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# METEORITE

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## Contents

<b>Putting ‘Rational’ Back in Rational Deliberation.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Gabriella LaRose</i>	
<i>University of Tennessee, Knoxville</i>	
<b>The External Origin of The Mind: A New Perspective for the Mind-Body Problem.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>Caner Gursel</i>	
<i>University of Toronto</i>	
<b>Confronting Horrendous Evils: Meaning-Making as a Foundation for Coping Practice.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<i>Nicole Hodiny</i>	
<i>Biola University</i>	
<b>The Ethics of the Newest Philosophy.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<i>translated by Nathaniel Squire</i>	
<i>University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign</i>	
<b>What is Harmful in the Age of ‘Better than Best’? Selective Abortion, Reproduction, and Enhancements.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<i>Peggy Randon</i>	
<i>University of Michigan, Ann Arbor</i>	

# Putting ‘Rational’ Back in Rational Deliberation

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## Abstract

In his work *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life*, Derk Pereboom seeks to develop a list of sufficient conditions: (DE), (S), and (Settled), all of which determine when one’s deliberation is considered rational. I incorporate Pamela Hieronymi’s managerial control requirement from her work *Two Kinds of Agency*. I hope to both assert that Pereboom’s definition of rational deliberation is in fact an act of deliberation sans rationality as well as amend Pereboom’s conditions to more adequately encompass what rationality requires. Then, I will consider how amending Pereboom’s conception of rational deliberation will affect the rest of his free will and moral theory.

## Introduction

What is required in order for deliberation to be rational? In important recent work, Derk Pereboom (2014) offers a series of sufficient conditions for deliberation to be rational. In this paper, I do two things. First, I show how Pereboom’s conditions are not in fact sufficient for deliberation to be rational because there is a critical sense in which an agent could satisfy his conditions, yet the agency of her deliberation is out of her hands. Second, I strengthen Pereboom’s conditions by drawing on a distinction (due to Pamela Hieronymi’s contribution) between outcomes and reasons. I argue that rational deliberation requires not just a consideration of outcomes, but also a consideration of reasons. In this way, the agency of a person’s rational deliberations is put back in her own hands.

In section 1, I present Pereboom’s sufficient conditions for rational deliberation as well as some other relevant literature. In section 2, I criticize Pereboom’s conditions for rational deliberation. Then, in section 3, I propose a solution, improving on his original conditions. Finally, in section 4, I examine the implications of the new conditions for Pereboom’s overall theory of freewill and moral responsibility.

## Section I: Rational Deliberation in Pereboom and Guiding Literature

In *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life*, Derk Pereboom seeks to develop a list of sufficient conditions for rational deliberation that are compatible with determinism. I argue that Pereboom’s definition and conditions for rational deliberation more adequately encompass what constitutes deliberation *per se* (as opposed to rational deliberation). I do this by developing a set of conditions which constitute a more *active* sense of rational deliberation, along with a definition for what constitutes a rational belief.

Pereboom begins by developing unique requirements for rational deliberation— that each option must be epistemically open and the ends must be attainable. More specifically, he develops (DE):

**(DE):** In order to rationally deliberate about either doing  $A_1$  or  $A_2$ , you must believe that as a result of your deliberating, whether you were to do  $A_1$  or  $A_2$ , you would, on the basis of that deliberation, do  $A_1$  or  $A_2$  respectively (2014: 118-119, 124).

This requirement is not enough, Pereboom concludes, because it needs supplementation by a condition that requires epistemic openness. Therefore, he combines (DE) with (S) and (Settled) in order to satisfy the epistemic openness requirement he believes is required for rational deliberation. (S) and (Settled), respectively, state:

**(S):** in order to rationally deliberate among distinct actions,  $A_1$  and  $A_n$ , an actor, S, cannot be certain of the proposition that she will do  $A_1$ , nor of the proposition that she will not do  $A_1$ , and either (a) the proposition that she will do  $A_1$  is consistent with every proposition that, in the present context, is settled for her, or (b) if it is inconsistent with some proposition, **she cannot believe that it is in conflict** (2014: 124).

**(Settled):** a proposition is settled for an agent just in case, she believes it and **disregards any uncertainty she has that it is true** (2014: 124).

What I wish to address is highlighted in bold above. In (S), if two propositions that an agent believes are in conflict, she must not have the belief that they are truly in conflict. This is best shown in cases such as those posed by McGrath where two premises are inconsistent with one another, but not in an obvious way (2014: 113, note 8). For instance, if you are deliberating about doing A or B for reason C, but B is, unbeknownst to you, inconsistent with C, that would suffice under this theory. I would like to say that Pereboom's definition of rational deliberation does not satisfy what is required of rationality because it requires beliefs to be predicated on mere intentions rather than beliefs about which option is best, but more on that later. Pereboom justifies a conception of deliberation where the deliberator disregards uncertainty that their beliefs are either wrong or unfounded. This disregard for uncertainty does not allow for active engagement with the deliberative process, resulting in the deliberator failing to settle the issue rationally.

In "Deliberation and Metaphysical Freedom," EJ Coffman and Ted Warfield stipulate a definition for deliberation while utilizing and evaluating the 'belief in ability thesis' or BAT (2005: 25). Pereboom cites this paper and argues that Coffman and Warfield seek to develop an all-encompassing definition for deliberation, which requires an agent to weigh and evaluate reasons for acting (2014: 109). In fact, Coffman and Warfield seek to clarify the definition of BAT rather than develop an all-encompassing definition for deliberation (2005: 27). Coffman and Warfield also discuss the claim that a counterfactual requirement on deliberation would be an excessive burden on the agent, isolating small children and some animals (2005: 41). That being said, they argue that children do have the capability of handling these counterfactuals, but may not have the knowledge to understand that they in fact have the ability to handle counterfactuals (2005: 41).

The authors' defense of BAT only requires the utilization of counterfactuals, not the understanding of their bearing on the decision making process (2005: 42). This is shown more clearly within examples where children are deciding between two distinct options that are mutually exclusive. Imagine a child is given the option between pizza and spaghetti for dinner. Let's also stipulate that the spaghetti does not have any cheese on it. The child, in her mind, makes her decision in favor of pizza by virtue of her affinity for cheese. She does not have the ability to identify her affinity for cheese as a reason for choosing pizza. Therefore, she does not have the ability to identify the counterfactual

claim: if the spaghetti had cheese, I would have chosen it instead of the pizza. She may have chosen this way due to her affinity of cheese and pasta, while cheese is held as a null factor because it is on both dishes. That being said, the child still has the ability to think about these counterfactuals on a basic level, by considering all the factors, but she does not have the ability to think in terms of counterfactuals or evaluate on the basis of these reasons. This is consistent with Coffman and Warfield's BAT conception, while it is not reflected this way in the Pereboom work.

Further, Pamela Hieronymi argues in "Two Kinds of Agency" that mental states and different mental properties in terms of the questions that they answer; where to form a belief is to answer the question: is *p* true? Agents form beliefs and intentions in order to answer questions about the truth value of these questions. Hieronymi sets out two distinct types of agency: evaluative control and managerial control (2009: 147, 152). Evaluative control is understood to settle intentions, where the question "whether to do that thing" is decided (2009: 145). This will be referred to within this paper as the question "what shall I do?" This reference is used to avoid some reader's intuitions that 'evaluative controls' requires an evaluation of the reasons for doing *p* or not doing *p*, as Pereboom would intuitively require (but I do not). Evaluative controls simply require a consideration of whether or not to do a certain action. Managerial controls are understood to settle beliefs, where the question "what should I do" can involve finding new reasons for or against *p* or evaluating reasons for or against *p* (2009: 152). Exercising managerial control over one's attitudes does not entail that the action decided or settled is actually carried out, allowing for akrasia within decision making or a reversion to a coin-flip as Pereboom would suggest (2009: 153). The answer to the "what should I do" question instead forms an attitude about what would be best to do within a certain situation. Reasons for or against acting do not entail that action is carried out, but rather should guide the deliberator in forming their attitude about what is best.

Also, in the paper "The Will as Reason," Hieronymi outlines a form of settling that does not require knowledge of reasons to arise against doing an activity, but requires an engagement with activities that require reasons (2009b: 204). She explains that raining does not settle the question "will it rain today?" because settling should engage your reasoning capacities. This is present in cases where you ponder going to the beach today with the consideration of whether or not it will rain. Willing, after evaluating and judging alternatives, is seen to be an exercise of rational capacities because willing is done for reasons (whether or not they are readily apparent or not) (2009b: 206). Hieronymi argues that practical reasoning does not answer what we have the best reason to do, but rather whether we should do that thing (this is phrased in terms of attitudes about whether or not to act in a certain way) (2009: 153, 2009b: 206-7). She emphasizes that reasons are not the cause of acting in a certain way, but rather shape the attitude about whether to act or not (2009b: 208). This belief is consistent with what I hope to assert. Reasons should be seen not as causal mechanisms forcing an agent to act one way or another, but as an evaluative tool in order to guide beliefs and attitudes about whether or not to judge an option best.

I am hoping to adopt the shall/ should distinction in order to distinguish between a normal deliberative process and a rational one. Normal deliberative processes, on my account, answer the question "what shall I do?" focusing on the outcome of the action itself. Rational deliberation focuses on "what should I do?" where the agent evaluates her reasons for or against deciding in a certain way. Pereboom's conception of deliberation requires too little by allowing agents to ponder what they shall do, in other words, evaluate distinct options for acting a certain way by virtue of reasons they may or may

not be aware of. I would like to argue that rational deliberation consists in the answer to the ‘what should I do’ question, justified through Coffman and Warfield, as well as Hieronymi. This interpretation allows agents to ponder what distinct option is the best, where the agent ponders what outcome (settled decision) is best by virtue of evaluating reasons which they either are or are not aware of. ‘Should’ requires that an agent engage with the reasons for deciding one way or another, whether or not those reasons are able to be articulated clearly. This is consistent with Coffman and Warfield’s BAT defense and beliefs on being justified in having a certain belief.

## Section II: Criticism of Pereboom

Pereboom argues that an agent should disregard uncertainty when making rational deliberations (2014: 114). This belief fails to address the evaluative property that is central within the should/ shall distinction. Pereboom thinks that agents would be rational in disregarding the uncertainty that their reasons are faulty. This disregards the evaluative requirement of determining what an agent should do, given two distinct options. The addition of an evaluative requirement would entail that a reason could not go ‘disregarded.’ This would make the agent focused on what she shall do rather than what she should do. When deliberating rationally, it should be required that uncertainty should be evaluated rather than disregarded. When disregarding the uncertainty that one’s reasons are faulty, an agent is more focused on the outcome of the deliberation (what one shall do) than the reasons for or against settling one way or another (what one should do). In this way, Pereboom’s requirement to disregard uncertainty focuses more on shall than should.

Pereboom discusses the causal efficacy of the deliberation when he claims that agents can choose an outcome without judging it to be best and even judge two distinct options to be equally good, while “the immediate result of deliberation can feature the outcome of a tie-breaking procedure, like the flip of a coin” (2014: 119). This type of decision can be labeled as rational, so long as the actor has weighed his options until they are in equipoise, leaving the final determination to the flip of a coin (2014: 118-119). My intuitions are that this is in fact not an instance of rational deliberation, but is rather simply an instance of deliberation. The deliberative scheme up until the point of the final decision surely is rational, and the decision to flip the coin in order to decide at all is rational, but the final decision (utilizing a coin flip) is left to chance. It seems as though the agent can rationally hope to bring the distinct options into equipoise, then rationally decide to leave the deciding factor to be a result of chance.

The coin-flip itself is not an act of rational deliberation, though it is the rational thing to do. The coin-flip case is one in which the agent is actively engaged in the rational deliberative process (evaluating what she should do, to no avail), until the coin-flip decides what the agent shall do. This form of deliberation requires only the presence of a decision making factor and not the presence of support for the decision’s being settled in that manner. The coin determines what the agent shall do, as the ‘should’ deliberation could not yield an optimal course of action. Surely rationality requires a more active role in the decision-making process.

Requiring an agent to have certainty that the decision they are making is the right one, of the 1.0 certainty type Pereboom mentions (2014: 120), would be too demanding on agents. However, allowing a decision with a .50 certainty level, such as the coin flip decisions, leaves rationality in the hands of an external decision maker. Pereboom himself notes that there should be a threshold number between .51 and .99 that determines

when a decision can be made rationally, but he does not specify where (2014: 120). Intuitively, he chose this to be lenient enough while still requiring an agent's engagement in deliberation, maybe just not rational deliberation. The distinction he makes is that a decision made with a .51 level of certainty would not be rationally decided, while one with a .99 level of certainty would (2014: 120). But, this seems arbitrary and even counterintuitive to his claim that a rational decision, when the options are in equipoise, can be decided rationally by the flip of a coin (which is .50 probability, chance). Pereboom seems to conflate the action of flipping the coin as being rational with the action itself expressing rational deliberation.

Also, when all else is equal, disregarding uncertainty about the reliability of your decisions diminishes the efficacy of deliberation. Disregarding uncertainty is a strict requirement of (DE) that Pereboom sets forth in the definition. It's essential that decisions are efficacious and that the evaluation of the options themselves are trustworthy. I think evaluating uncertainties is the active, rational, part of rational deliberation. In order for a deliberative process to be rational, you cannot simply disregard the options which may be uncertain, instead you must evaluate their uncertainty and use it during the deliberative process. This is to seek an answer to the "what should I do" question. An agent has to work to evaluate the options against the aspects of the world she believes to be presently accurate. The presence of rationality within a deliberative process entails an active role in the deliberations, not simply a passive requirement to disregard all uncertainty.

This passive requirement is most obviously problematic in the following example:

**Smoker's Dilemma:** Jerry is a smoker. He deliberates on whether or not to give up smoking with two considerations in mind: health and family. Using these considerations, Jerry weighs giving up smoking as more important than continuing to smoke. During his deliberations, Jerry consults his friend Tom. Jerry considers Tom's memorial evidence for the difficulty of quitting smoking, including evidence about the last time Jerry attempted to give up smoking but failed. Jerry believes Tom's evidence, causing the two options to return to equipoise. Following this deliberation, in accordance with (Settled), Jerry disregards the uncertainty of the truthfulness of Tom's memorial evidence and flips a coin to conclude his deliberation. The coin decides for him to give up smoking, and he does so.

This example highlights how Pereboom's parameters can yield passive and possibly irrational deliberations labeled as rational. Jerry deliberated whether or not to quit smoking, and Tom's memorial evidence was used to justify the two options returning to equipoise. Under the (DE), (S), and (Settled) requirements, this action is sufficient for an exercise of rational deliberation. This seems odd, though. An agent should be able to rationally rely on his own memorial evidence or testimony, but when an agent relies on the memorial evidence of another person, even a moment's reflection may call this evidence into question. Jerry deliberates about what he should do, but allows the coin to determine what he shall do, as the reasons, although unreliable, left him in equipoise.

The agent should be required, in order to rationally deliberate, to consider which propositions it would be rational to inspect further, even if this inspection occurs during a moment's reflection. It does not seem to be overly burdensome for Jerry to be required to reflect whether or not Tom's memorial evidence is reliable. This is shown better in (SD2):

**(SD2):** All is the same as in Smoker's Dilemma, but Jerry reflects on Tom's proposed memorial evidence. Jerry then remembers that the last time he attempted to stop smoking, he happened to also lose his job, placing a great amount

of stress on him and therefore causing his return to smoking. He cannot rationally rely on Tom's testimony and therefore concludes that he should quit smoking based on his two reasons: family and health.

In this case, a moment's reflection allows Jerry to settle what he should do, which is to give up smoking. He has evaluated and weighed his reasons for deciding in that way and allows these reasons to guide his actions. Of course, this critique is not to say that the account Pereboom gives is not an adequate and even all-encompassing definition for normal deliberation. It simply requires too little of an agent insofar as rational deliberation is concerned. (SD2) seeks to show that in order for this deliberation to be rational, the agent should be required to engage in reflecting on the reliability of the evidence presented as justification for the decision. The agent should consider what he should do in response to the evidence Tom gives. In the case at hand, that requirement yields a quick moments reflection in order to disregard Tom's testimony. It seems, at least to me, an admittedly restrictive principle, but an essential one. The term rational, to Pereboom, seems to be lightly attached to deliberation in order to give an account seeking to make deliberation more robust than it is, but not quite encompassing what it means to be a rational agent. It seems that rationality requires a responsiveness to reason and a desire to make sure a decision is the best of its many options.

### Section III: A Possible Solution

Throwing out (S) and (Settled) would be drastic. They only require a slight revision to satisfy the requirement I seek to incorporate. First, a quick definitional stipulation. I believe a specific change is needed to (S) and (Settled) in order to shift the requirement to be rational:

**Rational Belief:** Beliefs are rational when they are (1) reasons responsive and (2) based in present attitudes about the world or personal memorial testimony.

This definition requires that a belief is given a degree of certainty between .51 and .99. Of course this definition is not necessarily the best, most all-encompassing definition of a rational belief, but should be stipulated for the sake of my argument. This is something that I think Pereboom mischaracterizes but is important for the agent to have. Pereboom said that a decision made with .51 certainty would be irrational, while one made with .99 would be rational. He says there is a threshold number between these points which isolate when a decision can stop being irrational and begin being rational but says it's unknown to him where that distinction lies (2014: 120). I think any level above chance (.50) would constitute a rational deliberation, assuming all other requirements are met. If an agent has even a .01 reason greater than chance for a particular reason, that seems to be sufficient to support that decision. A .51 probability does not constitute chance and therefore it should not be equated with chance in Pereboom's theory.

I believe that a new conception of rational beliefs and the belief that even a .51 probability can constitute a rational deliberation better encapsulates the true definition of rational deliberation. I would like to revise Pereboom's definitions of (S) and (Settled) to support this. They should say:

**(S')**: in order to rationally deliberate among distinct actions  $A_1$  and  $A_n$ , S cannot be certain of the proposition that she should do  $A_1$ , nor of the proposition that she should not do  $A_1$ , and either (a) the proposition that she should do  $A_1$  is consistent

with every proposition that, in the present context, is settled for her, or (b) if it is inconsistent with some proposition, she cannot rationally believe that it is; and

**(Settled')**: a proposition is settled just in case she believes it rationally and has evaluated at least one reasons responsive justification for believing so.

(S') deletes "she cannot believe that it is in conflict" from Pereboom's definition of (S) and adds the additions in bold. These additions are made in order to be consistent with the should/shall distinction as well as incorporating the stipulated rational belief definition. (Settled) is amended to delete "disregards any uncertainty she has that it is true." This disregard focuses on what an agent shall do rather than should do, which is not consistent with what I hope to assert. Further, the addition of an evaluative and rational requirement in (Settled') returns the focus of settling an issue to agent intervention in the deliberation process.

These new requirements require an agent to engage critically with principles in order to rationally deliberate about them. Although this is demanding, undoubtedly, it seems logical to require as a condition for rationality that an active role is played in deliberation. The only substantial addition this definition adds is that an agent should be required to engage with the reasons for which her decisions are efficacious. The main criticism I am anticipating is with my addition in (Settled'). I believe that settling an issue, within the context of rational deliberation, requires a reason for which one believes the claim she is depending on. Thus, I have added my definition of a rational belief as well as a requirement of at least one reasons responsive justification for believing so.

I hoped to develop a new definition as to when something is settled that allows an agent to have beliefs that are definitely not certain while still maintaining a level of possibility. Taking this new definition to the Smoker's Dilemma example, I think that it will show how Jerry's deliberation in the initial case was clearly irrational. Jerry had no reason to believe in Tom's memorial testimony and therefore was irrational to consider this as evidence without independent verification. But in the (SD2) example, Jerry's decision has a clear rational basis for believing in its falsity. Through a moments reflection, Jerry invalidated his belief in Tom's testimony. If for some reason, however, there needs to be an intermediary example that may test the limits of what I am trying to set forth without directly affirming what I believe, I have come up with the following example:

**(SD3)**: All is the same as in the original Smoker's Dilemma example. However, Jerry ponders Tom's memorial evidence. Jerry's memory is tainted with confirmation bias and he believes he remembers attempting to quit smoking as being unbearable. The evidence is taken as rationally verified through Jerry's own memorial evidence. The two options are in equipoise and Jerry flips the coin, causing him to decide to quit smoking on the basis of the coin flip.

In this example, Jerry's belief is not rooted in his own memorial evidence such as in (SD2). In (SD3), Jerry still relies on Tom's beliefs but is responsive to one reason for which he has to doubt the reliability of Tom's memorial evidence. In this case, Jerry's deliberation about whether or not to quit smoking is both rational and efficacious up until the coin flip. Although this may seem unintuitive, it does not seem far off to claim that the deliberation can be rational until the agent relies on the chance (e.g. the flip of a coin) to determine the outcome of his deliberative process. Surely if the two options are in true equipoise, the rational decision is to either: choose neither of the two and remain undecided or to allow a passive force to make the decision for you. The decision to flip

the coin is surely rational, because there is no alternative option for settling the issue, but the actual outcome is not of the rational sort, because it was not settled by the agent himself, but by the coin.

In all three cases, it very well may be true that Jerry was going to quit smoking. Determinism can still be true while allowing for this sort of reasons responsive rational deliberation. Jerry could be determined to quit smoking, but all the while deliberate on whether or not to quit smoking. This is because Pereboom works from an assumption of deliberation compatibilism. The emphasis on compatibilism is why there is a focus on epistemic openness to what Jerry ought to rationally do (where the agent's being epistemically open to various options does not require that each option is metaphysically open to her in a way that determinism might threaten), rather than an emphasis on performing the action of quitting smoking. Pereboom settles on the following definition of the deliberative process which states that:

S deliberates just in case S is engages in an active mental process whose aim is to figure out what to do from among a number of distinct, i.e., mutually incompatible, alternative, a process understood as one that can (but need not) include the weighing and evaluating of reasons for the options for what to do (2014: 110).

My view seeks to require a bit more of rational agents in order to ensure that decisions are not made on the basis of mere suppositions or chance. It is true that this requires more of rational agents, but I hope to substantiate why this is important now.

As I have asserted before, mere deliberation is not undermined by determinism. Agents can deliberate while still maintaining their capacity as an agent to cause and be caused by the world around them. I, however, believe that rational deliberation is a special sort of deliberation. The term rational should not be used lightly, especially in philosophical thought. Rationality requires more from an agent than simple supposition or assertions. This does not mean that agent deliberation about what one shall do cannot be efficacious while also not being rational. Cases in which two options are in true equipoise, not to be settled by any other factor except for a coin flip should be decided by such means. But the actual flipping of the coin is not an act of rational deliberation, even while it may be the most rational method for obtaining an outcome.

Pereboom outlines a very clear set of guidelines for when deliberations can be efficacious and determined. I simply believe that rational agency should be required for an agent and her deliberations to be caused by odds greater than .50. By allowing events to occur by chance, Pereboom's conception of rational deliberation seems to fall into a common critique of determinism, the disappearing agent problem. The disappearing agent problem occurs when an agent does not have the power to settle whether or not a decision will occur; that is, she does not play a sufficient role in determining whether or not her decision occurs (2014: 32). Thus, the agent "disappears," allowing outside factors to causally determine the outcome. While the agent's decisions are efficacious because of determinism, this does not mean that her decisions are casually determined by her settling in that way. I think that with my conception of a more active, rational role in decision-making, an agent can be ensured that her choice is settled because of her engagement with the deliberation process, all the while her outcome is determined. This should address the disappearing agent problem while making room for determinism and compatibilism about deliberation as Pereboom requires. Pereboom's view requires that he is a compatibilist about deliberation but an incompatibilist about free will. The substantive addition here is that the agent must not simply allow the world around her to decide for her, but should decide herself between two distinct choices  $A_1$  and  $A_2$ . An

agent must rely on evidence to support her reasons for deciding in some specific way and, as a byproduct of determinism, her decision will be efficacious and rational.

#### **Section IV: Implications for Pereboom**

If accepted, this theory can still be held consistent with determinism and free will skepticism. This adaptation of rational deliberation to be easily incorporated within Pereboom's theory. Although it requires a stronger definition of rational deliberation, it does so under the pretense that rationality requires an agent's active involvement in making something the case. More clearly, the 'should' question requirement ties in clearly with Pereboom's conception of moral responsibility. He believes that you must be reasons responsive and rational in order to be morally responsible (2014: 143). This amended definition of rational deliberation is important for Pereboom's conception of moral responsibility.

Pereboom argues that in the backward-looking sense, you cannot be responsible for what you have done if you in fact are not the source of your actions. Common emotions in the backward-looking sense of moral responsibility are indignation and resentment because the agent should have acted otherwise, where should is an 'ought of obligation' (2014: 141). Feelings of disappointment seem to be a more logical response to an agent's failure to rationally choose an outcome which is considered morally right. If an agent had rationally deliberated about an issue and then flipped a coin to determine the outcome, it seems less logical to meet that person with moral concern for their choice. There does not seem to be grounds for blaming that agent for the happenstance outcome of their coin flipping.

On the other hand, if an agent had rationally deliberated about a given issue and rationally decided to engage in a morally wrong action, her choice intuitively could be met with disappointment for her not seeking out the right reasons for choosing against the morally wrong action. It would be irrational to show an agent indignation when she simply sought out the wrong reasons for doing an action rather than the right reasons. Disappointment is a better emotion to meet an agent with when she has misevaluated her options. Pereboom's conception of moral responsibility is one of axiological recommendation (2014: 141). This is where the agent is met with sorrow and moral concern for choosing his or her decisions incorrectly. This fits more neatly with a more demanding requirement on rational deliberation. Agents who deliberate and who are held to be morally responsible for their actions intuitively should be met with concern for choosing wrongly, or misevaluating options, so Pereboom's theory works here.

Overall, I think that it is necessary to more adequately and compass rationality and active agency within a definition of rational deliberation. This means, in the present context, amending Pereboom's conception of (S) and (Settled), and subsequently (DE). This expansion does require more of an agent but also seeks to require justification and reasons responsiveness for a decision to be labeled as efficacious and rational. The new proposed rational belief definition encompasses what it means to be an active rational agent within the context of the rational deliberation. This requires an agent to answer the question 'what should I do' in lieu of focusing on 'what shall I do?' Surely, more work is to be done and more development will be necessary, but for now, this seems to be a step forward towards determining what rational deliberation is.

#### **Conclusion**

In summary, I have shown that Pereboom's conditions for rational deliberation are inadequate. By discussing a series of cases, I have amended his conditions to reveal how the agent plays a more active role in an instance of rational deliberation, something that she must do if her deliberation is to be properly considered rational. I have discussed how these amendments bear on the other notable parts of Pereboom's theory.

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# The External Origin of The Mind: A New Perspective for the Mind-Body Problem

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Notwithstanding the brilliant technological and scientific achievements that human beings have accomplished after Rene Descartes' time, the Cartesian mind-body problem persists. In the *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Descartes creates 'substance dualism' by arguing that the mind can be conceived separately from the body, therefore, they must be essentially separate substances (Descartes, 4). The mind is still a mysterious concept, and we still do not have any all-inclusive theory that explains what the mind exactly is, or how and why it exists. In contemporary philosophy, some think the mind is not just attributed to humans, but to animals as well. I believe that we can attribute to animals quasi-minds that expose some of the capacities that the mind of human beings perform, such as the ability to feel pain. Yet, I believe that the mind, specifically the properly functioning mind in social context, is still a unique human capacity.

Therefore, the mind should be understood in the human context. We must understand it with respect to the capabilities that are unique to human beings, which are respectively the ability to have representational mental states, and the ability to use language properly. Those two abilities are the ones that Descartes argued for in the *Discourse on Method*. Descartes argues that the mind's unique abilities are two-fold: First, understanding the true nature of bodies, i.e. understanding them through the representational concepts that are beyond any sensible faculties. Second, containing the ability to use proper language, i.e. the system that can transmit information about those concepts. (Descartes, 1, 22).

These abilities are not innate ones. On the one hand, our scientific understanding of the world clarifies that the mind is contingent upon the body; no mind can exist without a particular body that the mind is attached to. On the other hand, having a body, hence having a brain, is not sufficient to have those aforementioned abilities. The human brain is designed by evolution to acquire those abilities. The necessary information about the formation and the infrastructure of the brain is transmitted by genes, and it is contained in our DNA. Yet, those abilities are *acquired*.<sup>1</sup> Genes do not transmit the ability to use language, or the ability to have representational states. In fact, the instructions to use those abilities are preserved in *coexistence*, the collective existence of minds.

Coexistence maintains and preserves the human social context. It contains the human created information, the information that would be extinct, if humans were not there to think it. That information is transmitted non-genetically, by the skills that we have invented. The most prominent skill that we use to transmit non-genetic information is language. In that regard, the mind depends on language to access this information that is necessary for it to become a fully functioning proper mind. Yet, ability to use effective language is also an outcome of the developmental processes of the mind, specifically to have a representational model of mind, which in fact depends on language to cultivate itself. The dynamic relationship between the mind, language

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<sup>1</sup>I must say that I take for granted that using effective language as not an innate ability. Yet, I would love to discuss with anyone who argue for the innateness of the ability to use effective language.

and coexistence demonstrates that the mind is contingent upon external factors to fully flourish. Therefore, even though Descartes' substance dualism is false, he might still be right about the dualistic nature of the mind and body relationship in some sense. The fact that the body by itself does not entail the proper mind illustrates a dualism in respect to the socially external origin of the mind.

In the first section of this essay, I will summarize the psychological studies about the developmental process of the mind, specifically about the development of the representational model of the mind, the version of the mind that contains representational mental states. There is abundance of evidence that the representational model of the mind depends on employing the theory of mind ability, which arises around the age of 3. I will discuss the external factors that are necessary for the development of the *theory of mind* ability, such as language and the mother's mental state utterances. Then, I will discuss theories about the role of representational mental states in the social context, and about the essential role of coexistence in the developmental processes of the mind. In the second section, I will summarize David Chalmers' hard problem of consciousness, and then try to solve the first part of it. I argue that the socially external framework of the mind that I propose provides a unique shift in our perspective of the hard problem of consciousness, and in fact it validates the theory that I argue for.

## The Psychological Background

In order to understand the contingent relationship between coexistence and the mind, it is necessary to examine the developmental process of the mind. The mind is contingent upon external factors to fully become fully functioning in a social context. Therefore, the developmental processes of the mind consist of the implementations of mental skills such as theory of mind ability and language eventually lead to the acquisition of the representational model of mind. Representational properties of the mind are contingent on language, a culturally embedded medium that allows the transmission of information between minds. With all this information, the mind is able to develop the self.

Minds' ability to attribute mental states to themselves and to the other minds is counter-intuitively defined as the theory of mind by David Premack and Guy Woodruff. Such an ability of the mind is called a theory, both because of the impossibility of observing those mental states, and of the mind's ability to *predict* observations based on those states (Premack and Woodruff, 515). Theory of mind is also referred to as 'folk psychology', the general framework for attributing propositional attitudes to minds in order to explain their behaviors (Goldman, 2). Theory of mind is considered as being "shared by almost all human beings beyond early childhood," thus, as a mark of having a *proper* mind (Marraffa). Therefore, in modern psychology there are some experiments that test whether a mind, especially the mind of an infant, has these abilities or not. Yet, for the purpose of this essay, I will define theory of mind ability as the awareness of mental states.

The false-belief task is the most common practice that modern psychologists use to demonstrate the existence of a theory of mind in children. In the false-belief task, a child is exposed to a scenario, in which a puppet leaves an object on a table and leaves the scene. Thereafter, a second puppet comes and hides the object that the first puppet left. Then, experimenters ask to child where the *first* puppet thinks the object is. Answers of children to this simple question, determines their score in the false-belief tasks. There occurs a substantial shift between age 3, when children fail to impute mental states to the first puppet by answering wrongly that the first puppet thinks that the object is where

the second puppet hid it, to age 4, when children start to understand that the first puppet does not know the fact that second puppet hid the object; hence, the fact that it thinks that the object is where it left (Goldman, 3).

Alison Gopnik interprets the empirical evidence from the theory of mind experiments as demonstrative factors of “a quite general shift in the child’s concept of the mind at around 3 ½ years”(5). According to Gopnik, children prior to 3 ½ years of age believe that objects are “directly apprehended by the mind,” “as a matter of a direct relation” instead of our conception of mind, in which objects are mediated by representational properties such as concepts and propositional attitudes (5). As a consequence, 3 years old children fail to pass false-belief tasks, because they do not comprehend the cases of misrepresentation, such as false beliefs, which require a representational model of the mind. Gopnik argues that the main difference that happens in this shift in children’s ability to pass false-belief tasks is considered as a move from “an elementary copy theory of mind to a fully ‘representational theory of the mind’” (Marraffa).

Uta Frith and Francesca Happe extend this claim further by arguing that lacking theory of other minds, which is tested by the false-belief task, means lacking a theory of own mind (Frith and Happe, 1). Their argument is based on autistic children’s inability to attribute mental states to other minds. This argument draws a logical inference that autistic children also fail to attribute mental states to themselves, which means “not having introspective awareness” of their mental states, hence, not having *proper* minds (Ibid, 6). Frith and Happe’s study connects having a representational theory of mind to having a proper mind.

Remember that Gopnik argues that the representational model of mind and its main premise, the argument that the mental states *represent* the world that the agent inhabits, are constructed between the age of 3 and 4 (9). Empirical evidence demonstrates that children are not born with the ability to attribute mental states to themselves and others. Instead, they acquire this ability subsequently. The developmental aspects of the representational theory of mind in addition to Frith and Happe’s conclusion express that effective usage of our brains, means that having a proper mind, is also an outcome of developmental processes. Therefore, possessing a mind, i.e. possessing a properly functioning brain that has full representational capacities does not supervene solely on the internal architecture of brains’, but as an outcome of the combination of the internal architecture and the factors that are external to the brain.

Language is the most influential external factor that is evidently related to theory of mind, hence, to the representational theory of mind that I use as a predicate of having a proper mind. Frith and Happe suggest that the theory of mind ability is fundamental to the *proper* communication between humans, hence, the acquisition of language (2). They argue that the effective usage of language necessitates the understanding of the misrepresentations, thus, “low-functioning individuals with autism” fail to “develop over time the richly connected semantic and experiential associations” that are also fundamental to reflect minds’ own mental states that also contain false beliefs (Frith and Happe, 10). In that regard, language is considered as “the medium” that allows children to learn “the unobservable mental states of others,” hence, to become aware of mental states in general (Woolfe et al., 768).

As a consequence, the dynamic relationship between language and the theory of mind is evidently expressed in other various experiments. Carol Miller provides an introductory study that summarizes current research about the relation between language and theory of mind. She argues that theory of mind is necessary for communications; but she also grants a crucial role for language for the acquisition of

theory of mind. Moreover, she argues that language is “a better predictor of theory of mind than the reverse” (Miller, 146). Language is the source of information that provides meanings to the unobservable mental states; thus, children’s exposure to communication about mental states influences their theory of mind development (Ibid., 146). Consequently, she argues that children with language learning difficulties might have problems with their theory of mind abilities, and children with theory of mind problems might have limited communicative development (Ibid.,152).

In another study that draws a necessary connection between language and theory of mind ability, Miligan et al. indicate the importance of children’s language ability for false-belief understanding (622). They argue that language ability, specifically syntactic ability, the linguistic structure of a language that determines how “words are combined into sentences,” provides the necessary format for representing false beliefs (Miligan et al., 628). They argue that false belief tasks involve sentential complements, which are “tensed subordinate clauses” that are embedded under propositional attitudes to form complex sentences. Usage of sentential complements allows the truth of the whole of a complex sentence, even though it has an embedded clause that expresses a false proposition. Therefore, we know that the sentence that *‘the puppet believes that the object is where it left it’* is true even though the puppet’s belief is a misrepresentation (Ibid., 628).

According to Milligan et al., syntactic ability also allows children to “keep track of changing locations in false-belief stories”(629). However, semantic ability, (using meaning-carrying words or representational concepts about the world) is also another important aspect of language. With semantic ability, language allows children to “participate fully in the culture, to engage in social interactions... and to listen to stories,” which “promote the development of theory of mind” (Ibid., 629). At the same time, theory of mind ability refers to proper usage of the mind, hence, predicates “the ability to participate in linguistic social action” (Ibid., 629) So, they argue that acquiring language ability and understanding false-belief tasks, means that passing theory of mind tests, are significantly related to one another, and language ability affects to false-belief understanding more than the reverse (Ibid., 638).

Moreover, Ruffman et al. offer a way for the implementation of mental states to infants. They use previous studies that found correlations between the causal talk of mothers’ to their children and children’s beliefs and affective understandings as basis of their experiments. Thereafter, they argue that the data they get from their experiments illustrate that only the mental utterances of mothers have fundamental causal role in promoting theory of mind understanding of their children, not vice versa (Ruffman et al., 744). Additionally, they compare the importance of mothers’ mental state utterances with language ability, and conclude that both are crucially important for the implementation of theory of mind understanding to developing minds (Ibid., 746). But, they favor mother’s mental state utterances as “the most important facilitators of theory of mind insight” (Ibid., 748). As a consequence, Ruffmann et al. provide the empirical evidence that illustrates the fundamental role of mental states utterances, language directed development of the *proper* mind.

Nevertheless, there are speculations about the appropriate role of the representational theory of mind and folk psychology that it entails. Proponents of the theory of mind widely suppose that the evolutionary role of folk psychology is attributing propositional attitudes to other minds in order to predict their behaviors. Yet, Ted Zawidzki is opposed to this assumed function of mind reading in our everyday practices. Zawidzki argues that these mind reading practices are neither quick nor

reliably accurate, which are the two necessary conditions for any reliable predictive tool in one's environment. Moreover, mind reading also fails to express the holistic nature of our mental states. Zawidzki asserts that one's mental states are not discrete entities but are dependent on an indefinite number of coexisting mental states (196). That holistic framework entails the indetermination problem for predicting others' mental states. As a consequence, mind reading becomes nothing more than "an impractical tool" for our everyday contexts (Zawidzki, 195).

According to Zawidzki, folk psychology, hence, the representational model of mind could not be selected by evolution for its mind reading ability, but only for its *mind shaping* ability that functions as molding behaviors of every developing mind "in order to make coordination [between] them easier" and make them appropriately socialized (194). In this picture, newly developing minds are constantly shaped by their caretakers to use propositional attitudes to infer the "normatively sanctioned response" for real life problems (Zawidzki 199). Prescriptive ability of propositional attitudes, rather than a proposed predictive ability, solves the indetermination problem that is caused by the holistic nature of the propositional attitudes, and gives a better functioning role to them than predicting behavior presupposes.

Daniel Hutto's 'Narrative Practice Hypothesis' (NPH) is another influential theory that offers a solution to the indetermination problem of our naturally holistic mental states. Like Zawidzki, Hutto is also quite skeptical about the predicting abilities of propositional attitudes. He thinks that our social encounters occur in a context in which everyone's social roles are determined. It means that no one has to predict one's behavior as long as others act appropriately to the social norms. In the cases with deviant behaviors, one's actions "cry out for explanations," and Hutto argues that 'reasons' provide accurate explanations for these kinds of deviant behaviors that one cannot presume beforehand (45).

Acting for a reason has been assessed as one of the marks of the mental by Hutto, who argues that it involves "a particular pairing of a belief and a desire," moreover, understanding reasons necessitates an understanding of "the way propositional attitudes inter-relate" (43). Nevertheless, none of the previously existing theories of theory of mind can offer a satisfactory schema for understanding actions in accordance with reasons. Hutto claims that false-belief tasks only demonstrate the mind's "meta-representational ability [i.e.,] showing command of the concept of belief" (50-51). Yet, this is not enough for comprehending those concepts' roles in various contexts, which get revealed by reasons. Comprehension of reasons requires an extra understanding of how those beliefs are interconnected besides a comprehension of the wider context that a person acts in, and requires relating to that person's story (Hutto, 51). Hutto defines any account that provides a reason for particular actions as a "folk psychological narrative" that provides the instructions for combining appropriate propositional attitudes in varying contexts (45).

In Hutto's account, being a folk psychologist means that possessing the comprehensive abilities of folk psychological narratives is "not built into minds"; hence, it is an acquired ability (53). NPH explains how developing minds acquire the comprehension of the folk psychological narratives. According to NPH, the stories that children are exposed to narrate how a person would act for a reason. The archetypical stories such as the Little Red Riding Hood exemplify "the forms and norms of folk psychology," implanting the instructions for how fundamental propositional attitudes such as beliefs and desires are combined with one another, alongside other cognitive faculties such as emotions and perceptions in "their normal contexts of operations"

(Hutto, 53-56). Throughout the training that children manage to accomplish with the framework of those archetypical stories, they get better at understanding social contexts that consist acts out of reasons. Their “pattern-completing, form-finding” mental architectures and their engagement with narrative practices turns them into properly functioning humans with properly functioning minds (Ibid., 58).

Zawidzki’s and Hutto’s accounts acknowledge the fundamental place of the external, specifically the cultural conditions in the developmental processes of minds. According to the evidence that is provided by theory of mind tests, it is clear that possessing a fully representational mind is an outcome of the development of the mind; hence, it is not an originally innate capacity of our brains. Zawidzki provides a socio-evolutionary role for the representational properties of the mind, specifically propositional attitudes, thus, demonstrating why they are socially constructed phenomena. Hutto’s NPH demonstrates both how minds are shaped and clarifies the exact role of coexistence in the developmental processes. Archetypical stories that are fundamental in turning fresh minds into proper minds are preserved via cultural context; hence, they are not genetically transmitted from one generation to another. In the absence of those stories, it is clear that there would be no instructions for the combinations of contextually appropriated mental states to one another, therefore, there would not be properly functioning minds.

The last psychological study I examine is about the dynamic relationship between language and the development of the self by Wang et al. (2010). The self is the embodiment of the mind in social context. It is important to understand how the self develops to fully understand how the mind works. After the implementation of theory of mind understanding, the developing mind becomes the representational model of mind, in which ‘I’ understands that other minds contain mental states; hence, ‘I’ contains mental states. One grasps self-awareness of one’s mental states, (impossible if one lacked a representational model of mind) and starts to see oneself more as a self with desires, beliefs etc. So, one develops a “self-concept,” the “conceptual representations of self.” The self-concept affects and is in turn affected by “the extended self,” the memory of the significant experiences that the self encounters in her life. (Wang et al., 555).

This extended self provides essential information to self-concept. Self-concept controls the construction of that information, memories, in accordance with self’s current existence, and thus determines “the accessibility of memories and the accessibility of their content” (Conway, 595). Those are the two aspects that construct the self by being in a constant dynamic relationship to one another. The self is a cultural one, because the two aspects of the self are constantly influenced by the beliefs, symbols, and everyday practices of the culture, the parochial social context that the self exists in and from which she constructs herself (Wang et al., 555). Therefore, the development of the self refers to a cultural adaptation along with the central part of “a symbolic system of culture,” which is nothing other than language (Ibid., 556).

Language is the fundamental medium that allows the transmission of cultural content from one self to another. As stated above, the representational properties are implemented to the mind only after the acquisition of theory of mind and language ability. Thus, the representational properties of the mind, which are fundamental for the development of the self-concept, are contingent on language. Children with language ability get access to the cultural knowledge that is necessary for sociocultural and linguistic competence in a community. Therefore, their selves, both the self-concept and the extended self, are shaped and in some sense determined by the cultural knowledge that is embedded in language that they use. Because the cultural knowledge resides in

language, the acquisition of another language means obtaining access to another cultural framework, hence, “the establishment of a new cognitive system” (Ibid., 556).

Therefore, Wang et al. study bilingual children from Hong Kong, where Western and Chinese culture exist together and where English and Chinese are both official languages. Two cultures mean two different belief systems, hence, two different representational foundations for minds to cultivate themselves. Therefore, children from Hong Kong have “full cultural competency in both” of the cultures (Ibid., 557). On the one hand, they live with traditional collectivist values of Chinese culture that are imposed to them by their family, and on the other hand, they go to Western schools and live in accordance with Western values that are imposed on them by their social life. Authors argue that they “grow up bicultural”; therefore, they are valuable test subjects to understand the relationship between language and the cultural self (Ibid., 557).

According to the results of their study, language is “critical to the development and maintenance of a cultural self.” Hence, it is essential for the existence of the mind in social context (Ibid., 564). Test subjects that were interviewed in English tended to put themselves in the center of their answers. They provided more information about their personal experiences, described themselves by their personal qualities, and talked more about their own perspectives when they recall their memories. However, the test subjects that were interviewed in Chinese gave more “socially oriented self-descriptions and memory accounts” (Ibid., 558). Moreover, authors also find out that the children who were interviewed in Chinese were in a higher agreement with Chinese collectivist values, whereas English interviewed children agreed more with the Western individualistic values. Therefore, Wang et al. managed to provide the empirical evidence that illustrates the dynamic relationship between culture, language and the self (563).

The results of the study suggest that different languages lead to different modes of self. The usage of different languages triggers different cultural belief systems, which in turn, shape the self-concept in virtue of the particular cultural values they impose. Within the activation of a particular cultural belief system, the self-concept manipulates the extended self, autobiographical memory of the self. Therefore, those findings support the theories that designate language as “[the] representational medium of culture,” which preserves the knowledge that are necessary for the maintaining and the expression of the self “through linguistic and conceptual configurations” (Ibid., 563). Moreover, those findings collaborate Zawidzky’s mind shaping hypothesis and surpass Hutto’s analysis by illustrating that language learning and narrative interactions that take place in cultural contexts not only provide the necessary skills to properly use the representational mental states, but also transmit cultural knowledge and competence to the self. In that regard, stories that Hutto prioritizes as ‘reason providers’ do not just clarify the reason per se, but the reasons that are embedded with cultural values.

Recent research about the developmental processes of the mind illustrates that the mind is an externally, specifically socially constructed phenomena that is contingent upon external phenomena such as ability to attribute mental states to other minds and oneself, and ability to effectively use language to engage in social context. Social context is parochial in a cultural context, which preserves the necessary instructive information of the development of the mind. To properly develop, the mind depends on the cultural information that has been preserved by coexistence, instead of the genetic information, which provides only the necessary foundations for the internal architecture of the brain. After the development, the mind and the brain form a unity, yet this unity is not an innate one, thus, we can argue that there exists a sort of duality in the origins of being, and our understanding thereof. This way of approaching the mind-body problem has potential to

shift our perspective of the hard problem of consciousness, which in turn will contribute to the socially external approach of the mind.

## Social Externalism and The Hard Problem of Consciousness

Consciousness is considered as one of the marks of the mental; therefore, it is an essential property of the mind, which must be ascertained in order to fully understand the nature of the mind. Loosely, consciousness is the mind's state of awareness, both of itself and of its surroundings; yet it has been redefined extensively in the course of last fifty years. To understand consciousness, scholars from various fields examine mental states that are affiliated with consciousness, and try to comprehend how those states work, and why they exist. I believe that to properly understand consciousness, hence the mind, we need to figure out why the hard problem of consciousness exists, and what this problem entails. I argue that the hard problem of consciousness is an outcome of the socially external nature of the mind.

David Chalmers' influential contribution to the mind-body problem is his description of the *hard problem of consciousness*. According to Chalmers, hard problems of consciousness are the ones that resist materialistic methods and explanations that are based on computational or neural mechanisms (4). Materialists argue that there exists nothing over and above than physical phenomena; hence, reductive materialists argue that every mental state is *reductively* explainable by the underlying functional mechanisms that are revealed by their microphysical properties.<sup>2</sup> Yet, they fail to explain *the hard problem of consciousness, the problem of explaining experience* (Chalmers, 5).

Chalmers argues that every state of being that "there is something it is like to be in them," from mental states such as thinking about trees to the purely bodily state of perceiving the redness of a tomato, contains a subjective experience (Chalmers, 5). Consciousness to him is, the fact that there is *something it is like to be-ness* of an organism.<sup>3</sup> The mind experiences the world that it inhabits; therefore, its existence contains the subjective aspect that is impossible to objectify. Even though there is a consensus about the bodily basis of experience, one cannot objectively explain why experience arises from the bodily phenomena, and essentially, why there is "something it is like to be that organism"(Chalmers, 5).

The hardness of the problem of experience occurs because experience cannot be explained even after every functional bodily system that is relevant to experience is explained (Chalmers, 6). Chalmers asserts that the performance of the bodily functions is conceptually explained by the mechanism that performs those functions (7). When the cognitive mechanism that performs a function, such as the verbal report, is explained, the verbal report of the mind does not need any extra conceptual explanation to be understood. Therefore such mental states are "functionally definable" (Chalmers, 7). Yet, the experience of seeing red needs an explanation that goes beyond explaining the functionally definable states. Therefore, there is an explanatory gap between functionally definable states and the experiences that arise from those states.

In *Materialism and Qualia: The Explanatory Gap*, Joseph Levine turns Saul Kripke's argument against materialism "from a metaphysical one into an epistemological one"

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<sup>2</sup>Chalmers states that he uses the broader definition of function as the causal role of a system that might perform when it produces a behavior (8).

<sup>3</sup>In *What it is like to be a bat?* Thomas Nagel defines the conscious experience, hence conscious organism as there is something it is like to be that organism; and argues that in the light of current physical systems, it is impossible to derive a more comprehensive definition than his.

(354).<sup>4</sup> Levine argues that functional definitions of mental states leave a significant gap between the functional explanation of a mental state and the experience that arises from it. In the case with pain, reductive materialists argue that pain is nothing other than C-fiber firing, which is the causal role of the state of pain. Nevertheless, C-fiber firing does not provide any explanation for the experience of pain, and the question that “why pain should feel the way it does”(Levine, 357). Functional definitions fall short of explaining why there exists the ‘what is likeness’ of the mental state pain, and why the experience of pain arises from C-fiber firing. Therefore, Levine argues, facts about experiences are “epistemologically inaccessible” by functional definitions.

According to Chalmers, any satisfactory theory of experience must close the explanatory gap. He acknowledges the possibility for the physical basis of experience, but he maintains that functionally definable states, which reductively explain physical bodily systems, cannot explain, what the experience of redness is, or how/why it arises from the perceptive state that can be reductively explained. He concludes the first part of his chapter by asserting the need of a non-reductive explanation, which counts experience as one of the fundamental properties of our ontology, for solving the hard problem of consciousness (Chalmers, 8).

The social externalist approach of the mind that I propose tackles the first part of the hard problem of consciousness by demonstrating why it is impossible to explain the experience of redness, and by explaining what experience exactly is. I believe the mystery of experience occurs because it resists the reductive explanations of the materialist arguments. I think Chalmers has become sympathetic to the possibility of a materialist explanation of experience, yet he still stands his ground against the reductivist accounts of the mind. Experience might still play a decisive role in the mind-body problem, but it does not necessarily refute the materialist arguments that argue for a bodily basis of experiences.

The explanatory gap is not just the problem of functionally explaining experiences by bodily mechanisms, but it is essentially a linguistic problem that is caused by the socially external basis of the mind. As I demonstrated above, acquiring the ability to use language provides the originally extrinsic representational states that are necessary for the development of the proper mind. Nevertheless, there exists a dynamic relationship between the representational states and language, because language is essentially constructed upon representational concepts. The word “red” refers to the concept of the color red, which represents the physical property of redness which is in turn required for a phenomenal experience (Bryne and Hilbert, 3). Therefore, language can only comprehensively transmit information about representations that are the outcomes of the non-phenomenal mental states of the mind.

As a consequence, explaining the experience of redness to someone who is blind from birth is impossible, because there exists no other way than describing it as *there is something it is like to see red*. When we transmit any information about

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<sup>4</sup>Kripke’s notorious argument against materialism in Naming and Necessity is as follows: The identity statements need rigid designators, the referring terms that designate the same object in every possible world, to be necessarily true. In the case with pain, materialist’ alleged rigid designator C-fiber firing were true if and only if pain would not be conceivable without C-fiber firing. Yet, it is conceivable that pain can occur without c-fiber firing, but it is not conceivable without the experience of pain. Thereupon, Kripke argues that the experience of pain is the only rigid designator that explains pain; hence materialists’ reductionist argument is necessarily false.

the color red via language, we use the objects that are red as references.<sup>5</sup> This type-demonstrative way of explaining the experience of redness demonstrates the circularity in the linguistic, specifically semantic, definitions of experiences, hence the failure of language on transmitting information about experiences. The circularity occurs because the experience of seeing red is necessarily accompanied by the perception of seeing red. Therefore, the phenomenal state of seeing red is fundamentally a bodily state that is contingent upon the bodily faculty of perception.

Experiences, phenomenal states, are momentarily mental states that are caused by bodily actions that are performed by bodily faculties. Phenomenal states are contingent upon bodily faculties, because I cannot conceive experiences without an embodiment that experiences them; hence, they must be purely bodily phenomena. Due to their purely bodily nature, phenomenal states cannot be accurately attended and transmitted by the mind, which is originally a socially external phenomenon. The mind has an extrinsic origin; it fails to properly understand or explain its blind spots, i.e. phenomenal states (purely bodily phenomena), by its own terms. The explanatory gap occurs not because of the purely mental or mysterious nature of phenomenal states, but because of their purely bodily nature, and the discrepancy between the mind and the purely bodily phenomena. Consequently, the hard problem of consciousness demonstrates the external origin of the mind. It retains its importance for illustrating the mind-body problem in that regard.

## Conclusion

The mind is analogous to the software that the hardware of a computer depends on. Without the software, the hardware cannot be used properly, thus fails to be a computer. The software of our body, the mind provides the vital instructions for the proper usage of the body in a social context. Coexistence is the database that preserves the necessary instructive information for forming the proper mind. Language is the network that maintains the connection between the database and the individual. Therefore, the mind depends both on the hardware that it is implemented in, and the database that preserves instructions. Even though the mind cannot be separated from the body, the body is not sufficient by itself for the mind to develop. Thus, an origin-based duality exists. The developmental processes of the mind that depend on the socially external factors illustrate the dependency of the mind on external factors, hence, its external origin.

Moreover, the fact that the mind is an *originally* external phenomenon illuminates why the hard problem of consciousness exists. The explanatory gap between experiences and functional definitions is in fact a linguistic problem. Because of the fact that language works through representational concepts, it falls short on fully transmitting semantic content of experiences, which are contingent upon bodily faculties. The hard problem of explaining experiences, therefore, manifests the disparity between the mind and the purely bodily phenomena, hence the external origin of the mind.

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<sup>5</sup>I take for granted that Bryne and Hilbert's defense of color realism is true, therefore, I agree with their conclusion that color is a physical property of the objects; hence objects are colored in themselves.

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# Confronting Horrendous Evils: Meaning-Making as a Foundation for Coping Practice

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## Abstract

This project explores the value of Marilyn McCord Adams' treatment of horrendous evils to suffering individuals and their attempts to make sense of their experience of horrors. Drawing on her concept of meaning-making, I will show how Adams' work can provide a foundation for praxis for suffering individuals. I will begin by expounding the connection between meaning-making and praxis. Then, with reference to meaning-making discourse from the psychology literature, I will specify two ways Adams' work provides a foundation for one's praxis: first, it can function as the end goal of one's practice and second, it can direct one's practice.

## Introduction

Known for their *prima facie* life-ruining potential, horrendous evils give us reasons to doubt the goodness of God. Responses to the problem of horrendous evils have remained largely theoretical as opposed to practical. They consist of abstract, detached treatments of the logical problem of evils—not so much concrete, personal treatments of the existential or psychological threat of evils. Marilyn McCord Adams shows how God is good to the individual in the midst of their suffering horrendous evil, but she says less about how the individual can respond to God's goodness. In this paper, I will first define the category of horrendous evils, and then exposit Adams' main argument. I will then argue that Adams' treatment of horrendous evils can provide a foundation for praxis for suffering individuals, that is, concrete action that can possibly defeat the horrendous evils in the context of their premortem life. My case consists of two parts. In Part 1, I will show that Adams' concept of meaning-making has implicit application to the human response to the experience of horrendous evils. In Part 2, I will specify two forms this application can take.

## Defining Horrendous Evils

Horrendous evils are defined as evils, the doing or suffering of which, “constitute *prima facie* reason to doubt whether the participant's life could be a great good to him/her on the whole.”<sup>1</sup> Horrendous evils degrade the person to subhuman status by reaching beyond physical pain or material deprivation and “into the deep structure of the person's frameworks of meaning-making, seemingly to defeat the individual's value as a person.”<sup>2</sup> Some examples of paradigmatic horrors include: the rape of a woman and the axing off of her arms; psychophysical torture to disintegrate one's personality; cannibalizing

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<sup>1</sup>Marilyn M. Adams. *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), 26.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 27.

one's own offspring; betrayal of one's deepest loyalties; child pornography; parental-child incest; slow death by starvation; participation in the Nazi death camps; the explosion of nuclear bombs over crowds; and having to choose which of one's children shall live and which be executed by terrorists.<sup>3</sup>

An evil is counted as horrendous when, from the participant's perspective, it has the power *prima facie* to rob their life of any positive personal meaning. Thus, only persons, insofar as they are meaning-makers, are afflicted by horrendous evils. Children count as participants of horrendous evils because they are "potential meaning-makers"; Adams notes the lifelong destructive power of childhood traumas such as sexual exploitation.<sup>4</sup> All other creatures such as animals and plants lack the capacity for meaning-making, and are therefore unlikely to be afflicted by horrors.<sup>5</sup> (While something should be said about humans who lack the capacity for meaning-making, they will not be addressed in this paper.) Participants of horrendous evils have reason to doubt whether their life is worth living because they struggle to conceive how so great an evil can be surmounted. They also struggle to conceive of plausible candidate reasons why God would permit them.

## The Goodness of God

Adams does not provide plausible candidate reasons why God permits such evils (as theodicies and defenses hitherto have attempted) because reasons-why are inconceivable and inaccessible.<sup>6</sup> They in fact "draw a picture of divine indifference or even hostility to the human plight" because they concern general suffering and ignore the need for God to respond to individual suffering.<sup>7</sup> For Adams, it is a more worthwhile project to show not why but *how* God is good to the individual despite their participation in horrors. Below, I exposit her argument.

### Adams' Argument: How is God Good to the Participant?

P1: God can be good to the individual participating in horrendous evil by making their life good on the whole.<sup>8</sup>

P2: God will make their life good on the whole by defeating the horrendous evil in the context of their premortem life.<sup>9</sup>

P3: God will defeat the horrendous evil in the context of their premortem life by giving it positive meaning.<sup>10</sup>

P4: God will give the horrendous evil positive meaning by integrating it into a good-enough whole to which the horrendous evil bears a relation of organic unity.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Marilyn M. Adams and Stewart Sutherland, "Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, no. 63 (1989): 300, accessed March 7, 2018, JSTOR Journals, EBSCOhost.

<sup>4</sup>Adams, *Horrendous Evils*, 28.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>6</sup>Adams and Sutherland, "Horrendous Evils," 304.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 303.

<sup>8</sup>Adams, *Horrendous Evils*, 31.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>10</sup>Adams and Sutherland, "Horrendous Evils," 307.

<sup>11</sup>Adams, *Horrendous Evils*, 28.

C: Therefore, ultimately, God can be good to the individual participating in horrendous evil by integrating the evil into a good-enough whole to which it bears a relation of organic unity.

### The Good-Enough Whole

The good-enough whole into which the horror is integrated is one's relationship with God, where God is understood to be "incommensurate goodness."<sup>12</sup> In classical theology, God is a being "than which nothing greater can be conceived"; a being of supreme, infinite, and paradigmatic goodness.<sup>13</sup> This means His goodness is incommensurate with any package of temporal evils and/or created goods.<sup>14</sup> Defeat of horrors demands nothing less than incommensurate goodness. By being in an intimate relationship with the participant, God ensures him/her a life that is good on the whole.

### Three Ways of Integration Into the Good-Enough Whole

Adams identifies three ways in which God integrates one's participation in horror into a relationship with Himself. The first is through *identifying with Christ*. Christian belief counts the crucifixion of Christ as a horrendous evil.<sup>15</sup> As such, one's participation in horrendous evil can be a means of sympathetically or mystically identifying with Christ. Sympathetic identification enables the participant to understand another's pain because they themselves have experienced it. Thus, victims of horrendous evil become more Godlike insofar as they sympathetically identify with the suffering Christ through their own suffering.<sup>16</sup>

Mystical identification entails the participant's literal sharing of Christ's suffering, whereby they mystically and symbolically become Christ, and their sufferings become Christ's own.<sup>17</sup> On this construal, the participant's suffering has positive symbolic meaning because the participant collaborates with divine suffering, and divine suffering is a paradigmatic good.<sup>18</sup> Following C. E. Rolt, Adams contends that one identifies with Christ when one "absorbs" the evil's blows with suffering love rather than retaliates.<sup>19</sup> One "win[s] the honor of sharing God's work of suffering for the world's redemption. . . by serving as a created loci where suffering is defeated by absorption rather than coercion."<sup>20</sup> Thus, God confers positive meaning on one's suffering horrendous evil by integrating their suffering into sympathetic and mystical identification with the suffering Christ.

The second way of integration is through *divine gratitude*. Adams articulates the possibility of defeat of horrors through postmortem heavenly welcome and divine gratitude. Julian of Norwich depicts our entrance into heaven as being met by "divine rewards" such as God's warm greeting, public acknowledgement of our earthly suffering,

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 82.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 82.

<sup>14</sup>Adams and Sutherland, "Horrendous Evils," 306.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 300.

<sup>16</sup>Adams, *Horrendous Evils*, 72.

<sup>17</sup>Adams and Sutherland, "Horrendous Evils," 307.

<sup>18</sup>Adams, *Horrendous Evils*, 159.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 72.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 159.

and deep gratitude for it.<sup>21</sup> Such divine rewards will bring us everlasting joy and honor.<sup>22</sup> They constitute symbolic defeat of the horrors in one's premortem life because they act as a component of one's relationship with God.<sup>23</sup>

The third way of integration is through *beatific vision into the inner life of God*, a phenomenon explored in reflections on religious experience. Invoking Rudolf Otto's hypothesis that religious experiences of God arouse both positive and negative accompanying feelings—fear, dread, fascination, terror, shame, stupefying confusion, and radical dependence, to name a few—Adams posits that experiences of horror could themselves be visions of God.<sup>24</sup> She finds it unsurprising that the above feelings can be triggered by both God's presence and horrendous suffering. In both cases, what one experiences is "disproportionate to the human psyche, and as such, 'mind-blowing,' anxiety producing, incapacitating, and humiliating."<sup>25</sup> A vision of God, whether accompanied by feelings of joy or terror, is itself an incommensurate good for the participant.<sup>26</sup> Just as one might encounter divine presence in their greatest joys, so one might also experience divine contact in their deepest suffering.<sup>27</sup> If horrendous suffering can be understood as such, then it carries a dimension of positive value. Despite the pain that it bears, an intimate face-to-face vision of God is incommensurate with any created goods or ills, and therefore great enough to defeat the evil.

To conclude, our inability to conceive of plausible candidate reasons why God would permit horrors should not be a reason to deny God's goodness.<sup>28</sup> God values the individual qua person in the midst of their suffering. By inviting them into a relationship with Himself, God compensates their horrors with the appropriate currencies.

I will now identify ways in which Adams' argument can be of practical value to suffering individuals. My thesis will only concern the defeat of horrors in the context of their premortem (as opposed to postmortem) life, where praxis is most pertinent.

## Part 1

Part 1 will show that Adams' work can provide a foundation for praxis for suffering individuals. My argument in Part 1 will introduce discourse from psychology and lay the basis for Part 2. My purpose for incorporating discourse from psychology is to show that participants can behaviorally respond to and potentially defeat horrendous evils in a concrete and not merely symbolic sense.

### Part 1 Argument

P1: Meaning-making provides a foundation for praxis.

P2: Adams' treatment of horrendous evils takes a meaning-making approach.

C: Therefore, Adams' treatment of horrendous evils provides a foundation for praxis.

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid.,162-163.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 163.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 163.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 161.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 161.

<sup>26</sup>Adams and Sutherland, "Horrendous Evils," 308.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 308.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 305.

### **Premise 1: The Theory of Meaning-Making**

The life-ruining potential of horrendous evils comes from their power *prima facie* to rob the participant's life of any positive meaning. Adams thus argues that meaning-making is the key to defeating horrendous evils. Meaning-making is a theory developed most fully in psychology and subfields such as counseling psychology and psychotherapy. It is the cognitive and affective process of recrafting one's self, one's experiences, and one's relationships in such a way that latent values of those experiences are extracted, and new positive meaning is formed.<sup>29</sup>

### **Meaning-Making as Foundation for Praxis**

For the purposes of this paper, I will refer to "praxis" as concrete action, either physical or cognitive, aimed at overcoming the *existential* or *psychological* threat of evils. I will contrast praxis with theory, which I refer to as abstract and often detached philosophical reflection aimed at overcoming the logical problem of evils. The process of recrafting, deconstructing and reconstructing, and making sense of one's experience is hardly abstract or detached; it is an embodied act. Current psychology literature confirms this. Meaning-making engenders psychological practice of various forms; sense-making,<sup>30</sup> negative religious coping,<sup>31</sup> and forgiveness,<sup>32</sup> to name a few. Psychologists have offered these practices as forms of therapy to patients suffering from various evils. They believe that "in low control situations not amenable to direct repair or problem-solving, such as trauma, loss, and serious illness, meaning-making is often the most adaptive."<sup>33</sup>

Theory operates on a general level, whereas praxis is tailored to the individual. Likewise, meaning-making is a personalized process, for evils are unique to the participant they afflict. If we confined meaning-making to the realm of theory, it loses its personal function. Meaning-making, therefore, best is best explored in the realm of praxis.

### **Premise 2: Adams' Use of Meaning-Making**

In order for Adams to show how God is good to the participant (recall that God is good to the participant by inviting them into a relationship with Himself), she must show how the horror can be defeated in the context of the participant's premortem life (even divine gratitude and heavenly rewards require one's intimacy with God in their

<sup>29</sup>Robert Kegan, *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 3.

<sup>30</sup>James Gillies and Robert A. Neimeyer, "Loss, Grief, and the Search for Significance: Toward a Model of Meaning Reconstruction in Bereavement," *Journal of Constructivist Psychology* 19, no. 1 (2006): 36, accessed April 6, 2018, Taylor Francis Online, EBSCOhost.

<sup>31</sup>Crystal L. Park, "The Meaning Making Model: A Framework for Understanding Meaning, Spirituality, and Stress-Related Growth in Health Psychology," *The European Health Psychologist* 15, no. 2 (June 2013): 44.

<sup>32</sup>Toussaint, Loren, Ani Kalayjian, and Daria Diakonova-Curtis. "Forgiveness Makes Sense: Forgiving Others Enhances the Salutary Associations of Meaning-Making with Traumatic Stress Symptoms." *Peace And Conflict: Journal Of Peace Psychology* 23, no. 1 (2017): 85. Accessed March 28, 2018. PsycARTICLES, EBSCOhost.

<sup>33</sup>Park, "The Meaning Making Model," 40.

premortem life). The horror can be defeated if it were given positive meaning. The horror can be given positive meaning if it were integrated into a good-enough whole to which it bears a relation of organic unity (as a dull puzzle piece is given a dimension of beauty when it is integrated into a beautiful puzzle picture). What is this good-enough whole to which the horror bears a relation of organic unity? Since God is the incommensurate Good, Adams concludes that a relationship with Him is incommensurately good for the participant, such that the horror, when integrated, can be given positive meaning, and thereby be defeated. Clearly, positive meaning-making is central to Adams' argument. The very defeat of horrendous evils requires the act of meaning-making. We can infer that Adams' treatment of horrendous evils undoubtedly takes a meaning-making approach.

### Objections

The weight of this argument rests on the truthfulness of P1 and P2. One possible objection to P2 is that the primary meaning-maker in Adams' argument is not the participant, but *God*. After all, Adams' concern was to show how God is good to them; what He can do for them. If this is true, then P2 is an unsuitable particular affirmative of the universal affirmative P1, which makes the *participant* the primary meaning-maker. In response, I contend that God offers the opportunity to make meaning, that is, He invites the participant into a relationship with Himself through which the horrors can be positively reframed. But it is the participant who ultimately responds to, interacts with, and pursues that opportunity to make positive meaning for him/herself. God sets the stage, but the participant is the primary actor.

In sum, Adams' concept of meaning-making has implicit application to the human response to the experience of horrendous evils. In what remains, I will specify two forms this application can take.

## Part 2

As stated earlier, God offers the participant an opportunity to make meaning. This opportunity is a relationship with Himself, wherein the participant makes meaning through three horror-defeating themes: (1) identifying with Christ, (2) divine gratitude, and (3) beatific vision into the inner life of God. Not much is said about the psychological component of these themes, that is, how they are relevant to the behavioral response of the participant. Adams' work is developed largely in theological and philosophical discourse—addressing how God's goodness can defeat evils—whereas my project will attempt to apply Adams' work to the participant's behavioral response to God's goodness.

In what follows, I will expound two ways in which Adams' three horror-defeating themes provide a foundation for the participant's psychological praxis. First, they are the *end goal* of one's practice. Second, they *direct* one's practice. For both of these, I will provide examples of meaning-making practices from the psychology literature. Along the way, I will compare Adams' themes to the literature's themes, suggesting hers to be a more adequate metaphysical foundation for these psychological practices.

### I. End Goal of Practice

First, Adams' themes are the end goals of one's practice. Identifying with Christ, divine gratitude, and beatific vision can be understood as the end results of one's construction of meaning. In what follows, I will outline two practices or what

psychologists call “meaning reconstruction activities” that best demonstrate the function of Adams’ themes as end goals: *benefit finding and identity change*.

### **Benefit Finding**

Benefit finding is the practice of “incorporating the raw materials” offered by one’s tragedy to create and search for new benefits.<sup>34</sup> Adams shares a similar sentiment with this process, saying that general meaning-making happens when “the individual [tries] to shape the materials of his/her life into a meaningful whole. . .”<sup>35</sup> Benefits can be construed as the “final ends a person ought to realize in order to have a life that matters.”<sup>36</sup>

In their study on victims coping with loss and trauma, Christopher G. Davis, Susan Nolen-Hoeksema, and Judith Larson found that the practice of finding benefits from tragedies was a key way victims assigned positive meaning to their experiences, and thus restored positive meaning in their lives.<sup>37</sup> Some benefits named by the study’s participants include: “growth in character,” “support from others,” “gained perspective,” and “brought family together,” among others.<sup>38</sup> Other studies show similar themes arising from the practice: “personal growth,” “lifestyle changes,” “family bonds,” “valuing relationships,” and “compassion.”<sup>39</sup>

Common among these studies is that the benefits found are *created* and *temporal* goods. In cases of moderate loss and trauma, created benefits such as those listed above might be helpful, even sufficient, to defeat the individual’s tragedy. However, Adams contends that created goods are insufficient to defeat horrors. Practice that aims to defeat horrors requires a more robust foundation. I will explore this need in the following section.

### **Benefit Finding and Horrendous Evils: Divine Gratitude and Beatific Vision as Benefits**

Adams’ themes of *divine gratitude* and *beatific vision* are transcendent benefits unlike those found in the above studies. This is because they are provided by an infinitely, supremely good God, and not created by humankind. Divine gratitude gives the individual such full and everlasting joy and honor “as could not be merited by the whole sea of human pain.”<sup>40</sup> And, beatific vision into the inner life of God is a benefit yielding exclusive intimacy with the incommensurate Good Himself.

At this point, it should be clarified that Adams’ themes as “end goals” ought not to be interpreted as only attained after the experience of horror. While divine gratitude is a postmortem benefit, beatific vision is a benefit experienced in the midst of the horror. I contend that it is still an end goal. It is still the end result of one’s search for benefits. It

<sup>34</sup>Gillies and Neimeyer, “Loss, Grief, and the Search For Significance,” 37.

<sup>35</sup>Adams, *Horrendous Evils*, 186.

<sup>36</sup>Thaddeus Metz. “The Meaning of Life.” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). Accessed March 23, 2018.

<sup>37</sup>Christopher G. Davis et al., “Making Sense of Loss and Benefiting From the Experience: Two Construals of Meaning,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 75, no. 2 (1998): 561, accessed April 19, 2018, Academic OneFile, EBSCOhost.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 566.

<sup>39</sup>James Gillies et al., “The Meaning of Loss Codebook: Construction of a System for Analyzing Meanings Made in Bereavement,” *Death Studies*, 38 (2014): 212, accessed April 6, 2018.

<sup>40</sup>Adams and Sutherland, “Horrendous Evils,” 308.

just happens not to occur after the horrific experience itself. Beatific vision can still be a benefit throughout one's life; not only during, but also after one's participation in horror. To say that one received beatific vision into God's inner life is to be encouraged lifelong that one's evil will always carry some positive meaning.

One might now ask how divine gratitude is relevant to the defeat of horrors in the context of one's premortem life, as one only experiences it after they have died. One should be reminded that although divine gratitude is a postmortem benefit, the *practice* of benefit finding—searching for it, anticipating it, drawing new meanings from it—must occur in the context of earthly life. Thus, divine gratitude still remains an end goal of the temporal practice of benefit finding.

### Identity Change

Identity change is the process of building a new sense of self as one builds a new life after one's experience of loss or trauma. James Gillies and Robert A. Neimeyer believe that one necessarily reconstructs their identity while one reconstructs meaning.<sup>41</sup> In previous studies, participants coping with loss and trauma described their new self as more resilient, independent, and confident; more aware of life's fragility and more vulnerable to later losses; having greater capacity for empathy and emotional closeness with others; having grown spiritually or existentially; and having grown "sadder but wiser."<sup>42</sup> Gillies, Neimeyer, and Milman also found "survivor identity" to be a common theme for individuals coping with bereavement.<sup>43</sup>

While there are reported negative identity changes such as "lost identity" and "identity as a bereaved person,"<sup>44</sup> for the purposes of this paper, we will focus on the positive identities. I will now compare the strongest of these identities to those offered by Adams, showing that the former are created goods which fall short of the metaphysical desideratum met by the latter.

### Identity Change and Horrendous Evils: Christ as Identity

Where horrors are concerned, identities such as "survivor," "resilient," "empathetic," and "grown spiritually and existentially" are insufficient for defeat. This is because they are non-transcendent in nature, crafted by the participant facing tragedy. Defeat of horrors demands nothing less than an incommensurately good identity. The identity suggested by Adams might be capable of meeting this need. I refer specifically to *mystical* identification with Christ, whereby the participant mystically *becomes* Christ in their suffering. They do not merely sympathize with Christ; they literally experience a share of Christ's suffering. When one shares in Christ's divine suffering, they are believed to "increase in dignity as they acquire a higher degree of Godlikeness."<sup>45</sup> Compared with created identities, Christ's incommensurately good identity might be more sufficient where horrors are concerned, as it coats the participant with a new self that triumphs over the horror just as Christ triumphed over death.

<sup>41</sup>Gillies and Neimeyer, "Loss, Grief, and the Search for Significance," 37.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 37-38.

<sup>43</sup>Gillies et al., "The Meaning of Loss Codebook," 212-213.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Adams, *Horrendous Evils*, 159.

In sum, by assuming the role of end goal, the themes of divine gratitude and beatific vision can serve as foundations for the practice of benefit finding, and identifying with Christ as a foundation for identity change.

## II. Directing Practice

Second, Adams' themes direct one's practice. To direct means to conduct the operations of the practice; to drive it to completion. Earlier, I explained Adams' themes as the result of a process (as the end goal). Now, I will explain Adams' themes as the driving force of a process. Two practices that adequately portray the function of Adams' themes as directors of practice are the *Dual Process Model* and *self-narration*.

### The Dual Process Model

The Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement was originally developed for those suffering from loss of a loved one. But, it is reasonable to posit that this model can be of potential help to participants of horrific suffering, e.g., participants who have faced horrific loss and participants who sense a separation between their life before and life after the horror. I will address this in more length later.

The Dual Process Model proposes that the bereaved take on coping tasks of two kinds: loss-oriented and restoration-oriented coping.<sup>46</sup> Loss-oriented coping refers to the tasks that *confront* the loss experience itself, such as grieving, longing for the deceased, recalling life before their death, ruminating the events surrounding their death, and imagining counterfactual actions of the deceased.<sup>47</sup> Restoration-oriented coping refers to the tasks that avoid reflection on the loss; rather, the bereaved will focus on adjusting and developing a new life and a new identity without their loved one.<sup>48</sup> The bereaved oscillate between the two opposing domains of coping until they have reached a point of satisfactory adaptation in both.<sup>49</sup> In this dynamic back-and-forth process, the bereaved will at times confront their loss, and at other times, seek distraction from it.

The central drive of the Dual Process Model is meaning-making. In order for the bereaved to reach a point of satisfactory adaptation in both domains of coping, they must search for meaning in both the loss of their loved one and the new life without their loved one.<sup>50</sup> Without this driving force, the bereaved will stay dormant in both domains—or perhaps not engage in either domain—and struggle to overcome their grief.

The model can be applied to cases of horrific suffering consistent with meaning-making. Meaning-making drives the participant to do the coping tasks that confront their horror as well as build a life beyond it. This is how Adams' meaning-making themes function as directors of the Dual Process Model: insofar as they generate positive meaning in one's experience of horror, they direct the participant toward adaptation in both domains of coping.

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<sup>46</sup>Margaret Stroebe and Henk Schut, "The Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement: Rationale and Description," *Death Studies* 23, no. 3 (1999): 197, accessed April 6, 2018.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, 213-214.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 215-216.

<sup>50</sup>Margaret Stroebe and Henk Schut, "Meaning Making in the Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement," in *Meaning Reconstruction: the Experience of Loss*, ed. Robert A. Neimeyer (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2001), 67.

### The Dual Process Model and Horrendous Evils

It is clear that not all paradigmatic horrors can be confronted using the Dual Process Model. It was created specifically for bereavement, after all. Participation in child pornography, for example, is a kind of horror that does not relate to loss and bereavement in any obvious way—unless the child victim counts his/her innocence and purity as a loss or as a deceased identity of theirs, in which case it would be reasonable for him/her to undergo the process of oscillating between confronting their loss and building their life anew.

Many other horrors, however, could be adequate candidate cases for which the Dual Process Model is helpful. Consider the Nazi death camp survivor who witnessed the torture and death of his father, or the survivor of the attack on Hiroshima who lost her family to the explosion of nuclear bombs, or the agent who accidentally or unwittingly caused the death of his wife. These are paradigmatic horrors which doubtlessly include severe bereavement and loss, and are, therefore, cases for which the Dual Process Model might prove effective.

One area the Dual Process Model might be less helpful for is *ongoing* horrific suffering. The model operates on the basis of a one-time tragedy that creates a separation between the bereaved's life before and after it. It assumes that time has passed since the loved one's death. But in the case of ongoing suffering, the participant cannot engage especially in restoration-oriented coping, which requires that some time pass from the point of the tragedy. Ongoing participation in horrors implies that no time has passed, but that the participant is still in the midst of the tragedy. Nevertheless, Adams' themes can still provide a foundation for the Dual Process Model because they are meaning-making themes, and meaning-making is what directs this practice.

### Self-Narration

When "horrors interrupt life narratives and leave participants at a loss as to how to continue,"<sup>51</sup> the practice of self-narration invites one to look at their life as a story and to restore positive meaning to that story by reconstructing it. Kenneth Surin<sup>52</sup> and Paul Fiddes<sup>53</sup> believe that meaning-making operates on the genre of narratives as opposed to detached philosophical reflection. This is because meaning-making concerns the unique story of the individual, and self-narration is a highly personalized practice.

In psychology, self-narration is used for grieving and traumatized individuals. The practice is defined as follows: the individual "organizes the 'micro-narratives' of everyday life into a 'macro-narrative' that consolidates our self-understanding, establishes our characteristic range of emotions and goals, and guides our performance on the stage of the social world."<sup>54</sup> Based on this definition, I will take horrors to be the micro-narrative, and one's life on the whole to be the macro-narrative.<sup>55</sup>

It is natural for humans to process their grief and trauma narratively. Neurophysiology reveals that the structures of our brains are such that we have a

<sup>51</sup>Adams, *Horrendous Evils*, 189.

<sup>52</sup>Kenneth Surin, *Theology and the Problem of Evil* (Oxford; New York: Blackwell, 1986), 27.

<sup>53</sup>Paul Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 147-149.

<sup>54</sup>Robert A. Neimeyer et al., "A Social Constructionist Account of Grief: Loss and the Narration of Meaning," *Death Studies*, no. 38 (2014): 488, accessed April 6, 2018.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, 487.

pendant to respond to tragedies through plot reinvention. Our brains promote the creative process of piecing our memories together to create ourselves a macro-narrative.

In Neimeyer, Klass and Dennis's overview of previous studies, grieving individuals have tried to clarify their experiences of loss and trauma—their micro-narratives—through the following thematic structures: “[it was] God’s will”; “enhanced spirituality”; “changed priorities in life”; and “appreciation for the preciousness of life” among others.<sup>56</sup> I will now compare these themes to Adams' themes.

### **Self-Narration and Horrendous Evils: Identifying with Christ and Beatific Vision as Thematic Structures**

In literature, a theme is the underlying meaning of a story. It directs the flow of the story, acting as a foundation for its beginning, conflict, climax, and resolution. Themes resolve the story's conflict event by giving it a larger meaning. Without themes, the story loses its meaning and therefore its direction.

In what follows, I will gesture at *identifying with Christ* and *beatific vision* as story themes that direct one's self-narration. First, they resolve the conflict event (the horrendous evil). Then, they direct the process of reconstructing the macro-narrative—that is, they organize the conflict event and other micro-narratives into a coherent macro-narrative—such as to make it good on the whole.

First, whereas the literature's created, non-transcendent thematic structures try to resolve the conflict event, the God-given and transcendent thematic structures of beatific vision and identifying with Christ do more than resolve the horrendous evil. Unlike the literature's themes, they give the horrendous evil a dimension of positive meaning by integrating it into themselves—themselves being good-enough wholes.

Instead of understanding the conflict event as a means to, say, “personal growth” or “appreciation for the preciousness of life,” the participant can understand it as a beatific vision of God; a direct glance into His inner life. The horror would then be more than just a means to some resolution: if the horror is construed *as* a beatific vision of God, then the horror would have positive meaning in virtue of itself.

The participant can also understand the horror as a means to a transcendent resolution—that is, identifying with Christ—whereby the story “ends” with the individual sympathetically identifying with the pains of Christ, or mystically experiencing a share of His divine suffering. Both interpretations of this thematic structure provide clarity and positivity to the horror's meaning. The participant now has transcendent materials to resolve the horror to an extent that the created thematic structures in psychology might not sufficiently have.

Second, upon resolving the horror, *beatific vision* and *identifying with Christ* direct the reconstruction of one's macro-narrative using those newfound understandings of the horror. When the thematic structures clarify the horror's meaning and introduce positive dimensions to it, they resolve it. The resolution does not stop here, however. Since the horror is the conflict event of one's life narrative, resolution of the horror will also lead to resolution of the entire life narrative. Recall Adams' central argument: a participant's life can be good on the whole if the horror is defeated. And the horror can be defeated if it is made into an event with positive meaning. Adams' thematic structures could sufficiently reconstruct one's macro-narrative in such a way as to rescue it from being contorted by the horrendous evil, thereby making the macro-narrative good on the whole. Adams'

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 487-488.

themes might thus provide an adequate foundation for the practice self-narration. They can direct the practice the way a literary theme would direct a story.

To summarize Part 2, Adams' treatment of horrors and secular psychology's meaning-making practices can interact in a give-and-take process. Adams could provide a foundation—an adequate metaphysical framework—for secular psychology's practices, and secular psychology's practices can extend Adams' work into the realm of praxis, that is, concrete behavioral response to horrific suffering.

## Conclusion

In mainstream psychology, meaning-making discourse and practice operate on religion-neutral frameworks. Meaning-making models, I have attempted to show, lack interaction with the kinds of metaphysical foundations offered in Christian philosophy. Mainstream psychology resorts to secular humanist solutions to trauma, loss, and horrors, where the recurring themes or outcomes are created, temporal goods. Scarcely any of these mention a relationship with the incommensurately good and transcendent God as an antidote to trauma, loss, and horrors.

Adams' answer to horrors is a relationship with God where one experiences identification with Christ, divine gratitude, and beatific vision into Christ's inner life. These three meaning-making themes can provide an adequate foundation for psychological praxis for individuals suffering horrendous evils. They do so by being the end goal of practice and directing practice.

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# The Ethics of the Newest Philosophy: Max Stirner's "The Ego and Its Own"<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Walter Friedensburg's 1845 piece "Zur Sittengeschichte der neuesten Philosophie. Max Stirner: Der Einzige und sein Eigentum" has existed in German text for over a century. Written as a reply to Max Stirner's unique take on ethics from "The Ego and its Own," Friedensburg explains that the "newest philosophy," is neither unique nor new. The work of satire attempts to show the ridiculousness of egoism in a way only unapologetic mockery can. Despite its dated origin, Friedensburg's essay had yet to be translated into English. Its predecessor, Max Stirner's work, had already had its turn in the hands of English readers, and has been able to argue its cause without having this necessary competition.

When I read the book, I could not help but remember some lieutenants of the Berlin guard. Before then I had easily been able to reach my own conclusions, until at once I had to imagine, that in the Berlin guard, and of the contemporary philosophies then, the lieutenants only found one serviceable. But my ideas were present; could they have also been in the favor of the guard? But no, my ideas were not as fantastical.

The latest philosophy has left a new, great scar on them nearly every day. Now a new concept, a new idea is lifted on the throne; it should have everyone on alert, it is performed like clockwork; that though one could not surpass his predecessor in originality, or more so in strangeness, the more rough and distorted his thoughts on life appeared, all the more would he himself know how to get applause: why would a man not, once he has overcome the idea of the lieutenant, be prepared at least in proper tunic and cap for the ultimate philosophical phrase, and the goal and endpoint of world history! Furthermore, the lieutenant is also a man, and the difference between him and the essence of a well-known philosophy is not great. — I calmed myself down over my idea. — This most recent theory that Max Stirner has introduced leaves nothing for men to find interesting save the most unthinkably mischievous, so they have found their phrase within today's ballet: "A light dancer against a thousand maidens born in virtue turned gray!"<sup>2</sup> But what is chastity and virtue? A "rafter," a ridiculous "Spook," to which a "possessed" world pays homage. The authentic and whole man is above all gospel, ideas, and principles, and is far beyond them. Of course, this remains unchanged to you: once you also had an idea, and you even spread that gospel once. You may, after all, want to have a principal, but admit this to yourself: to elevate it to the level of your essence, to bend yourself to your own goal of your actions, that is foolishness; the most profound kind of foolishness in the world. If only as far as it is entertaining—amusing you—or because you have no desire for anything greater, or because the play in the opera house today is boring, why not show zeal for virtue? But for heaven's sake, do not say to yourself, "Here I stand, and I cannot differently," because that, friend, is the "mantra of the possessed."

<sup>1</sup>Leipzig, bei Otto Wigand, 1844.

<sup>2</sup>Vergl. M. Stirner, S. 82.

There is a man, to the sound of a trophy, the basket of his good is stolen.<sup>3</sup> I am acquainted with thieves little, as with things stolen; how then is this thief to be me? I will not be like the devil, and I will feel some moral indignation at the crime of theft.

Is stealing a crime? Can one not be a thief? Crime here, crime there; there is neither good nor bad, neither moral nor immoral, neither right nor wrong. These are all “clerical differences” which concern us, the “egos,” “properties,” never. So I am going to talk about the thief, only because my mood allows it, amuse or annoy, but all because of my mood, never because of ethics—or because of law.

“That which is right for me, that is right. And if something was not right for the whole world, but was right for me, then I wanted it, so I never asked anything of the whole world. Anyone who appreciates themselves does the same, anyone who appreciates themselves to the point of being an egoist. Because violence is right, in fact, violence is the fullness of rights.”<sup>4</sup> You have it all right, what you are doing, just do it; You are right to enjoy it, precisely because you enjoy it. Do not let yourself be led astray by talk of a natural law, of one founded within the essence of man. What you are in every moment, be it where or when it is, that is your being, and indeed your only true and truly own being. For, in expressing it in general thoughts and principles, and asserting them as a law, you only divide yourself; you build up a heaven out of yourself, and therein a God, before whom you fall down in a foolish manner, since he to you, as his creator, should offer his homage. So you will again be back to those sacred things to pester and disturb your own actions; because the secret to singularity and uniqueness is the gracious acceptance that nothing is sacred.

There exists a poem by Gaudy to the great company: Lump and Compagnie, and here is the same philosophy. The Lump is the only true king in the world.

I had tried to refute all this seriously and tried to accumulate detailed points and verbose arguments in order to crush the Stirnerian “self” beneath us. I will be careful. Who can assure me that it is not this “self” that drives me in its own amusement, laughing at the fool who takes his seriousness seriously. Furthermore, whatever ordinary man would call truth the self is not serious about it; rather his self speaks so as to please himself, but as a churning stomach, and what is the need for such a grumble? It wants it, and that is all!

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<sup>3</sup>Vergl. dazu S. I 02.

<sup>4</sup>S. S. 249.

# What is Harmful in the Age of ‘Better than Best’? Selective Abortion, Reproduction, and Enhancements

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## Abstract

Through an ethical lens, this essay seeks to make the case for circumstances when selective abortion, selective reproduction and genetic enhancements<sup>1</sup> may be justified. Inevitably, rapid developments in medical knowledge will provide humans with the capacity to shape future generations in unprecedented ways. Thinking about what connotes harm, as well as how the use of advanced medical technology presents long-term effects on presently marginalized groups (e.g., children, ethnic minorities, low-income families, etc.), one might argue that society is obligated to meet injustice with social intervention, rather than genetic manipulation. It would follow from this to prioritize mass education by doctors and medical practitioners to ensure that these technologies are not more damaging than beneficial.

*Implications of Selective Abortion, Genetic Testing and ‘Harm’ on Society; in reference to Sparrow, Dworkin, Purdy, Steinbock, Kass, Baily and Kittay.’*

## Introduction: Passive and Active Harm

The issue of what connotes harm is arguably the greatest point of contention in discussions surrounding reproductive rights. Based on the assumption the life of a human fetus is comparatively less important than that of a fully developed child or adult, the case is often made that while it is morally permissible to abort a fetus, a mother’s choice to be negligent in raising a child is not morally justified.

Take for instance Ronald Dworkin’s “Abortion and the Sanctity of Life” example in the book *Life’s Dominion*.<sup>2</sup> In his claim, many find it counterintuitive that the outcome of injuring a life is, in fact, worse than the outcome of taking a life. Especially when analogizing to the idea of animals and torture, it is the overwhelming majority that view tormenting one’s pet to be morally wrong in any case while, in the event that a pet must be euthanized, it can be reasoned. In the case of human fetuses, active choices made by the pregnant mother directly advance or damage the child’s interests. Negative effects of the mother’s health practices during the childbearing process or thereafter antithesize the parents’ responsibility to provide a minimally satisfying life for their child and to not

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<sup>1</sup>While human genetic engineering is still in its most basal stage, there are current procedures that work to the same end.

<sup>2</sup>Dworkin, Ronald. *Life’s Dominion: An Argument about Abortion, Euthanasia, and Individual Freedom*. New York: Knopf, 1993. Print.

cause intentional harm to it; i.e., preserving the child's life while not necessarily fulfilling the basic necessities of parenthood.<sup>3</sup>

Relevant in the age of technological advancement, debate also surrounds whether or not passivity towards evolving medical insight can be understood as a mode of harm. As addressed in Robert Sparrow's *A Not-so-New Eugenics*,<sup>4</sup> with the reliability and current capacities of genetic testing (e.g. PGD and SCNT<sup>5</sup>), failure to use the practices to select against embryos with 'serious disorder' can be considered parental neglect. The idea is only furthered by opponents of genetic engineering who are in favor of genetic testing because of its lack of manipulation of an individual. It calls into question the validity of denoting a moral difference between tactics that are person-affecting and not—whether or not the processes change qualities within a child or idealize certain qualities in order to choose a child, with the potential for generational genetic impact.

Cases of prevention where environmental hazards affect the child's well-being have traditionally included manipulating the child's surroundings in order to equalize his or her chances in life. This avenue of remedy works to enhance the traits of existing persons, rather than using genetic testing to choose which child is born, which is a result of PGD and SCNT. It is unclear whether or not one avenue should be seen as more defensible than the other, if they are only different means to the same end: a society with diminishing variation, where the nature of the 'ideal child' varies directly with the prevailing bigotry of the times.

Ultimately, the points Sparrow and Dworkin make align with the idea of *consequentialism*, or results-based ethics, which implies that selecting for a healthy child is equally as justifiable as preventing harm to a developing child in that they have the effect of minimizing the level of unnecessary suffering in the world. With this in mind, the moral significance of selective abortion becomes an issue of whether or not we are only selecting against [non-cosmetic] deliberations that have restricted the person's life in terms of its length and amount of suffering.<sup>6</sup>

### **Harm in Intention: Knowingly Birthing Children *with* Debilitating Diseases**

Another factor for considerations surrounding harm is whether it is morally correct to birth a child that is at a high risk for suffering. A specific instance comes from Laura Purdy's "Genetics and Reproductive Risk,"<sup>7</sup> in which the moral significance of having a child with a fifty percent chance of developing a painful, significantly disabling disease is reasoned. Purdy suggests that genetic testing should be made available to all, primarily so that parents are made aware of when they have conceived a disease-bearing child and, by Purdy's logic, follow with the reasonable next step of aborting it. However, through the analysis of arguments by Leon R. Kass, Mary Ann Baily, and Eva Feder Kittay, it is

<sup>3</sup>Dworkin is also known to suggest that there is no harm inflicted when aborting. Taking for granted the belief that a fetus does not have interests and rights, he make the claim that a fetus can not desire not to be killed, and that a fetus does not have a fundamental right to life and no one is maltreated by the processes of abortion.

<sup>4</sup>Sparrow, R. (2011), *A Not-So-New Eugenics*. Hastings Center Report, 41: 32-42.

<sup>5</sup>Preimplantation genetic diagnosis and somatic cell nuclear transfer.

<sup>6</sup>More on this in the section in reference to Margaret Little's essay.

<sup>7</sup>Purdy, Laura M. (2010). Genetics and Reproductive Risk : Can Having Children Be Immoral? In Craig Hanks (ed.), *Technology and Values: Essential Readings*. Wiley-Blackwell.

evident that, like me, not everyone holds these views on the justifiable nature of selective abortion.

Purdy's thesis contends that parents are obligated to not give birth to a child who will have a high risk of suffering for many years; to provide their children with a life that does not fall short of basic health norms of the social group. Baily's "Why I Had Amniocentesis"<sup>8</sup> argument follows suit, as Baily explains how she would not want the person who will be her child to be born into a body with such 'potentially significant limitations.'

It is agreeable that the significant limitations that the child may possess could place them in a different social class or culture than his or her parents, which can be isolating for both parent and child. And, as explained in Kittay's, "Prenatal Testing and Disability Rights" from the same journal, prenatal diagnosis and abortion do not inherently express a rejection of people with disabilities; this would only be the case if we view people with disabilities as their disabilities. Despite this, many ultimately align with Leon R. Kass in his assessment that abortion and amniocentesis are "principles without limits."<sup>9</sup> Kass states the claim that, without having to imply it, selective abortion devalues the life of the disabled, as the absence or infrequency of disabled people in society would cause their unique perspectives to be more alienated from non-affected people. Discrimination towards the disabled would likely increase, as it would with any other minority group. In these ways, Kass believes selective abortion for disability devalues the life of the disabled.

Relating back to whether people are obligated to refrain from reproducing if they would be likely to have children with certain diseases or disabilities, it is important to note that for many, abortion does not follow as a moral option for a negative diagnosis. Another well-reasoned option for the aforementioned group is to seek preliminary testing for the likelihood of transmitting hereditary diseases and to make the decision of whether or not to engage in the risks surrounding pregnancy, preconception.

Moreover, for a disease like Down's Syndrome, where the capacity to have a rich and fulfilling life is within reason, it might not be a mode of harm, as Sparrow would argue, to simply neglect to abort the child or manipulate their DNA in order to achieve a 'better life.' With the existence of medical services, disease management programs, and support groups, doctors are able to educate parents on the current resources in place for the child. This will help the parents gain a mutual understanding of their child's unique perspective and feel attached to the child without displacing or ostracizing them.

### **Harm in Intention: Knowingly Birthing Children *for* Debilitating Diseases**

To counter, I do not align with the prospect that the use of all genetically manipulating technology yields unjust or undeniably risky results for the parent, child, or their relationship. In some cases, parents should be morally obligated to use genetic technology to have a second child if, for example, there is no other way to acquire the tissue necessary to save the life of their first child.<sup>10</sup> Appealing to the case of Molly and Adam in Bonnie Steinbock's "Using Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis to Save a

<sup>8</sup>Asch, Adrienne, Parens, Erik, (1957) and Hastings Center, *Prenatal Testing and Disability Rights*. Georgetown University Press, Washington, D.C.; [Great Britain], 2000.

<sup>9</sup>Kass L.R. (1976) "Implications of Prenatal Diagnosis for the Human Right to Life." In: Humber J.M., Almeder R.F. (eds) *Biomedical Ethics and the Law*. Springer, Boston, MA

<sup>10</sup>This is the case, insofar as the technology is readily available, relatively inexpensive, and does not cause significant discomfort to the second child.

Sibling,”<sup>11</sup> the genetic testing and application to specify a fetal bone marrow type not only brought another life into the world, which was completely unaffected by the medical procedure, but Adam’s birth was able to provide umbilical cord tissue that would save the life of their existing daughter—his sister—Molly.

Firstly, physical consequences on the in vitro fertilized child were nonexistent. Many parents opt to have in vitro fertilization when other traditional methods of pregnancy are unsuccessful, and it is widely accepted as a standard, ethical medical practice. Furthermore, Adam’s body was never intended to be used for spare parts (i.e., to extract a liver, kidney, corneas, etc.). After delivery, the umbilical cord was removed for the tissue cells, and this structure is not at all functional for human life after birth. Secondly, I have long been a proponent of controlling first for practice, not *intention*.<sup>12</sup> Foremost, it is necessary to assess whether genetic testing is inherently impermissible.<sup>13</sup>

Though abortions and genomic editing may increasingly follow from prenatal testing, it is not the primary reason for its institution. Genetic testing is formally used to identify or rule out certain genetic or chromosomal conditions. In most cases, it serves as an informant about prospects of healthcare and the management of the disease, and it is not alone impermissible. Comparing the case of using genetic technology for Molly with the cases of producing children who would be less vulnerable to various diseases, there are clear moral issues raised more commonly in the latter than in the former. In the case of Molly and Adam Nash, we have controlled for the discrepancy between what diseases are morally justified in eradicating; the method of selective reproduction was used only because Molly’s immediate life was contingent on the procedure’s success. Thus, for the same reason that we support therapies, we should pursue genetic testing under this jurisdiction.

In contrast, many view the obligation to exhaust these means to save a child’s life as harmful and reject this idea entirely. While the consequences might be lethal in the parents’ choice to not have a second child, they believe that option should only be only suggested to parents who are willing and able to care for the second child, just as they are able to care for their first. It becomes morally impermissible and harmful if the child is born to unwilling, inattentive parents with no intention to raise the second child after having expended their options for the first child. Due to the fact that one’s motives can hardly be controlled for in practice, the idea that genetic testing is harmless still holds contention.

Ultimately, while every case would not be as successful as the story of Molly and Nash and their loving family, at a minimum, one could plausibly assume that in the majority of cases, children would not be harmed in the process; in fact, many will be saved.

*‘Unnatural Selection and the Effects on the Child’s Psyche; in reference to Sparrow, Juengst, and Little’*

<sup>11</sup>Steinbock, Bonnie (2003). "Using Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis to Save a Sibling: The Story of Molly and Adam Nash." In Bonnie Steinbock, John D. Arras, and Alex John London. *Ethical Issues in Modern Medicine* (6 ed.). McGraw-Hill. pp. 544–545.

<sup>12</sup>In a far-removed analogy, if someone steals from another person, in deciding punishment, we do not first ask whether the perpetrator had been stolen from by someone else or was persuaded by his peers to do so; we first address that stealing is morally impermissible. In a bioethical context, we should not jump to criticize the parent’s intentions for having Adam to save Molly. Rather, we should first address the practices associated with it (e.g., in vitro fertilization and prenatal testing).

<sup>13</sup>Moving forward, the essay will take for granted that there is a universal acceptance for in vitro fertilization.

## Cash-Cropping Children

It has been substantiated that the role of the parent is to foster the child's development into a healthy, virtuous adult. This does not imply the more specific obligation to use genetic technology to increase the chance that the child will have more talents, skills, and virtues than they otherwise would for the next generation (read as: claim "C"). In reference to Robert Sparrow's *A Not-So-New Eugenics*, the writers, John Harris and Julian Savulescu, support the argument that with our willingness to accept the advances in our welfare that have been made available through other technologies comes a commitment to human enhancement. If we are to be concerned for the future generations, we should be compelled to pursue enhancements. Ultimately, what follows from claim "C" is the exacerbation of social and economic divides (given the practicalities of what resources will be available and to whom), as well as limitations put on the autonomy of future generations. It is my view that certain traits should not be selected for, leading to a conversation on the difference between enhancement and medical treatment.

It is widely acknowledged that prevailing social constructs are impactful determinants of the future welfare of an individual, be it justified or not. As one could expect, new problems arise when society has its hand in genomically controlling the social constructs of a time. This readily presents when addressing how race and ethnicity play into this construct. As children are born with markers of racial separation, their lives in some capacity have the potential to be met with social disability; as stated by Sparrow, their 'skin color, hair type, shape of nose and lips, presence or absence of an epicanthic fold, and so on—will have reduced life prospects.'

Does it then follow that to give a child every opportunity, parents are obligated to genetically select against traits that are the target of discrimination in their society? If one is to assume that parents are to do everything they can to ensure the child has optimal growth, ability, and agency in society, I would agree with them. However, to draw an inference from this that manipulating the human genome falls within that jurisdiction is to be firmly misguided. For one, the act of genomic editing may speak to the argument of limited autonomy for the child. In the case of genomic editing, the child has been born into an already transformed template, based on the parent's subjective view of what makes for a desirable person. In this way, the task of editing one's DNA is far different from common practices promoting one's development.

On another note, the extent to which a parent's hand is at work in a child's persona might cause resentment of the child, as well as expectations for them to produce certain outcomes (e.g., expected qualities, interests, behaviors, etc.). In turn, this unintentionally damages the parent-child relationship. If traits such as height, jump span, metabolism, or strategic reasoning are somehow selected for, one could assume this child would become an excellent athlete. The failure for the child to perform successfully to whatever capacity the child's parents expected would weigh heavily on the parent if these traits were distinctly selected for. Ironically, parents could grow to dislike the child from failure to reach pre-assumed expectations; i.e., when the genetically 'perfect' child results in 'imperfect' or deviating desires due to environmental influences.

It should also be discussed whether parents have any moral right to raise children with whom they are biologically related, if they were able to select embryos that were more likely to have more socially desirable traits. Though I am opposed to such processes, it is my view that they would have parental rights to the child, given that the entire

biological makeup of the child is not being changed; the technology would only be to advantageously tweak it. Certainly, it is more involved than playing Beethoven for toddlers as they sleep or after-school programming in one's adolescence, but, arguably, humans already control for determinant qualities of their future offspring, by *intersexual selection and mate criteria*.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Eugenics Model**

Sparrow suggests, for those who are concerned with losing diversity in the process of genetic engineering, that the process is self-correcting and diversity may remain in some cases. For instance, due to variations in the level of ultraviolet radiation at different latitudes, parents should have children with fair skin in countries near the poles, whereas near the equator they should have children with dark skin. By this logic, it can be also deduced that Sparrow would be a proponent of the idea that parents inherently preference children with their similar features, even those that are idiosyncratic, non-beneficial, or even debilitating. This is all charming, while equally impractical. It is far-reaching to assume that parents would bring in environmental example to practically deduce the best response to socially constructed determinants. And, while parents would naturally gravitate towards, have respect for, and in some cases favor a child that functions as they do in society, a common parent's perspective is to propel their children further in society (socially and economically) than they are.

The faults with limiting the obligations of parents to having a child that is "good enough" is that there needs to be some plausible mechanism of deciding what that manifests as in a human being and explaining why parental obligations stop at this point, if not at currently normal human capacities. This reflection leads to the projection of a future society where genetic testing is more rampant and normalized. Parents may not have an option other than to ensure their child is as perfect as scientific abilities of human enhancement allow. As stated by Sparrow, "refusal to adopt [enhancements] will appear unreasonable; because the welfare of children is at stake, parents' failure to do "the right thing" will appear especially egregious."

With such narrow metrics for determining the perfect genome, in every case of comparison or ranking, one individual will always be better, provoking further enhancement and homogenization. This inevitably leads to preferences parallel to that of 'European standards of beauty' and the like, all of whom will be born to the most affluent populations, where genetic engineering is most financially accessible. For those and similar factors, people favored by the consequentialist argument and the practice itself seem eerily similar to that of the old eugenics.

### **Enhancements v. Medical Treatment**

As stated previously, major contention with the institution of selective genetic modification and engineering surrounds the discrepancy between which diseases or social impediments are morally justified in eradicating. With a pool of characteristics capable of human interference, the potential for ethnic-cleansing and homogenization is limitless.

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<sup>14</sup>Definition: an avenue for natural selection, where members of a biological sex choose members of the opposite biological sex to procreate with. When picking a spouse — especially in certain societies, choosing traits in partners such as lighter skin and height could be used as a control in selection.

Eric Juengst's "What Does Enhancement Mean?"<sup>15</sup> argues enhancement and medical treatment are distinct. With his reasoning, enhancement interventions are classified by the following approaches: *disease-based accounts*, *ideological accounts*, and *normalcy accounts*. The difference is each approach's conception of legitimate medical need.

Taking the approach of the 'disease-based' accounts, the justification of medical need is the identification of a pathological problem. Of course, this is met with uncertainty when considering preemptive risk prevention where nothing is broken. Preemptive risk prevention, from Juengst's position, would be connoted as an enhancement. The 'ideological' accounts fall into the similarly ambiguous language. In the ideological accounts, the responsibility is imposed on doctors to interpret the patients value systems. Though it is my innate response to rely on the doctor's perspective in determining what constitutes non-enhancement, this would ultimately suggest a lack of regulation in policy. Finally, the 'normality' principle endorses medical necessity as an effort to provide normal function within a *reference class*. Still, the account makes it difficult to make universal judgements on policy.<sup>16</sup> On one end, medical restrictions already put limits on what connotes "medical treatment;" this is seen through insurance policies which will only cover preventative treatments, even controlling for its quantity and durations. Moreover, the more important focus might not only prevent extreme cases of misuse of selective reproduction and gene editing, but will also keep untangled the inevitable discrepancies between artificial and natural achievement that follow from increasing use of enhancements in society.

Juengst's reasons for thinking people should not use drugs also aligns with the unfairness of equalizing people's skills through genetic enhancement. In his argument, taking drugs does not improve skill because, theoretically, the only thing separating one person from another would be the acquisition of said drugs, a reflection of social privileges rather than skill, hard work, or unbiased achievements. Juengst's objection to prescribing Ritalin for students who wish to perform better on tests comes from the subsequent deliberations on whether or not the student's grade was truly earned. If what is being judged for achievement is directly affected by enhancements, it is morally impermissible to use scientific technology in this way. In direct opposition to the "new eugenicists," my perspective is that genetic manipulation that to any degree limits, impedes, or degrades the livelihood or the achievement of others is not justifiable.

Margaret Little discusses similar controversies, in "Cosmetic Surgery, Suspect Norms, and Ethics of Complicity."<sup>17</sup> In her discussion, she notes that some find it problematic to use medical technology to keep in trend with fashion and beauty standards, while others find it relevant to treat suffering from insecurities and dissatisfaction with one's body. This is an interesting dichotomy, as drawing the line between surgeries of enhancement and surgeries for medical treatment becomes more difficult when one's mental health is a factor. For example, sex-change surgeries greatly impact a person's overall livelihood and mental wellness, which suggest that some cosmetic enhancement are doubly medicinal for one's mental and social impediments. On the other hand, a case where a person exhibits Body Dysmorphic Disorder might create controversy with Little's argument, since the source of suffering is not accounted for

<sup>15</sup>Juengst, Eric and Moseley, Daniel, "Human Enhancement," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.).

<sup>16</sup>An immediate concern would be deciding on what constitutes a "reference class."

<sup>17</sup>Little, Margaret. "Cosmetic Surgery, Suspect Norms, and the Ethics of Complicity" from Parens, Erik. *Enhancing Human Traits: Ethical and Social Implications*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1998, pages 162-176.

through the mode of treatment. Again, we can turn to the doctor as morally responsible for working with patients to decide on which side of the spectrum their procedures fall—medicinal or an enhancement. Through psychological tests, medical records, and previous patient data, it could be ultimately argued that these issues should be taken on an individual basis, instituting the normality principle as a standard.

### **Conclusion: The Practicality of Modern Medicine**

Topics of selective reproduction, selective abortion, and genomic editing are more often than not discussions of the experiences had by individuals and claims based upon rationalizations for pre-existing practices. From each position, be it the parent or child, doctor or patient, we are confronted with a number of ethical objections to genetic technologies aimed at protecting and enhancing human capacities. While some of the objections to the aforementioned practices are indeed persuasive, they alone are insufficient to prevent the development and practice of these genetically manipulating technologies. The foundation of our societal progression is our adaptation technologically and, while there will always be people who take these practices to the extremes—these individuals do not invalidate the reasons for making the technology available in the first place. As it naturally does in topics of bioethics, it becomes, again, a discussion of the responsibilities of medical doctors to inform on the multitude of perspectives and impacts one can not alone imagine in his or her decision making. This, a personal view of the most important element to the integration of advanced or nuanced medical avenues, might help to mitigate the cases where distrust is bred through unjustifiable overextension of the capabilities of science and medicine.

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