APORIA

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From the President:

Dear Philosophers,

Last semester was fantastic: The Philosophy Society signed-up more new members than ever before; our debates and speakers were all consistently spirited, involved and interesting; and we even managed to lure in philosophy powerhouse Timothy Williamson. So, with that said: it gives us great pleasure to christen the new year with the fourth volume of Aporia, the society's journal.

Before diving in, however, this may be a good time to stop and think about how philosophy is seen by those in the 'non-philosophical' world. In Monty Python's classic sketch, the 'Philosophers' Song', we were drawn in broad strokes as drunken, cerebal fools: – "I drink, therefore I am" – I hope this isn't reflected in the journal! Alternately, you might consider physicist Richard Feynman's famous claim, "Scientists are explorers. Philosophers are tourists." Whether or not to agree, we'll leave to you to decide. Or, it may help to remember William James's oft-quoted precept: "A man with no philosophy in him is the most inauspicious and unprofitable of all possible social mates".

Try not to strain your head too much while perusing this journal. If you do find yourself frustrated by any of the articles within, remember the words of JD from the American sitcom 'Scrubs': "Philosophy is tricky". On that note, we'd like to thank everyone who has made this journal possible, and everyone who buys a copy! We hope you enjoy it just as much as we do.

Sarah   *Joe*
President   Vice-President

Contents

Locke and the Right of Resistance

Silvan Wittwer, *St Andrews*

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1. Introduction

In this essay, I will identify the grounds on which Locke justifies the right of resistance in the *Second Treatise of Government* (1690). My argument unfolds in two parts:

In the first part, I will introduce some basic concepts (section 2) that Locke appeals to in order to run his argument for the right of resistance (section 3). The second part consists of a criticism by John Mabbott (1973), which turns on the distinction between political society and government (section 4), and my interpretation of Locke that evades it successfully (section 5).

2. Some Basic Lockean Concepts

Before being able to expound Locke's argument for resistance, I have to introduce some basic concepts. In what follows, I will therefore briefly characterize the notions of the state of nature and its law of nature, the state of war, civil or political society and the ends of government.

According to Locke, the *state of nature* represents the original condition of mankind, the condition of men living without governments or political superiors in general.[1] It is conceived as a state of perfect *freedom* and *equality*. While freedom amounts to the 'perfect freedom to order [one's] actions, and dispose of [one's] possessions and persons [...]',[2] equality means that 'all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another [...]'.[3] Equality derives from the fact that all human beings are of the same species and in principle endowed with the same faculties.[4] Most notably, all human beings are capable of getting insight by reason.

Freedom in the state of nature is not perfect, however. There are limits to it, imposed by the *law of nature*. The law of nature is the rule of 'reason and common equity, which is that measure God has set to the actions of men, for their mutual security [...]'.[5] It forbids that anyone 'ought to harm another [or herself] in his life, health, liberty or possessions', since all men are made by God.[6] In case of violation, the community has the right to punish the transgressor 'to such a

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[1] Cf. Mabbott 1973: 143, Locke 1690: §4
[2] Locke 1690: §4. Henceforth, I will omit '§' when citing Locke. Thus, the number indicates not the page, but the paragraph in which the quoted sentence can be found.
[3] ibid.
[4] ibid.
[5] Locke 1690: 8
[6] Locke 1690: 6

degree, as may hinder its violation'[7] in the future and reestablish natural equality. Additionally, the injured person has the right of reparation,[8] the compensation received making sure that the victim's self-preservation is henceforth guaranteed (since not looking after oneself amounts to violating the law of nature, too).

Moreover, if the law of nature is violated, we are presented with an instance of 'force without right, upon a man's person',[9] which alters the status of the transgressor: he is no longer in the state of nature, but puts himself into the *state of war* with the rest of the community. He remains in the state of war until the transgression is (collectively) punished, (individually) repaired and the state of nature thus reinstated.

The state of nature imagined by Locke is not as idyllic as it might look at first sight, though. Rather, it suffers from certain 'inconveniences [...], which necessarily follow from every man's being judge in his own case [...].'[10] In particular, the state of nature is flawed with respect to three features: it lacks law based on common consent, it fails to provide a universally known and indifferent judge, and it cannot guarantee the power of executing sentences according to the law of nature.[11]

Certainly, the law of nature is intelligible to all men as rational creatures. Coming up with a consistent interpretation in every case and applying it impartially, however, might prove to be very difficult an undertaking.[12] This holds especially if one happens to be involved in the violation, either as injuring or injured party. Due to that, the state of nature is inclined to transform into a permanent state of war.

For Locke, the solution to the state of nature turned into a state of war consists in founding a *civil* or *political society*. Men are social animals by divine design,[13] so this might be achieved by setting up a social contract, transferring one's natural rights of punishment and reparation mentioned above to a mutually agreed authority or government.[14] Consequently, one ceases to be personally responsible for the observation and execution of the law of nature. Instead, the political institutions appointed by the civil society take care of it. Since the law of nature essentially regulates and protects property, conceived in the broad sense as covering 'life, liberty and estate'[15], the *end of civil society* or *government* consists in the preservation of property of its members.

Subscribing to a government and its political institutions addresses the three weaknesses of the state of nature identified above: the legislative powers codify the law of nature in the form of a commonly assented body of positive law, the judiciary provides the members of civil society with an impartial authority to appeal to in legal affairs or controversies and the executive power makes sure that the established law is observed and executed.

Absolutely pivotal to Locke's conception of government (and his argument for the right of

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[7] Locke 1690: 7

[8] Locke 1690: 10

[9] Locke 1690: 19

[10] Locke 1690: 90

[11] Locke 1690: 126-26

[12] Locke 1690: 124

[13] Cf. Locke 1690: 77

[14] I'm aware of the potential distinction between political society and government. I will discuss its relevance and related issues in the second part of the paper. For now, there is none.

[15] Locke 1690: 87

resistance) is the fact that it is always based on the people's consent.[16] The people trust the government with their natural rights only because they expect it to fulfil better the task of protecting property and because it seems to provide against the defects of the state of nature. Thus, the government's power 'can never be supposed to extend farther, than the common good [...].'[17] Its authority is restricted to enacting the law of nature. If the government counteracts this restriction, it loses its legitimacy.

3. Locke's Argument for Resistance

In chapter 19 of the *Second Treatise* Locke puts forward an argument for the right of resistance by elaborating on the conditions under which governments dissolve and it is justified to establish a new one. Initially, Locke distinguishes between two cases:[18]

Either the legislative undergoes a change without approval of the people. In this case, the government violates the people's native right of self-preservation, since preserving oneself '... can only be done by a settled legislative, and a fair and impartial execution of the laws made by it.'[19] There are not less than five different ways of altering the legislative, all of which Locke attributes to the executive. They read: replacing laws with its arbitrary will, interfering with the assembling of the legislative, manipulating representatives or elections, delivering the people into the subjection of a foreign power, and neglecting the execution of made laws.[20]

Or the government acts contrary to the people's *trust*. This happens if political superiors 'endeavor to invade the property of the subject, and to make themselves [...] masters, or arbitrary disposers of the lives, liberties, or fortunes of the people.'[21]

And, in fact, this case seems to be more fundamental. For, as mentioned in section 2, the legitimacy and power of government stem directly from the people's trust in its ability to preserve property and thus execute the law of nature.[22] If the government fails to guarantee preservation and falls short of enacting the law, it breaches the people's trust. And if it breaches the people's trust, it loses its legitimate authority. Henceforth, the government uses *force without authority*, which puts itself in a state of war with the people. In the state of war, the people obtain the right of resisting the government by force as well as the right of establishing a new legislative, which they deem better suited for the preservation of property. In short, '... in all states and conditions, the true remedy of force without authority, is to oppose force to it.'[23]

Finally, Locke emphasizes that there is only one party rightfully entitled to judge whether the government acts contrary to the people's trust – and this party is the people themselves: '... for who shall be judge whether his trustee or deputy acts well, and according to the trust reposed in him, but he who deputes him, and must, by having deputed him, have still a power

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[16] Locke's concept of consent raises intricate issues on its own. I won't discuss those in this essay, though.
[17] Locke 1690: 131
[18] Locke 1690: 212, 221
[19] Locke 1690: 220
[20] Cf. Locke 1690: 214-19
[21] Locke 1690: 221
[22] Cf. Locke 1690: 149
[23] Locke 1690: 155

to discard him, when he fails in his trust?'[24]

But doesn't Locke somehow overstate his case by making the 'body of people' itself judge over whether the right of resistance can be applied legitimately? Are people not chronically discontented with their government anyway, ignorant of political affairs in general, too mercurial to act strategically, and the right to resistance therefore a permanent threat to social stability?[25]

Locke dispels those worries by specifying the conditions for the legitimate use of the right to resistance and by giving reasons for the people's reluctance to resist permanently (and hence abuse the right of resistance). They come down to the following four:[26]

First, the scope of application of the right to resistance is fairly narrow, since any well-composed government features the option of relief and reparation by appeal to law. Appealing to the political institutions must always be preferred to deploying violent means. Only if the *institutional way* is blocked, means alien to the political process of decision-making can be taken into consideration. Only unlawful force might be rightfully opposed by force.[27]

Secondly, the government's unlawful acts have to be of *general concern* to the people, either directly by affecting the majority of them or by posing a potential threat to the society as such. At all events, the misdemeanor has to reach 'farther than some private men's cases'.[28] This effectively excludes the scenario that the momentary unhappiness of few individuals amounts to the justification of resistance.

Thirdly, a single unlawful act committed by the government won't be sufficient for making legitimate use of the right of resistance. Instead, a 'long train of abuses, prevarifications and artifices'[29] is needed to actually trigger resistance.

Fourthly, the people can by characterized by deep-seated apathy, an aversion to quit old customs and constitutions as well as the disposition to suffer through instead of resist political mismanagement.[30] Hence, they are not likely to make use of their right frequently.

Jointly, all those conditions seem to imply that even if Locke places the judgment on the legitimate application of the right of resistance into hands of the people, they are not likely to abuse the right on the very first occasion. Rather, the right to resistance represents the last way out of an otherwise unbearable situation.

4. Society and Government

John Mabbott (1973) points out that Locke puts forward two different accounts of the foundation of governments.[31]

The first account conceives of the foundation of governments as the process or move by

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[24] Locke 1690: 240

[25] The objection can be found in Locke 1690: 203, 223, 224.

[26] Locke doesn't seem to distinguish between legitimacy and likelihood of [*cont.   overleaf*] resistance. Rather, he thinks that resistance is less likely if it is illegitimate. This is contentious, especially since the people decide on the legitimacy of resistance themselves. However, I won't discuss this further.

[27] Locke 1690: 204

[28] Locke 1690: 208, 209

[29] Locke 1690: 225

[30] Locke 1690: 223, 230

[31] Mabbott 1973: 151f.

which mankind leaves the state of nature and transfers its natural rights to a government. 'The constitution of the legislative is the first and fundamental act of society [. . .].'[32] Being a civil or political society means having a government. The first account is the predominant account of Locke's *Second Treatise*.

The second account is not introduced until chapter 19. It conceives of the foundation of governments not as a single process, but consisting of two separate, independent steps: the creation of political society and the appointment of a government. Locke introduces the account in order to launch his argument for the right of resistance: the dissolution of the government does not necessarily imply the dissolution of the society. If the government crumbles as a result of opposition by the people, the political society remains nonetheless in existence. It is the political society that provides and establishes a new government. Thus, society precedes government.

Basically, the two accounts differ merely in respect to one conceptual commitment: while the second account subscribes to the distinction between *political* society and government, the first does not.

Mabbott argues further that Locke's theory fails to bolster the second account and its distinction between political society and government. For according to Mabbott, Locke 'himself repeatedly rejects the view that the creation of a political society is an act independent of and logically preceding the appointment of a government.'[33] If Locke sticks to the distinction nonetheless, he is being inconsistent.

Ultimately, Mabbott's challenge to Locke can be summarized as follows: if Locke cannot preserve the distinction between society and government, his argument for the right of resistance is flawed. For the distinction is essential to Locke's argument: only if the dissolution of the government leaves the society intact, can it come up with new political institutions that seem better suited for the preservation of property.

In my view, however, Mabbott's criticism of Locke is misplaced, since Mabbott fails to distinguish himself between two different claims he puts forward above. On the one hand, he claims that Locke cannot account for the distinction between society and government and is therefore being inconsistent. That's Mabbott's *first critical claim*.

On the other hand, he claims that the two Lockean accounts of governmental foundation are contradictory. Either societies and governments emerge simultaneously or they don't. That's Mabbott's *second critical claim*.

Due to this conflation, Mabbott looks for evidence in the wrong place. He takes evidence *for* the first account of governmental foundation as being evidence *against* the distinction between society and government.[34] That doesn't have to be the case necessarily.

In what follows, I will treat Mabbott's two critical claims separately. This enables me to show how and where one can find evidence for the distinction that is independent of evidence for the accounts of governmental foundation. Moreover, this will eventually lead to an alternative understanding of the accounts as well. Thus, on my reading, Locke refutes both of Mabbott's critical claims.

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[32] Locke 1690: 212
[33] Mabbott 1973: 152
[34] Cf. Mabbott 1973: 152 ff.

5. Resisting Mabbott's Interpretation of Locke

Indeed, one may not find a lot of evidence in Locke's theory that bolsters the distinction between society and government, if one restricts one's search to accounts of governmental foundation.[35] However, this might not be the right strategy to elucidate Locke's understanding of the relationship between society and government. After all, the distinction might be operative in other contexts.

Instead, it might prove promising to have a closer look at how exactly governments *dissolve* according to Locke.

In the first paragraph of chapter 19, Locke states that 'whenever a society is dissolved, it is certain the government of that society cannot remain.'[36] John Dunn (1973) interprets this statement as saying that the dissolution of society is sufficient, but not necessary for the dissolution of government.[37] So, political society and governments might behave differently in case of dissolution. But how can one explain that civil society subsists while the government dissolves?

Given Locke's conception of resistance, it is evident why governments dissolve: by breaching the people's trust they lose their legitimacy or rightful authority and put themselves into a state of war with the people.[38] But does the fact that the state of war breaks out between government and society imply that society itself falls prey to it? It does not seem so necessarily, but it calls for an argument.

Thus, we should reformulate the question posed to Locke: does the state of war break out between the people? If it does, society loses its inner cohesion and dissolves. If society dissolves simultaneously with the government, the distinction between society and government fails to hold. Mabbott's first critical claim would be correct.

Answering the question amounts to finding out whether the distinction operates in contexts other than accounts of governmental foundation.

However, Locke is far from being clear on the issue in question. Rather, his comments on which state obtains between the people after the dissolution of a government remain fragmentary and elusive.

In fact, as far as I can see, there is but one passage in which Locke hints at the possibility of the state of war breaking out between the people after the dissolution of the government. For the government's function consists in being an impartial authority, dissolving it means taking away 'the umpirage, which every one had consented to, for a peaceable decision of all their controversies, and a bar to the state of war amongst them.'[39] As soon as the government dissolves, people lose the sole impartial authority they could appeal to and end up waging war against each other.

Nevertheless, there are at least three features of Locke's argument for the right of resistance implying that the state of war does not break out between the people once the government is

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[35] There is some evidence to be found in Locke 1690: 99, 106.
[36] Locke 1690: 211
[37] Dunn 1969: 181
[38] Locke 1690: 151
[39] Locke 1690: 227

dissolved. A charitable reading of the quote above would then be rendered implausible.

Firstly, Locke distinguishes significantly between the concepts of resistance and rebellion. While resistance is a people's right that can be legitimately asserted under certain circumstances, rebellion is the crime of which a government is guilty. Basically, Locke conceives of rebellion in the Latin, literal sense as reintroducing the state of war. A rebellious government violates the law and puts himself in the state of war with the people.[40] Resistance, on the contrary, applies to the people only, not to governments. Presumably, it must be an ordered, purposive process, at whose end a new legislative is established. It does not seem to be associated with the vagaries of the state of war at any rate. Actually, the people resist *because* the governments are rebellious!

Consequently, if Locke had thought that the dissolution of governments leads to a state of war between the people themselves, he would probably have refrained from distinguishing between rebellion and resistance in the first place. He would have characterized the people as prone to rebellion as well.

But how does Locke exactly characterize the people anyway? Let's have a look at a further feature:

Secondly, Locke views the people as the supreme political power, since they appoint the government for certain ends on a strictly fiduciary basis. This is true especially, however, if the government is dissolved: 'And thus the community may be said in this respect to be always the supreme power, but not as considered under any form of government, because *this power of the people can never take place till the government be dissolved*.'[41]

Additionally, and once more, Locke expects the people to come up with a new legislative. This expectation is met only in case having supreme power amounts to being a political actor. And acting politically, according to Locke, can be achieved but by a body that is sufficiently unified.[42] Thus, the people are not only the supreme power, but also the sole political actor in times of dissolution. That certainly distinguishes them from the government.

Thirdly, Locke puts forward the anthropological claims that human beings are social animals by nature and that trust or 'keeping of faith' essentially belong to human practice.[43] Mabbott is quick to point out that Locke doesn't think these dispositions to be sufficient for establishing a civil society.[44] Certainly, this is true if one considers the very beginnings of civil societies, the stage when human beings appoint governments for the first time in their history in order to evade the inconveniences of the state of nature. But once a society has existed for a while and the government gets dissolved, why shouldn't those human characteristics prevent the people from falling back into the state of war with one another?

The point is emphatically made by John Dunn (1969). He introduces a distinction between *formal* and *substantive* social order: 'The order which can be erased through such a desertion by the executive is the formal legal order of the English Body Politick, not the substantive social

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[40] ibid.
[41] Locke 1690: 149, my italics.
[42] Locke 1690: 96
[43] Locke 1690: 77, 14
[44] Mabbott 1973: 155, cf. Locke 1690: 14

order of the village or even perhaps the county.'[45] After all, it just seems implausible that, if the government dissolved, the experience of being a political society would vanish overnight! Something would have to subsist, be that elementary social or more sophisticated political structures. At all events, there would be no state of war breaking out between the people themselves.[46]

Eventually, the distinction between society and government seems to hold. Mabbott's first critical claim is rendered implausible and Locke's argument for resistance is secured. What about Mabbott's second critical claim, though? If the distinction really holds, then Locke appears to operate on two different, contradictory accounts of governmental foundation. How can we deal with this problem?

The solution hinges on an idea anticipated above: the second account is actually no account of governmental foundation, but an account of governmental dissolution. The two accounts explain different things, and are therefore not contradictory!

The first account explicates the origins of legitimate political authority. Thus, it seems plausible that the distinction between society and government is not in play yet: when the first civil society is founded, a government is appointed simultaneously. The second account, on the contrary, accounts for governmental dissolution and reinstatement. Hence, it makes sense that civil society and government are told apart, for the former has to resist and replace the latter.

In this sense, the accounts can be read as being temporally successive. While the first account covers the early chapters of human political history, the second account accommodates social phenomena characteristic of more developed societies, like dissolution of and resistance to governments.

6. Conclusion

In my essay, I have specified the conditions under which the people, according to Locke, might legitimately assert the right of resistance. Subsequently, I have presented Mabbott's (1973) criticism of Locke's argument, which says that he fails to account for the distinction between society and government. By disentangling two different claims from Mabbott's criticism, I was able to show that there can be evidence found for the distinction in Locke's argument if one looks for it in 'non-foundational' contexts. Thus, Locke evades Mabbott's criticism.

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[45] Dunn 1969: 184f.

[46] My argument leaves it open what the terms 'people' or 'society' actually mean for Locke. It just shows that they are distinct from 'government' in certain cases.

References

[1] Dunn, J., 1969: *The political Thought of John Locke: a historical account of the argument of the 'Two Treatises of Government'.* London, Cambridge University Press.

[2] Locke, J., 1690: *Two Treatises of Government.* [Available on the World Wide Web at http://www.constitution.org/jl/2ndtreat.htm, accessed on 17.4.2009]

[3] Mabbott, J.D., 1973: *John Locke.* London, MacMillan.

Is Global Truth-Relativism Self-Refuting?

Kyle Mitchell, *St Andrews*

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1. Introduction

This paper argues that Global Truth-Relativism (GTR) is not self-refuting. To arrive at this conclusion, I will begin by providing an account of GTR using MacFarlane's semantic framework for Truth-Relativism. After formulating GTR, three distinct variations of the self-refutation charge (SR) will be examined. The first, due to Mackie and Siegel will be shown to be question begging as a result of it being shown that GTR is an intelligible position, deserving of the truth predicate. Next, Hales "strengthened" SR will be shown to rest on a faulty principle, while further appeals to make a strengthened SR that rely on trans-perspectival truth will be shown to be question begging as well. Finally, Cappelen and Lepore's challenge to the proponent of GTR will be met by showing that the challenge relies on a "principle of tolerance" that can consistently be rejected by the proponent of GTR. In this way, it will be shown that the proponent of GTR can avoid SR.

2. A Rough Sketch of the Debate

Global Truth Relativism is one of the most ancient and tenacious theories of truth. The truth of an utterance traditionally depends on at most three factors: the way things are in the world, the meaning of the uttered sentence and the context in which the utterance was made. Defiantly, The proponent of GTR suggests that, for all utterances in natural language, these tree factors do not fully determine the truth of an utterance. Instead, truth is also determined by our judgments based on the standards of our culture, language, personal experience and a variety of other factors – in short, our perspective. Furthermore, because these standards can vary from perspective to perspective, the truth of an utterance will, in principle, also vary across perspectives[1]. For the purposes of this paper, absolutism will be defined in reaction to GTR as the claim that there exists at least one proposition that will remain invariant across distinct perspectives[2].

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[1] If the truth-value did not vary, or at least possibly vary, from perspective to perspective there would be no point in employing the notion of a perspective to makes sense of the truth of the relevant proposition. For example, if a proposition's truth-value could not vary between perspectives, then the role of a perspective in determining truth would seem to drop out.

[2] Absolutist positions will typically make further claims such as the idea that truth is not dependent on perspectives at all and that there exists a "view form nowhere". These positions, however, are stronger than the

As ancient as GTR is SR. While there are many different versions of SR, all suggest that GTR is false if it is assumed to be true by presenting a dilemma. The suggestion is that the proponent of GTR must hold that, if GTR is true, then either,

Horn 1) it is *not* relative to a perspective the GTR is true, or

Horn 2) it is relative to a perspective that GTR is true.

Horn 1) is clearly unacceptable, for if it is not relative to a perspective that GTR is true, then there exists a proposition[3] - "GTR is true" - that is not relative to a perspective. This, however, contradicts GTR, for GTR claims that the truth of *all* propositions and utterances is relative to a perspective. No one thinks the proponent of GTR should endorse Horn 1). The contention arises over whether or not Horn 2) is possible. There are a few different ways to show why one might think Horn 2) is just as contradictory as Horn 1). However, before we can assess Horn 2), we must clearly state the content of GTR, showing that it is a crisp and intelligible theory; otherwise we might wonder whether the theory is worth inquiring into at all.

3.1 Picture of a Global Relativist's World:

Before providing a framework for GTR, allow me to canvass a few intuitions about what a genuine GTR would look like. This will allow us to develop conditions under which we can call a semantic framework a genuinely relativist framework. Imagine that Eric and William are in an argument about whether or not the proposition that

A) <God exists>

is true or false. Relative to William's perspective, A) is true and, relative to Eric's perspective, A) is false. Of course, if GTR is true, then both William and Eric are correct in their assessment of A). In other words, *propositional* truth is relative. Moreover, if William uttered A) in a context of use, then William would assess his utterance of A) as true, Eric would assess William's utterance as false and both Eric and William would be right in doing so. Therefore, a semantic framework for GTR must meet the following conditions:

1) *Propositional relativity*, and

2) *Utterance relativity*.

Furthermore, because GTR claims that the truth of *all* utterances is a relative matter, if GTR is true, then the truth of every proposition will be constrained by 1) and 2).

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one outlined above, making them less likely to dispel GTR.

[3] And presumably an utterance: "GTR is true".

3.2 Detour: Kaplan and the Logic of Indexicals:

In order to provide a robust semantic framework for GTR we need to outline David Kaplan's semantic framework for sentences containing indexical expressions, for it is from this semantic framework that MacFarlane provides his relativist semantics[4]. What is common to indexicals is that both the truth-value and the proposition expressed by statements using these terms vary *relative to the context in which they are used*. For example, in

B) <I was there>

"I" and "there" are obviously context-sensitive[5]. Kaplan's framework will show how the context of use allows sentences containing indexicals to a) express determinate propositions and b) have a determinate truth-value. Furthermore, because the truth-value of these kinds of sentences can only be determined *relative* to a context of use, it is easy to see how a detailed theory of indexicals could pave the way for a detailed theory of relativism.

To show how a) is possible, Kaplan distinguishes two layers of meaning: *character* and *content*. On the one hand, B) will take on different meanings when used in different contexts. If used by Kyle in C_1 talking about St Andrews it will express the propostion "Kyle was in St Andrews" and if used by Eric in C_2 concerning Chicago it expresses the proposition "Eric was in Chicago". Kaplan calls this the *content*. On the other hand, there is the level of meaning that determines the content in the context of use. Kaplan calls this level of meaning the *character* of an indexical expression[6]. Character, for Kaplan is a function from contexts to contents. Hence, in C_1 the character of "I" and "there" will pick out Kyle and St Andrews to determine the content of B) – "Kyle was in St Andrews".

Furthermore, Kaplan thinks that once the content has been determined in a context of use, the content is *fixed*. For example, imagine that B) was used in C_1 and we want to know the truth-value of B) in a possible world *w'* in which Kyle had never been to St Andrews. Even though, this possible world is not the possible world of C_1 (in that possible world, *w*, Kyle *was* in St Andrews), we will, nonetheless, evaluate the content determined in C_1 with respect to *w'*. This allows us to distinguish the context of use from, what Kaplan calls, the *circumstances of evaluation*. In the simplest case, the circumstance of evaluation is just the world of evaluation. Normally, the default world of evaluation is the world in which the sentence is used. However, we can use modal operators such as "in the nearest possible world it is the case that" and "in *w'* it is that case that", to shift the circumstance of evaluation to different possible worlds. According to Kaplan, contents are functions from circumstances of evaluation to extensions. Therefore, it is only *relative* to a circumstance of evaluation that a given content can be true or false[7]. This is an important point – under Kaplan's framework the *same fixed content* can be evaluated as

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[4] Indexical expressions include the pronouns 'I', 'my', 'he', 'she', 'it', the adverbs, 'here', 'now', 'tomorrow', 'yesterday', the adjectives 'actual' and 'present' and others.

[5] For example, imagine that B) is written on a blackboard and you have no knowledge of the context in which the sentence was written. In this scenario it will be impossible for you to determine what exactly is meant by the sentence an the board and what the truth-value of the sentence is precisely because you do not know *context* in which it was written, i.e. who wrote the sentence, the demonstrations associated with the sentence, ect.

[6] The character of an indexical expression often take the form of a rule – 'I' refers to the speaker of the sentence, 'there' refers to the place demonstrated by the speaker – and is fixed across contexts of utterance.

[7] Kaplan, David (1977) "Demonstratives" in Themes from Kaplan. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989.

true relative to one world and false relative to another. This is a kind of relativism, however short of GTR[8].

3.3 MacFarlane: A Robust GTR

MacFarlane's strategy to construct a crisp and intelligible relativist semantics is to adjust Kaplan's framework to meet the conditions of propositional and utterance relativity. Because *one in the same* proposition must be able to be evaluated correctly as both true relative to some perspective and false relative to some other perspective, MacFarlane makes use of Kaplan's distinction between contexts of use and circumstances of evaluation. In Kaplan's framework, the context of use will determine, not only the content of an utterance, but also the circumstance of evaluation. In this way, the context of use plays two *distinct* roles: 1) a content-determinative role and 2) a circumstance-determinative role. For example, consider the behaviour of the contingent, eternalized sentence without indexicals in Kaplan's framework:

> C) <On April 22nd, 1992, Kurt Cobain went out to dinner.>

Of course, C) will express the same proposition at every context and even in different possible worlds. However, the context of use will still play at least one important role – determining the possible world against which we evaluate C), i.e. the circumstance of evaluation. This allows one in the same proposition expressed by C) to be true relative to some possible worlds and false relative to others.

Furthermore, MacFarlane notes that the circumstance of evaluation need not exclusively contain possible worlds. For example, temporalists believe that propositions are temporally neutral. Therefore, according to the temporalist, A) expresses the same proposition at 2pm as it does at 3pm, allowing the truth-value of A) to vary from time to time. In this way, the temporalist will include not only possible worlds but also times in the circumstance of evaluation. Thus, we could shift the circumstance of evaluation with modal as well as temporal operators like "at 2pm it will be the case that". We might even think of propositions as locationally neutral, fitting locations into the circumstances of evaluation as well[9]. These may not be the most orthodox views about propositions, but they are certainly intelligible. The important point here is that, in Kaplan's framework, we need not evaluate the truth-value of a given content relative to *only* possible worlds. For this reason, MacFarlane suggests that it is at least conceptually possible that we can include parameters other than possible worlds and times in the circumstance of evaluation. We could even have, for example, a religious standards parameter. This brings us closer to a framework for GTR, for now A) will be true according to William's religious standards and false according to Eric's religious standards, meeting the propositional relativity condition.

This, however, is not enough for a genuine relativism as utterance truth is still absolute. For example, in William's utterance of B) the religious standards that matter will be William's

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[8] It is important that we keep the distinction between contexts of use and circumstances of evaluation, for without it we would have trouble explaining things like utterance necessary truths. For example, an utterance of 'I am here now' will be true at every context of use. Therefore, if we did not distinguish contexts of use from circumstances of evaluation 'I am here now' would be true in every possible world. This is clearly false.

[9] It seems like English might contain locational operators: "I few miles from Chicago it is the case that", ect.

religious standards, for these are the standards in play at the context of utterance. Thus, Eric's assessment that William's utterance is false would be incorrect, for the relevant standards that determine the truth of William's utterance are William's religious standards – not Eric's. In this way, we still fail to meet the utterance relativity condition. MacFarlane's solution is to suggest that it is not the *kind* of parameter that matters to make a GTR framework, but rather the way in which the parameter is treated. It is important to notice that, when dealing with context-sensitive sentences, not only are these sentences used relative to contexts, but they are also *assessed* relative to contexts. Therefore, MacFarlane distinguishes the context of use from the *context of assessment*. Upon closer inspection, a context of assessment is just the relativist's more commonly used notion of a perspective – it is simply a judge who assesses propositions and utterances for truth and falsity according to the relevant standards. Normally, the relevant standards deployed in assessing a proposition or utterance will be one's own. For simplicity sake, I'll talk of perspectives rather than contexts of assessment.

In the same way that a context of use can play a circumstance-determinative role without playing a content-determinative role, a perspective can play a circumstance-determinative role without playing a content-determinative role. For this reason, MacFarlane's semantic framework 1) secures the proposition relativity condition, for B) can correctly be considered true relative to William's perspective and false relative to Eric's perspective in the same way that we saw before, only now using a perspective instead of the standards at a context of use and 2) the utterance relativity condition because the relevant standards in determining the truth-value of an utterance are those according to one's own perspective. Thus, an utterance of B) will correctly be assessed as true from William's perspective and correctly be assessed as false from Eric's perspective. In this way, MacFarlane's framework meets both the propositional and utterance relativity conditions, guaranteeing it as a bona fide relativism. Therefore, a GTR embedded in a Kaplan-style framework would entail that the following bi-conditional hold:

> GTR) For *all* sentences S, S is true at a context of use Cu and a perspective Ca iff there is a proposition p such that
>
> 1) S expresses p at Cu, and
>
> 2) p is true at the world of Cu and the relevant standards of the assessor at Ca.

Finally, it is important to note that, because the context of use looses it's privileged status with the addition of perspectives and because we need to account for the fact that, within GTR, Eric and William can both be equally correct, it is crucial that any formulation of GTR claim that *all perspectives are created equal*, i.e. that according to the *content* of GTR, no perspective is privileged over any other perspective.[10]

4.1 Self-Refutation Argument: Mackie and Absolute Self-Refutation

The first suggestion that Horn 2) lands the proponent of GTR in a contradiction comes from Mackie. However, before showing that GTR is self-refuting, Mackie distinguishes claims that

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[10] John MacFarlane, 2005: "Making Sense of Relative Truth", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society 105: 321-39.

are a) self-refuting *as a result of asserting the relevant claim* and b) self-refuting *as a result of the content of the relevant claim*. Call the first instances of SR *assertoric* SR and the second instances of SR *content* SR. It is important to note that, even though they are instances of SR, instances of assertoric SR do not entail that the *claim* these instances of SR refute is itself incoherent. Rather, only the *assertion* of this claim is incoherent.

Mackie, however, thinks that GTR is *itself* an incoherent position, for he thinks that the SR argument against GTR is an instance of content SR. The relevant instance of content SR occurs because an operator is *strictly prefixable*:

> SP) An operator is strictly perfixable iff, where d is an operator and p is a proposition, if p itself is true, then dp must also be true.

For example, "It is possible that" is a strictly prefixable operator, for everything true is possibly true. In this way, the proposition "it is not the case that something is possible" is an instance of content SR, for it entails that "it is possible that it is not the case that something is possible". Unlike assertoic SR, absolute SR entails that the *content* of the refuted claim is itself incoherent. It is important to note that all the SR charges assessed in this paper concern content SR and, therefore, have this consequence.

Mackie thinks that Horn 2) is an instance of content SR because "it is absolutely true that" is a strictly prefixable operator. In this way, the second horn of SR is an instance of content SR because Horn 2) entails the strictly prefixable operator "It is absolutely true that", yielding the contradictory claim "It is absolutely true that it is relative to a perspective whether GTR is true". In this way, Horn 2) of SR does not go through and GTR is self-refuting[11].

4.2 No Question Begging and the Need for a Sensible Theory

The simple response that the proponent of GTR needs to make is to suggest that a) in order for Mackie's SR to work, it must be the case that "absolutely true" is a strictly prefixable operator and that b) if GTR was true, then "absolutely true" would *not* be a strictly perfixable operator, for true propositions would be relatively rather than absolutely true. In this way, Mackie begs the question against the proponent of GTR.

Harvey Siegel, however, suggests that this solution might not be as straightforward as it sounds. For example, Mackie's argument would not beg the question if it turned out that the proponent of GTR could not formulate his position without implicit reference to absolute truth. In this way, if we can show that the relativist's formulation of GTR depends on the notion of absolute truth, then, in the absence of a coherent relativist notion of GTR, it will be open for Mackie to claim that "it is absolutely true that" is a strictly prefixable operator, for we will not have any reason to think there is a theory of truth that is not a kind of absolute truth. Siegel suggests that it might be the case that the formulation of GTR relies on the notion of absolute truth with a question for the relativist: if the relativist thinks that there is no "true" and only "true-for-a-perspective", what does the relativist mean by "true" in "true-for-a-perspective"? Meiland suggests that it makes no sense to ask this question because the proponent

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[11] J. L. Mackie, 1964: "Self-Refutation – A Formal Analysis", Philosophical Quarterly.

of GTR, lacking a notion of "truth" simpliciter, would understand the question above as no more intelligible than asking what "cat" in the word "cattle" means. Siegel, however, suggests that this analogy will not work, for unlike the "cat" in "cattle", "true" in "true-for-a-perspective" is conceptually distinct from the parts that make up "true-for-a-perspective". The proponent of GTR is, after all, providing us with a theory of *truth*[12]. In this way, the proponent of GTR still needs to show what she means by "true". In essence, the challenge is for the proponent of GTR to show the absolutist why relative truth is deserving of the truth predicate. Once this is shown, the proponent of GTR will be able to suggest that "true" in "true-for-a-perspective" really does just mean "true-for-a-perspective".

4.3 Making Sense of GTR: GTR and Assertion

In order to answer Seigel's challenge and establish that GTR is just as deserving of the truth predicate as absolute truth, we can appeal to how MacFarlane "makes sense" of relative truth, by providing a description of the role "true" plays in an account of the speech act of assertion. The strategy is this: start with an explication of truth that is acceptable to the absolutist and then find a job for perspectives in this framework. Having done this, the proponent of GTR can suggest that if the absolutist can make sense of his truth predicate in this framework, he should be able to make sense of GTR being a theory of truth as well. In this way, GTR will be just as deserving of the truth predicate as absolutism.

To provide an account of the role "true" plays in assertion, MacFarlane focuses on the *consequences* of making an assertion. The consequences of making an assertion are the norms that govern our *commitment* to the truth of a proposition. MacFarlane suggests three norms that might be thought to constitute commitment to the truth:

> C) Commitment to withdraw the assertion if it is shown to be false.

> D) Commitment to up hold[13] the assertion if it is appropriately challenged.

> E) Commitment to be held responsible if someone else either reasons or acts on what has been asserted, and it proves to be false.

It's easy to see that an account of assertoric commitment should at least include some of these conditions. Imagine someone claiming: "You're right, what I asserted was not true, but, nonetheless I stand by what I said". It would be difficult to regard this person as a competent asserter. Likewise, it would be odd if an asserter, when an assertion is challenged and the asserter still believes the assertion to be true, said: "I don't think your challenge makes my position false, but I won't up hold my assertion anyway". Evidence of E) can be found in the following example: imagine that you are told that your favourite band will be playing in the park on Friday. The

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[12] Seigel, H, 1986: "Relativism, Truth and Incoherence", *Sythese* 68: 295 – 312.

[13] MacFarlane suggests that we are committed to *justifying* the assertion rather than up holding the assertion. However, we can raise doubts about this condition (MacFarlane himself does). For example, imagine a situation in which someone who believes that "God exists" is true, but has no justification for this – he merely takes it as faith. Even if he did not try to justify this assertion when challenged we might still consider this an instance of being committed to the truth (or at least what he considers true). My swapping "up hold" for "justify" is meant to account for these doubts.

band almost never performs theses days and you take off work to see them. To your surprise, the band is not there. It would be very odd if, when questioning the person who told you about the band, that person said: "You actually decided to *act* on my assertion? It's up to *you* to decide what's worth taking seriously, so that's not my problem". In this way, assertoric commitment to the truth should at least include some combination of C), D) and E).

Above we have outlined an account of the role the truth predicate plays in assertion by explaining assertion via the consequences of being committed to the truth. The absolutist should be able to accept that the truth predicate plays this role. Furthermore, it's easy to see how perspectives can play a part in C), D) and E). For example, if the relevant perspective from which we are committed to the truth is the perspective in which the asserter is evaluating the putative challenge and the relevant context of use is the context in which the proposition is asserted, then we can come to the following construal of C), D) and E):

> C*) In asserting that p at C_1, one commits oneself to withdrawing the assertion (in any future context C_2) if p is shown to be false relative to context of use C_2 and perspective C_2.

> D*) In asserting that p at C_1, one commits oneself to up holding p in the face challenges in a future context C_2 if p is true relative to a context of use C1 and a perspective C_2.

> R*) In asserting that p at C_1, one commits oneself to withdrawing the assertion (in any future context C_2) if because of this assertion someone else takes p to be true (relative to a context of use C_1 and a perspective C_2) and it proves to be false (relative to C_1 and C_2).

In this way, perspectives can play a part in a framework for the role of the truth predicate in the speech act of assertion that can be embraced by both the absolutist and the proponent of GTR[14]. Therefore, the absolutist should be able to accept that GTR has just as much right to the truth predicate as the absolutist, allowing the proponent of GTR to suggests that "true" in "true-for-a-perspective" can simply mean "true-for-a-perspective". In this way, the proponent of GTR can meet Siegel's challenge.

5. The Self-Refutation Argument: Take Two

Once arguments like Mackie's are solved, opponents of GTR will focus on the relative truth of GTR entailing that GTR is false in some perspective. The second horn of the argument is now analyzed in the following way:

Horn 2)

1) it is relative to a perspective that GTR is true

2) if it is relative to a perspective that GTR is true, then GTR is false at the standards of some perspective.

Sometimes the opponent of GTR will wrongly conclude from 2) that

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[14] John MacFarlane, 2005: "Making Sense of Relative Truth", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society 105: 321-39.

3) If GTR is false at the standards of some perspective, then GTR is false

Therefore,

4) GTR is false.

To conclude 4) is clearly question begging, All that follows from the antecedent of 3) is that GTR is false *at the standards of some perspective*, for there is no false simpliciter if GTR is true. The argument unjustifiably drops the relativistic qualifier "at the standards of some perspective".

There are two strategies open to the opponent of GTR. First, the opponent of GTR can argue that GTR being false at the standards of some perspective actually entails GTR being true in all perspectives, leading us back to the first horn – GTR being absolutely true[15]. Call these kinds of arguments *strengthened* SRs. Second, the opponent of GTR can suggest that the antecedent of 3) is in and of itself problem enough for the relativist.

6.1 Hales' Strengthened SR: Relativism and Modality

Steven Hales, in his attempt to save GTR from the SR charge, provides the opponent of GTR with the first strategy. Hales does this by re-analyzing the SR argument via an analogy between perspectives and possible worlds. However, before showing that the SR charge is stronger than initially supposed, Hales further explains the force of the second horn of the SR charge:

> SSR) Consider the latter case, a perspective in which relativism is untrue. In such a perspective, call it p, not-relativism – that is, absolutism, is true. Now, absolutism is true only if there is some proposition that has the same truth value in all perspectives... However, it does not seem that p could contain such a proposition... given the assumption that there are perspectives in which relativism is true – we are guaranteed that the truth value of every proposition ϕ will vary across perspectives. Hence, there is no proposition that is true in all perspectives; that is, for every proposition there are perspectives in which it is true and perspectives in which it is untrue. Then relativism is true in all perspectives, and this, I have already shown entails that relativism is untrue[16].

In this way, Hales shows that the thought that there are propositions in which absolutism is true in the second horn of the SR charge leads us back to the first horn of the SR charge, entailing the falsity of GTR. Hales, then attempts to show exactly why we are allowed to make this inference.

For Hales, the inference in the second horn that entails the falsity of GTR relies on an implicit analogy made between a proposition's being true relative to a possible world and a proposition's being true relative to the standards of a perspective. Initially this seems far-fetched. However, recall that in MacFarlane's relativist framework, being true relative to a set of standards determined by a perspective is a lot like being true relative to a possible world – both are ways of being true via a circumstance of evaluation. With this analogy in mind, Hales invites us to think of the logic of GTR in much the same way that we think of the logic of possible worlds. In modal logic, possibility is represented by the operator, $\Diamond$, while necessity is

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[15] The opponent of GTR could also argue that GTR is false in every perspective – but it seems like the easiest way to do this is to lead the proponent of GTR back to Horn 1), landing him in a contradiction.

[16] Hales, Steven, 1997: "A Consistent Relativism", *Mind* 106.

represented the operator, $\Box$, such that 'possibly p' is represented as '$\Diamond p$' and 'necessarily p' is represented as '$\Box p$'. In the same way, Hales suggests that $\blacklozenge$ be an operator that takes sentences and indexes them to the standards of a perspective such that, '$\blacklozenge p$' be read as 'it is relatively true (true in some perspective) that p'. Hales further introduces the absolute operator, $\blacksquare$, such that, '$\blacksquare p$' be read as 'it is absolutely true (true in all perspectives) that p'. Moreover, in the same way that there is an accessibility relation between possible worlds, Hales suggests that there be a commensurability relation between perspectives, such that calling a perspective Ca commensurable to a perspective Ca' is roughly the same as saying that Ca' is a consistent or compatible perspective with Ca given certain facts about Ca.

Finally, Hales suggests that in the same way that in modal system $S5$ we adopt the theorem

M) $\Diamond \Box p \Rightarrow \Box p$,

in the logic of relativism we should adopt a similar principle

P) $\blacklozenge \blacksquare p \Rightarrow \blacksquare p$.

Hales suggests that the inference in SSR) relies on principle P). In Hales' analysis of the second horn of the SR charge above, because there must be a perspective in which GTR is false and absolutism is true, there must be some perspective in which some p is true in all perspectives – formally, $\blacklozenge \blacksquare p$. However, we *also* saw that, because we assumed that GTR was relatively true, it could not be the case that there be a p such that p is true in all perspectives – formally, it could not be the case that $\blacksquare p$. Therefore, because $\blacksquare p$ is false, via principle P) and modus tollens, $\blacklozenge \blacksquare p$ must also be false, taking us back to the first horn of the SR charge – that, relativism is true in all perspectives. Therefore, our reliance on principle P) in analogy with modal logic provides a strengthened SR charge. It looks like the proponent of GTR is not safe to claim that GTR is merely relatively true.

6.2 Hales' Solution: Relatively and Relatively True

Fortunately for the proponent of GTR, Hales has a solution to the strengthened SR charge. This again relies on the analogy between relativism and modality. Consider the proposition: "everything is possible", i.e. "for all p, $\Diamond p$". Allow p to be "it is necessarily false that for all p, possibly p". If this is the case, then the following is true: "possibly, it is necessarily false that for all p, possibly p". Furthermore, via theorem M), we can conclude that "it is necessarily false that for all p, possibly p". Therefore, by reductio, in modal system $S5$, it cannot be the case that everything is possible. This argument follows a similar line of reasoning as the strengthened SR charge. Yet, no one is prepared to give up talk of possibility just because 'everything is possible' is false. Rather, in the face of this argument, we can still hold on to the proposition that 'everything true is possibly true'. Indeed, this is just a well-known theorem of $S5$.

In the same way, Hales suggests that the strengthened SR charge denies the proposition that 'everything is relative', i.e. "for all p, $\blacklozenge p$", but does not deny the proposition that "everything true is relatively true". Concomitantly, if "everything true is relatively true" is true, then "everything

untrue is relatively untrue" is true as well. According to Hales, this is all the proponent of GTR needs[17].

6.3 Problem's with Hales' Solution and the Strengthened SR Charge

Hales uses the analogy between truth relative to the standards of a perspective and truth relative to a possible world to vindicate both the strengthened SR charge and his solution of to the strengthened SR charge. However, he does not give a direct argument for this analogy. Nevertheless, there are still reasons to think that the analogy obtains. As already stated, MacFarlane's relativist framework lends itself to thinking about relativism and possibility in the same way. A proposition's being true relative to a perspective and true relative to a possible world is just part of the greater story of being true relative to the details of a circumstance of evaluation. In the same way that the truth of a proposition can change according to possibility and necessity operators, so too it might seem appropriate that the truth of a proposition change according to relativistic operators such as "according to Eric's religious standards it is the case that". Moreover, we might think that the reasoning in SSR) is sound and Hales analysis seems to explain this reasoning. Therefore, perhaps we can grant Hale's analogy.

Despite this, there are significant problems with Hales analysis. First, note that the proposition 'everything true is possibly true' does not entail the proposition 'nothing is necessarily true'. In the same way, 'everything true is relatively true' will, in Hales logic, not entail that 'nothing is absolutely true'. Therefore, Hales logic does nothing to suggest that there is no absolute truth[18].

Finally, recall that both Hales' analysis of the SR charge and his solution depend on the use of principle P) in the strengthened SR. Furthermore, recall that Hales adopted principle P) because of theorem M) in modal system S5. However, theorem M) is *only* a principle of S5 and is not a theorem in any other the other modal systems, such as S4. The reason why M) is a theorem of S5 exclusively is because of the accessibility relation between worlds in S5. In S5 every world is accessible to every other world and, therefore, the accessibility relation between worlds is both symmetrical and transitive. In this way, if it is true in S5 at a world w that $\Diamond\Box p$, then there is a world w' where $\Box p$ obtains, i.e. where p is true at all the worlds accessible from w'. Therefore, because the accessibility relation in S5 is symmetrical and transitive, meaning that every world is accessible to every other world, w' is accessible to the same worlds as w. Hence, $\Box p$ will obtain at w as well, making M) a theorem of S5. In this way, M) being a theorem of S5 depends on the accessibility relation between worlds being symmetrical and transitive[19].

Recall that in Hales' logic of relativism, he substitutes the accessibility relation for a commensurability relation. Therefore, in the same way that the adoption of theorem M) depends on the accessibility relation between worlds being symmetrical and transitive, the adoption of principle P) should depend on the commensurability relation between perspectives being sym-

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[17] Hales, Steven, 1997: "A Consistent Relativism", *Mind* 106.

[18] Hales does not think this is a problem, for he sees his logic of relativism as a *neutral* ground between proponents and opponents of GTR. In this way, Hales thinks that the proponent of GTR must find *evidence* that there are no absolutely true propositions rather than relying on the logic of relativism to vindicate his claim.

[19] Kölbel, Max 1999: 'Saving Relativism from Its Saviour'. *Critica: Revista Hispanoamericana de Filosofia*, 31, pp. 91-103.

metrical and transitive, otherwise Hales' adoption of principle P) will appear arbitrary[20]. In this way, if we have reason to think that the commensurability relation between perspectives in not symmetrical and transitive, we will have reason to reject the inclusion of principle P) into the logic of relativism and, therefore, reason to reject Hales' strengthened SR and solution to the strengthened SR.

It does not seem plausible that the commensurability relation in the logic of relativism be best represented as symmetrical and transitive. For example, consider the central disagreement of SR: the relativist R believes that GTR is true and also, because he believes in GTR, that if an absolutist A comes along and has her own reasons for believing that GTR is false, then R will respect A's position − it will not contradict R's own views. However, the same will not be true of A. Because A is an absolutist about the falsity of GTR, R's belief that GTR is true will contradict A's position. In this way, A's perspective will be commensurable to R's perspective, but R's perspective will not be commensurable to A's perspective. Therefore, A's perspective and R's perspective have an *asymmetrical* commensurability relation. Thus, the commensurability relation in the logic of relativism is not best represented by transitivity and symmetry, giving us no reason to accept principle P) and, therefore, no reason to accept Hales' strengthened SR and his solution to SR[21].

6.4 Trans-Perspectival Truth

Despite that fact that Hales' analysis of SR remains unconvincing, Hales original restatement of Horn 2) in SSR) still *seems* to lead the relativist back to Horn 1). In order to better understand why we might think the relativist is led back to the first horn of SR, we would do well to make a distinction that has not be clearly stated in the literature. We can distinguish between truth in a perspective and *trans-perspectival* truth where

> TP) a proposition p is trans-perspectivally true iff the truth-value of p depends on the truth-values of propositions across a set of perspectives.

If we look back at SSR), it seems that we are lead back to the first horn of SR when we consider that, a) in order for absolutism to be true in a perspective there must be some proposition that is true in all perspectives, for this is the definition of absolutism; but b) there can be no such proposition because, in order for GTR to be true in a perspective, the truth-value of every proposition must vary between perspectives.

This line of reasoning seems compelling because both absolutism and GTR, if true, are trans-perspectivally true positions in so far as their truth and falsity depends on the truth-values of propositions within the relevant range of perspectives. In this way, we can make sense of Hales initial observation in SSR) by appealing to trans-perspectival truth: we are allowed to infer that if absolutism is true in *some* perspective then, *because the truth of absolutism depends on other perspectives*, we are allowed to infer that there must be a proposition in every perspective whose

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[20] Even if the relativism and modality analogy holds we will still not be provided with a reason to treat the logic of relativism like S5 as opposed to, say, S4.
[21] Shogenji, Tomoji 1997: 'The Consistency of Global Relativism'. Mind, 106, pp. 745-47.

truth-value remains invariant. Likewise, because GTR is trans-perspectivally true, GTR will be true in *some* perspective only if there actually is *no* proposition whose truth-value remains invariant across perspectives. Hales used principle P) to show why it might be valid to infer that if absolutism is true in *some* perspective, then there must be some proposition p whose truth-value remains invariant across perspectives. In the absence of Hales analysis, however, we can still make sense of this inference by appealing to the notion of trans-perspectival truth. In this way, we can see why we might be lead to think that the second horn of SR leads us back to the first horn, providing us with a strengthened SR. Unfortunately, appealing the notion of trans-perspectival truth will not provide us with a valid strengthened SR.

6.5 Back to the Original Problem

Both Kobel and Bennington suggest that, even if we introduce the notion of trans-perspectival truth, we still drop the relativistic qualifiers, begging the question against the proponent of GTR. The core of the claim is that, if GTR is true, then propositions that are trans-perspectivally true will vary in truth-value from perspective to perspective as well. Hence, in appealing to the notion of trans-perspectival truth to create a strengthened SR, we beg the question against GTR. We seem to be forgetting that GTR allows no truth but truth within a perspective. Kobel shows how Hales initial observation does not pose a problem for the relativist formally:

Definitions:

p = a proposition

r, s and t = perspectives

T = true at the standards of a perspective

GTR = $\forall p(\exists r, s(Trp \land \neg Tsp))$

Abs = $\exists p(\forall r, s(Trp \leftrightarrow Tsp))$

Horn 2):

1) $\exists r, s(Tr(GTR) \land \neg Ts(GTR))$	Relative GTR
2) $\exists s(\neg Ts(GTR))$	Detached second conjunct
3) $\exists s(Ts(Abs))$	Entailed by 2)
4) $\exists s(Ts(\exists p((\forall r, t(Trp \leftrightarrow Ttp))))$	Identity with absolutism
5) $\exists r(Tr(GTR))$	First conjunct of 1)
6) $\exists r(Tr(\forall p((\exists s, t(Tsp \land \neg Ttp))))$	Identity with GTR

Notice, there is no formal conflict between 4) and 6) and, therefore, no formal conflict between 3) and 5) as well. In this way, given the assumption that there are perspectives in which GTR is true, it does *not* follow that the truth-value of every proposition will vary across perspectives.

Rather, it only follows that *within the perspective in which GTR is true* the truth-value of every proposition will vary across perspectives. Likewise, if absolutism is true in a perspective, all that follows is that *within the perspective in which absolutism is true* there will be a proposition whose truth-value remains invariant across perspectives[22]. In this way, strengthened SR arguments do not work.

7. Cappelen and Lepore's Challenge:

Recall that the absolutist has two strategies that she can use to make the second horn of SR work: either the opponent of GTR can argue that GTR being false at the standards of *some* perspective actually entails GTR being true in all perspectives, or the opponent of GTR can suggest that the antecedent of 3) in and of itself is problem enough for the relativist. We saw that the first option did not work. Cappelen and Lepore (CL) have issued a challenge to the Radical Contextualist[23] that can easily be made into an SR argument endorsing the second strategy.

Their objection comes in the form of a challenge: even if GTR is true at the standards of the relativist's perspective and false at the standards of the absolutist's perspective (call being true and false at the standards of the absolutist's perspective true* and false*, respectively, to differentiate it from being true and false at the standards of the relativist), then why doesn't the proponent of GTR worry about being false*? Why should the proponent of GTR only be concerned about avoiding being false and not care about being false* if, as GTR holds, no perspective is privileged over other perspectives? Isn't it just as bad to be false* as it is to be false? In this way, CL exploit one of GTR's central tenants – that all perspectives are created equal – to challenge Horn 2) of SR[24].

If the proponent of GTR is to be concerned about being false*, he must have some reason to be committed[25] to GTR being false*. Hence, if CL's challenge is to carry any weight, then the proponent of GTR should endorse the following principle:

> *Principle of Tolerance (PT)*: One should not ignore any genuinely held perspective.

Holding on to PT is what would prevent the relativist from *not being concerned* that his position is false* or committed to his position being false*. Furthermore, if CL's challenge is to be an instance of SR, it must *at least* put GTR in danger of being inconsistent. Therefore, if CL's challenge is to hold up, it needs to be shown that PT is a necessary condition of GTR, rendering the rejection of PT inconsistent with GTR. The strategy that I propose for the proponent of GTR is to show that PT can be rejected and not contradict the content of GTR.

Unfortunately for the absolutist, PT is not a necessary condition of GTR. For example, imagine a relativist R and an absolutist A who disagree about the truth-value of GTR. It seems

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[22] Kölbel, Max 1999: 'Saving Relativism from Its Saviour'. *Critica: Revista Hispanoamericana de Filosofia*, 31, pp. 91-103.

[23] Radical Contextualism suggests that all expressions in natural language are context sensitive. Therefore, the Radical Contextualist holds that all utterances are true in some contexts and false in others.

[24] Cappelen and Lepore, Insensitive Semantics, 2005.

[25] What I mean by committed to being false* is that the proponent of GTR treat being false* in the same way that he would being false. Truth and falsity will be something that will play a certain role in the life of the relativist, the suggestion here is that true* and false* should play the same role.

perfectly possible that R believe the content of GTR and yet *treat* A as though he is not worth listening to. In fact, this kind of situation is not merely possible, it is actual: Thomas Kuhn suggests that if you are established inside a prospering paradigm, it is perfectly all right if you don't care about doing justice to competing paradigms. Richard Rorty as well suggests, in his relativism, that if the central humanitarian values of our culture are threatened, we are entitled to fight them. The reason why the proponent of GTR can consistently reject PT is that PT is a normative principle and GTR is a descriptive claim. In this way, just because the proponent of GTR believes that all perspectives are of equal worth does not entail that the proponent of GTR *should* treat other perspectives as equal[26]. Therefore, the proponent of GTR is free to reject PT and, thus, consistently able to disregard GTR being false*.

One might object, however, to this move by claiming that the issue is not normative. For example, we can follow Lasersohn in distinguishing three different "stances" that one can take in a relativist framework when assessing the truth of an utterance. We can take a

> 1) *Autocentric perspective* where the utterance is assessed relative to the standards of our own perspective,

> 2) *Acentric perspective* where no particular perspective is used to assess the utterance, or an

> 3) *Exocentric perspective* where the utterance is evaluated relative to the standards of a perspective other than our own.

Imagine that we are proponents of GTR. Then, by rejecting PT and disregarding the absolutists perspective, we are taking up an autocentric perspective – we evaluate GTR as true rather than false* because GTR is true at our standards. We can make a further distinction between 1) the *content of GTR* and 2) *any position embraced by any given proponent of GTR*. Notice that the content of GTR is not biased with respect to perspectives – all perspectives are created equal. One might suggest, therefore, that *qua inhabitant of a perspective* we are free to ignore the absolutist by taking an autocentric perspective but *qua proponent of GTR* we inhabit an acentric perspective. Therefore, qua proponents of GTR we cannot use the above solution to CL's challenge.

The problem with this response is that merely inhabiting an acentric perspective should not worry the proponent of GTR, it is simply what GTR states. From an acentric perspective the proponent of GTR might be aware that GTR is both true and false* but, as he inhabits an acentric perspective, he will not be *committed* to GTR either being true or false* and, therefore, not worried about being false*. In order for CL's challenge to worry the proponent of GTR, CL must suggest that the proponent of GTR should be *committed* to GTR being false* - to take an exocentric perspective. PT could force the relativist to take this perspective by giving reason to commit to the absolutist's standards. However, as shown above, the proponent of GTR need not endorse PT[27]. Furthermore, it is important to note that in rejecting PT we are not rejecting the

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[26] The thought here is the same as Hume's "is/ought" problem, i.e. that you cannot derive an "ought" from and "is".

[27] This solution to CL's challenge and response to the solution were inspired by a dialogue between Lockie and Tolland concerning Lockie's paper "Relativism and Reflexivity".

claim that all perspectives are created equal. Rather, the proponent of GTR is merely rejecting the *treating* of GTR being false* in the same way that he would if it was false.

8. Conclusion

It has been shown that three distinct SR arguments concerning Horn 2) of SR should not worry the proponent of GTR. Therefore, GTR is not an inconsistent or self-refuting position. However, recall that the arguments reviewed only concern whether or not GTR is self-refuting as a result of the *content* of GTR. It remains to be shown whether or not GTR can coherently be argued for or asserted. In this way, with the question of whether or not the content of GTR is inconsistent laid to rest, perhaps the dialectic towards showing that GTR is an untenable position should concern the possibility of GTR being able to be coherently asserted.

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What Motivated Epicurus to Say that Atoms Swerve?

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Keywords: swerve, atomism, Epicurus, physics, Democritus, determinism.

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1. Introduction:

The swerve is the most radical departure from Democritean philosophy that Epicurus makes. The different stance is emphasized by the fact that in their physics they are generally very similar. The most obvious account for this difference is that Epicurus saw significant problems with Democritean atomism that had to be solved. O'Keefe comments, "Since the swerve appears nowhere in Epicurus' extant writings, any suggestions about why he introduced the swerve are necessarily speculative".[1] This paper will attempt to examine Epicurus' reasons for his claim that atoms swerve.

In Lucretius' account of Epicurus' philosophy the swerve, broadly speaking, has both a cosmological and a psychological function.[2] Whilst there is some debate as to the precise role the swerve plays, this essay will firstly outline O'Keefe's interpretation of the cosmological role of the swerve. O'Keefe argues that Democritus' account of atomic motion based solely upon collisions is inadequate. He argues that Epicurus had to introduce weight to account for atomic motion and the swerve to account for collisions within this account of motion. The psychological[3] role of the swerve is even more contested. This essay shall outline Russell's account of the swerve: that it makes dialectical space within atomism for freedom in what would otherwise have been a Laplacean determined world. It will be argued that these two accounts of the roles of the swerve are the most true to the evidence, and thus the roles that Epicurus wanted the atomic swerve to play. From this it can be concluded that the lack of a full account of atomic motion, and the failure to account for free will, or responsibility for actions, within Democritus' physics motivated Epicurus to say that atoms swerve.

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[1] Tim O'Keefe, 'Does Epicurus need the swerve as an Archê of Collisions?', *Phronesis* Vol. 41(1996). p. 313.

[2] A. A. Long and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol.1, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). p. 49, 105-6. (11H &20F) Quoting Lucretius 2.216-293.

[3] I shall use the term 'Psychological', in a way that refers to both of Russell's terms 'Psychological' and 'Mechanical', as he argues the later is merely an extension of the first.

2. Epicurus and Democritus:

There can be no doubt that Epicurus was a close follower of Democritus' philosophy.[4] So much so that Cicero in De Finibus criticizes Epicurus for merely repeating Democritus, and where innovation is made, he just distorts his philosophy.[5] What is important from this dialogue is the response by Torquatus, Cicero's Epicurean spokesman. Torquatus is principally concerned with the ethical discussion, but in a passing remark links the introduction of the swerve with other criticisms that Epicurus had of Democritus.

> "I shall return to on another occasion, and prove to you both the notorious swerve of the atoms... as well as the full extent of the criticisms and corrections that Epicurus made to Democritus' errors"[6]

This passage clearly shows that the Epicureans felt that Epicurus was modifying and thus preserving atomism, saving it from the errors of Democritus. Given Epicurus' "great man" reputation and the meticulous attention his followers paid to his works,[7] it seems unlikely that they would have put forward a theory that did not originate within Epicurus' teaching. Thus we can conclude that Epicurus also felt he was correcting Democritus' philosophy. This still leaves open what precisely Epicurus thought he was correcting. Lacking any personal account of his motivation, it is best to first investigate the role of the swerve in the context of his philosophy and then compare it to Democritus' theory.

3. The Cosmological Role of the Swerve:

O'Keefe points out that Epicurus positioned the swerve within his account of atomic motion, alongside weight and collisions as principles of movement. Collisions have occurred eternally according to Epicurus; there was no first collision.[8] Yet Epicurus must give an account of how these collisions occur. Epicurus' first step is to explain how there is motion in the world. All atoms are perpetually in motion,[9] and are borne along by their weight.[10] Naturally atoms "would be falling downwards like raindrops through the depths of the void".[11] Unaffected therefore, all atoms travel downwards. Epicurus thus offers an account of motion caused by weight, but it appears impossible for collisions to occur, for every atom travels with the same velocity. This is because irrespective of their particular weight, the void offers no resistance.[12]

As of yet no property of the atom, extension, solidity and now weight, can offer an explanation of the collisions. O'Keefe claims that Lucretius' account points out that the swerve is a property

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[4] Daniel C. Russell, 'Epicurus and Lucretius on saving agency', Phoenix Vol. 54 (2000). p. 5.

[5] Marcus Tullius Cicero, On Moral Ends, ed. by Annas, Julia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). p. 9. (I.17).

[6] ibid. p. 12. (I.28).

[7] David Sedley, 'Epicurus', Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ed. by Edward Craig (London: Routledge, 1998). p. 351.

[8] Long and Sedley, The Hellenistic Philosophers. p. 46. (11A4) Quoting Epicurus, Letter to Herodotus, 43-4.

[9] ibid. p. 46. (11A1) Quoting Epicurus, Letter to Herodotus, 43-4.

[10] ibid. p. 46. (11B2) Quoting Lucretius, 2.80-124.

[11] ibid. p. 49. (11H2) Quoting Lucretius, 2.216-50. Epicurus was aware of the difficulties of 'up' and 'down' within a void, and therefore had specific meaning in mind. Exposition of this is not necessary for this essay.

[12] ibid. p. 49. (11H3) Quoting Lucretius, 2.216-50

of the atom itself, rather than an event that happens to it. Lucretius says "If they [atoms] were not accustomed to turn aside"[13], as if it is within their nature to swerve. The swerve appears to be a 'natural feature of atomic motion' that can account for why there are collisions.[14] The swerve explains how atoms resists their natural tendency to travel straight down, as explained by their weight, and travel in to the paths of other atoms. This accounts for collisions, and in turn the creation of macroscopic bodies. The swerve is an explanatory *archê*, rather than a temporal *archê*. Both weight and the swerve were introduced by Epicurus each as an explanatory *archê* for atomic motion and atomic collisions respectively.[15]

This is more likely to be the account that Epicurus had for the swerve than the two other accounts proposed for the cosmological role. The traditional view is that the swerve was a historical event required to trigger the collisions, an Epicurean equivalent of Aquinas' 'unmoved mover'. This is obviously incorrect, for as shown above Epicurus denies the need for such a trigger in his *Letter to Herodotus*. Long and Sedley try to account for this contradiction by suggesting a two stage development of Epicurus' thought. They claim that for the letter, being an early work, the idea of no first collision was sufficient, but that Epicurus later refined his theory with the use of the swerve to account for one.[16] Whilst this accounts for the apparent contradiction in the traditional view, it commits Epicurus to a change of mind that, as O'Keefe's account shows, is unnecessary.

Having shown that O'Keefe's account of the swerve is the most likely to be what Epicurus had in mind, it still remains to show what the deficiencies were in Democritus' account and thus what motivated Epicurus to say that atoms swerve. The key features of Epicurus' account of the swerve are that it is part of a two part account of atomic motion and that it is a property of the atom, in both of which the swerve functions alongside his account of weight.

Therefore, Epicurus did not find Democritus account of atomic motion adequate. The atom's property of weight was designed to account for motion as a whole in Epicurus' physics. Therefore Epicurus must have felt that Democritus could not account for atomic motion, otherwise his explanation giving the atoms the property of weight would not have been necessary. Without motion, collisions could not have occurred, for the latter relies upon the former. Therefore, within Epicurus' overall account of atomic motion, he had to explain the specific motion involved in collisions, hence the swerve. Some may argue that Epicurus' account of motion, resulting in the uniform downward travel of atoms created the problem of explaining the collisions. But as shown before, Democritus had a greater problem with collisions for he could not even explain the motion that facilitates collisions, never mind the collisions themselves.

O'Keefe offers further evidence for the idea that the lack of an account of atomic motion by Democritus motivated Epicurus to say that atoms swerve. It would appear that Epicurus was aware of Aristotle's philosophy, given his definition of 'up' and 'down' within infinite space, after Aristotle asserted that the normal use of the words made no sense. Furthermore, as a follower of Democritus in Athens shortly after Aristotle, it would seem likely that he was aware

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[13] O'Keefe, 'Does Epicurus need the swerve as an Archê of Collisions?'. p. 315. Quoting Lucretius 2. 216-224.
[14] ibid. p. 314.
[15] ibid. p. 317.
[16] Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*. p. 52.

of Aristotle's criticisms of Democritus.[17] Aristotle's criticisms focussed on Democritus' inability to account for motion in his theory, for he could appeal neither to the void, which was only supposed to facilitate motion, nor to the atoms themselves for there was no property that could account for motion.[18] Without motion and collisions the Democritean principle of motion cannot occur.[19] If Epicurus was aware of Aristotle's work, which it seems that he would be, and Aristotle was critical of Democritus' account of motion, it would seem natural that Epicurus would be motivated to give an atomist's account of motion that does work; hence the properties of weight and swerve inherent in the atom, and atomic motion caused by weight and collisions due to the swerve.

We can therefore say that Epicurus felt that Democritus' account of atomic motion was incomplete, at least, and, by extension, that his account of the inherent properties of the atom was likewise incomplete. These two factors, which are closely related, are the motivation for Epicurus to say the atom swerved as part of his account of motion, in regards to its cosmological role.

4. The Psychological Role of the Swerve:

A similar procedure can be followed for the swerve's psychological role. By showing that Russell's account is what Epicurus meant for the role the swerve plays in regards to the freewill debate, we can then work back to see what motivated Epicurus to introduce the swerve.

Russell claims that Epicurus had a 'dialectical and purely negative' role for the swerve.[20] The atomist is at particular risk to what Russell calls Laplacean determinism, meaning that every event and the future can only be as it is, due to the causally related nature of the events in the world. This is because all events must be explained in terms of atoms and void, and the specific laws governing the motion of atoms. Lucretius appears to be aware of this problem. He first comments on the role of the swerve in regards to this discussion,

> "*If all motion is linked, and new motion arises out of old in a fixed order, and atoms*
> *do not by swerving make some new beginning of motion to break the decrees of fate,*
> *... from where does this free volition exist*".[21]

Lucretius makes an important link. Laplacean determinism entails psychological determinism, for psychological events are a subordinate set of events to the set which is potentially governed by Laplacean determinism.[22] To preserve psychological freedom, that is to say freewill, and responsibility for one's actions, Epicurus has to show that Laplacean determinism does not apply to atomism. This is the swerve's role for Epicurus.[23] The atom makes an undetermined

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[17] O'Keefe, 'Does Epicurus need the swerve as an Archê of Collisions?'. p. 313.

[18] ibid. p. 312.

[19] ibid. p. 316.

[20] Daniel C. Russell, 'Epicurus and Lucretius on saving agency'. p. 227.

[21] Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*. p. 106-7. (20F1) Quoting Lucretius 2.251-93.

[22] Russell, 'Epicurus and Lucretius on saving agency'. p. 230. Obviously Epicurus would not have used the term 'Laplacean' rather perhaps physical determinism, however the problem is still the same. Russell uses 'Laplacean', and for the sake of clarity so shall I.

[23] Russell, 'Epicurus and Lucretius on saving agency'. p. 232.

act, and creates a new motion. This is all that the swerve need do in Epicurus' philosophy to preserve agency. It breaks the stranglehold of necessity. With Laplacean determinism shown not to apply, there is no risk to psychological determinism. The swerve therefore accounts for freewill and responsibility of action by making the dialectical space in atomism for positive arguments made by Epicurus that actually account for freewill.[24]

Russell's account is the most fitting of the various interpretations of the role of the swerve in the freewill debate. As such it should be considered what Epicurus intended. It has considerable advantages over the alternative theories. In regards to Bailey's account, where an "act of volition is neither more nor less than the swerve"[25], Russell's interpretation does not cast us into a world of randomness having escaped determinism. By equating volition to the random swerve, Bailey leaves us dependent upon a swerve to act, a swerve which may not occur[26], and such a process leaves the swerve responsible for our actions rather than ourselves.[27] Sedley's account is that the mind's volition is preserved via downward causation, the mind's emergent properties act upon matter, and that this is only possible with freedom of atomic movement, and the swerve gives the atom two or more tracks. The swerve creates this atomic freedom.[28] Sedley requires Epicurus to be not merely an atomist. This, however, is a presumption he needs for his account and, therefore, the burden of proof is upon him to show there is this dualism in Epicurus' thought. Quite simply, he fails to do this. Secondly, this is conceptually expensive, why posit dualism where it has been shown that pure atomism can still account for the freewill that Epicurus required. Furley's once in a lifetime break, isolating oneself from history via a swerve perhaps works well with the quote from Lucretius above.[29] There are two problems however with this approach. If the swerve is truly random, there is a risk that a swerve will not occur in everyone's lifetime. This poses the risk that some people are free and responsible for their acts, whilst others are not. This does not seem to be true freedom, nor does it seem to ease the concerns in life that Epicurus sort to do. Secondly this swerve saves us from one form of determinism, but surely it will reassert itself post-swerve on a different foundation. We don't escape determinism, but put it on a different footing. As can be seen, the other readings of Epicurus fail, and by elimination of the alternatives, Russell's account is taken to be what Epicurus meant when he said that atoms swerve.

The psychological role of the swerve allows for space within atomism for freewill and responsibility for actions. Therefore, the motivation for Epicurus to say that atoms swerve must have been that he believed that there was no such space for freewill in Democritus' account.[30] Russell points to Diogenes of Oenoanda as giving evidence that Epicurus held this view.[31] He states that the lack of free movement in Democritus' philosophy results in all motions being necessitated.[32] He goes onto say that Democritus failed to allow for the free movement of atoms,

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[24] ibid. p. 234. Russell points us to *On Nature* book 25.

[25] Cyril Bailey, *The Greek Atomists and Epicurus*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928). p. 320

[26] Russell, 'Epicurus and Lucretius on saving agency', p. 226.

[27] ibid. p. 236.

[28] David Sedley, 'Epicurean Anti-reductionism', *Matter and Metaphysics*, ed by Jonathan Barnes and Mario Migucci. (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1988). p. 318-9.

[29] David Furley, *Two Studies in the Greek Atomists*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967). p.232.

[30] Russell , 'Epicurus and Lucretius on saving agency'. p. 232.

[31] ibid.

[32] Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*. p. 106. (20G) Quoting Diogenes of Oenoanda. 32.1.14-3.14.

whereas Epicurus did, and because of that modification censure and admonition is possible. Cicero gives explicit evidence that Epicurus' motivation was what this essay concluded from analysis of the swerve's role. He says "Epicurus' reason for introducing this theory was his fear that, if the atom's motion was always the result of natural and necessary weight, we would have no freedom".[33] Cicero also states in the same passage that Democritus didn't account for freedom, not because he did not see the problem but that he preferred necessity. However, Epicurus himself claims blindness on the account of Democritus.[34] This matches the Oenoanda's account of Diogenes, saying that it was a failure on the part of Democritus rather than a deliberate move to allow determinism. So by conjunction of these passages we have proof of the motivation of Epicurus. Epicurus was motivated by what he thought was blindness of Democritus, what others saw as acceptance, in not accounting for freewill and responsibility of action, through the total subjectivity of motion to necessity. To counter the necessity in the world he said that atoms swerve to introduce indeterminism into the world, allowing for freedom.

5. Conclusion:

Having investigated the roles the swerve plays within Epicurus' philosophy it is possible to look back and see what motivated him to posit the swerve. The swerve was an essential part of Epicurus' account of atomic motion and collisions. From this it was possible to conclude that it was the lack of such a workable account of atomic motion and collision in Democritus' philosophy that motivated Epicurus to say that atoms swerve. In a similar manner it was shown that Epicurus used the swerve to allow for indeterminism within atomism, which left space for agency. It was shown that the lack of such space within Democritus' account motivated Epicurus to say that atoms swerve. This essay has shown that Torquatus was right, that Epicurus made 'corrections' to Democritus, which preserved atomism from fatal errors of Democritus.

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[33] Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers.* p. 105. (20E3) Quoting Cicero, On fate, 21-5.
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Act Your Age: Moral Imagination in the Virtual World

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Keywords: harmless wrongdoings, imagination, age play.

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1. Introduction - Harm, Wrongdoing and The Imagination

When a tyrant imagines his mortal enemy being destroyed in an unpleasant way he might not necessarily wish that enemy real harm, or indeed wish anything truly awful to happen to them at all. Likewise, I can claim to think about murdering someone without actually being compelled to commit murder. What occurs in these situations is an act of 'immoral imagining'[1], the entertaining in thought of actions or activities considered morally wrong. The fact that the immoral acts are restricted to the imagination in these cases might suggest that what occurs is harmless but this is not, and should not be the case. Indeed, it has not always been the case at all. Within the Treason Act of 1351, there is the statement "When a man doth compass or imagine the Death or our Lord the king ... that ... ought to be judged Treason."[2] The suggestion is that simply thinking about the death of the king is enough to be held accountable for Treason. Legally then, in 1351 someone might be arrested and punished for thinking about the death of the king; not actually trying to kill, or wanting the king dead, but simply entertaining the thought of the king being dead. On the face of it, this thirteenth century law seems absurd; if the king is not harmed, there appears no logic in punishing someone for treason. There is no victim here, nobody appears to suffer as a result of imagining the king dead.

At face value, there appears little justification in outlawing behaviour that doesn't actually harm anyone else. However, immoral imagining is not something which can be judged purely in terms of harm, it is an act of a personal nature which calls into question the morality of those who entertain immoral thoughts. I would like to suggest that when I imagine something morally unacceptable I bring into disrepute the nature of myself as a morally sound person. So, the disgruntled peasant of 1351 who imagines the death of the king would not only be punished, but damage too their own moral character as a result of what they imagined. What we imagine should not be free of moral assessment purely because it is not real. Just because we cannot attach harm, or indeed a victim to what we imagine is no grounds with which to deem imaginings a harmless act. When we imagine acts which would be morally wrong if carried out, we commit

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[1] At this stage the term 'immoral imagining' is used as a name alone rather than assuming it immoral to imagine certain things. Fuller discussion of this term will come later in the paper.
[2] 'Revised Statute from The UK Statute Law Database, Treason Act 1351 (c. 2)' <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/RevisedStatutes/Acts/aep/1351/caep_13510002_enm_1> [accessed 15 May 2009].

an act of 'harmless wrongdoing'. This seemingly harmless act of imagination is one which we might still deem wrong, or attach 'wrongness' to. The purpose of this paper will be to prove that immoral imagining is an example of harmless wrongdoing. This will be shown in a two step argument. Firstly, it will be proven that immoral imagining is wrong, and secondly that the pursuit of the immoral imagination within virtual worlds is wrong too. It is within virtual worlds that immoral imaginings might easily be indulged, so this is where the assessment of immoral imaginings and their nature as morally wrong will be focussed upon.

2. Feinberg's Harmless Wrongdoing

In ordinary usage, there is a tendency to associate wrongful acts with the concept of harm. An act is considered a wrong one on the basis of it being harmful, and of causing harm to someone in some way. This also implies the need for a victim for an act to be considered harmful, but this is an unreasonable association. As Feinberg points out, "harm is both vague and ambiguous, and entangled with other concepts, like wrong."[3] This being the case, it is unnecessary that harm always exist for an act to be deemed wrong. There can be wrongs without harm. A person can commit a wrongful act without that act necessarily being a harmful one too. Feinberg struggles to present examples for this claim, conceding that "there are also examples, though less common ones, of wrongs that are not harms."[4] In the introduction to a volume on 'harmless wrongdoing', Feinberg presents very few examples of wrongful acts without harm, and speculates towards the possible existence of others. Feinberg's key example is that of consensual homosexual acts between adults. This may be considered wrong because of the biblical injunction it defies; the act itself is devoid of victims, thus the act is wrong but harmless overall.

This notion of harmless wrongdoing is one which raises much debate and Feinberg admits that the idea is "controversial among moral philosophers."[5] This controversy exists as a result of the difficulty involved in formulating examples of harmless wrongdoings. As Feinberg suggests, it is more difficult to present examples of harmless wrongdoings than it is to theorise the existence of the term. Feinberg's own example of consensual homosexual sex between adults raises some questions over the nature of harmless wrongdoing and how the term may be defined. There are many people who do not believe in the biblical injunction that Feinberg relies on, enough for there to be a substantial amount of people who would not consider consensual homosexual sex a case of harmless wrongdoing at all. Indeed, even if one is Christian, and believes that homosexual activity is wrong, then the consenting adults in the example actually *do* harm themselves. They commit a sin, and therefore damage their souls, so there is actually harm. Thus, if one is a Christian, no harm exists, and if one is a non-believer (and does not believe homosexuality to be wrong), then no wrong exists. This may seem problematic, but these are cases where harm is 'harm to oneself'. This is an important point since Feinberg's example may appear to fall into the trap of being harmful to oneself, and is therefore not a harmless wrongdoing at all, but harm to the self does not count towards cases of harmless wrongdoing. A harmless wrongdoing

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[3] Joel Feinberg, *Harmless Wrongdoing: The Moral Limits of The Criminal Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), xxvii.

[4] ibid, xxviii.

[5] ibid.

only refers to wrongdoing where no second or third parties are harmed. Failure to recognise this point makes it far too easy to criticise examples of harmless wrongdoing on the basis that they involve harms to the self.

Therefore, an act of a harmless wrongdoing necessitates the following factors: "the morally illicit act in question does not adversely affect anyone's interests ... furthermore, it is wrong without wronging any victim."[6] Taking this definition as a starting point, the aim of this paper will be to provide an example of harmless wrongdoing, and in doing so prove that the notion is not as controversial as Feinberg suggests. Under Feinberg's model, there are two clear characteristics in examples which constitute a harmless wrongdoing. Firstly, that an act does not adversely affect anyone's interests, and secondly that the act be wrong without actually wronging any victim.

3. Age Play - The Immoral Imagination

'Age-play' within a virtual world will be forwarded here as an example of harmless wrongdoing, and it will be shown that the example is in possession of Feinberg's characteristics. In a virtual world such as Second Life there are instances where real harm is apparent, but these are instances of harmful wrongdoing rather than harmless wrongdoing. Second Life is a virtual world simultaneously accessed by multiple users by way of avatars that they create themselves. By October of last year, Second Life had over fifteen million users.[7] The Official Guide to Second Life defines itself as "a virtual world ... It's your virtual life."[8] Users can buy land in Second Life, marry each other or engage in other pastimes that we take for granted in real life. These are realistic engagements between real people, involving real currency and real binding agreements. In such cases, the actions that users take within the virtual world are realistic, they have real consequences and can be realistically harmful to those behind the avatars involved in an agreement or a marriage. Second Life's very own slogan states 'Your World. Your Imagination'. The slogan implies that there are not always instances where real harm can be attributed to virtual interactions. If Second Life is an imaginative world, then that which goes on inside it can also involve imaginative constructs, fantasy and those actions which might be impossible in real life. It is this type of interaction which relates to immoral imagining and harmless wrongdoing, because acts within the virtual world are harmless but may still be considered wrong.

'Age play' is a regressive role-play in which adults take on the role of children. This can involve sexual role-play in which adults pretend to be a parent and child in order to engage in a shared sexual fantasy. Within a virtual world, this takes the form of two consenting adults, most commonly one with an adult avatar and one with an avatar designed to resemble a child. "Age play occurs between two consenting adults, one of whom takes on the role of a child, and the other takes on the role of a caretaker."[9] Users of a virtual world may then take the adult

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[6] ibid.

[7] 'Second Life Appoints New Euro Chief to Boost Business', MarketingWeek (2008) <http://www.marketingweek.co.uk/cgi-bin/item.cgi?id=63112&d=258&h=262&f=3> [accessed 17 May 2009].

[8] Michael Rymaszewski, Wagner James Au, Mark Wallace, Catherine Winters, Philip Rosedale, Cory Ondrejka, Benjamin Batstone-Cunningham, Second Life: The Official Guide (Wiley-Interscience, 2006), p. 4.

[9] 'Age Play', Conversation Between 'Claudia' and 'nethacker' regarding age play and what it entails (1999) <http://www.iron-rose.com/IR/docs/ageplay.htm> [accessed 15 May 2009].

and child-like avatars and engage in simulated sexual acts with them. The very nature of an avatar implies that there be a human being in charge of it, and that someone is responsible for the actions that an avatar undertakes. Behind every avatar is a person, a link between reality and the virtual world which is plainly obvious. An avatar has been defined as "a perceptible digital representation whose behaviours reflect those executed, typically in real time, by a specific human being."[10] If a child were to be in control of one of the avatars in the age play example, the act of engaging in simulated intercourse would be problematic, because a child is involved. No real child is involved or harmed in age play fantasies because two adults control the avatars engaged in the sexual act. This fact should not make the act any less morally problematic than a case where a real child is involved.

The morally problematic issue therefore appears as a result of what resembles a child taking part in a virtual sex act. This brings about the first of Feinberg's characteristics, that an act does not adversely affect anyone's interests for it to be considered a harmless wrongdoing. In the case of age-play, it is evident that the act has no negative effect upon the interests of any party, since it is between two consenting adults; the only issue at hand is the fact that one of the avatars resembles a child and the association this brings to morally wrong acts is a troubling one. Intuition tells us that 'age play' is morally wrong, and the reason for this must be made clearer. The second of Feinberg's characteristics, that the act be wrong without wronging any victim is of greater importance than the first and will be focussed upon in order to address the intuitive feeling of moral wrongness associated with 'age play' and why this counts towards the act being a harmless wrongdoing.

It remains unclear why exactly we should react negatively towards age play since it is a seemingly harmless act; an example of an act considered wrong without any *real* harm occurring. If it is clear why 'age play' may be considered harmless, it is now important to distinguish why it can be considered wrong. When a subject merely imagines something as morally wrong as having sex with a child, there need not be a real life intention in existence. The subject need not necessarily want to have sex with a child, but they have entertained the thought in their imagination. Similarly, when two users engage in an age play scenario in a virtual world there need not be any real life intentions towards real children, but the act is an imaginative concept brought into a virtual world. This in itself is enough for a subject to be at fault morally, and for the act to be considered a wrong one. The reason for this stems from the accountability of moral imaginings - the idea that acts of imagination are morally assessable. In other words, those who entertain morally troubling concepts in imagination should be held accountable. Kendall Walton believes this to be the case for the reason that adoptive imagination is a morally corrupting process, stating it can be wrong to adopt "even in the imagination a moral view that I reject in reality."[11] Walton uses the term 'moral view' to refer to those morally problematic views that people might accept in their imagination, but would reject in reality. An example is a claim such as: 'The Holocaust was a good thing'. This is an view that we might accept in imagination when reading fictions, but in reality, are most likely to reject. Age players may not adopt any

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[10] Jeremy Bailenson, & Jim Blascovich, Avatars. In W. S. Bainbridge (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Human Computer Interaction* (Great Barrington, MA: Berkshire, 2004), p. 65.

[11] Kendall L. Walton and Michael Tanner, 'Morals In Fiction and Fictional Morality', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volumes, 68 (1994), p. 34.

specific moral view, but they do adopt an imaginative pretence to morally problematic actions. In other words, the age player entertains in their imagination an action which would be wrong were it to be carried out in real life.

Walton holds that we have reasons to resist immoral imaginings of the type age play represent because such imaginings can affect our moral 'orientation'. By accepting moral views we know to be morally problematic we disorient our moral compass, as Walton puts it, and are drawn towards immoral concepts which would otherwise be repugnant. By adopting a view in imagination that is troubling in moral terms, I "might change my moral orientation; it might in this sense 'pervert the sentiments of my heart'."[12] Walton suggests that merely entertaining immoral thoughts can have an effect upon a person's morality, and that the process of adoptive imagining itself is corrupting. This being the case, it is up to the individual to effectively resist morally problematic imaginings in order to protect themselves from the corruption of moral values that Walton believes possible. In terms of the age play example, it is therefore necessary for individuals to resist such a morally troubling imagining, rather than actively engaging it. The notion of 'imaginative resistance' is one Richard Moran also discusses. According to Moran, 'imaginative resistance' occurs when an individual refuses to entertain or adopt immoral imaginings or moral responses the individual deems inappropriate.[13] As morally accountable human beings, we therefore have a responsibility to resist immoral thoughts in order to protect our own moral characters. Those who fail to resist certain imaginings, and habitually entertain immoral imaginings are those with a moral character flaw. Age players fall into this category. The flaw of the age player is to entertain the morally problematic notion of a child as sexual object. No real child is harmed and the age player need not wish to have sex with a child in reality, but age play fantasy involves someone pretending to be a child, and using the child-like avatar to engage in a virtual sexual act. This sexualisation of a child is an immoral imagining, and failure to reject this amounts to a failure of a persons imaginative resistance. Essentially, the age player fails to resist the immoral imagining of age play and what the act entails.

The failure of age players to resist and reject such immoral imaginings implies that their actions are habitual. Moral judgement is usually reserved for examples of habit, and not for individual instances of emotions or passions. Amy Mullin draws from the Aristotelian notion that it is not only an individuals actions which are morally assessable, but their dispositions too.[14] In doing so, Mullin suggests that Aristotle's conception of dispositions can be applied to acts of imagination. This implies that the imagination provides evidence of an individual's dispositions, and should therefore be morally assessable too. This is an important point, and one which goes some way to providing the necessary evidence for the moral accountability of the imagination. From this the reason why immoral imaginative concepts like that of age play can be considered wrong, becomes apparent. According to Mullin: "habitual acts of imagination, such as those that involve sexual exploitation of children, do seem clear instances of flaws in

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[12] ibid.

[13] Richard Moran, 'The Expression of Feeling in Imagination', *The Philosophical Review*, 103, I (1994), pp. 75-106.

[14] Amy Mullin, 'Moral Defects, Aesthetic Defects, and the Imagination', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 62, III (2004), p. 252.

one's own moral character."[15] Age play is an example of an act of imagination which Mullin suggests can provide evidence of a moral character flaw. Imaginings can be partly constitutive of dispositions, thus if a persons dispositions can be morally assessed then such an example of habitual immoral imagination is also morally assessable.

Indeed, that imaginings partly constitute dispositions and their morally assessable nature can be seen to be supposed in our present Judicial system. There is clear evidence that imaginative content plays a role in character assessment, implying that the imagination is open to moral assessment in a way that represents its influence on the nature of a person as a virtuous character. As a form of punishment, the offenders of specifically harmful acts commonly enter a process of rehabilitation. This places great emphasis upon not only what the culprit does, but also what they entertain in mere thought. If a murderer is incarcerated for committing murder their possible release is dependent upon the likelihood that they will re-offend, and if they present any danger to the public. This likelihood is measured by study of the inmate's behaviour, but also of their mental state. The inmate who no longer entertains the thought of killing is more likely to be released than the one who still does. Of course, people can lie about having these thoughts, but consider it to be the case that we can determine when people have certain thoughts about doing bad things and when they do not. If an offender commonly thinks about murdering people then this seems enough to deny their release. If we did not obviously place high importance upon that which we merely entertain in thought, then this state of affairs would not exist and the offenders with and without murderous imaginings would have an equal chance of being released.

In this example, the imaginative content of the murderer is taken to imply their disposition towards murdering again. This is a case of the imagination being morally assessed, and one which suggests that people are indeed accountable for their imaginative content. The inmate who does not imagine committing murder again is one who displays the imaginative resistance that was evidently not in place when they committed their original crime. The inmate who entertains the thought of murdering again shows that their character is morally flawed in the way that Mullin suggests. The habitual entertainment of immoral thoughts implies that the individual is more open to the immoral, and as such their disposition towards murdering again appears more likely. To imagine murdering someone is therefore wrong firstly because the idea of murder itself is morally wrong, and secondly because the entertainment of such an immoral imagining results in the corruption of moral character. This is another example of a seemingly harmless imaginative act which can actually be morally assessed, considered wrong and the imaginer held accountable for. If imaginings can be partly constitutive of dispositions, the implication for age players is a damning one.

Just as the murderer that entertains the thought of murder is deemed more likely to commit a crime, the age player that entertains the immoral idea of simulated child molestation is disposed towards immoral acts, and more likely to entertain similar immoral thoughts. As Mullin suggests, "repeated adoption in the imagination of an immoral perspective might have morally damaging effects."[16] This being the case, to adopt the imaginative content that age players do is to entertain the 'immoral perspective', and therefore destroy the 'moral innocence' that we otherwise have.

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[15] ibid.
[16] ibid.

Furthermore, Mullin believes that the habitual adoption of an immoral imagination will not only lead to character flaws, it will ultimately confuse our moral sensitivities, and disorient our moral compass in the way Walton has suggested. To entertain notions such as those involved in age play or the imagination of murder will inevitably lead to "a failure to recognise when immoral things are happening."[17] The fact that immoral imaginings such as those age play involves can lead to a degradation of ones moral character is the reason that they may be considered wrong. Age players appear to repeatedly adopt an immoral perspective which Mullin believes leads to the moral damage suggested here.

It is morally wrong to merely imagine immoral concepts then, because the entertainment of such concepts result in a dissolution of moral character. The failure to practice imaginative resistance is to exhibit this moral character failing. To lose sight of what is morally right and wrong, and display the inability to distinguish between the two is an example of moral insensitivity. Jacobson makes a similar point in a paper distinguishing between morally sensitive and virtuous people.[18] This distinction shows why we should practice imaginative resistance, and why those who do not display moral character failings.[19]

In an appeal to Moran-style imaginative resistance, Jacobson makes the following definition: "the virtuous audience will resist feeling ... what they deem it wrong to feel; while a morally sensitive audience will be unable to feel that way."[20] Related back to the age play example, the virtuous audience are those that view age play negatively, refusing to engage the immoral imaginative concepts related to it. Naturally, this means that the sensitive audience are those that simply cannot entertain age play in any way, even in imagination. The virtuous audience have the ability to entertain the idea of age play, their virtue stems from the fact they are able to resist feeling anything towards it, because they know it to be wrong. Jacobson also believes that "enough practice in resistance might, through habituation, make a virtuous spectator into a morally sensitive one."[21] This mirrors in the opposite direction, Mullin's point that habitual immoral imagination can lead to character flaws. The habitual resistance of immoral thoughts leads to a stage where we are simply unable to entertain immoral ideas at all. It is preferential that people go through this evolution; the morally sensitive person is of sounder moral character than the virtuous person. It is better to be unable to entertain the immoral than it is to have to resist, and be open to resistive failure. If it is a character flaw to habitually entertain immoral imaginings, as Mullin suggests, then the inability to entertain them at all suggests a character virtue. This being the case, the age player, and those who entertain such immoral imaginings display an insensitivity which implies they may never become morally sensitive persons in the sense Jacobson implies. Just as the murderer who imagines murdering again is held accountable for being more likely disposed to murdering, the age player is more disposed to immoral concepts. Age players fail to resist immoral imaginings when they engage their fantasies within a virtual

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[17] ibid.

[18] Daniel Jacobson, 'In Praise of Immoral Art', *Philosophical Topics*, 25, I (1997), pp. 155-199.

[19] Of course, this might be an example of harm to the self, and in imagining certain things I harm my own moral character, but this is still an example of a harmless wrongdoing, as the imaginative act harms no 2nd or 3rd parties but is still wrong. This victim cannot be the self; there must be a wrongdoing without harm to another party for the example to be one of harmless wrongdoing and this is the case here.

[20] Jacobson, 'In Praise of Immoral Art', *Philosophical Topics*, 25, I (1997), p. 186.

[21] ibid.

world. An age player pursues their imagining, wishing it to become more than just an imagining; they display a disposition towards the sexualisation of children in the virtual world. This means they are unable to work towards being a morally sensitive spectator due to their consistent engagement of the immoral imagination.

Everyone has a moral duty to behave in a certain way, to adhere to specific moral guidelines in their everyday conduct. There are specific acts and actions which are deemed immoral, and the virtuous person can recognise these, and actively resist committing them. The morally sensitive amongst us are simply unable to entertain anything they consider immoral, this inability shows that they have a strong moral character. These people need not resist the immoral, since the inclination towards it is not there. Age players then, are those with the character flaws that render them immoral people. The murderer up for parole is morally insensitive if they imagine murdering once released. This is because they fail to resist immoral imaginings, and actively engage the immoral imagining, suggesting they would, or are likely to, re- offend. Such a person cannot become morally sensitive since the fact that they display no imaginative resistance to the immoral thought of murder and habitually entertain the thought instead implies Mullin's 'flaws in moral character'. Similarly, age players do the same.

As Seiriol Morgan suggests, "the complex and frequently dark nature of human sexual desire requires a certain kind of ethical sensitivity from us, and also places upon us obligations not to act on certain sexual impulses we might have."[22] As cited from Mullin earlier "acts of imagination that involve sexual exploitation of children, do seem clear instances of flaws in one's moral character."[23] While age play does not involve real children, and is therefore not strictly of the imaginative type Mullin suggests, it does qualify as one of the 'dark desires' that Morgan believes we should not entertain, and refrain from acting upon. Age play is a fantasy, in which its participants simulate the molestation of a child. No child is harmed by what exists as an imagination within a virtual world. It is however, a fantasy which appears to go against the idea of imaginative resistance, and is one that the morally sensitive person would clearly be unable to entertain. As moral beings we have the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, good and bad. in the first instance it is up to us to distinguish between good desires and bad desires. Then it is necessary to know that bad desires should not be acted upon, and that we should only entertain desires we deem good. Once we make this distinction, its is imaginative resistance that stops us from pursuing bad desires. Age players then, lack the moral sensitivity Morgan believes necessary to distinguish between dark and acceptable desires. Not only this, age players fail to resist immoral imaginings because of this, and as a result the distinction between good (acceptable) and bad (dark) desires is blurred. Since the age player engages a bad desire when they pursue their fantasy in a virtual world their imaginative resistance has failed, as well as calling into question their ability to distinguish between right and wrong desires in the first place.

Relying on a Kantian notion, Morgan believes our propensity towards certain desires can be shaped by imagination, which is similar to the Aristotelian point of dispositions being partly formed by the imagination: "motives emerge from our freedom and are potentially reshaped into

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[22] Seiriol Morgan, 'Dark Desires', *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 6, IV (2003), p. 378
[23] Mullin, p. 252.

more complex forms by imagination."[24] Kant refers to passions as 'Leidenschaft', and believes that these passions are difficult to control through reason. Suggesting that our passions come from our nature as free, sociable creatures, Kant refers to the conflict that exists in society between the free creatures as they attempt to impose their will upon others in order to gratify their passions. This gives rise to "a kind of primal conflict in human society" in which people are subordinated and treated as "a means to their own ends."[25] Kant concludes from this state of affairs that "A desire which has become habitual is an inclination."[26] The imaginative desire that age players feel is of a morally troubling nature that suitably fits Kant and Morgan's concerns. It is a desire as habitual as the murderer imagining murdering as to become a disposition, an inclination, and one that proves the individual that has that desire to be morally flawed. There are certain desires, and imaginative concepts we have a duty to resist at the least, and completely reject at best. Since immoral imagining is morally corrupting to moral character, to entertain the idea of age play is wrong. Age players fail to resist immoral imaginings and their own moral sensitivity in favour of pursuing a fantasy. Not only this, the nature of age play implies that it may well be even more difficult for reason to control than Kant suggests. Age players habitually pursue their fantasy in a virtual world where they can visualise and interact with likeminded individuals in order to make their fantasy something more than just an imagining. Clearly then, the age play fantasy does not just exist in the mind. Due to this, it appears that it will be more difficult for reason to control the fantasy, since the extent of the fantasy is much greater than anything that might exist in the mind alone. Kant's conflict therefore encompasses the nature of age play and why it is rejected by morally discerning individuals. If reason has difficulty in controlling purely imaginative fantasies as Kant suggests, then fantasies engaged within virtual worlds, which are of a more active nature, must be even harder to control.

The intuitive feeling of wrongness felt when presented with what age play involves is moral sensitivity coming into play. Just as the morally sensitive individual can reject imagining murder because they know it to be wrong, they can reject age play because it carries the same feeling of wrongness. To entertain immoral imaginings is therefore to pursue a desire that becomes habitual, providing assessable evidence of an individual inclination towards the immoral. Since the immoral imagination is corrupting, and hence morally assessable it is morally wrong to imagine certain activities. Age play is once such activity. An age player displays no imaginative resistance, and therefore does not have the feeling that what they do is wrong. This represents the conflict which exists in those virtuous enough to reject the idea, and those age players devoid of the moral sensitivity to do the same. To entertain certain immoral thoughts shows an insensitive moral character, and it is certainly a step further to act out these imaginings in the way age players do.

Age play might be a harmless acting out of an imagining, devoid of a victim, but is still a wrongful act. Morgan suggests that: "behaviour that would make one person very unhappy can leave another entirely unconcerned, and it is hard to tell what will upset who."[27] Despite this,

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[24] Morgan, p. 384.

[25] ibid.

[26] Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. By Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 12.

[27] Morgan, p. 406.

there are sill 'paradigm cases' with which we can shape our moral reasoning. Notions such as murder, rape, and paedophilia are examples of such cases, moral concepts abhorrent enough that they can be used as benchmarks for moral rights and wrongs. It is fair to say that imagining rape, murder and paedophilia will make the majority of people 'unhappy', if not morally outraged. Since the habitual entertainment of such imaginings leads to damage of moral character, immoral imaginings are wrong. This being the case, age players not only commit wrongful acts when they engage in fantasies within a virtual world, they take an immoral imagining further by actively pursuing it, representing it in a virtual world. Virtual worlds, like the real world, are not risk free and are certainly not free of moral assessment. If the imagination can be morally assessed, as has been forwarded, then the virtual world is a way of representing this morally assessable imagination, and acting upon what once existed only in the mind. For this reason, it is wrong to act upon imaginings as age players do within a virtual world, because the imagination is morally accountable.

4. Age Play - Virtual Worlds And The Pursuit of Fantasy

The accountability of the imagination suggests that the mind, and virtual world should not provide a free pass to do whatever one pleases, then defend this by simply stating that nobody has been harmed. Adopted immoral imaginings are character corrupting, and to adopt in thought ideas which are immoral is a damaging process. The virtual world provides freedom to an extent not possible in the real world. Within it, fantasies and desires can be pursued without the condemnation they would receive were they pursued in the real world. Age players do not therefore, face the moral analysis they would face in the real world, they can act upon their fantasies in relative privacy, within a virtual world. The virtual world is not however, risk free in the same sense that a properly fictional world can be said to be. Walton suggests that "the divergence between fictionality and truth spares us pain and suffering we would have to experience in the real world. We realize some of the benefits of hard experience without having to under go it."[28] This contrasts somewhat with the nature of a virtual world. In imagined cases, and within Walton's fictional worlds, I am free of the guilt, fear and pain that I might otherwise experience had my experience been real. A fictional world is therefore risk free in the sense that it allows agents to experience and undergo emotions without fear of repercussions; the agent is not damaged or hurt by the victory of the blood thirsty tyrant onscreen or on the page as they would be had the tyrant literally rampaged through their town. This much is obvious, and it is fair to conclude from these points that a fictional world is a harmless construct of a purely imaginary nature. A virtual world, on the other hand, might be similarly harmless, but it is not risk free, or free from moral assessment in the same way fictions are.

The virtual world provides a tool with which moral imaginings might be acted out, or represented. Imaginative objects of fantasy and desire; of actions rejected in reality might easily be pursued. By signing up to a virtual world, registering a username and creating an avatar, an individual is engaging in something more than just lazily sitting around imagining a morally problematic concept. It is easy enough for any individual to be told to 'imagine yourself killing

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[28] Kendall L. Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 68.

your worst enemy', but this is different from engaging an imagining of this nature by seeking to pursue it with likeminded individuals. Indeed, while it might seem for the briefest of moments desirable to think of your worst enemy dead, out of your life and therefore not a problem anymore, a common sense morality stops the virtuous person from taking such an imagining any further. Indeed, such imaginings simply exist as fleeting moments of entertained fantasy and do not form the basis of anything that an individual might be judged upon seriously. It would be irrational to judge someone who briefly imagines their worst enemy dead as having murderous intentions generally. Even the most virtuous of human beings can entertain such immoral thoughts. The difference lies in assessing those willing to act on immoral imaginings, or at least pursue an imagining to the extent they appear to be willing to act, in some way, to make it more than an imagining.

Fantasy, originating from the Greek word phantasia refers to our ability to entertain images and ideas. The "lively imagination ... can vividly represent ... things, voices, or actions with the exactness of reality, and this faculty may readily be acquired by ourselves if we desire it."[29] This definition of the imagination and the ability it holds to entertain subjects which do not exist in reality leads to another Greek word *phantazethia*: "a verb used specifically ... for the faculty of entertaining appearances."[30] This suggests fantasy, especially imaginative fantasy, to be a means of picturing oneself in a certain way. This is certainly true of age players engaging in fantasy within a virtual world. Age players take on character roles, picturing themselves as a child, or a parent as part of their collective fantasy. More than this, age players not only imagine themselves in a way different to their own reality, they represent themselves in the form of avatars which resemble their imaginative constructs. By entering a virtual world in order to engage their fantasy, an age player must register a username, create an avatar and learn how to use the virtual world. This is different to merely imagining an age play scenario, this is the active pursuit of the scenario itself. An age play fantasy, as a product of the imagination, affords those who engage it a gratification of desires otherwise held internal.

Age play in a virtual world is much different to simply sexualising a child in the mind. The virtual world provides props that assist the fantasy, making it something more realistic, and more tangible than any imaginative construct can be. The malleable nature a of virtual world allows people to design their avatar to suit specific individual desires. In Second Life an avatar can be customised to resemble a child or take on any number of features the user dictates. Certainly, the mind affords us a similar level of creative freedom, but the mind is closed to others, the virtual world is much more social in nature. The age player is not just one person engaging a fantasy for their own benefit, they interact collectively as a community all pursuing gratification of a shared fantasy. It is the more complex nature of the pursuit of immoral fantasies in virtual world which makes them even more wrong than immoral imaginings. The sustained engagement of age play in this way shows the willingness of individuals to go against typical moral judgement in favour of an immoral fantasy. Age players effectively place themselves into the imaginative fantasy in a similar way that Moran believes dramatic imagination involves adopting a point of

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[29] Quintilian, 'Instituio Oratoria' (2006) <http://honeyl.public.iastate.edu/quintilian/6/chapter2.html#29> [accessed 17 May 2009] (para. 10 of 12).

[30] Eva T.H. Brann, *The World of The Imagination: Sum and Substance* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 1990), p. 21.

view different to ones own.[31]

Dramatic imagining consists in the imaginative adoption of and identification with a certain point of view different from one's own. As mentioned previously, such adopted perspectives lead a related disposition. Thus, imaginatively adopting such a point of view usually involves imagining the respective evaluative and affective responses to given situations, and there is an awareness of what the imagining entails. Moran likens dramatic imagination to empathy, since we essentially place ourselves in somebody else's shoes when we imagine in this way. Furthermore, Moran believes that because of dramatic imagination it could be "easy to lose track of the difference between ... fantasy and acting out"[32] The age player, therefore, does not simply accept idle propositions in the way that a daydreamer may entertain sexual fantasies. Their imagining is of the dramatic sort since they actively attempt to act out their fantasy, placing themselves into a virtual world in order to accomplish this. Since fantasies of the purely imaginative sort have already been proven to be morally problematic the pursuit of them in a virtual world is even more reprehensible.

Richard Wollheim gives the example of the erotic daydreamer to suggest that Moran is correct in stating that dramatic imagining may lead to confusion between fantasy and acting out. The erotic daydreamer imagines themselves engaged in sexual activity, and in doing so imagines themselves being sexually aroused. As the daydreamer imagines themselves being aroused they will actually become aroused in reality.[33] Wollheim believes this suggests that imagination can provide real emotions. If this is so then the imagination is quite clearly corrupting. If the example were changed to one which is morally problematic, unlike Wollheim's, then the arousal that results from the fantasy would be condemned. If we can condemn an imagination for causing this corruption in the immoral case, then we can certainly condemn those that take fantasies a step further into the virtual world. The erotic daydreamer is simply entertaining something in thought, and this happens to lead to arousal, as is the case when people imagine sexually appealing situations. This is very much different to the age player. Certainly, they will have the imaginative experience that leads to arousal in the same way as the erotic daydreamer, but the age player does even more than this. The virtual world provides a means to pursue this arousal, and satisfy themselves by indulging in the imaginative act in a way which can provide them with something more like the active experience they crave. This craving leads to the pursuit of the fantasy, and is not the same as passing time by daydreaming about things you might find arousing.

An age player pursues their fantasy because it appeals in the imagination, and this fantasy is difficult to control. It is because of imagination that people wish to age play, without it reason might easier overcome the desire and fantasy that imagination fuels. Indeed, without an imagination and without the ability to engage fantasy Adam might not have eaten the forbidden fruit. An imaginative faculty can tempt one in ways that would otherwise be unsuitable, as Richard Kearney suggests "Adam was attracted to the forbidden fruit because he had imagination. Each time they felt tempted to exercise their fantasy, Adam's descendants strayed off the path."[34]

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[31] Moran, p. 104.

[32] ibid.

[33] Richard Wollheim, *The Thread of Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 81-82.

[34] Richard Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 39-43.

This picture implies that fantasies and the imagination house concepts that are otherwise closed to us, and that the imagination can be corrupting because imagination allows us to entertain concepts we might otherwise refuse or reject in reality. This is not to condemn imagination in general as corrupting, since without imagination we could not perceive the world around us or have access to the creative faculties which allow us to express ourselves.

To age play in a virtual world is therefore to engage an imaginative fantasy, and actively pursue the fantasy into the virtual world. There are parts of the age play fantasy that appeal to those of deficient moral character (the role of dominator/domineer), and parts which should be quite obviously immoral (the fact that the act consists of simulated child molestation). The positive aspect of the fantasy exists because imagination allows us to toy with ideas we might otherwise reject. Fantasies of an immoral nature can not only be played out in the mind, but pursued in a virtual world where people can enact the fantasies they imagine. Imagining age play, and habitually wishing to pursue an age play fantasy leads people to ignore their better moral judgement and act out their imaginings within the virtual world. However, the imagination is morally accountable, this has been proven, so the pursuit of an imaginative fantasy which might be considered wrong is just another step down a slippery slope towards moral insensitivity and corruption of the moral character. Imaginings can be wrong, but not harmful, this has been displayed,. Imaginings like age play actively sought within a virtual world such as Second Life can be wrong but not harmful too, they are therefore an example of harmless wrongdoing.

5. Conclusion – The Moral Accountability of Imagination and Virtual World

It has been shown that immoral imaginings, and the pursuit of immoral imaginings in virtual worlds are examples of harmless wrongdoing. In these situations, individuals entertain or pursue immoral imaginings, and as a result cause damage to their own moral character. The examples provided have displayed that immoral imaginings do not have victims, and do not harm anyone, but may still be morally assessed.[35] We should not entertain certain activities because doing so degrades our moral character, and confuses our 'moral compass'. Since this is the case, the pursuit of immoral imaginings is also a case of wrongdoing. Within a virtual world nobody is harmed when an individual seeks to live their fantasy. No child is ever harmed when age players conduct their role play, yet we still feel that what they do is morally wrong. This is a justified feeling since what we imagine gives evidence of our dispositions, and the possibility that individuals will be open to immoral concepts. Not only this, the age player simply fails to resist an imagining which is morally questionable. The lack of harm is not enough of a reason to conclude that what age players do is not morally assessable.

As an example of harmless wrongdoing, we must approach the imagination of certain concepts, and our pursuit of seemingly harmless fantasies with caution. The pursuit or entertainment of a fantasy is not risk free, and is not exempt from moral judgement. We have the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, and as such have a duty to resist those imaginings which

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[35] Once again, excluding harm to oneself of course, which is not included in the definition of harmless wrongdoing. This only involves harm where other parties are involved.

obviously raise moral problems. To pursue them is to ignore this important fact and show an individual lack of moral sensitivity.

Examples of harmless wrongdoings are certainly difficult to present, and there appear to be few examples of wrongs which are not accompanied by harm. However, immoral imagination, and resulting conduct within a virtual world is one which fits well into Feinberg's definition of what harmless wrongdoing consists of. The virtual world is a playground in which moral imaginings may be acted out and represented. Imaginative objects of fantasy and desire; of actions rejected in reality can be easily pursued. If it is wrong to imagine a child in a sexual situation then it is certainly wrong to enter a virtual world and pursue such an imagining as fantasy, regardless of the fact nobody is ever really harmed. Age play conducted purely in the imagination, or within a virtual world is wrong because of the damage it does to us, and our moral character, in entertaining and pursing immoral concepts. Immoral imaginings and their pursuit within virtual worlds are wrongful acts without harm, and therefore suitable examples of harmless wrongdoings.

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Can Egoism Provide a Solid Basis for Morality?

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1. Introduction

It has often been argued that Egoism is by definition incompatible with morality. We will challenge this viewpoint in the following analysis, arguing that the assumption of incompatibility rests on a false premise. This will allow us to enquire whether or not Egoism can provide a basis for morality. To answer in the affirmative, it is sufficient to show that the claim that Egoism *could* be such a basis cannot in all cases be refuted.

2. Gert Against Egoism

Bernard Gert's book "*Morality – Its Nature and Justification*" puts forward a strong argument against the compatibility of the two concepts Egoism and morality. According to the Gert, morality has to be a rational principle that can be applied universally to all rational persons. He further states that morality functions not only as a guide for the individual person who adopts it but also that "a person who adopts it must also propose its adoption by everyone." The scholar concludes that Egoism cannot lie within this definition of morality, because "no one would put forward ethical egoism to be adopted by everyone."[1]

Gert's argument is vulnerable, however, because he does not justify the claim that one has to promote a moral guide, which one adopts. The reasoning behind this claim could be presumed to look as follows:

> **Premise 1**: If I adopt a moral guide, I must be convinced that this moral guide is right.

> **Premise 2**: If I am convinced that something is right, I have to promote it.

> **Conclusion**: If I adopt a moral guide, I have to promote that everyone adopts it. I cannot adopt Ethical Egoism as a moral principle because I would not promote it.

On closer inspection, premise 2 is not true; it is perfectly possible to believe that something is right without promoting it. If you are convinced of the validity of a moral guide, this means

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[1] Bernard Gert, "Morality – Its Nature and Justification" (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. Oxford Scholarship Online, Oxford University Press, http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/0195176898.001.0001, accessed on 29.10.2008), p. 8

that you have to think that if everyone else were rational, then they should adopt the principle. The crucial point is that this "should" is not to be understood in the sense that you *want* the other person to adopt it. It is merely a "should" in the sense that you think the adoption would be reasonable *from the other person's point of view.*

3. Wanting Others to be Irrational

As an example, consider the difference between telling your husband that he should never cheat on you and telling your friend that she should better not cheat on her husband because this might bring her into a lot of trouble if she were found out. In the first case, the "should" simply expresses your preference: You do not want to be betrayed. This is not the "should" involved in thinking that others should adopt a moral principle. Here, "should" takes the rationally evaluative meaning, which is paralleled in the advice given to the friend who considers adulterousness.

In this sense, if Kathrin thinks James should adopt Ethical Egoism if he were rational, this does not mean that she necessarily *wants* him to adopt it. If Kathrin does not want James to adopt the principle, she will not promote it. As one can see, from being convinced that something is right it does not necessarily follow that one has to promote it.

Premise 2 therefore has to be adapted. This changes the definition of a moral guide. Now, adopting a moral principle means that you have to be convinced that everyone else would act rationally by adopting it but it does not necessarily mean that you have to promote it. This allows us to view Egoism as not being by definition out of the realm of morality. However, not all of versions of Ethical Egoism lie within our new definition. Lawrence M. Hinman identified three different versions of Ethical Egoism. Out of these, one falls out our definition of a moral guide, while the difference between the remaining two becomes blurred if they are supplemented with Gert's qualification of rationality as a prerequisite for the identification of a moral guide. The three different versions identified by Lawrence M. Hinman are characterized as follows:

Individual Ethical Egoism (Everyone should act in my interest)

Personal Ethical Egoism (I should act in my interest, everyone else may do what they want)

Universal Ethical Egoism (Everyone should act in their own interest)[2]

Individual Ethical Egoism cannot be a basis for morality within our adapted definition. When you adopt a moral guide, the definition requires both that it seems rational to you and that you consider its adoption to be rational for everyone else as well. In the case of an individual egoist this would mean that it would have to be rational for a second person to promote both your and her interests, which is impossible if these interests collide. You cannot consider it rational that Bernd should give you chocolate and at the same time consider it rational that instead Bernd ate the chocolate himself. Therefore, Individual Ethical Egoism cannot provide a basis for morality.

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[2] Lawrence M. Hinman "Look out for #1 – and there is no #2: Ethical Egoism" (Ethics Updates - Presentation: Ethical Egoism http://ethics.sandiego.edu/presentations/theory/EthicalEgoism/index.asp - 9/15/2006, accessed on 18.10.08), p. 8.

Universal Ethical Egoism, as well, does not concur with our definition unless adapted. Demanding that everyone should do what is in their interest makes a normative demand without qualifying the "should" as one which merely evaluates the rationality of the choice of principle. If this qualification is made, Universal Ethical Egoism merges with Personal Ethical Egoism. The egoist can at the same time concede that everyone else may do what they want and hold that everyone else should decide to be egoists *if they are rational.* This combination of Personal and adapted Universal Ethical Egoism lies within our definition of a moral guide and therefore cannot be treated as ab initio incompatible with the requirements for a basis of morality. That does not mean that it necessarily is a basis for morality but it implies that it could be. This allows us to now go further into the question whether or not Egoism can be judged as "right" in a moral sense of the term. Such a judgment could be based upon one out of three factors: The intention, the act itself or the outcome.[3] If Egoism can be judged as "good" in at least one of these terms, then we can no longer deny the possibility of it actually representing a basis for morality. In the last part of this essay the analysis will therefore only focus on the outcome of Egoism, displaying that given certain prerequisites it can stand as a valid justification for Egoism as a moral principle.

4. A Good Outcome: For Whom?

Many defenders of Egoism have taken a Utilitarian approach, arguing that Egoism leads to good outcomes. Adam Smith, for example, proposes in "The Wealth of Nations" that everyone would be better off if every person promoted her self-interest. Others try to reconcile Egoism and Utilitarianism via sympathy or rewards in after-life.[4] However, these accounts set utilitarian standards of a "good outcome." This cannot be a way to defend Egoism because Egoism clashes with Utilitarianism by denying the existence of a "Universal" or "Total Good" which is to be valued higher than the interest of the individual.

Derek Parfit recognizes the importance of making a very clear distinction between utilitarian and egoistic standards. In his text "Reasons and Persons" he discusses the Self-Interest theory, which is a theory about how best to apply Ethical Egoism.[5] This means that any judgment on the outcomes of the Self-Interest Theory is equal to a judgment on the consequences of Ethical Egoism (if well-applied).

Parfit says that instead of judging the theory's success at a collective level, we should judge the outcome at the individual level, where it succeeds by leading to better results for each person. He explains that the Prisoner's Dilemma does not, as has often been claimed, defeat the Self-Interest Theory; the prisoners fail as a group, but each does better. He sees no reason why the theory should succeed at a collective level. If each person judges their interest to be more important to herself, then each person ought to apply the Self-Interest Theory even though she

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[3] Lisa Jones, University of St Andrews, handout of PY1105, 30.09.2008.

[4] See Charlie Dunbar Broad, Five types of Ethical Theory (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1930, http://www.ditext.com/broad/ftet/ftet6.html, accessed on 30. 10.08), p. 159 – 162.

[5] Derek Parfit, "Reasons and Persons" (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986. Oxford Scholarship Online. Oxford University Press, http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/019824908X.001.0001, accessed on 27.10.08), p. 90 - 92.

would prefer if others did not apply it.

A parallel argument is given by Henry Sidgwick and Marcus G. Singer who recognize that Egoism cannot be defeated by rational arguments: "If the Egoist strictly confines himself to stating his conviction that he ought to take his own happiness or pleasure as his ultimate end, there seems no opening for an argument to lead him to Utilitarianism."[6] In other words, if the Ethical Egoist says that his interest is what is most important *to him*, then it is impossible to have a real discussion because there is no convincing reason forcing him to consider something else as his priority.

5. Conclusion

After all, from the perspective of each individual who applies the principle of Egoism, Ethical Egoism can be seen as having a "good" outcome and as therefore providing a possible basis for morality. This is the crucial point of every discussion about Egoism: When we ask about "good" or "bad", the question is whether we take the "view of the universe", as does Utilitarianism, or the view of the individual. In the end, whether or not Ethical Egoism can be a basis for morality depends on the perspective one takes.

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