people in the Bible did not always follow deontological principles, but rather obeyed a broader, deeper calling than rigid laws could contain. This obedience did not always gain virtuous people in the Bible esteem from their peers, but it did earn them respect from God.

Critics of agent-centered ethics, then, have a point: an individual will never be able to reliably determine the inner virtue of another person – only God can – which is a limitation that does not affect deontologists (or utilitarians) and perhaps is part of the reason strict deontologists hold onto their

moral obligations so strongly. People can only ever observe the actions and outward appearances of other individuals. Consequently, though virtuous people will hopefully be recognizable as such, there is never a concrete guarantee since there is no specific action guidance given within virtue ethics. It is easier, in a sense, for deontologists. Since they are only required to observe a person doing something morally right or “permissible” in order to say that he or she is an upstanding individual, they are much freer in their assessments. Virtue ethicists, in contrast, are not able to judge people based on specific sets of actions, but instead are required to weigh intentions, sincerity, and attitude. And yet, the deontological model seems too simple for Scripture, as 1 Samuel 16:7 says, “the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.” Agent-based ethics, it seems, cannot be humanly determined, which limits the capabilities of virtue ethics.

Yet even today, many fundamentalist and evangelical Christians will claim that sexual ethics in Scripture is somehow different and that any sexual proclivity or sin should immediately shame or even ostracize certain individuals, and yet this lawful zeal is not even supported by Christ. Today, “both Christian fundamentalism and political conservatism are associated with rule-based moral processing. This style of moral processing involves solving moral problems through quick and unequivocal application of previously established moral codes.”<sup>36</sup> Interestingly, though, when the religious rulers during Jesus’ time would try to make and adhere to specific, airtight laws regarding sexual ethics, Jesus quickly reprimanded them. They wanted specific actions to live by that would require no thought and little to no good intentions. These leaders thought that if they refrained from having sexual relations with a woman, then they were automatically righteous men, and were henceforth free to judge other people harshly for committing acts of adultery or fornication. Jesus, however, showed them that all their perceived righteousness was really just judgment and hypocrisy. In John 8:7, when the corrupt religious leaders brought a woman who had committed adultery to Jesus and cast her down at His feet in a proposition to stone her, Jesus said, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” The leaders were immediately ashamed and left Jesus’ presence. In instances such as these, Christ heightened His criticism of earthly ideals even further by saying during His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:27-8, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” God sets a model for virtue regarding sexuality that does not follow a set of deontological rules, but rather that appeals to a higher sensitivity to what is truly and deeply virtuous.

Yet, how can all these ideas about agent-based ethics be applied to modern Christians’ romantic relationships? And, furthermore, who has proven that strict or evangelical Christian culture propounds ineffective romantic ideals, anyway? It seems we should answer the second question before offering a solution to the first.

First of all, the approach used within Christian evangelical churches leads the community to impose strict standards regarding sexual purity and proclivity upon its youthful members, causing many of these young adults to experience severe guilt. One writer for the New York Times tells how leaders of Christian youth groups she attended as a teenager expected her and other girls to sign “purity pledges” to their “future husband[s].”<sup>37</sup> She describes how those practices felt “naive and manipulative” and how they led her to feel guilt and shame over any perceived sexual desire or premature interest in a romantic partner.<sup>38</sup> A study performed by Dr. Vincent E. Gil at Southern California College measured the sexual fantasies and consequent guilt experienced by conservative Christians. Within the study, the “respondents reported normative fantasy categories and frequencies of fantasy occurrences,” but the “fantasy episodes were experienced along with substantial to high levels of guilt over fantasizing.”<sup>39</sup> Gil’s findings suggest that there are “learned cognitions in furthering guilt, over and above the content or frequency of the fantasy experience itself.”<sup>40</sup> In other words, the conservative Christians in the study had the same quantity and type of sexual fantasies as other members of the population, and yet they felt extreme levels of guilt that secular individuals did not. Furthermore, the “fantasy guilt seems to be triggered early, before other cognitions which the physiology itself may prompt.”<sup>41</sup> The conservative Christian respondents in this study showed that not only did they experience guilt for having sexual fantasies, but they also had guilt even before the sexual fantasy occurred, suggesting that the teachings within their churches caused them to feel shame for something that had not yet even occurred.

This shame that conservative Christians feel regarding sexual fantasies and activity that is instilled in abstinence-only education talks by evangelical churches leads many individuals to marry early. Even though one study found that “children born to teenagers were substantially more expensive than those born to women who delay first births until their twenties,” there is still a trend within the “Bible Belt” to marry early.<sup>42</sup> Research conducted by Garcia and Kruger shows how “sexually conservative sentiments clash with the evolved proclivities for sexual gratification reflected in the profound rate of consumption and promotion of sexuality in the larger contemporary American culture” and that “individuals who subscribe to local religious customs are thus more likely to face opposing cognitions regarding sexuality.”<sup>43</sup> Because of this phenomenon, Garcia and Kruger claim that “one possible way individuals in religious environments may predictably reduce such conflict is by marrying at earlier ages – thus maintaining sexual practices in harmony with social norms.”<sup>44</sup> Many conservative Christians located within the Bible Belt are exposed to the same peer pressure for sexual proclivity as young adults in other areas. In order to experience sex themselves while still obeying evangelical Christian norms, these individuals are marrying early.

Those Christian individuals who do not marry early, however, seem destined to continue experiencing the extreme guilt discussed above regarding their sexual fantasies, or they engage in sexual activity that potentially leads to feelings of depression. Sexual purity is a critical component of one’s

spirituality, as researchers at Azusa Pacific University note by stating that for many conservative Christians, “sex means everything; it is considered the worst sin if one commits illegitimate sex.”<sup>45</sup> Since sexual purity is so critical to Christians’ spiritual walk, its detriment can lead to depressive thoughts. Klausli and Caudill argue that “in the context of a Christian campus environment, discrepancy between an ideal spiritual development and the perceived actual spiritual development may have a particularly detrimental effect” since “such irregularities of ideal and perceived selves create cognitive dissonance that contributes to feelings of inadequacy and shame that may exacerbate or perhaps, even produce depressive symptoms.”<sup>46</sup> Feelings of guilt seem to have a negative impact on Christians’ mental health, especially in conjunction with the perception that a person is not “living up” to his or her spiritual ideal by either experiencing sexual fantasies or engaging in sexual activities. In many ways, these individuals must feel trapped, for whether or not they engage in sexual activity, they still may have episodes of guilt and depression over perceived spiritual autophagy.

Having shown that detrimental effects accompany conservative Christian leaders’ adherence to abstinence-only education, what is the proposed solution? Researchers Yu and Lee highlight how “in our current culture, sex is polarized... in the contemporary period, sex is often perceived to have no meaning or value rather than a means of achieving some materialistic ends (e.g., physical pleasure, power, fame), resulting in the demeaning of sexual acts and related aspects of [an] individual’s life.”<sup>47</sup> Contrastingly, to many conservative Christian groups, sex holds far too much importance and shame when done sinfully.<sup>48</sup> These researchers, instead of abandoning religion altogether, suggest that “when the Christian value is incorporated in comprehensive sex education and counseling, it can impact college students’ lifestyles with respect to sexuality positively by avoiding either one of the preceding extremes.”<sup>49</sup> They propose that “Christian value” regarding sexual activity can be integrated into society if conservative Christian groups “utilize the concept and practice of grace when relating to youth and young adults who are active in sexual activities, by providing comprehensive education and alternative plans.”<sup>50</sup> But what should these “alternative plans” look like?

In order to answer this question, it seems that the term “marriage” as it is used in the Bible and applied today must be reevaluated. A better understanding of biblical marriage can help us decipher the ways that marriage could be reevaluated and remodeled, today. There is tremendous respect for marriage within the Torah, as one of the first things God “says of Adam in Genesis 2:18 before creating Eve as his companion” is that “it is not good for man to be alone.”<sup>51</sup> Within the Torah, there is no specific ordinance for legal or even contractual marriage, but rather only a social one. It is only later when rabbis in their works-based mindsets begin adding to God’s divine inspiration (often in ways that Jesus later condemned) by writing specific laws in the Talmud to regulate marriage.<sup>52</sup> Marriage, starting in the Old Testament and ending in the New Testament, is designed to be a monogamous relationship between one man and one woman. While the men in the Old Testament were

permitted to have multiple wives, it was never God's intention, as the multiple marriages were fraught with anger and strife (such as in the case of conflict between Abraham's wives Sarah and Hagar in Genesis 21). Regardless, the fundamental marriage contract has always been to live together, to seal their marriage through consummation, and to remain monogamously faithful to each other. The story of Isaac and Rebekah illustrates this perfectly, as in Genesis 24:58 her family asks her, "Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go." Shortly thereafter, in Genesis 24:67, "Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her." Thus, one of the first marriages ever in the Bible illustrates its most critical components, namely love and monogamy.

It seems "practical wisdom" has indeed proven to be the best model for Christian romantic relationships. Rather than demanding that young adults engage early in the legal construct of marriage or avoid sexual encounters altogether outside of this construct, conservative Christian sects should promote love between partners and sexual monogamy. Rightly, "the Christian approach to sexuality encourages practicing chastity until marriage and discourages participating in self-seeking, permissive, and noncommittal sexual activities," but the definition of what constitutes marriage should be reshaped.<sup>53</sup> "Uncommitted sexual behavior among young adults is becoming more socially permissive and normative," and yet "there is abundant individual discomfort with these activities."<sup>54</sup> Rather than modeling either manipulative "purity" ethics or its opposite, "the progressive Christian approach that simply baptizes casual sex in the name of self-expression and divorces sex from covenant faithfulness and self-sacrificial love," young Christians need a new standard that encourages them to value and love their partners before having sex with them.<sup>55</sup> The attitude of "waiting until marriage" is not unhealthy so long as there is a more flexible idea of what marriage is or should be.

Additionally, practical wisdom tells us that individuals who are too young and inexperienced should not engage in sexual activity. The experience and maturity it requires to engage in sexual activity responsibly is one barrier that should prevent young teens from having intercourse, but the emotional intelligence and virtue that are necessary to love and value another person are also critical components of a healthy romantic relationship that can only be realized at an older age. If, before engaging in sexual activity, individuals carefully considered the kind of person they themselves should be, as well as the kind of romantic partner they as Christians should look for, then it seems that there would be no need for conservative Christians' "purity" standards. These standards seem like deontological backlash against the extreme sexual proclivity that threatened conservative Christians' message of careful monogamy and sacred, God-ordained intercourse. The fear that people were too young and immature to have sex was legitimate, but the conservative Christians took this fear to an unhealthy extent.

In the end, deontological standards have affected conservative Christian and fundamentalist communities as much as, if not more than, the rest of the Western world. While deontology is not necessarily bad, many of its

adherents use its system to apply moral rules and judge others harshly based on their actions. This is even more apparent in the sphere of conservative Christian sexual ethics than in other spheres. The attitude that ethical system has created in young Christian communities leads the young adults to feel guilt and possibly even depression, and rather than being able to celebrate marriage and sexual activity as God intended, young Christians feel extreme shame for their sexual desires. Many of them can only freely engage in sexual activity if they get legally married at a young age or if they abandon their religious standards altogether – a poor choice for any person to be forced into. Instead of embracing such bleak prospects, churches ought to place less emphasis on legal marriage and give more attention to love, monogamy, and maturity within romantic relationships. This virtue ethics approach that embraces intention and practical wisdom, rather than contracts and rigid rules, is much better suited for the framework that life, especially in romantic relationships, often provides: one that is messy and that causes virtuous people to engage in a good deal of repentance.



## Notes

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# The Ethics of Prescribing Adderall and Ritalin as Cognitive Enhancers

## Ashley Maczka

Over the years, we have been trying to get smarter in order to outwit our competitors, get the best grades possible, and feel more productive within our work habits. As our need to get smarter has become more of a priority, we have turned to the use of neurocognitive drugs such as Ritalin and Adderall in order to become more productive. Ritalin is used to help those who struggle with attention deficit disorder (ADD).<sup>1</sup> The drug helps these individuals calm down, focus, and, as a result, achieve better grades than they had prior to medication.<sup>2</sup> Due to the drug's ability to help an individual with ADD to focus, productivity increases since the individual is able to concentrate on doing their work rather than on other distractions. This stimulating effect is tempting to the college population, many of whom do not necessarily have ADD/ADHD but are overloaded with work in addition to other obligations. Since Ritalin does offer so many benefits, is it ethical to prescribe it as a cognitive-enhancement drug?

### *The Need for Productivity: Society's Love for Enhancements*

As a society, we have a love for enhancements; we want to live easily and are constantly looking for ways to make life more productive without putting in the full work. Our increasing use of technology has enhanced our functioning in that individuals can work less to get what they want. For example, instead of having to go to the grocery store or a restaurant, you can order groceries and food off of your phone and have them brought directly to you. In a study done by Kalkbrenner and McCampbell, 60% of individuals said that their smartphone increased their productivity and 22% said that it greatly increased their productivity; only 2% said that their productivity was decreased by their smartphone.<sup>3</sup> Although many people perceive themselves to have increased productivity, many studies have shown a decrease in productivity due to these devices. The decrease is partially due to the distracting games and social media outlets to which smartphones provide access.<sup>4</sup> Although many argue that smartphones can limit productivity especially when used as a form of entertainment, and thus as a form of procrastination, others perceive these technological advancements as enhancements of their productivity, which illustrates society's love for, and dedication to, these enhancements.

Many individuals have explored not just technological enhancements, but also pharmacological ones. Pharmacological enhancements are mostly stimulants: psychoactive drugs that promote vigilance, wakefulness, and increased attention after use.<sup>5</sup> These drugs are mainly used to increase cognition and awareness and overall have been a tool for cognitive enhancement. The main stimulant used in common culture is caffeine. In a study that focused on U.S. citizens, "78% [of the 2,714 survey participants] are regular coffee drinkers and only 15% had never drunk coffee."<sup>6</sup> Although many enjoy the taste and feeling that caffeine provides, more individuals use

caffeine for cognitive enhancement rather than just for the flavor and stimulation alone. In a study about cognitive enhancement conducted on German university students, “54.9% had a lifetime prevalence rate for coffee, 30.5% for caffeinated/energy drinks and 10.7% for caffeine tablets.”<sup>7</sup> These numbers indicate that there is a strong use of caffeine for cognitive enhancement as well as a growing acceptance of the use of caffeine for this purpose. Caffeine also has no true adverse effects, which makes it safe for use and therefore legal.<sup>8</sup>

Although caffeine is a legal form of cognitive enhancement, many have turned to illicit drugs as well as the misuse of prescription stimulants in order to gain a greater, more potent sense of alertness. Beginning with illicit drugs, cocaine has been used widely for increasing attention and wakefulness while also providing a “lasting euphoria.”<sup>9</sup> Although cocaine is a powerful cognitive enhancement, it is very damaging to the cardiovascular system and can have neurotoxic effects; it is also highly addictive, and was labeled a Schedule II drug as a result.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, after becoming a recognized problem in the 1880s, cocaine became strongly stigmatized.<sup>11</sup> Due to both stigma and health risks, cocaine has decreased in popularity as a drug for cognitive enhancement.

Even though illicit drugs in general have decreased in use for cognitive enhancement, the misuse of prescription stimulants continues steadily. Prescription stimulants are highly stigmatized as well, but are used more regularly for cognitive enhancement, especially in the college setting. ADD/ADHD drugs are used to treat attention-deficit (hyperactivity) disorder. These drugs are given to children, and sometimes adults, who meet the DSM-5 criteria for the disorder. The criteria include making careless mistakes, having difficulty organizing tasks, and being unable to sit still (within the hyperactivity diagnosis).<sup>12</sup> “Adderall has been said to increase concentration, improve mood, while decreasing stress, which are qualities possessed by individuals with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.”<sup>13</sup> Although there are guidelines for when the drug should be prescribed, physicians often have trouble determining this, especially since the disorder is subjective and based on self-report.<sup>14</sup> We tend to see overprescription of ADD/ADHD medication, and this is where issues have begun to arise. When these drugs have been prescribed to those who may not need it, those individuals experience the positive effects, feeling as though their cognition has been boosted. There is also the idea that these drugs help those with ADD/ADHD improve their cognition/attention, which in turn helps them improve their grades in school.<sup>15</sup> With these ideas in mind, we tend to focus on the positives: we believe that using these drugs will improve our grades. Correspondingly, we fail to see the negatives. Many believe that Adderall and other stimulant prescriptions are safe, since doctors can prescribe them; this generally makes Adderall legal.<sup>16</sup> By overlooking the negatives, which will be discussed shortly, individuals view prescription stimulant use as being a safe health behavior to participate in. Additionally, the influx and increased accessibility of these drugs adds to the possibility of sharing with friends or stealing from others. With this overall

increase in availability and the belief in significant cognitive enhancement without health risk, a rise in the use of these drugs for this purpose has occurred, especially within the college population.

*So Many Assignments, So Little Time:  
ADD/ADHD Drug Misuse in the College Population and Perceived Benefits*

In the college population, about 20% of students are misusing prescription stimulants for recreational/academic purposes.<sup>17</sup> In another study, researchers found that about 1 in 3 students had abused Adderall at some point.<sup>18</sup> With significant usage in the college population, some may question why students would choose to use these drugs illegally for cognitive enhancement. College students experience various pressures and stressors. There is a pressure to graduate on time, and thus a pressure to keep up and pass every class to stay on track.<sup>19</sup> In addition to this, the expectations of graduate schools and entry-level positions are getting more and more challenging to meet. Students are expected to have high GPAs, to participate in extracurriculars, and to have various amounts of work experiences and internships.<sup>20</sup> Due to the heavy workloads and the need for good grades, college students look for other methods to make these tasks and goals easier to accomplish.<sup>21</sup> These methods often include the use of these stimulants since students believe that their attention, cognition, and grades can be improved thereby.

Many students do see the benefits of taking these drugs for cognitive enhancement. First, the majority of students who use these drugs do so to improve grades.<sup>22</sup> Although scientific endeavors have begun to show that the drugs do not help academically, the perception of improvement is beneficial to the student. The student feels positive about “bettering” themselves and improving their grades; they expect the drug to work, so they get this placebo effect.<sup>23</sup> This positive mindset appears to be good for a student’s mental health. Another reason individuals use these drugs is to increase focus.<sup>24</sup> Those who view themselves as procrastinators or those who get easily distracted often feel as though they need the extra focus and that the drug could help them stay on track. This also leads to a better mindset in that these individuals feel accomplished. Next, some students choose to use the drug to stay awake longer.<sup>25</sup> Due to the heavy workload, students feel the need to pull all-nighters to get assignments done. The drugs postpone the negative consequences of sleep deprivation, and this increase in productivity without consequences is seen as very beneficial to this population. Lastly, students may choose to use the drug for social reasons.<sup>26</sup> College students are often peer-pressured into partying and staying out late. ADD/ADHD drugs can not only help with staying awake, but can also dull the symptoms of intoxication.<sup>27</sup> Although this dulling can be dangerous, college students may see it as a benefit to feel as though they can drink more alcohol than normal. Overall, drugs like Adderall and Ritalin help students keep a positive mindset, perhaps due to a placebo effect, leading them to believe in the benefits of these drugs.

*Can Ritalin Make Me Smarter?:  
The Scientific Truth Behind These “Cognitive Enhancers”*

Although these drugs are perceived to work by the students who use them, many question whether or not they work in actuality, and much research has been done in this area. Over the years, studies have found that students who use these drugs for cognitive enhancement have had a lower GPA on average as well as an increased tendency to skip classes and participate in negative behaviors such as drinking and doing other drugs.<sup>28</sup> Not only do studies suggest the lowering of grades with these ADD/ADHD drugs, but some studies – for example, Arria et al. in 2017 – also compare those who quit using the drugs, those who just started, and those who have used them for a long period of time. Among those who chose to stop using these prescription stimulants, as well as among those who never used them at all, GPAs increased to some degree.<sup>29</sup> Among those who just started using these drugs and among those who continued using them, GPAs decreased significantly.<sup>30</sup> Overall, these results are very important in showing that it is the drugs themselves that lead to this decrease rather than the individuals using them. Essentially, these drugs have the opposite of the intended effect.

*Taking Risks for Productivity:  
The Dangers of Using ADD/ADHD Drugs for Cognitive Enhancement*

In addition to failing as cognitive enhancements, these drugs can also have many negative side effects, leading to the question of whether or not it is ethical to prescribe them for this purpose. First, ADD/ADHD drugs can affect emotion and memory. Adderall, for example, produces strong positive emotions and also causes users to have a significant feeling of the drug’s effects (i.e. giving them a “high”).<sup>31</sup> Although users may find this to be a good thing, these drug effects can greatly inhibit motor control. This is especially true if the dose is large enough to create induced psychosis, which can lead to hallucinations.<sup>32</sup> Many studies have also considered the effects these drugs have on memory for users who do not have ADHD. Weyandt et al. found that working memory was significantly diminished by the drug.<sup>33</sup> In addition to this, they found that the students had a negative perception of themselves after doing this working memory task.<sup>34</sup> This suggests that harm is done not only to working memory, but also to self-confidence, especially in problem-solving tasks.

Second, cardiac issues are also common and dangerous: studies have shown that Adderall and Ritalin increase the functioning of the autonomic nervous system.<sup>35</sup> Like any other stimulants, these drugs increase heart rate in order to provide a sense of awakesness. Over time, this hyper-functioning can lead to serious heart problems. Hypertension has been shown to occur in chronic users of these drugs, which can lead to myocardial infarction (heart attack) and tachycardia (rapid heart rate).<sup>36</sup> These conditions could lead to



strokes, heart failure, or even death. Interestingly enough, case studies have shown that ingesting even two regular Adderall tablets could lead to a heart attack.<sup>37</sup> Overall, in light of these significant and potentially deadly risks, the use of Adderall for cognitive enhancement seems unnecessary and dangerous.

Lastly, these drugs can cause addiction and withdrawal; this is one of the most important reasons that they should not be used merely for cognitive enhancement. “Adderall can be as addictive and abusive as cocaine and crystal meth due to the fact that it affects the mesolimbic reward pathway in the brain.”<sup>38</sup> This pathway activates dopamine which indicates reward and pleasure in the body.<sup>39</sup> If the activation of this dopamine pathway is frequent, the body can become reliant on this or even become less affected by it. The latter causes individuals to require increasing quantities of the drug to maintain the same effect. This addiction can exacerbate the previously described negative effects and further deteriorate the body. Withdrawal effects – the opposite feelings that occur when stimulant use is stopped – can also be dangerous and unpleasant. Since these drugs boost positive emotions, withdrawal often leads to depression.<sup>40</sup> This can be particularly dangerous if the individual already has suicidal thoughts or perhaps stressors that may push them toward these thoughts. Withdrawal can also lead to insomnia and fatigue,<sup>41</sup> which in turn leads to lessened cognitive functioning as well as increased susceptibility to accidents (i.e. falling asleep at the wheel). Lastly, withdrawal can lead to nausea and vomiting.<sup>42</sup> Although not usually life-threatening, these symptoms contribute to dehydration, which could become an issue if not addressed.

*To Prescribe or Not to Prescribe:  
The Ethical Implications of ADD/ADHD Drugs as Cognitive Enhancers*

With these negative side effects as well as the lack of improvement in grades and overall functioning, some may question whether it is ethical for doctors to begin or continue prescribing these drugs as cognitive enhancers. In order to understand what it means for something to be ethical or not, we can look at deontological ethics, specifically W.D. Ross’s prima facie duties. In general, deontological ethics focuses on whether the action itself is morally right or wrong rather than looking at the consequences.<sup>43</sup> To get more specific, Ross has proposed these prima facie duties which are not absolute; they emerge from our relationships with others.<sup>44</sup> Ross has broken these duties down into seven categories: duties of fidelity, duties of reparation, duties of gratitude, duties of beneficence, duties of non-maleficence, duties of justice, and duties of self-improvement.<sup>45</sup> Within these subcategories, the duties of beneficence, non-maleficence, and fidelity will be examined in the context of prescribing ADD/ADHD drugs for cognitive enhancement.

The duty of beneficence is based on the principle that “there are other beings in the world whose condition we can make better.”<sup>46</sup> For the sake of this duty, physicians should be working toward bettering the lives of their patients. In the case of prescribing drugs such as Adderall and Ritalin, doctors should ensure that the patient can benefit from these drugs. As previously stated, these

drugs can be addictive and dangerous. They also do not work as cognitive enhancers – they do not improve academic performance – in those users without ADD/ADHD. Due to these observed results, the physician would not be improving the life of the patient by prescribing these drugs as a form of cognitive enhancement. Indeed, the physician would be worsening the patient’s working memory with little benefit overall. In essence, the duty of beneficence would not be upheld.

Along similar lines, the duty of non-maleficence involves the principle that “we could also make the condition of other beings worse.”<sup>47</sup> The physician should ensure that no harm is brought to a patient – hence the Hippocratic Oath, which states that they shall “do no harm.”<sup>48</sup> But there are many risks with prescribing ADD/ADHD medication as a cognitive enhancer. As stated previously, severe cardiac issues can occur due to increases in heart rate and blood pressure. These can lead to long-term issues such as hypertension or even heart attacks, which can then lead to death. In addition to this, Adderall can harm working memory and thus problem-solving ability. Lastly, these drugs can be addictive, and both withdrawal symptoms and dependence can be dangerous, especially when they lead to overdose or depression. In these ways, a physician worsens an individual’s life by prescribing them these risky drugs, and thus fails to uphold the duty of non-maleficence.

Finally, the duty of fidelity, which is associated with telling the truth and keeping promises,<sup>49</sup> is also not upheld under these circumstances. If a physician were to prescribe these drugs for cognitive enhancement, they would need to be very direct and truthful about the associated risks. This leads into the idea of giving informed consent. The patient would need to be able to understand the risks and benefits in order to make a clear, autonomous decision for themselves. The physician-patient discussion, prior to consent, would need to inform the patient about possible misuse of the prescription, potential addiction, and the repercussions of giving the drug to others. This would not only help the individual understand the risks of the drug, but it may also help decrease others’ misuse. If the physician failed to be clear about the risks associated with using these drugs for cognitive enhancement, then individuals would lack the understanding necessary to make the decision. The physician has a duty to tell the full truth in this situation, especially since the patient’s life could be on the line. If the physician were to lie, withhold information, or accept uninformed consent, then that physician would not be upholding the duty of fidelity.

### *An Objection to Popular Belief: When the Risks Outweigh the Benefits*

Overall, prescribing ADD/ADHD drugs for the purposes of cognitive enhancement is not ethical. These drugs do not adequately provide cognitive enhancement in those without ADD/ADHD; they provide alertness but do not improve grades and performance as individuals believe them to. So any

potential benefit is far outweighed by the harm, since these drugs also involve dangerous risks and side effects, including cardiac arrest, memory troubles, death, addiction, and perhaps life-threatening withdrawal effects. Ethically, then, prescribing these drugs for cognitive enhancement violates W.D. Ross's prima facie duties of beneficence, non-maleficence, and fidelity. To violate these duties is to be unethical by deontological standards.

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## Violence in Buddhism

### Max Moore

Most religions of the world preach non-violence and pacifism. Yet there is not a lack of war in the world, and in some cases pacifist religious ideology is even used as a justification for violence. Christianity has pacifism as a central tenet within its theology, yet the crusaders committed intense acts of violence in the name of Christianity. In this realm, Buddhism is not an exception. Within the history of Buddhism, Buddhist practitioners and even religious sects have participated in violence. This paper will analyze the situation surrounding violence, the rationalization of violence, and acts of violence committed by Buddhists throughout history, while answering the question: can one be Buddhist and still commit violence?

For a Buddhist monk to be a master of combat as well seems contradictory to the pacifist tenets of Buddhism, but this is exactly the case of the Shaolin Monks of China. Buddhist monks are permitted to defend themselves, even from persecution.<sup>1</sup> *Pei Cui's Shaolin-Monastery History* documents how the Shaolin Monastery came under attack by bandits during the Mui Dynasty, and the Shaolin defended themselves. During the Tang Dynasty, the monks received the patronage of emperors like Li Shimin because they participated in combat during his campaign to become emperor. The author also describes how Buddhist temples at the time were under immense persecution from the Tang Dynasty, and the Shaolin were mostly spared from that persecution. The author points to the monks helping the Tang fight as the reason why they were not persecuted, and as the potential rationalization for them committing violence.<sup>2</sup>

A piece of scripture that a Buddhist could potentially use to rationalize violence is the Upayakausalya Sutra. This sutra describes Buddha reflecting on one of his past lives in which he was a ship captain. One night, ocean deities come to him in a dream and identify one of the passengers as a bandit who is planning on killing the merchants aboard. The Buddha evaluates three possible actions: do nothing and allow the bandit to kill everyone; inform the merchants, who would kill the bandit and incur evil karma for murder; or kill the bandit himself. The Buddha dwells on this ethical dilemma for seven days, and eventually decides to kill the bandit himself. In keeping with the principle of compassion, this is framed not as retribution for evil, but rather as compassionately sparing the bandit the horrible karmic consequences of mass murder.<sup>3</sup> This is the concept of compassionate killing: one tries to save others from themselves, and carries out the act with no anger in the heart. There are multiple examples of this concept in Buddhism. For instance, the Tibetan Tantric school of Buddhism writes of a “liberation-killing of the last emperor of the early Tibetan dynasty, Langdarma, by the Buddhist monk Lhalung Pelgyi Dorje to free Buddhism from oppression in Tibet.”<sup>4</sup>

Shaolin monks are not the only Buddhist monks in history who have committed violence. The Sōhei monks of Japan's Tokogawa period were a powerful political and military force in Japan. The story of the Sōhei is similar

to that of the Shaolin. Historian Mikael S. Adolphson traces the monks' history of violence to the ninth century. Violence within temples began as demonstrations of protest to unpopular appointments by the emperor to temple administration. Since the Japanese nobility inserted their sons into positions of authority in the temples, the temples were transformed into political court factions. Because of these political disputes, temples were assigned property managers who used weapons and other forceful means to protect the land of the monastery. These land managers mingled with the lower-ranked monks of the temple, and the use of weapons as a martial practice diffused to the monks. The Tokogawa period (1603-1867) was a time of immense change and violence in Japan, and these temples were not excluded from being targeted by warring factions. Due to the prevailing danger and the decline of protection from the government, temples had to resort to their own self-defense, and so these combat-trained monks became essential.<sup>5</sup>

Although these examples are from an earlier time, there is not a lack of modern Buddhist violence. Professor Michael Jerryson of Eckerd College found, in a recent book titled *Buddhist Fury: Religion and Violence in Southern Thailand* (2011), that the Thai government asked new recruits to be ordained as monks and to be embedded in the temple to act on behalf of the government and protect the temples.<sup>6</sup> Author Mark Jurgensmayer claims that he met one of these fully ordained military monks between 2006-2008. The Thai government, however, has denied that they currently continue this practice. After an increase in violence in recent years, Buddhists in the region have formed community defense forces. Monasteries began to self-militarize for defense while building protective walls and allowing Thai military forces to be based in these complexes.<sup>7</sup> The violence against Buddhists in Thailand has not ended, and as recently as January 2018, Reuters reported on two monks being killed in Southern Thailand by unidentified combatants.<sup>8</sup>

In a 2001 interview in the *Seattle Times*, Tenzin Gyatso, the fourteenth and current Dalai Lama, answered a question with a relevant and explanatory quote about monks using self-defense. If someone had a gun and was trying to kill you, he said, "it would be reasonable to shoot back with your own gun," although he went on to say that it should be only to wound and not to kill.<sup>9</sup> My research suggests that most Buddhist monks and Buddhist followers across history are practicing self-defense against threats, with validation from the scriptures, rather than seeking out violence and using the scriptures to rationalize this violence.

However, this statement is not universal, as some Buddhists are actively initiating, supporting and calling for violence. Theravada Buddhist nations in Southeast Asia are the best examples of modern Buddhists initiating violence. A historical example of a Buddhist monk calling for violence occurred in Thailand. A Buddhist monk named Kittiwuttho Bhikkhu was part of a far-right group called Nawaphon in the government. This group actively opposed communists and is cited as a primary reason for the massacre of students at Thammasat University. Bhikkhu commonly preached that it was not a sin to kill communists.<sup>10</sup>

Myanmar provides another modern example of a monk calling for violence. Myanmar, a majority Buddhist country in Southeast Asia, is embroiled in a many-sided ethnic civil war. The Buddhist monk Wirathu is the leader of a political movement within Myanmar called the 969 movement that is accused of starting violence. This movement calls for the support of Buddhist business exclusively, in active opposition to the Rohingya Muslim minority. Wirathu's speeches have been linked to riots where Muslims were exclusively attacked, and Facebook has censored him for inflammatory speech. A crucial point about Wirathu's speech is that he never mentions the initiation of aggression or violence, only violence in the sense of defense of Buddhism as the majority religion of Myanmar;<sup>11</sup> this technically does not break the Five Precepts. Wirathu uses scripture to rationalize violence, using a specific tantra called the Kalachakra Tantra; the 969 movement's website also has used it as rationalization for their actions.<sup>12</sup> This tantra tells of a Buddhist warrior king who will come from the kingdom of Sambhala and reestablish the Dharma, saving Buddhism from barbarian hordes. These 'barbarian hordes' are a reference to Muslims, and they are led by a figure that is a bastardized spelling of Muhammad.<sup>13</sup>

In my research, I was unable to find explicit mention of the Kalachakra included with other Buddhist anti-Islamic movements documented online, but these groups are a network and interconnected.<sup>14</sup> Wirathu was quoted as saying, "to protect and defend the threatened Buddhist the world over, my 969 movement will join hands with the Bodu Bala Sena..."<sup>15</sup> The Bodu Bala Sena, or BBS, is a Sri Lankan Buddhist nationalist group like the 969 movement, as they share an ideology and they likely use the same Kalachakra scripture to rationalize violence. The lack of information on these groups prevents scholars from fully understanding their inner workings and rationalization.

To answer the question about whether or not a Buddhist can commit violence and still be Buddhist, in some cases the answer is yes. If the violent action is done with no hate in one's heart, and if it is done in compassion or self-defense, then this is still faithful to the middle path. However, if one does not act for the sake of compassion or self-defense, then by "taking life," one is breaking the first of the Five Precepts and is thus committing a sin.

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# Holistic Humanistic Medicine and the Mind-Body Problem

## Jennifer Shabrach

The mind-body problem is a philosophical debate about the relationship between the mind and body – whether the two are together or separate. Many philosophers, whether Western or Eastern, seek an answer to this question. One relevant concept is dualism, which was originally presented by René Descartes. Dualism suggests that the mind and body are two separate essences. The opposite concept is monism, which holds that the mind and body are the same. Some philosophies, such as Buddhism, believe in mutual connection between the two but do not claim that the mind and body are either together or separate. Whichever way the debate goes, it can be argued that the mind-body interaction can relate to holistic humanistic medicine. The mind-body problem can help explain why physicians should practice holistic humanistic medicine within their daily lives.

### *Descartes' Dualism*

The mind-body problem has been around for centuries. However, one of the first people to make a reasonable epistemological argument approaching a solution was the philosopher René Descartes. Descartes's answer explores an idea called dualism that we have today. Essentially, he believes that the mind and body interact sometimes as one, but nevertheless are two separate entities. In his *Meditations*, he comes to this conclusion as follows.

Descartes begins by defining the mind as a thinking thing which is not extended, and the body as the exact opposite, namely not a thinking thing which is extended.<sup>1</sup> This comes from his previous conclusion that we are thinking things, which is also the origin of his famous saying, "I think, therefore I am."<sup>2</sup> According to Descartes, we can understand both mind and body with the use of the other since God is hard to understand. Therefore, if we cannot understand, God must have created these two separate beings knowing that we would not understand.<sup>3</sup> Thus, mind and body are two distinct beings, leading to a dualist view.

Since we are thinking things, he shows that our bodies are present along with our minds. He uses the analogy of our bodies being present with our minds like a seaman is present to his ship.<sup>4</sup> Though separate, these entities can still influence one another. This suggests a type of dualism called interactionalist: this means that the two are separate yet interact with one another. Descartes thought that the pineal gland in our brains was the point at which mind and body met as well as the location of the soul.<sup>5</sup> Though current science shows this to be wrong, there could be other places that link the two from a neuroscientist's perspective. A concrete example of interactionalist dualism, for Descartes, is the association between stomach and mind: the stomach's growling helps unconscious hunger become conscious.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, although the mind and body are two separate beings, they can interact to influence each other.

## *The Buddhist Mind-Body Perspective*

Buddhism has an interesting view on the mind-body problem, tending to disregard many Western dualist answers. In a way, Buddhist thinkers do not believe that the relationship between mind and body is either dualist or monist, but rather a mixture of both.

Yuasa, an Eastern mind-body thinker, describes the mind and body as being mutually dependent. The body is a vessel which is guiding the mind.<sup>7</sup> This may sound like Descartes' interactionist dualism, but Buddhists argue that it is not a form of dualism. The monism side of their argument comes from a certain connection between the two that extends beyond simple dualism. This connection is described as "body-mind unity."<sup>8</sup> Overall, they believe that the interaction part is so intense that they cannot be two separate entities, yet they are not the same. Their mind-body perspective is somewhere between dualism and monism.

Yuasa relates this mind-body perspective to older forms of medicine.<sup>9</sup> Traditional Chinese medicine treatments and preventions have been utilized for centuries and still work in societies today. This medical philosophy, which focuses on mind and body being treated as a whole,<sup>10</sup> can create balance, wellness, harmony, and improve the relationships between physicians and patients in today's form of medicine.<sup>11</sup> Integrative medicine is also easy and attainable due to the wholeness of mind and body behind it.<sup>12</sup> Doesn't this sound like more reason to practice it?

### *Connection of Mind-Body to Medicine*

The holistic humanistic medicine of traditional societies was once the only type of medicine, but in the present day, it is mostly overlooked due to technological advances. The humanistic part allows relationships to be built between physicians and patients that improve the success rate and overall rewarding factor of medicine. The holistic part allows for better healing of not only the mind and not only the body, but also both as a whole. So, although Eastern and Western philosophies offer different answers to the mind-body problem, both still insist on body and mind being integrated as a whole. When mind and body are integrated this way, yet still seen as separate, increasingly successful treatments become possible.<sup>13</sup> One can see that holistic humanistic medicine should be practiced whether the mind and body are connected or separate, because either way, they necessarily interact with each other.

Hidden in today's world are numerous examples of treatments that apply holistic humanistic methods. Such examples include acupuncture, meditation, and treatments involving no pharmaceutical drug therapy.<sup>14</sup> First, these sources of therapy help the patient feel comfortable with their doctor and form trust based on the humanistic aspect. Second, the patient is treated for both physical (external) and mental (internal) pain. This treatment is caused by physicians seeing a person as a whole and not just as a body to be treated.<sup>15</sup> The balance between body and mind is the most important part of this

philosophy, simply because if one part of the body is affected, then the mind must be affected too.

Mental illness serves as an interesting example of this. There is a certain stigma surrounding mental health in today's world. We have realized, at least, that those who suffer from mental illness are not insane but just ill; however, we still do not know how to treat the problem. We frequently prescribe mental illness drugs in the United States without ever trying more natural body remedies or incorporating these remedies into the daily lives of patients. Some of these holistic remedies could include meditation, acupuncture, exercise, diet, and so on. Physicians need to start practicing holistic humanistic medicine to reach their patients on a different level.

However, mental health is not the only application for holistic humanistic medicine; for example, consider a car crash victim. If such a victim enters the emergency room unresponsive and physically hurt, what is the first – or rather only – thing that a physician would do? A physician in the status quo would try to treat the victim's body until their condition is no longer life-threatening, and then quickly move to the next patient. How would a physician practicing holistic humanistic medicine respond differently? The physician would first realize that there is most likely more than external trauma. They too would try to treat the patient physically as best they could, but then they would follow up with mentality exercises. The mission here is not only to discharge the patient healthy, but also to know that the patient genuinely *feels* healthy. These physicians who put more time and effort into their jobs by practicing holistic humanistic medicine are considerably more effective in terms of success rates, well-being, and long-term health.<sup>16</sup>

### *Conclusion*

The mind-body problem has challenged philosophers even until this day. However, after considering multiple theories such as the dualism of Descartes and the monism-dualism blend of Buddhism, it can be agreed that the mind-body interaction relates to holistic humanistic medicine. The interaction can and should be utilized when treating patients. This could work for external and mental problems and could change the practice of medicine forever. Holistic humanistic medicine really embodies this famous quote by William Osler: "The good physician treats the disease; the great physician treats the patient who has the disease." It will help the physician to truly realize that the patient is a person with a mind and body, not just a disease or sickness.

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## A Virtue Ethics Approach to the Jehovah's Witness Case Alejandro Mendoza

The purpose of medical ethics is to guide the physician to make morally sound decisions within a medical setting. Therefore, there is significant discussion surrounding the implications of recommending or withholding treatment to patients. Within this philosophical debate there are several theories – such as the traditional consequentialist and deontological approaches – that have garnered the support of medical professionals and staff alike. For decades, the medical field has relied on these theories, and others that are based on similar moral tones, to guide physicians through difficult situations in primary and critical care.

One of the most cited medical cases within biomedical textbooks is the 'typical' Jehovah's Witness case, in which a patient refuses a life-saving blood transfusion on the grounds of their religious beliefs. I would argue that the traditional consequentialist and deontological theories are not equipped to deal with this case. In light of this, I would like to discuss this case through a virtue ethics lens since I believe that this approach has not been given a proper seat at the biomedical ethics table. There has not been a lot of literature on the subject, let alone regarding its application in medicine. However, I believe that this theory will be a strong contender against the traditional theories within medicine.

In order to facilitate my argument, I will first review the traditional consequentialist/utilitarian theory and argue that this approach wrongfully prompts the physician to recommend ineffective treatment options instead of maximizing public health. Second, I will examine the deontological theory and its emphasis on the physician-patient relationship; specifically, I will look at the paternalistic approach, because of its relevance to this case, and explain why it provides little guidance for the physician. Once I explore the traditional theories, I will lay out virtue ethics and how it can be applied to medicine. In doing so I will offer four virtues that will guide the physician to make ethical decisions: compassion, discernment, trustworthiness, and integrity. Then, I will apply these virtues to the case at hand. Overall, I will argue that virtue ethics provides a better approach to the Jehovah's Witness case than the traditional consequentialist and deontological theories.

### *Consequentialist and Deontological Approach to Medicine*

Before discussing virtue ethics, I would like to examine the traditional consequentialist and deontological approaches to medical ethics. The utilitarian/consequentialist approach is concerned with achieving the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number of people. Within ethical philosophy, this is also considered consequentialist since the moral rightness of an action depends on the consequences of that action. It is immediately obvious that using this approach to medicine will lead to the harm of

individual parties if it means a positive outcome for the greater good.<sup>1</sup> For example, if a patient contracts an infectious disease and refuses to tell their spouse – who is their only caretaker – then a utilitarian approach would guide the physician to tell the spouse if they are at risk of contracting the infectious disease, even if it meant betraying patient confidentiality. Although this sounds brutal in practice, this approach encourages calculated decision-making in which the physician must consider the overall benefit and harm based on the evidence. There are two variants of utilitarianism: act utilitarianism and rule utilitarianism. Within act utilitarianism, the physician must deal with each case individually and analyze the evidence of the case in order to make a decision based on the overall benefits or harms of treatment or intervention. As such, every action or decision that the patient makes is considered and added to the measurement of balancing harm and benefit. However, in rule utilitarianism, there is no such calculation of the harms or benefits to the patient. Instead, the physician’s decisions are guided by a set of rules that are based on the relevant evidence. Therefore, this approach, compared to act utilitarianism, gives significantly more guidance to the physician in their practice. In rule utilitarianism, the “morally right decision is an action complying [with] moral codes/rules leading to better consequences.”<sup>2</sup>

However, I would argue that the utilitarian/consequentialist approach to medicine is impractical and dangerous in practice. First, I would be cautious of the utilitarian’s assumption that health and utility are interchangeable. Stephen Holland in *Public Health Ethics* claims that health is only one aspect of utility, and maximizing health will not produce the same effect as maximizing utility.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it would be unreasonable to calculate moral decisions on the basis of utility. With that in mind, most would agree that the role of the physician in society is to maximize public health. However, through the utilitarian approach, there is a significant push for physicians to reduce health inequalities as opposed to maximizing public health. When physicians follow the principles of utility, they are able to justify “interventions or policies that are somewhat less effective at improving the general...health, but reduce health inequalities, one must concede that public health is not guided solely by a principle of maximization [of health].”<sup>4</sup> Therefore, I would argue that the utilitarian approach to public health – along with the concept of utility – fails to achieve the overall goal of maximizing public health, let alone the health of one patient.

If the utilitarian/consequentialist approach fails to adequately provide for the patient’s health, then we must examine the deontological approach with the same level of scrutiny. Within the traditional deontological approach, the morality of an action is determined by the nature of the action as opposed to its consequences. Within this approach, the physician’s decisions may produce some good for the patient, but not for society as a whole. Therefore, the relationship and interactions between the physician and the patient are essential in guiding the physician to make ethical decisions about treatment. Jharna Mandal, in “Utilitarian and Deontological Ethics in Medicine,” argues that the deontological approach “drives clinicians to do good to patients,



strengthening the doctor-patient bond...[even when] deontological ideologists (doctors and other medical staff) are usually driven to [a] utilitarian approach by public health professionals, hospital managers, and politicians.”<sup>5</sup> Therefore, I would argue that there is significant reason to consider that this theory will fall short of its intended purpose. However, I do believe that the deontological approach deserves further consideration, especially in regard to the physician-patient relationship.

### *Care-Centered Ethics in Medicine*

In an effort to expand on the deontological approach, I would like to examine the relationship between the physician and the patient. Care-centered ethics provides some insight into this relationship through the paternalistic approach. James Childress and Mark Siegler, in “Metaphors and Models of Doctor-Patient Relationships,” propose five metaphors and models within the care-centered approach in order to examine the relationship between the patient and the physician in care-centered medicine. All of the metaphors attempt to examine a separate and important realm of the doctor-patient relationship in primary and critical care. They provide metaphors in order to highlight how the relationships currently are and how they ought to be. However, Childress and Siegler acknowledge that there is no single perfect physician-patient relationship due to the dynamic environment of Western medicine. I concur, simply because of the major differences within primary care and critical care regarding important factors such as confidentiality and patient autonomy. Since the paternalism metaphor offers a good representation of the deontological and care-centered approaches, I will examine it further.

Paternalism is when the majority, if not all, of the decision-making is done by the medical professional. Within this relationship, the physician has moral authority, which can limit patient autonomy since the patient has little input regarding treatment. Thomas Szasz and Marc Hollender in “A Contribution to the Philosophy of Medicine” claim that there are two versions to the paternalistic approach to medicine. The first is the parent-infant relationship, in which the physician is expected to fully guide the patient in determining medical treatment. This can be particularly helpful in areas of critical care in which the patient might not even be able to display wants and needs, let alone give consent. In addition, Kaba and Sooriakumaran in “The Evolution of the Doctor-Patient Relationship” argue that “the infant is the dependent in the relationship”<sup>6</sup> and therefore the primary recipient of care.

However, I would argue that the paternalistic approach, although giving the power to medical professionals, gives little guidance for moral *dos* and *don'ts*. Without any kind of moral guidance, the physician is left to technically assist the patient with no consideration for empathy or context – something I will discuss later in virtue theory. The second version of the paternalistic approach is the parent-adolescent-child relationship, in which the physician guides the “patient by telling [them] what to expect and what to do,

and the patient co-operates to the extent of obeying.”<sup>7</sup> Childress and Siegler argue that this approach can be applied to situations like infectious diseases: a physician instructs a patient to take treatments such as antibiotics and the patient can decide to comply.<sup>8</sup> However, I would argue that this approach does not take into consideration the harm that could result from medical decisions. In some critical situations – such as HIV – the patient’s decision not to obey their physician’s orders can result in harm to others. Although some theories, such as the traditional utilitarian and deontological approaches, can easily decipher the risk and harm to third parties, they are still limited by the objections that I have stated previously. Care-centered paternalism is no different in that matter: the ability for a physician to make medical decisions based on either the greater good or the good of the patient is distorted by the physician’s implicit biases on a case-by-case basis.

### *Virtue Theory*

Before getting into virtue ethics in medicine, I would like to examine the need for virtue ethics in general. Ethical principles are able to guide individuals to make right or wrong decisions, but often do not take into consideration the idea of a moral agent. Although there is much need to focus on relationships in regard to decision-making, it is important to acknowledge that humans are sophisticated creatures with the ability to make decisions based on emotional reactions. I would argue that these reactions play a pivotal role in the ability to perceive and respond to situations. Virtue ethics, especially when applied to areas such as medicine, recognizes the importance of reactions in the moral experience. The theory employs the use of a moral agent to “learn by habitual practice [and] how to develop good characteristics that will enable us to behave well.”<sup>9</sup> This provides the necessary guidance that traditional ethical principles lack in application.

Although there has not been much examination of virtue ethics in medicine, the theory dates back to ancient Greek philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Just as in its modern application, virtue ethics strove to find characteristics that make an individual virtuous without looking at “how a person acted but [rather] at what sort of character [they] had.”<sup>10</sup> These traditional philosophers believed that a good person must develop virtues that inevitably become part of that person’s character. James Rachels, in *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, argues that “a trait of character, manifested in habitual action...is good for a person to have.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore, there is at least some background to work from in the application of virtues to medical ethics. So, just what *are* the virtues? Well, although there is no specific list, the majority of ethical philosophers would still support the ‘cardinal virtues’ set forth by the Greeks.

### *Virtue Theory in Biomedical Ethics*

If virtue ethics wants to have a seat at the biomedical ethics table,

there needs to be a sound list of virtues for the physician to attain. Tom Beauchamp and James Childress, in *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, argue that most of the virtues can be reduced to four central ones: compassion, discernment, trustworthiness, and integrity. Although they acknowledge that these are not the cardinal virtues for everyday life, they “are widely acknowledged in biomedical ethics and... help us focus on the character of health professionals.”<sup>12</sup> In order to apply these virtues in the medical practice, it is worth examining each one in detail.

### *Compassion*

The first essential virtue is compassion, which is a combination of concern for the patient’s welfare and an emotional response of deep sympathy, tenderness, and aversion to their misfortune. Beauchamp and Childress argue that in order for a physician to be truly compassionate to others in a virtuous sense, they must first have sympathy and express benevolence in alleviating the misfortunes and sufferings of the patient. They also argue that unlike integrity, which is primarily focused on the self and self-improvement, compassion emphasizes the need to show empathy toward others.

One could certainly argue that, at face value, compassion can only be given to those patients with disabilities and illnesses. This would limit the physician’s compassion to critical and emergency situations. However, I suggest that sympathy and compassion as an emotional response can be developed physiologically by the moral agent or physician. David Hume, in *A Treatise of Human Nature*, develops this exact point:

“[Were] I present at any of the more terrible operations of surgery, [it is] certain, that even before it [began], the preparations of the instruments, the laying of the bandages in order, the heating of the irons, with all the signs of anxiety and concern in the patient and assistants, [would have had] great effect upon my mind, and excite the strongest sentiments of pity and terror. No passion of [other] discovers itself immediately to the mind. We are only sensible of its causes or effects. From these we infer the passion: and consequently there give rise to our sympathy.”<sup>13</sup>

If physicians are unable to approach the virtue of compassion, then they will fail to provide adequate care for the patient.

### *Discernment*

The second essential virtue is discernment, which incorporates sensitivity, acute judgment, and understanding of medical decisions. This virtue implores the physician to make critical judgments without being influenced by factors such as outside considerations, fears, personal attachments, and internal biases. Beauchamp and Childress connect this to practical wisdom. They argue that a physician’s practical wisdom “knows

which ends to choose, knows how to relay them in particular circumstances, and carefully [select] from along a range of possible actions, while keeping emotions within proper bounds.”<sup>14</sup>

In a more general sense, a discerning physician is better equipped to responsively understand and perceive what circumstances demand. For example, a discerning physician will be able to recognize when a patient needs comfort rather than privacy. If they recognize that comfort is the right choice, they will also be able to decipher the right amount of comfort the situation demands without being intrusive. Beauchamp and Childress claim that “if a rule guides the behavior in a particular case, then seeing how to follow the rule involves a form of discernment that is independent of seeing how the rule applies.”<sup>15</sup> This is important because acts of respect, autonomy, and benevolence will vary in different situations. Physicians who apply discernment in their practice will be able to manifest these actions in different ways that best support the care of patients. Therefore, discernment is often manifested through creative responses in order to satisfy the patient’s wants and needs.

### *Trustworthiness*

The next essential virtue is trustworthiness. Within a medical setting, a patient’s trust in their physician is the belief that they will act according to the right motives and appropriate moral norms, and hence, in the best interest of the patient. Beauchamp and Childress suggest that trust “is often the most important ingredient in the patient’s choice of one physician rather than another, a physician’s perceived lack of untrustworthiness may be the primary reason for a patient’s decision to switch to another physician.”<sup>16</sup> Therefore, trust significantly affects the ability of a physician to develop a sound relationship and understand the wants and needs of the patient.

Although there is limited writing on the subject within bioethics specifically, Aristotle affirms the importance of trust in professional settings. He argues that when transactions are built on trust, it is appropriate for the law to forbid lawsuits: “the law forbids lawsuits for voluntary transactions between those who associate thus as friends... for good men do not have bounds of justice with one another... [and as such, they] have dealings with one another as good and trustworthy.”<sup>17</sup> Therefore, the bond of the transaction is made on the basis of trust, not on the basis of legal contracts. Although I would argue that this is inappropriate for the medical setting, I am not willing to diminish the importance of trust in professional relationships as a means to develop benevolence and sympathy. It seems that this approach can be worthwhile within virtue ethics, and deserves further examination in the medical practice.

With Aristotle’s argument in mind, it is hard to deny that trust is a fading ideal in current Western healthcare settings. Beauchamp and Childress claim that physicians used to emphasize trust far more when they had less effective medical treatment options.<sup>18</sup> Today, the vast array of medical treatment options and increasing distrust have given rise to more “medical

malpractice suits and adversarial relations between health care professionals and the public.”<sup>19</sup> This overt suspicion between the professional and the patient has also significantly increased the “mechanisms of managed care”<sup>20</sup> in which physicians are barred from providing certain treatment options to their patients. In addition, this distrust has increased the need for ombudsmen and patient advocates, who implement legally binding limitations upon physicians.

### *Integrity*

Beauchamp and Childress boldly assert that the primary virtue of health care is integrity. Physicians are able to justify many actions, including the recommendation and refusal of treatment, based on their integrity. Therefore, when a physician refuses to treat a patient with a specific treatment method, they do so on the grounds that the request compromises their own core beliefs. In general, this can present problems regarding the individual biases and ideals of the physician. However, Beauchamp and Childress present a compelling argument regarding the need for moral integrity within the medical practice. Although they argue that there is no clear definition of moral integrity within healthcare, they claim that physicians should strive, for the most part, to achieve “soundness, reliability, wholeness, and integration of moral character”<sup>21</sup> in order to achieve some form of integrity. Accordingly, they form two distinctions on how integrity represents a physician’s moral character. The first is the coherent integration of all aspects of the self, including emotions, aspirations, and knowledge. This is essentially a recognition of individual characteristics and traits that influence moral decisions. Second is the defense of moral values and the ability for an individual to defend their characteristics. This is extremely important since, inevitably, a physician will have to deny a patient a treatment option based on their medical knowledge and skills. However, Beauchamp and Childress also argue that a reasonable physician who embodies the virtue of integrity will be able to accept when it is necessary to violate their own ideals for the sake of the patient. However, I would argue that this should only be done when the patient is in a fully autonomous state of mind. Therefore, the physician must be able to determine whether or not the patient is competent enough to go against the recommendation of the medical professional.

### *Jehovah’s Witness Case*

Philip Gardiner, in “A Virtue Ethics Approach to Moral Dilemmas in Medicine,” examines the typical Jehovah’s Witness case in order to determine the value of the virtue ethics approach to medicine. In the case, a fully autonomous and competent adult – Brian, a Jehovah’s Witness – loses a significant amount of blood from an acute duodenal ulcer, an ulcer that develops in the lining of the stomach. This condition is fatal if not treated.<sup>22</sup> The physician in the case, Dr. G, determines that the best chance to save Brian’s life is through a blood transfusion along with an operative

intervention to assist in stopping the bleeding. Brian immediately refuses to consent to a blood transfusion, but does consent to treatment with non-blood products along with the surgery. Dr. G assesses the situation and informs Brian that there is substantial risk in performing the surgery without a blood transfusion.

Let us first examine this from the patient's point of view. Brian, who entered the hospital competently and autonomously, is able to make decisions about his health and his spiritual faith. Gardiner argues that it follows that Dr. G should respect Brian's faith, which he has chosen by his own free will. In this case, the patient makes the decision to prioritize his eternal existence over his physical health. Therefore, Brian is demonstrating that he is prepared to take the "risk that he might die in order to ensure, according to his own belief system, that he will have eternal life."<sup>23</sup>

Now let us look at this from the physician's standpoint. When considering a decision for Brian from a virtue ethics perspective, Dr. G needs to balance his expert knowledge with a complete understanding of the patient's wants and needs. However, Gardiner claims that Dr. G must also take into consideration *how* Brian made the decision not to have a blood transfusion, in order to "ensure that [he] does not transgress any medical moral code."<sup>24</sup> In this circumstance, Dr. G is bound by a professional code of practice that emphasizes saving lives. Brian Hurwitz, in "Swearing to Care," argues that:

"The main intention of medical oaths seems to be to declare the core values of the profession and to engender and strengthen the necessary resolve in doctors to exemplify professional integrity, including moral values such as compassion and honesty."<sup>25</sup>

However, he also points out that it is only in twenty-first century medicine that physicians customarily work in partnership with their patients in order to guide and advise them in making appropriate choices for treatment. Factors such as the patient's health beliefs, cultural background, and social relationships are taken into consideration in order to determine treatment. Given this, there are several cases – such as that of Brian – in which such factors oppose the judgment of the healthcare professional. Gardiner claims that it can be "challenging when the patient chooses to reject a doctor's guidance – for example, refusing treatment, which the doctor knows may adversely affect their patient's wellbeing."<sup>26</sup> However, he also believes that physicians are trained to tolerate the moral burden caused by the uncertainty and the risks associated with the survival of the patient.

### *Virtue Ethics in Application*

Now let us apply the virtues of compassion, discernment, trustworthiness, and integrity to see how they help guide the physician though

this case. Using a virtue ethics approach, Dr. G should develop an emotional response to the patient's situation and use it as motivation to assess treatment or lack thereof. At this point, Dr. G might feel disappointed in or even resentful toward the patient for rejecting his sound medical advice. He might feel anxious about allowing Brian and his loved ones to suffer his death. Once Dr. G naturally considers some of these elements, he must reflect on the virtues. In applying compassion, Dr. G is placing himself in the patient's situation and "[imagining] what it must be like to be a person who is prepared to risk death because of the sincerity and devotion to their faith."<sup>27</sup> This will likely prompt Dr. G to recognize Brian's courage and feel emotions of respect and admiration. When he applies discernment, he will be able to obtain sensitive insight and thus better understand Brian's situation. Dr. G will be able to:

"identify the complex emotional elements of the case [and...] weigh up [his] motivation to look after [his] patient's health as effectively as possible with the motivation of the patient whose life is founded [and] underpinned by his faith even if devotion to his ideology costs him his life."<sup>28</sup>

From this, Dr. G is most likely to conclude that a discerning physician would respect the patient's wishes and not force him to undergo a blood transfusion. When Dr. G applies the virtue of integrity, he must decide whether or not Brian is able to make a medically competent decision that would undermine the recommendation of the physician. Dr. G must accept the patient's motivation for objection since he firmly established that Brian was fully autonomous and in a competent state of mind when he made his decision. Although Dr. G will consider his own internal values and goals, which might include his medical oath, personal biases, and religious beliefs, he must ultimately place these aside for the sake of honoring the patient's wishes. Finally, Dr. G must consider the virtue of trustworthiness. Since this virtue is the cornerstone of the patient-physician relationship, and since it weighs heavily in this case, it deserves significant examination. When patients expose their deepest and most personal beliefs during critical situations, they "allow for the most intimate of examinations, and confide their private vulnerabilities."<sup>29</sup> Brian has disclosed profound beliefs about his faith and the extent to which it influences him in decisions about his health. Brian, as the patient, is relying on Dr. G's moral character and competence as a medical professional, hoping that Dr. G will act in his best interest. At this point, there is very little chance that Dr. G will be able to change Brian's ideology. Therefore, Dr. G will have to weigh the burden of proceeding with a blood transfusion against Brian's wishes. Part of this burden is the idea that even if Brian survives, he will have difficulty trusting physicians in the future and may decide to stop seeking medical attention altogether. This is a high price to pay, and Dr. G will have to resolve this dilemma using the virtues that guide him. If he does so, Dr. G will most likely use the virtue of discernment in order to

place the patient's wants and needs over his own.

### *Conclusion*

Overall, Gardiner claims that a physician who embodies the virtues of compassion, integrity, trustworthiness, and discernment – like Dr. G – will be able to respect the patient's wishes in this case. He also claims that this approach does not amount to a solid set of rules. However, he argues that the underlying benefit of the theory of virtue ethics is precisely its flexibility – its ability to assess how a virtuous physician would respond to a given situation. Dr. G's ability to weigh the relevant facts and develop emotions about the patient's situation allows him to make a morally correct decision regarding treatment. In general, this allows for Dr. G to develop creative solutions to difficult situations, which might be impossible with other theories such as the traditional consequentialist and deontological theories.

I am fully aware that the success of virtue ethics within the typical Jehovah's Witness case does not mean that this approach will work equally well in other medical scenarios. However, I hold that some aspects of virtue ethics make it a better contender than the current deontological and consequentialist theories in medicine. In an effort to prove the value of virtue ethics, I would like to review some of the points that I made in this paper. First, in my analysis of the utilitarian/consequentialist theory, I pointed out that physicians are inclined to make moral decisions based on maximizing utility. This means that a physician must properly weigh the benefit and harm of treatment or lack thereof. When weighing the individual factors, the physician must take into consideration the happiness of everyone who will be affected. Therefore, there is a significant chance that the decision to give or withhold treatment will be for the benefit of others rather than for the benefit of the patient. This raises a plethora of issues and questions about the practicality of the theory. However, in considering the two approaches, act-utilitarianism and rule-utilitarianism, there is significantly more guidance from rule-utilitarianism about how to act in the best interest of the patient. Even with this in mind, there are other problems surrounding the utilitarian approach, specifically regarding the concept of utility. I argued that the concept of utility wrongly pushes physicians to recommend less-than-effective treatment options that reduce health inequalities instead of maximizing public health.

Since this is a problem, I proceeded to the deontological theory, which emphasizes the relationship between the physician and the patient. To expand on this further, I looked at several care-centered theories that outlined the physician-patient relationship. First, I examined the paternalistic relationship, in which a physician is expected to make the majority of the decisions regarding treatment. I argued that this approach offers little guidance for the physician to act in the best interest of the patient, because of the overpowering influence of the physician's own personal biases and traits.

Since I objected that the traditional deontological and consequentialist views presented significant issues within medicine, I wanted to examine the



virtue ethics approach. Although I recognized that virtue ethics also emphasizes the relationship between the physician and the patient, I noted that it is uniquely concerned with personal motives, characteristics, and emotions. Virtue ethics acknowledges that humans are sophisticated creatures who base decisions on emotional reactions. The theory can take advantage of these emotional tendencies to develop virtuous characteristics through habit. The result is the concept of the virtuous agent (physician) who can embody certain traits to make sound ethical decisions. These traits come in the form of virtues such as compassion, discernment, trustworthiness, and integrity. Virtue ethicists argue that when a physician can act with these virtues in mind, they will be able to make ethical decisions in their practice.

I then examined and applied the virtues in the scenario of the difficult Jehovah's Witness case in order to see how the virtues guide the physician to make decisions. The virtue of compassion allowed the physician to acknowledge and respect the patient's personal sacrifice in refusing treatment. Discernment allowed the physician to recognize the relevant information that he needed to make a sound medical decision. This included the ability to recognize that the patient was acting fully autonomously and competently when he refused treatment. The virtue of integrity guided the physician to deemphasize his own internal goals and biases in order to act in the best interest of the patient. Finally, the virtue of trustworthiness enabled the physician to appreciate the extent to which the patient was exposing his religious beliefs. Also, it helped the physician realize the negative effects that forcing treatment would have had on the patient in the future. Overall, the virtue ethics approach outshone the deontological and consequentialist approaches in guiding the physician to make a morally sound decision that eliminated personal biases and provided the best option for the patient.

## Notes

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## The Flaws of Hume's Empiricism and the Denial of the Self

Emily Hurley

David Hume is a well-known philosopher and proponent of the English philosophy Empiricism, which asserts that reality is comprised of experiences and perceptions. In his work titled *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Hume meticulously crafts a definition of 'perceptions' to eventually conclude that the idea of a persisting 'self' is merely an illusion created by the mind and its faculties. By looking at an analysis of Hume's criteria for defining perceptions and an analysis of his other writing, it is obvious that his theoretical definition of perceptions clashes with his philosophical explanation for the self. Hume recognizes this inconsistency but is unable to reconcile the two ideas. Hume's inability to fix his definitional problem shows that empiricism is not correct in assuming that reality is only comprised of one's experiences, and thus its claim about the nonexistence of the self should be doubted by contemporary philosophical communities.

Before we can understand and criticize Hume's claim that there is no self, we need to understand Hume's definition of perception, which is what he bases all of his further arguments and assumptions on. In an essay titled "Questioning the Basis of Hume's Empiricism: "Perceptions," What Are They?" author Howard Seeman argues that Hume's definition of perceptions throughout his work *A Treatise of Human Nature* gives perceptions six important qualities. These qualities include "present to the mind and dependent on the mind... passive... particular... ontologically independent... appearing as having aspects or being in certain manners, and to be fleeting or perishing non-endurants"<sup>1</sup>. The two most important and troubling qualities of Hume's perceptions illustrate them as being "ontologically independent" and "perishing non-endurants", which classifies perceptions as completely separable events, uniquely distinguishable from each other, and as fleeting un-repeatable occurrences observed by a person<sup>2</sup>. These two parts of Hume's definition of perceptions are what later allows him to claim that the self is also fleeting. As Seeman says, "these two accounts (of our inability to have an idea of "substance" and "self") rest on the fact that both ideas are of things that endure, are invariable and constant through time"<sup>3</sup>. Because humans believe their perceptions are non-fleeting and can be revisited at any time with the help of memory, they also see themselves as non-fleeting things, and thus as having an unchanging 'self'. Hume rejects this idea of the self completely, saying that "everything, which appears to the mind, is nothing but a perception, and is interrupted, and dependent on the mind; whereas the vulgar confound perceptions and objects, and attribute a distinct continu'd existence to the very things they feel or see"<sup>4</sup>. The use of the words "interrupted and dependent" emphasizes this fleeting nature that Hume attributes to perceptions.<sup>5</sup>

This line of reasoning eventually causes Hume to contradict himself. As author Yumiko Inukai points out in her essay titled "Hume's Labyrinth: The Bundling Problem", Hume admits within the appendix of his work: "But upon a more strict review of the section concerning personal identity, I find myself involv'd in such a labyrinth, that, I must confess, I neither know how to correct my former opinions, nor how to render them consistent"<sup>6</sup>. Inukai explains that this concern expressed by Hume relates back to the assumptions made within Hume's argument against the existence of a self, "In speaking of our identity ascription to an object... Hume talks as if the mind is an observer of a succession of ideas... A succession of closely related ideas is presented to the mind, and the mind slides from one to the next, on account of which the imagination ascribes an identity to the succession"<sup>7</sup>. This succession described by Inukai implies a relationship between these perceptions and contradicts Hume's criteria for perceptions that we established earlier, that perceptions are inherently independent things. Inukai shows that Hume distinguishes between "natural relations as associations between ideas and philosophical relations as comparison of ideas: causation is a 'philosophical relation, as implying contiguity, succession, and constant conjunction, yet 'tis only so far as it is a natural relation' that it 'produces an union among our ideas'"<sup>8</sup>. Here Hume makes the important distinction between "philosophical relations" between perceptions and "natural relations" between perceptions implying that natural relations create real ties between different perceptions, rendering them no longer independent. This description of natural relations calls back to Hume's statement of identity, how "the mind is an observer of a succession of ideas... the imagination ascribes an identity to the succession"<sup>9</sup>. Yet, if perceptions are supposed to be separate and independent, what is this natural succession that the mind recognizes? This apparent contradiction is what causes Hume's concern within the notes of his writings, and places Hume's other philosophical statements into doubt.

In Inukai's writing, there emerges possible solutions to Hume's problems, which include two possible events: if "perceptions inhered in some kind of a substance, or if we perceived real connections among perceptions" then the problem of how ideas are able to become connected can be solved<sup>10</sup>. By giving perceptions the properties of substances or physical objects, they become in a sense enduring and less perishable. It would also explain why perceptions are grouped together in certain ways, much like two rocks from different areas are similar and can be compared, ideas and perceptions could be conceived in the same way. The explanation that there are real and meaningful links between ideas and perceptions, would also solve the connection issue.<sup>11</sup> These solutions would then explain why our mind perceives ideas together in certain ways, thus creating a perceived identity or self. However, Hume does not bother to offer either of these solutions in his writing, as doing so would admit the limits of Empiricism. Assuming that perceptions are not independent and can thus be accurately linked together by the mind, indicates that there are

items outside of perception that are present within reality. This can include items such as the natural laws present within physics and mathematics, which Hume tries to argue only seem foolproof or accurate to the mind. We cannot know the sun will rise based off our past perceptions if the perceptions cannot be linked together in any meaningful way. By altering or amending his criteria for perceptions, Hume would have to reexamine his claim that there is no self. His argument relies on the assumption that there is an ordering of ideas (preestablished) within our minds, and that such an ordering creates the illusion of a self when we string ideas together. However, this idea was shown to be contradictory to the notion that ideas are independent and non-enduring things.

Hume's unanswered problem indicates a need in the philosophical community for a re-examination of Empiricism and its implications. Empiricism raises many axiological and ethical questions, often left unanswered, about what it means to perceive and the value of perception within our lives. Because of the various important implications that Empiricism has, it is necessary that one understands the problem that arises in Hume's work. By depicting perceptions as completely singular and independent events, Hume struggles to reconcile his idea of the self being an illusion with the qualifications he lays out for perceptions. If the mind perceives these ideas in groups to create an illusion called the self, what instrument of experiences can explain this "bundling of ideas" as Inukai describes it? Because Hume is unable to explain this inherent grouping of ideas within the limits of Empiricism, the idea that the self is fictitious should be seen as unlikely, and further examination is greatly needed.

## Notes

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2. Seeman, "Questioning the Basis of Hume's Empiricism: "Perceptions," What Are They?", 398.
3. Seeman, "Questioning the Basis of Hume's Empiricism: "Perceptions," What Are They?", 398.
4. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 193.
5. Seeman, "Questioning the Basis of Hume's Empiricism: "Perceptions," What Are They?", 396.
6. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 633
7. Inukai, "Hume's Labyrinth: The Bundling Problem", 264
8. Inukai, "Hume's Labyrinth: The Bundling Problem", 265
9. Inukai, "Hume's Labyrinth: The Bundling Problem", 264
10. Inukai, "Hume's Labyrinth: The Bundling Problem", 269
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## Ru Virtue Ethics and Contemporary British Philosophy

By Patrick Salerno

Are humans good? This question, as open as it is, has been at the forefront of philosophical discussions for millennia. Some look to nature and, seeing the natural chaos of the world, come to the conclusion that we are no better than the animals that hunt in the jungle. Others look to the inward notions of identity and self, drawing on an innate goodness stemming from something deep inside us. This debate has developed three competing conclusions: 1. Human nature is good, 2. Human nature is bad, and 3. There is no human nature. Ancient philosophers, like Mencius and Xunzi, looked to natural phenomena and their perceived order of things to make sense of this dilemma. Mencius saw the mandate of heaven as a force for good, and looked at humanity's potential as a clear sign of their innate benevolence. Xunzi looked to the corruption he saw around him, and scoffed at this notion of innate goodness.<sup>1</sup> More contemporary philosophers, like Richard Dawkins and Roger Scruton, debate the science of man. Dawkins warns that without care our evolutionary past will corrupt our society. Scruton looks at our genes but can't help but notice the whole of humanity seems more than just its parts. Alister McGrath, another contemporary philosopher, attempts to synthesize these opposing views by asking if our genes (or any version of an inherent quality) make us good or bad. McGrath makes a compelling synthesis that calls into question the very idea of human nature. By comparing the different theories and looking to the reflection from Ailister McGrath, I will show that human nature does not exist. We must recognize the altruistic and negative parts of ourselves, and use education to form our own sense of moral goodness.

Mencius, an ancient Chinese philosopher and famed Ruist thinker, believed the arc of humanity bends towards benevolence. In his own writings, Mencius makes several points on why he believes this is so. The first is this idea of universal innate responses. The example he gives is a baby falling into a well. Mencius claims that any person who witnesses this baby falling will have a gut reaction of shock and sadness. He claims that anyone who is able will instinctively reach out and try to save the baby. By making this assertion, Mencius is arguing that there is a connecting force within humanity that is good.<sup>2</sup> Mencius believes this connecting force is like a seed that can be cultivated and grown into pure moral character. The tool for this seed is education and the installment of ritual. Evil in Mencius's eye is the result of continual neglect and destruction. The analogy he uses is of a mountain forest. On its own the forest will grow healthy and strong, and if you cut it down, it can grow back. If you continue to cut and trample the forest, eventually it will lose its vitality becoming a barren and rocky path.<sup>3</sup> Mencius saw the potential in us to be good and how when cultivated we can unlock the virtues inside of us.

Roger Scruton, a renowned conservative philosopher, attempts to show that humanity is more than just simple biology. In a series of three lectures given at Princeton University, Scruton spoke on human

nature, morals, and rights. He began his first lecture with a dissection of differing opinions. He spoke about biology and its apparent hold on us, "We have biological needs and are influenced and constrained by genes."<sup>4</sup> He went on to discuss the apparent biological constraints such as a flight or fight response, but also the illogical self-sacrifice shown towards children by their mothers. Scruton described these individual genes as mostly irrelevant, and made the case that our ability to reason separates us from the animal kingdom.<sup>5</sup> In another lecture Roger compared humanity to music. In this analogy the individual notes are like genes, and the musical phrase is the person. Scruton argued that when these notes are played we do not listen to them one note at a time, but rather as a sequence that induces an effect far greater than any note could do on its own. In this way we as humans have an effect that is greater than any individual gene could express. Our identity, our sense of self is a thing that makes us more than just biological animals. This, combined with reason, forms Scruton's perception that human nature cannot be reduced to mere biological or selfish impulses.

Mencius and Scruton share an idea that there is something intrinsically greater about humanity and human nature. For Mencius this is reflected in his idea of universal acts of goodness, like trying to prevent a baby from falling. Mencius sees acts like this as the universal foundation from which one grows into a completely good human being. For Scruton he uses the concept of identity to show that humans can not be reduced to the chaotic whims of genes and natural selection. Mencius would most likely agree with this modern interpretation, viewing the altruistic genes as seeds in which to cultivate a better person, using reason and logic to better oneself.

Xunzi, a fellow Ruist philosopher and rival scholar to Mencius argues the opposite. Sungmoon Kim, a contemporary philosopher comments on Xunzi's differing opinion, "Xunzi found Mencius's moral cosmology to be "un-Confucian." In his view, the anarchic state of his time arose from human nature which is self-interested and passion driven."<sup>6</sup> Xunzi believed that we are born selfish and evil, and we must educate ourselves in order to subdue our natural tendencies. The corruption in our politic, the constant war, these things are a direct result of our human nature, and a failure to overcome it.<sup>7</sup> The need to educate someone on moral goodness shows that it is not innate; true moral character takes years to master. To put the argument in its most basic terms – if goodness is so innate then where is it?

Richard Dawkins shares a similar, but more refined view. Alister McGrath, as mentioned above, comments on Dawkins' views on humanity. Evolutionary biology tells us all we need to know. Our genes are a result of our ancestors' success in surviving, and those genes for survival and reproduction are expressed in us.<sup>8</sup> At our core we are self-serving, for the simple reason that our genes make us do so. For Dawkins there is nothing innate or special about us, as we are animals and abide by the rules of nature. An interesting caveat to this is that the genes that may have made us successful in surviving the past have become detrimental to our present-day society. McGrath comments that in the animal kingdom the ruthlessness and brutality seen in war would have helped us escape and survive predators, but now it creates crime and chaos in an orderly society.<sup>9</sup> This, however, does not mean we are doomed by our

genes. Dawkins writes that by knowing our genes and understanding how they affect us, we move one step closer to overcoming our genetic past and living a productive life. By educating ourselves on what affects us biologically, we can become better.

Xunzi and Dawkins share a sense of realism. While Xunzi did not know about genes, he saw an animalistic inclination towards violence and recognized it as much more real than any selfless trait. Dawkins sees humans as another species on this planet, bound to the same rules as any other. For both, education was a way out. Through ritual Xunzi believed one could become a sage, and Dawkins sees knowledge as a powerful tool in overcoming hardship.

Sungmoon Kim says that the debate between the two ideologies is often summed up as “Idealism vs. realism.”<sup>10</sup> One looks at the world as it could be, the other as it is. Kim points out that Mencius and Xunzi have a lot more in common than most people realize. In his article on Chinese Constitutionalism, he points out “Xunzi’s position seems to be no different from Mencius’s”<sup>11</sup> as they share a similar belief on who can overthrow a tyrant and when. Kim wanted to show that both Mencius and Xunzi created realistic political theories, and that their main point of contention was the relationship between a king and his ministers. In doing so he points out that to sum their disagreements up as idealist vs. realist is too simplistic of a label.

The core debate between the contemporary philosophers is whether or not the whole of human nature is greater than its parts. Roger Scruton uses identity and reason to argue that there is more to us than just genes and neurons, as we have the will power to change ourselves for the better. Dawkins counters and argues that every action in us is chemical, and that if we want to improve it is paramount we recognize our biological constraints. Just like with the ancient philosophers Scruton and Dawkins do share a few things, first being that both philosophers do recognize genetics play a role in how we operate. The second is it takes learning and education to improve oneself, regardless of any greater sense of identity. Finally, the third is that humans do have a capacity to overcome the limitations of our genes.

With the similarities and differences established, what can be gleaned from this? McGrath attempts to synthesize the age-old debate. We have genes, and those genes affect us. Some genes can be said to appear altruistic, while others seem to be self-serving. Whether you believe we are good or bad, all the philosophers have a source for their nature.<sup>12</sup> For theologians it would be god and or sin. Scruton would argue identity, and Dawkins would say genes. For Mencius, it is Tian. We choose to label an aspect of ourselves and ascribe it as an unchangeable nature. However, no matter which side you take, this nature can be improved (or overcome) through education. All four of the philosophers discussed (and both commentators) mention the role education plays in becoming a good person. Education, or self-cultivation as the ancient philosophers put it, is key to achieving goodness regardless of any innate benevolence or malevolence. With that said, I can’t help but ask – Does any notion of innate human nature matter? Education is fundamental to all of the theories presented, and if we assume that the aforementioned philosophers are all good people who achieved goodness by following their respective theories, then it is a moot

point on whether you start as good or evil. Proper education will allow you to cultivate yourself to become a good person.

Human nature does not exist; we must recognize the altruistic and negative parts of ourselves, and use education to form our own sense of moral goodness. The argument for innate goodness comes from idealistic philosophers like Mencius and Roger Scruton. They look for universals within ourselves, and see our potential for goodness as a true sign of something greater. Their counterparts are pragmatic philosophers like Xunzi and Richard Dawkins. They look at nature and science thus coming to the conclusion that we are just like the world around us. Commentators like Sungmoon Kim and Alister McGrath show us that these four thinkers aren't as different as they may seem. Education is of key importance to all of them. With the role education plays in each of their theories, we are led to the conclusion that we do not have any universal nature. We develop our individual nature by educating our selves and practicing moral goodness.

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# Answering Toxic Masculinity as it Contributes to the Oppression of Women

By Katherine DiSantis

Society is shaped by norms, many of which are passed down through generations by parents who raise their children to fit the acceptable mold. Many of these norms manifest as specific beliefs, acceptable language, and encouraged behaviors. These learned ideas can also be gender specific, creating a dichotomy that is unequal and potentially harmful to those who ingest these teachings. For hundreds of years, men have been raised to be breadwinners, figureheads, directors, and controllers. They have also been taught to show only certain emotions, act “manly,” and to assert their dominance in order to get what they want. This has manifested into toxic masculinity, which is harmful to men, as well as women and others who are seen as inferior. When examining this societal structure, there are also many perspectives as to how these norms truly affect members of society, which have given rise to movements known as liberal and radical feminism. In order to combat this unbalance, one must first ask this: how do liberal and radical feminists understand toxic masculinity as it contributes to the oppression of women?

Answering this question is important to comprehend toxic masculinity and its harmful effects. Understanding the feminist perspective is also critical when learning how toxic masculinity cages and barricades women from living equal lifestyles, and therefore is necessary when examining the societal norms that affect individuals. In order to eradicate oppression, we must understand how toxic masculinity is a main contributor to the oppressive practices, and then shift our actions to rebalance the playing field leading to freedom for all participants. Both radical and liberal feminists have opinions on how we address this societal issue, which is why it is important to include both perspectives when problem-solving.

Although liberal feminists have worked tirelessly to cease the pattern of inequality, radical feminism better answers toxic masculinity and offers tangible solutions that would eradicate the oppression of women indefinitely. This is due to the fact that liberal feminists cater towards law creation and enforcement, whereas radical feminists believe toxic masculinity can only be changed through societal upset and shifts in the daily lives of each individual. In order to prove this argument, I intend on defining toxic masculinity in greater depth, then addressing it from both the radical and liberal feminist viewpoints. Next, I will explain how toxic masculinity contributes to the oppression of women, further vouching for radical feminism as having the best solutions to eradicating oppression. I will also be answering objections from the liberal perspective, to prove my argument for the radical movement. Finally, I will close my paper with a handful of suggestions as to where society should move forward in eradicating oppression universally.



## Toxic Masculinity

As stated previously, societal norms are passed down through generations, with parents, teachers, and other adults influencing the ideals and behaviors of children. To add, gender identity is not influenced by biological characteristics, but solely by the feminine and masculine standards that are continually taught.<sup>1</sup> These standards create a gender dichotomy, with boys and girls being raised to fit certain roles and adhere to certain traits. These influences are given by family, school, peers, and media. To focus on masculinity, the idea of “toxic masculinity” is seen in males beginning in youth and ingraining itself into adulthood. Toxic masculinity is characterized by the “enforcement of rigid gender roles, but also involves the ‘need to aggressively compete with and dominate others.’”<sup>2</sup> Further, maleness is usually associated with greater social status, economic reward, and political power that is seen in larger quantity than femininity.<sup>3</sup> More characteristics would include masking one’s feelings, using aggression in place of effective communication, and using violence to defend their gender identity as “real men.”

Toxic masculinity contributes to the oppression of women through acts that are misogynistic, violent, institutional, and power motivated. As described by Robyn Rowland and Renate Klein, “patriarchy is a system of structures and institutions created by men in order to sustain and recreate male power and female subordination.”<sup>4</sup> These structures are barriers, systematically placed to cage women and keep them from achieving success in science, business, medicine, law, or academia.<sup>5</sup> The idea that men must be the breadwinners and the primary worker manifests in toxicity as it pushes men to the front for opportunities, leaving women to wait at the back of the line. Seemingly insignificant speech and actions from men like “locker room” talk, homophobic jokes, and “catcalling” at women are all motivated by this need to be “manly.” The actions may be small, but when added up and evaluated by the impact they leave, they contribute greatly to the social inequality of genders in society.

One of the main ways toxic masculinity contributes to the oppression of women is through violence and physical domination. As described by Robyn Morgan, “violence against women is global, cross cultural, and epidemic, in diverse forms not restricted to rape (including date / acquaintance rape and marital rape), battery, sexual molestation and abuse, and sexual harassment.”<sup>6</sup> This violence from men is motivated by the need to control, and the need to emit power over others. Violence has become so intrinsic to patriarchal culture that is normalized in society, justified by precedent and frequency.<sup>7</sup> Further, this means that physical aggression has been used for centuries in order to subordinate women, using intimidation and violence to maintain dominance and control the gender power dynamic. Liberal feminist scholar Susan Moller Okin explains how this consistent inequality through history has been perpetuated by “fear of the power of women,”<sup>8</sup> and therefore has led to violence be-

ing the main tactic to maintain the subordination of women.

## Radical Feminism

Radical feminism is the acceptance that all women are part of an oppressed group, and promotes the eradication of women's oppression through societal upheaval and shifts in the structures that dictate everyday life.<sup>9</sup> It is also the movement that wants to achieve gender equality through tangible action, resistance to the patriarchy, and social change. As described by Robyn Morgan, radical feminism wants to take larger steps in eradicating inequality; she explains -

Perhaps it becomes clear why all issues are feminist issues - and why band aid reforms, or equality with men in a male-defined society, or "empowering" women to have "self-esteem" while leaving intact a status quo with a perforated ozone layer - all are pseudo-solutions that a radical feminist finds unacceptable; the beautifully irascible voices in this collection cannot be bought off so easily.<sup>10</sup>

She further explains how radical feminists want to eradicate oppression of all people, taking a strong stand for complete social reform in order to achieve the equality that all feminists advocate for.

Radical feminism believes that toxic masculinity plays the largest role in oppressing women because the discriminatory and misogynistic behaviors that contribute to the gender dichotomy are exacerbated by men who exhibit toxic traits. Children are exposed immediately to gender socialization, which is the process by which children are taught to learn about the roles, behaviors, and characteristics that society associates with maleness and femaleness.<sup>11</sup> It is because of the way boys are raised that encourages them to grow into their privileged and superior status as men, and the cycle of oppression continues without cease. Radical feminists further believe that it is these traits that lead to the oppression of women, because they are seen in daily life and in every avenue of society. It is the need to assert dominance, to maintain power and control for their social group, and the practice in equality that gives illegitimate excuses for keeping women out of the workplace, out of school, and in the home. These actions, although sometimes small, are still barriers that add up to make the cage of oppression that encompasses and suffocates women.

Radical feminism addresses toxic masculinity in two ways: changing the way children are raised, and smashing the patriarchy in order to give women equal chance at the opportunities and liberty that men currently possess. With young men being taught to accept their privileged status and grow into power-yielding, superior figures, the cycle of oppressive behavior is passed down from adults to children, with boys growing into toxic traits

from early adolescence. Radical feminists advocate for the equal socialization of children, entailing that boys and girls being taught to express all emotions, dress however they please, play with any toy, and respect all individuals no matter their gender. They believe that calling out every oppressive action and teaching men the value of equality is the key to eradicating the gender dichotomy altogether.

### Liberal Feminism

One of the leading liberal feminists of the modern age is Alison Jaggar, who understands liberal feminism as the application of liberal principles to both women and men equally.<sup>12</sup> This connects the roots of liberal feminism to liberal philosophical thought, which emphasizes the importance of individual freedom backed by support from a government. Jaggar further defines liberal feminism as “the acceptance of traditional liberal conception of human nature and the characteristic liberal values of individual dignity, equality, autonomy and self-fulfillment.”<sup>13</sup> In order to contrast from radical feminism, liberal feminism believes in societal shifts that are sponsored by a government, with legislation crafting and law enforcement as the main tools to achieve change.

Liberal feminism recognizes toxic masculinity as a contributor to the oppression of women in the form of denying equal opportunities. It is due to the engrained idea of the patriarchy and male power-holder that creates the lack of equality in systems like education, workforce, bodily autonomy, and personal expression. With liberal feminism drawing many of its foundational values from classical liberalism, the feminists believe that the lack of educational opportunities for women has led to their inability to conceive rational thoughts.<sup>14</sup> This in turn has widened the gap between men and women, because women are unable to receive education due to the male power dynamic in society, and therefore cannot compete with men who have the skillset that they were prevented from attaining.

Liberal feminism believes the answer to eradicating the oppression of women is through protesting, legislation drafting, and utilizing law enforcement measures to ensure the implementation of equality is widespread and administered effectively. It was liberal feminists who were behind the ratification of the nineteenth amendment, ensuring equal voting rights for women, and it was also liberal feminists who spearheaded support for civil rights, LGBTQ protection, and the legitimizing of sexual assault and harassment. Toxic masculinity can be erased through institutional provisions that would make equal opportunities for women as men, rebalancing the field without directly interacting with the men who exhibit those traits.

## Objections to Liberal Feminism

Although Liberal feminism works hard to eradicate the oppression of women, radical feminism looks at the root of the issue by tackling toxic masculinity with immediate action and pushback that achieves more widespread success. The radical feminist movement relies on verbal and action-oriented exercises that approach the difficulties of oppression directly, unlike liberal feminists who work behind the scenes on institutional reform.<sup>15</sup> Radical feminists in the third and fourth feminist movements worked to eradicate oppression in all forms, whether it be on the basis of gender, race, class, religion, or sexual orientation in the understanding that toxic masculinity and the patriarchy is responsible for many types of oppression.<sup>16</sup> This fact further supports why radical feminism is better equipped to combat inequality, which is because it has evaluated and understood the basis of oppression better than classic liberal feminists who's view lacks periphery on barriers to other social groups.

Liberal feminists argue against this, claiming that there should be policy change on the public levels, but that a person's private life should be kept separate. In reference to philosopher John Locke, he pushes for liberalism in the sense that individual rights should be protected, and thus separated from the general body politic. Liberal feminists place emphasis on this idea of separation, and feel as though radical feminists infiltrate personal lives too heavily when trying to make change. If the correct laws and policies are implemented and enforced, the oppressive practices against women will cease without taking it upon oneself to change society. An example of this would be the hiring of a woman over a man for a leadership position, simply because she is a woman and the company is trying to diversify its personnel even if one candidate is better than another. Rather than cutting a candidate because of gender bias, a liberal feminist would argue that policy implementation that enforces the hiring of an equal number of women and men in the workplace with leadership training included would create better fairness and equality for all candidates.

Reverting back to the radical feminists' argument, this type of policy change does not always occur when it is needed. Law creation can take many years, and can take even longer to be truly enforced once passed into effect. Radical feminists believe that it takes the work of everyone to see change, and if society continues to wait on policy implementation, there will never be equality or success. Radical feminists would argue that it takes direct action, a change in heart in order to shift society, and policy creation is not an effective way to get the point across that toxic masculinity is a major contributor to the oppression of women.

## Possibilities for the Future

UN Women's document named "Understanding Masculinities and Violence Against Women and Girls" offers bright ideas on how to transform masculinity from toxic to wholesome. It explains how a shift needs to occur on the internal, interpersonal, institutional, and ideological levels.<sup>17</sup> The internal level would be characterized by the way individuals view themselves in terms of feminine / masculine roles. The envisioned change would be the encouragement of personal liberation from societal expectations, with individuals learning to express themselves freely without attention to a gender binary. The interpersonal level is shown through relationships that are dictated by male exertion of power over others; this is seen through men who are violent against women, men who do not play an equal role in household functions, and the gay, lesbian, and transgender community who is targeted by men for unabiding to the typical gender roles.<sup>18</sup> The shift here would stem from the internal level, with all participants in a relationship feeling validated for being their true selves and having the freedom to engage with another without fear of retaliation or discrimination. The institutional level would entail policies and practices that fuel the gender dichotomy, including a male dominated police and legal force that disregards cases on gender or LGBTQ based violence and instances of military recruitment that target the violent and toxic characteristics of men. This should be shifted towards an equal and safe opportunity for women to join the military without fear of discrimination or mistreatment and the ability to be respected for any job she decides to take on. Finally, the ideological level should be shifted from the justification of male superiority to gender equality throughout all avenues of society in order to fully eradicate toxic masculinity and the oppression of women together.

## Conclusion

Radical feminist Anne Koedt offers a catalyst for change; she believes that women must liberate themselves from the harsh effects of toxic masculinity through personal disenfranchisement from the practices against them. She explains,

Women must learn that the technique used to keep a woman oppressed is to convince her that she is at all times secondary to a man, and that her life is defined in terms of him. We cannot speak of liberating ourselves until we free ourselves from this myth and accept ourselves as primary.<sup>19</sup>

This change would come deep within the hearts' of women, asking that women take the first step in disregarding previous gender roles and stepping onto the same plane as men without their permission. With this being said, it has been seen through many examples how radical feminism addresses toxic masculinity in a stronger fashion than liberal feminism. Although toxic mas-

culinity continues to reinforce the socialization of masculine and feminine characteristics among individuals throughout their lifetimes, the internal, interpersonal, institutional, and ideological changes within society would cause the upheaval necessary to cease the oppression of women altogether. In order to achieve a just world, the future must include new avenues for individual liberties and expression which are equal for all.

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## The Most Certain of the Uncertain: Death

By Esmeralda Chavez Jimenez

Life is being able to see in the distance, a white Alcatraz in a garden of red flowers and being captivated by its delicacy and luminous color amongst the rest; getting closer to the flower and feeling the smoothness that the pedals radiate on your fingers as they sway gently with the breeze. You become curious and lean down to smell the flower—a fresh fragrance. After a couple of months visiting the garden, the brisk and violent wind tears the pedals off the stem and down to the ground, they whirl—away from the lively garden. Was this the ending you were looking for? Perhaps not, but just as plants have an ending, so do we. Something that has not changed amongst humanity for centuries which we all share with the people we encounter in the streets, at school, at work, and even our family members is this one action—death. But what is death? As for the people that do not believe death exists, what is the purpose of this stage and when can it be fulfilled? The Buddhist teaching alongside the Christian faith can help understand this complex concept to understand not only death, but the purpose of life.

Siddhartha Buddha, or the “Enlightened One”, was able to understand the concept of death through the term reincarnation; the belief that we are born many times until we reach the perfect state known as nirvana. Buddha questioned life and sought to find eternal happiness through suffering, such as undergoing harsh days without aliment. “... (he) concludes that mortification of the flesh is not conducive to progress towards his goal of freedom from birth, aging, sickness, and death.”<sup>1</sup> After such conclusion, he uses meditation as a mediator of realization that grants him freedom of rebirth. Rebirth is a kind of punishment and the cause of the “egotism and selfishness that harm other now and oneself in the future though the negative karma they create.”<sup>2</sup> According to the Buddha, humans have desires, that if not granted, brings suffering. Not only does Buddha teach that desires lead to suffering, he states that attachments are actually the root of all suffering. Suffering leads to the fear of death involving our loved ones. Since we become attached to our loved ones, humans begin to fear the passing of them so we suffer. It is also important to mention how death is often associated in society as violent, cruel, and bitter because human’s desire to know what happens after death and if we will be in the perfect state of happiness in the next stage or not. Since everyone has different beliefs, we become afraid that we will not reach the perfect state for the next stage, leading to Nirvana. So, in order to be worthy of this perfection we must reach that state throughout life. Buddhist teaching advises its believers through the attainment of such a state by understanding the Four Noble Truths

and following the Noble Eightfold Path. In order to answer the question of, ‘what is death’, the first step is to first be worthy of it, regardless of where we believe our soul goes. Life and death are not opposites as most think of them as. On the contrary, life is lively compared to the beautiful Alcatraz flower. However, it’s a moment of constant trials of temptations in the soul, that if we surpass, we will be worthy of the perfect state once we die. If we prove ourselves to not be worthy, in the context of Buddhist teachings, then we will be in constant suffering—reincarnation.

Death is also a familiar concept in Catholic faith. According to the Bible, Jesus came as the savior for humanity in order to clean their sins; he died in the cross—a perfect and pure human suffered for the saving of others. Yet, the idea of death is not something to be feared upon in the Catholic faith. If we become worthy of the kingdom of heaven, then we shouldn’t fear going to hell—the eternal state of suffering and pain. “For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord.”<sup>3</sup> “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”<sup>4</sup> “And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”<sup>5</sup> These three references from the bible tells humans to not fear death if they surrender their life to their creator for he will purify their sins. Life is the dedication to God and the surrender of ill emotions that lead us to sin. According to the bible, after death there is paradise where there is no suffering, pain, or hunger—the perfect state of happiness. The purpose of life is to dedicate our purpose to him, he is the source of happiness and fulfillment.

The senior Buddhist nun, Ajahn Candasiri, shares her beliefs between Jesus and Buddhist teachings. According to Candasiri, who was born into the Christian faith and then converted, they both share some ideals to death, which after trying to find answers about death I’d argue the same. Through selfless acts that (Jesus) does to “carry out his Father’s will” as Candasiri stated, Jesus paves the way for an afterlife.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, in the Buddhism, Siddhartha tries to understand life for people to reach nirvana.

Interestingly enough trying to find the answers to death, I’m always led back to life. Life answers the questions of death. Death is not abysmal; we live to die. In order to reach Nirvana or be worthy of Heaven, our own emotions are to be channeled from within peace; the source could vary, either the creator or ourselves. Death is actually reaching the perfect state of eternal harmony. Life is the trial for many of us to prove ourselves worthy of happiness. The *how*, depends on our beliefs.

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# Rejecting Pausanias' Conception of Heavenly Love In Favor of a Post-Modern, Wholesome Conception of Love

by Katharine DeSantis

## Introduction

Plato's *Symposium* challenges many of our post-modern conceptions of love. It creates space to question the nature of love and discuss how love shapes our moral character, informs our ethics, and contemplates the true meaning of beauty.<sup>1</sup> Pausanias's conception of love is especially interesting in the discussion regarding the varying characteristics of love; he differentiates between an "elevated love" and a "base one,"<sup>2</sup> and argues that the only acceptable form is heavenly love that occurs between an older man and a younger man, where the elder is bestowing wisdom upon the younger. Although Pausanias's argument has merit in recognizing that love extends beyond lust, his overall understanding of love is narrow and exclusive. True love encompasses a deep and profound appreciation for one's mind, body, and soul, and can exist between any human individuals regardless of gender, age, or other defining identity characteristic. Therefore, Pausanias' idea of "heavenly love" should be rejected in favor of a more wholesome conception of love that includes a wider and deeper scope of human connection.

Pausanias states "love is not in himself noble and worthy of praise; that depends on whether the sentiments he produces in us are themselves to be noble,"<sup>3</sup> describing love as a manifestation that can be positive or negative depending on how it is engaged with.<sup>4</sup> He discusses this conception of love when evaluating the differences between "heavenly love" and "common love"; Love of Heavenly Aphrodite exists when an older man sees intellectual promise in a pubescent boy and forms a relationship based upon "love of the right sort of character."<sup>5</sup> Pausanias details a transactional love, where "the lover is able to help the young man become wiser and better, and the young man is eager to be taught and improved by his lover,"<sup>6</sup> which he deems justifiable by the teaching of virtues in exchange for sexual favors and service. On the other hand, Common Aphrodite's Love aims merely at sexual gratification, and is the negative example of love being used for ill reasons. Pausanias also states that any kind of love for women is disgraceful due to women's perceived lack of intellect.<sup>7</sup>

## Rejection of Pausanias's Conception of Love

Pausanias's idea of "Heavenly Love" boils down to a man taking pleasure in another man's intellectual promise, which is overtly transactional and centered entirely upon the receiver's eagerness to learn and exhibition of improvement.<sup>8</sup> The lover educates the young man on civics, virtues, and other worldly ideas, but only in exchange for favors and sexual gratification. This is an almost inevitable opportunity for young men to be exploited by lovers who are gatekeeping education and manipulating them into believing that providing service is a noble way to receive wisdom.<sup>9</sup> It forces young men to feel dependent on their lover to provide them with the tools and skills it takes to succeed in

life. It is also a contradiction, considering Pausanias deemed sexual gratification and physical satisfaction a “common” form of love.

Additionally, Pausanias’ argument is lacking in regards to the threshold for lovers. The lover supposedly teaches the young man how to be a noble citizen and “good” person, but Pausanias does not list any criteria or threshold for the lover to have in order to be qualified for wisdom-sharing. Additionally, parents and teachers can pass the same virtues and lessons onto young men without the need for sexual gratification or favors in return.<sup>10</sup> This relationship shows that others can fill the role of wisdom-bearer in a more moral way because there is no transaction or gatekeeping between giver and receiver of knowledge. Further, the age difference is also not relevant regarding love; the sharing of wisdom can occur between young and old and people of the same age. This idea that older men become fond of younger men does not necessarily qualify them to be the best teachers and givers of wisdom.

Although homosexuality was understood differently in ancient Athenian society, it is narrow-minded to assume that love can only exist between men. All genders show equal promise in regards to intellectual excellence and Pausanias’ failure to recognize that shows his lack of thorough understanding of the true nature of love. If he truly believes in heavenly love that exhibits love beyond lust or physical satisfaction, he would realize that wisdom can be bestowed upon anyone who is willing and eager to learn. Dr. Richard Hunter points out that lovers derive two possible benefits from their relationships: “a not explicitly expressed emotional satisfaction that he is doing good by helping a young citizen toward virtue and, second, physical satisfaction,”<sup>11</sup> which shows how the benefits of this love are applicable to all genders. If the lover is receiving either emotional or physical satisfaction, it is not a necessary component that this relationship must be between men only.

## **A Wholesome Conception of Love**

After understanding the rejection of Pausanias’s conception of heavenly love, it is fitting to transition into an analysis of the postmodern, wholesome conception of love. In today’s society, love is a wholehearted appreciation of another individual’s character traits, experiences, values, positive attributes, and flaws. This love can occur without the need for exchange; this love is emoted without the need for retribution. In practice, individuals will find some-one deserving of their respect, support, passion, and nurture, and will show a commitment to that person. Love inspires individuals to grow in emotional depth. Biologically, love is an emotion that releases serotonin and pleasure chemicals in the brain that make people attracted and attached to the person that they love.<sup>12</sup> This love is very strong and can often withstand challenges and hardships. Individuals today choose to love someone through their flaws, mistakes, and tribulations, a value often shared in traditional wedding vows: “for better, for worse, until death do us part.” All of these aspects are what lead to all-encompassing love that people in modern society find to be the most worthwhile and beneficial to their life.

This love can exist between anyone, no matter what gender, age, or identity they are defined by. The individuals in the relationship create their

own standards and expectations for productive and efficient partnership that do not rely on transactions or bargains. Although the lovers may help each other succeed and teach each other important values, there is no emphasis on the older man / younger man partnership that necessitates love as defined by Pausanias. This aspect of love is essential to the definition of wholesome love because it is inclusive of all expressions of love and supports the idea that all individuals are worthy of love, differing from Pausanias' idea that only intellectually promising young men are deserving.

This love is important to achieve because it yields long-term benefits on those experiencing it. A person is able to achieve happiness, learn, and grow while in partnership with another person who is ideally achieving similar successes. When the barriers to achieve this love are eliminated and more people can engage in loving relationships, there is greater learning of virtues and values. The individuals are shaping their values together to decide what is meaningful for their lives, for their families, friends, and communities, and therefore are achieving more than what Pausanias envisioned for his heavenly love relationships.

### **Merit in Pausanias's Argument**

Although Pausanias presents many challenging ideas regarding love, he hits two relevant points in his argument. The first is that love can have positive and negative effects and can be morally correct through certain behaviors and actions.<sup>13</sup> Some may believe they are acting out of love for another, but in reality are manipulating, abusing, or neglecting their partner. These individuals distort love, acting with malice and causing harm. This is immoral by Pausanias' ideals and would follow suit with the wholesome conception of love.

Additionally, Pausanias explains that the lover "expresses his love and pursues his object openly,"<sup>14</sup> which is important to the health and integrity of relationships. Love where one partner feels underappreciated, undervalued, or hidden due to embarrassment is humiliating and negative for the individual. This form of love can create long-term mental health challenges for the individual who is questioning their worth since their partner will not acknowledge their presence to others.<sup>15</sup> Further, open communication between partners nurtures love because their connection grows with honest and thoughtful sharing.

### **Conclusion**

Although Pausanias's conception of love has a few intersecting positives with the wholesome conception of love, his argument overall is lacking regarding the limiting and narrow-minded nature of loving relationships. When discussing the nature of love, it is important to consider all the aspects that make love worthwhile and positive for individuals. Wholesome love can add meaning to one's life when they are able to feel mutual respect and appreciation with their partner. By widening the scope to include all genders, ages, and identities in the realm of love, eliminating the transactional exchange within love, and eliminating criteria for who is allowed to share wisdom or teachings, wholesome love is able to thrive and better support lifelong happiness.



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## Phenomenological View of Time Travel

By Jennifer Shabrach

Time is something one does not think of daily since it is already in place. However, the philosopher Augustine believed time was much more than that. According to Augustine, there is subjective and objective time which are processed differently in everyday life. Subjective time represents time which has an experiential component within it.<sup>1</sup> This phenomenological view can help look at harder topics involving time such as the possibility of time travel. A common wonder is if the possibility of time travel can be proven or even considered based on the phenomenological views that humans have on time. In a way, the idea of time travel becomes an aporia because time travel cannot be thought of from the human mind based on their subjective experience meaning humans may never process anything revolving time and space because it is beyond their perspective.

The possibility of time travel has been debated for numerous years. Essentially time travel involves the discrepancy between subjective time and objective time itself.<sup>2</sup> It involves the ability to travel through a 4-dimensional world that involves time and space along with the previous 3-dimensions we experience every day. The 3-dimensional world does not involve space and time but are fundamentally height, width, and depth of objects around us.<sup>3</sup> The distinction in the types of travel can be mainly exemplified by astronauts:

“In a sense, this effect, called time dilation, means astronauts are time travelers, as they return to Earth very, very slightly younger than their identical twins that remain on the planet.”<sup>4</sup>

So, it is represented that some form of manipulation in time is present within astronauts. However, time is tricky to define in itself. Augustine tackles time by describing it as subjective and objective. Objective time does not depend on human consciousness, whereas subjective time does.<sup>5</sup> This creates a problem within definitions though. Since most humans use subjective time to go about their daily lives, can they fully process time travel if they do not experience said travel? Especially since all human experience is done in a 3-dimensional world. This makes it challenging to decide whether time travel is possible or not for the human eye.

There are many views on whether time travel is possible. One view involving philosophical reasoning shows time travel could be possible for the future but not necessarily the past. This view is due to logical reasoning within the grandfather paradox:

“If time travel was logically possible then the time traveler could return to the past and in a suicidal rage destroy his time machine before it was completed and murder his younger self. But if this was so a necessary condition for the time trip to have occurred at all is removed, and we should then conclude that the time trip did not occur. Hence if the time trip did occur, then it did not occur. Hence it did not occur, and it is necessary that it did not occur.”<sup>6</sup>

The reasoning behind the Grandfather Paradox represents the logical inequivalence. If someone went back in time to change space and time in itself for that same person, it would be impossible since they would have never existed. If time travel was possible, the Grandfather Paradox implies we could only be possible to travel into the future and not the past.

A completely different view of the possibility within time travel would be from a scientific perspective. There are numerous physicists who specialize in the future of time travel, so the field is constantly being pursued. At the moment, it is challenging to find a form of time travel that would allow the human body to physically survive.<sup>7</sup> Some research suggests there is possibility for time travel through creating a doughnut-shaped hole using exotic matter. The matter would represent a vacuum of space and time. Once the logistics are figured out, the time traveler could race around this vacuum essentially creating a time warp.<sup>8</sup> The limits of human perception have also been reevaluated based on recent experiments implying human brains can see up to 11 dimensions if they focus hard enough.<sup>9</sup> Humans may hold the potential to process a 4-dimensional world. Therefore, science shows time travel could be possible with (ironically) more time and resources.

Although I am a scientist and philosopher, the first view based on philosophic logical argument seems more plausible in my mind. Traditional logic does not pay attention to the 4-dimensional perspective since most humans only process everything in their 3-dimensional everyday perspective. Therefore, the logical argument matches the view of human perspective better. Science is knowledgeable but the progress within the community could take years to achieve the point of time travel even though they show multiple ideas. Another problem with scientific time travel is time travel scientists are not highly desired currently. In all honesty, companies would rather fund research to cure diseases and help with present day issues. The focus on the present is due to the idea of subjective time. Everyone wants to live to see tomorrow and experience it in their 3-dimensional world. Therefore, from a phenomenological basis, the philosophical logic view makes more sense than the scientific view.

I predict time travel may never be seen from the human eye, yet alone processed through the human mind. Humans often rely on phenomenological ex-

periences to prove what they know. This is why most only bother with the subjective view of time, because it can be more personal and experienced from the individual. There are examples to further show this point. For example, if Jerry was a time traveler who went back to see his thin and younger self, the younger self may be in denial to the fact that it is in fact him in the future. Jerry's denial is due to the fact that Jerry is seeing what is in front of him, which is a much larger and older man. He may overlook the 4-dimensional experience that given space and time, both men are the same entity of Jerry.<sup>10</sup> Another example is how one looks in the mirror in the morning and again at night. The individual may be wearing the same outfit and not look much different, however the person in the mirror changed every second due to the 4-dimensional experience which was unseen. One is oblivious to see subtle changes due to our senses clinging on to the 3-dimension subjective time. Therefore, we are oblivious to the 4-dimension world because of our lack of phenomenological objective time. The idea of time travel may never be understandable in a human mind unless experienced first-hand in a subjective time. Time travel may become an aporia problem which can never be answered.

Since there are so many views on time travel, consensus on whether it is possible or not can be hard to. Consensus can possibly never be made because of the aporia surrounding whether humans will be able to ever fully process the idea of time travel. Although some philosophers and scientists open the possibility for us to view dimensions which we may be able to process time in well enough to explore time travel, we are not where we need to be for a solid answer. Hopefully one day, subjective time and objective time can be seen more as one and put an end to the aporia.

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