

Strawson and Prasad on Determinism and Resentment

ON STRAWSON

'Freedom and Resentment' is divided into six sections. The central question of the article is stated in a variety of formulations in the sixth and the ninth paragraphs of Section IV (pp. 10-11). On analysis, the question separates out into three different orientations: of eventuality, of rational incumbency, and of possibility. To paraphrase:

Would a belief in determinism lead us to abandon reactive attitudes and adopt the objective attitude?

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Strawson never entertains the question of eventuality.¹ Instead, he focuses on its two prerequisites. To these, his answers are invariably in the negative, sometimes landing on the side of rational incumbency (no rational reason why one should adopt the objective attitude) and sometimes on the side of possibility (not possible to adopt the objective attitude and sustain it). Strawson's argument in regard to the Question of Adoption is the central argument of the essay, but it is also important that we understand

why he raises the question and how he gives background to it by bringing up and elaborating on the notion of reactive attitudes.

Sections I, II, and VI concern the on-going argument between compatibilist determinists (who affirm determinism and morality) and incompatibilist determinists (who affirm determinism while denying morality²). Strawson reformulates these positions as optimistic determinists and pessimistic determinists, hinting at his own leanings on the subject. Strawson also briefly mentions sceptics (who neither deny nor affirm determinism or morality) and libertarians (who deny determinism and affirm morality). All four of these groups, Strawson says, claim to understand what determinism is (while disagreeing about the precise definition). Strawson, on the other hand, admits to ignorance on the subject of the definition of determinism.

In a quasi-dialogue, Strawson provides a capsule of the optimist/pessimist disagreement. To paraphrase:

optimist: Despite determinism, moral judgement and punishments are desirable because they deter and regulate.

pessimist: Moral judgment and punishments imply guilt, which implies responsibility, which implies freedom, which implies the falsity of determinism (which we both agree is true).

optimist: Freedom, yes, but only in the sense of *freedom from* (limitations), which does not imply the falsity of determinism.

pessimist: No, *freedom to* is also necessary for responsibility.

optimist: Okay, but freedom in the sense of deciding and intention is not incompatible with determinism.

pessimist: Why does freedom in this sense justify judgements and punishments?³

optimist: [Silence]

pessimist: You need another kind of freedom, and it will contradict determinism.⁴

Strawson is not satisfied with the optimist's silence and, in the end, suggests that he continue the dialogue as follows:

optimist: No, it is not a matter of freedom. I said in the beginning that morality is necessary because it is socially indispensable.

pessimist: But that's so cold.

optimist: The web of attitudes and feelings which form an essential part of the moral life as we know it are such that ...⁵

And so Strawson has the optimistic determinist saying that: (1) morality is possible in the face of determinism (no justification for this),⁶ and (2) it is desirable because we couldn't be human without it. Strawson says that the problem all along is that neither the optimists nor the pessimists (nor the sceptics) have given enough thought to the complexity of human morality. In Sections III and V and the first half of Section IV, Strawson attempts to unravel one fundamental part of this complexity.

In Sections III and V, Strawson introduces the concept of the reactive attitude (or range of such attitudes).⁷ The reactive attitude is non-detached, he says, by which he means that it occurs as part of normal human interaction. Let's set up an example and use it for as long as it is profitable. Person A bumps person B. Person C witnesses. The expectation of all three of these people, in keeping with normal moral attitudes, is goodwill, or regard, on the part of each for all of the others. When A bumps B, B immediately wells up with resentment, having seen no apparent reason for the bump. C witnessing the bump, and also seeing no obvious reason for it feels a sense of moral disapprobation. A, who holds the same general normative values, also has a feeling about the event. Strawson provides names for each of these types of reactions: B has a *personal reactive attitude*. C has *moral reactive attitude*,⁸ and A has a *self-reflective attitude*.

Strawson's reason for bringing up the reactive attitude is to demonstrate that human beings are profoundly involved in all manner of inter-personal relations. These relationships presume goodwill, or regard, on the part of all participants for all of the others and are essential to the coherence of normal human society. We constantly manifest our attitudes and actions in our relationships with others, and others base their reactions in a large part on their perceptions of our attitude at any given time. For instance, if A's bumping of B followed A's telling of a joke and was accompanied by a wink and a chuckle, B, sensing that A meant no harm, would likely feel no resentment at all, and might even manifest a jocular attitude, himself. We live in a web of such attitudes and reactions as a part of normal life, Strawson says. Some of the attitudes we may see manifested are goodwill, affection, esteem, contempt, indifference, and malevolence. Depending on how we view the justification of these attitudes, we may ourselves react with gratitude, resentment, forgiveness, love, or hurt feelings (in no particular order).

Integral to his discussion of reactive attitudes is Strawson's treatment of occasions for the inhibition of the reactive attitude, which he presents in the second half of Section IV and the eighth paragraph of Section V. He offers a hypothetical case of the manifestation of an unadjusted lack of goodwill, which is reasonably met with resentment (on the part of B) and disapprobation (on the part of C). There are certain circumstances, he says, under which these actions are often withheld. For instance, going back to the case of A bumping B, A may have done so accidentally, or unknowingly; he could have been pushed, or perhaps he meant it as a way of assisting B. In any of these cases, B would rightfully withhold resentment (and C withhold disapprobation). These we may call *act-exempters*. Likewise, A may temporarily have 'not been himself', or may have been under great strain, or may have been acting under post-hypnotic suggestion. In any of these cases, B may feel that A was not responsible for his action and so may not harbour resentment (and C would withhold disapprobation). This is an instance of exempting the person rather than the act, and we may call the reason for inhibiting the reactive attitude a *short-term person-exempter*. There is another general kind of person-exempter, the *long-term person-exempter*.⁹ This would justify B's withholding resentment (and C's withholding disapprobation) because of A's extended abnormality. A could be a child, or a hopeless schizophrenic; his mind may have been systematically perverted, or he could have been acting under uncorrectable compulsive behaviour.

To withhold the reactive attitude is to have what Strawson calls the objective attitude. With the objective attitude, we do not regard people in the normal human way, although the attitude may be emotionally toned with such emotions as repulsion, fear, pity, or love. We adopt the objective attitude in order to manage, handle, cure, train, or avoid, etc., another person. Strawson emphasizes that the objective attitude is adopted only under rare circumstances and that it precludes normal reactive attitudes and feelings. He says that although the reactive and objective attitudes are not mutually exclusive, they are profoundly opposed. Note that forgiveness as pardoning (though it looks like a withholding of blame), since it is counted above as itself a reactive attitude, should not be construed as switching to an objective attitude.

The issue that began this discussion was whether determinism is compatible with free agency. Up to now, Strawson has talked about neither. The assumption of the pessimist, he says, is that if determinism were

believed to be true, the believer (B or C) would be justified in adopting the objective attitude and would withhold normal reactive attitudes, since A would not be able to be held responsible for his actions due to their being determined. As to the Question of Adoption, Strawson offers answers at several different points. I will list summaries of them below to get the full range of complexity, first providing a capsule answer and its orientation.

(a) negative, not a rational incumbency/possibility:

it would not follow from the truth of determinism that anyone who caused an injury *either* was quite simply ignorant of causing it *or* had acceptably overriding reasons for acquiescing reluctantly in causing it *or ...*, etc. The prevalence of this happy state of affairs would not be a consequence of the reign of universal determinism, but of the reign of universal goodwill.

I must admit that I am not sure exactly what Strawson is saying here. He seems to be suggesting that, having introduced his three inhibitors of the reactive attitude, that any adoption of the objective attitude will occur *only* under circumstances of the presence of at least one of these inhibitors. If this assumption were to hold,¹⁰ then for a determinist, in circumstances in which none of the inhibitors were operative, the adoption of the objective attitude would not rationally follow. From this argument, we can conclude that an affirmative answer to the Question of Adoption would not be a (rational) incumbency. I could be misinterpreting the argument, however, because Strawson actually says, 'we cannot find, here, the *possibility*¹¹ of an affirmative answer.'¹²

(b) negative, not a rational incumbency: the only justifiable long-term person-exempter is 'deep-rooted psychological abnormality—or simply by being a child.' Since determinism does not make abnormality the universal condition, it cannot act as a long-term person-exempter. There are two possible objections to this argument. First, we could demand a justification for his claim of only one kind of long-term person-exempter. Second, suppose determinism were universally believed to be true, and all believers were pessimists, hence adopting the objective attitude. In such a case, all Bs and Cs would be compared to what Strawson identifies as normal conditions, abnormal. And so, in a sense, determinism *would* make abnormality the universal condition.¹³

(c) negative, not a possibility: 'the only possible form of affirmative answer' entails determinism making abnormality the universal condition. Although Strawson does not deny that this is possible *per se*, he does say that it is 'practically inconceivable'. I take this to mean that in some possible world it might be conceivable, but not in this world. No new justification is offered.¹⁴

(d) negative, not a possibility: Strawson says that regardless of one's belief and the validity of the theoretical ground for it, human beings are incapable of 'a sustained objectivity of interpersonal attitude'. The reason is that humans are incapable of the isolation it would entail.¹⁵

(e) negative, not a rational incumbency: when we adopt the objective attitude in the case of person-exempters, we do so only in the occurrence of long-term person-exempters (abnormal people) and short-term person-exempters (normal people). In neither case is the reason a belief in determinism. Therefore, 'we cannot, as we are, seriously envisage ourselves adopting a thoroughgoing objectivity of attitude to others as a result of theoretical conviction of the truth of determinism.'¹⁶ This, Strawson says is the culmination of his train of arguments. We can see from the foregoing arguments, that Strawson seems to be the bearer of a certain conservatism; since the normal situation is such that determinism is not an inhibitor, then it could never be an inhibitor. The basis of this seeming conservatism is Strawson's (at certain places in the article) intransigent dichotomy of reactive and objective attitudes. I'll bring this up for further discussion at the end of the paper, but suffice it for now to point out that if the objective and reactive attitudes could be shown to *both* be normal human attitudes under all conditions and could be held simultaneously, then determinism would not be isolating, and therefore could be rationally incumbent upon the committed determinist.

(f) negative, not a possibility: Strawson tacks on two further points. The first is that 'the human commitment to ordinary inter-personal attitudes ... is part of the general framework of human life, not something that can come up for review.' Strawson says explicitly that the real question is the rational incumbency of adopting the objective attitude, given a committed belief in determinism. Then, he immediately counters that such a question is, itself, irrational, because of the reason given just now in the quotation.¹⁷

(g) negative, not a rational incumbency: The second point is that, even if human beings were capable of adopting a sustained objective attitude

(now he is entertaining the question he just said could not be entertained), the only (not the primary) consideration would be 'the gains and losses to human life, its enrichment or impoverishment.' So even if it were rational from the point of view of a belief in determinism to adopt the objective attitude, that reasoning would be trumped by the reasoning which concludes that life would be too impoverished as a result. If rationality were the vehicle of decision-making, however, one would have to at least entertain the determinist's case for adopting the objective attitude. If the adoption of the objective attitude were concluded to be reasonable, and if it were also concluded that not adopting the objective attitude were also reasonable, given the reason of impoverishment of life, then a further criterion would have to be given for choosing the latter over the former. Strawson would say that the criterion is that a human life is always better than an inhuman life, and that the sustained objective attitude is inhuman.¹⁸

(h) negative, not a rational incumbency: The above arguments were all given in regard to the personal reactive attitude. These next three arguments extend the above rationales to the moral and self-reflective attitudes. This argument is an extension of (a). Only the three inhibitors justify the objective attitude. A belief in determinism does not universalize any combination of the three inhibitors. Any talk of determinism is therefore irrelevant.¹⁹

(i) negative, not a possibility: Extension of (d).²⁰

(j) negative, not a possibility: Reiteration of (f). Strawson says that 'it is not in our nature (to be able to) adopt the objective attitude indefinitely. On this basis, he says that it is useless to even ask the question.'²¹

(k) negative, not a rational incumbency: Strawson tacks on a reiteration of (g), commenting, 'for those convinced that the truth of determinism ... really would make the one choice rational, there has always been the insuperable difficulty of explaining in intelligible terms how its falsity would make the opposite choice rational.' Here I take Strawson to be saying that if one accepts that determinism is an acceptable justification for adoption of the objective attitude, then one must also explain how it is that one's disbelief in determinism is adequate justification for adoption of the reactive attitude. Strawson seems to believe that this is a very strong point, but I fail to see how a belief in determinism requires one to justify a premise in regard to a disbelief in determinism. In fact, it is a

rather gross non-sequitur, unless I have misconstrued the thrust of the comment.²²

This concludes my summary of Strawson's article.

ON PRASAD

Like Strawson, Prasad admits agnosticism in regard to the definition of 'determinism'. Unlike Strawson, Prasad offers a minimal definition of 'determinism', because, he claims, it is necessary to resolving the issue in question. His minimal definition is: 'when an agent does something, it is not possible for him to have avoided doing it or to have done something else.'²³ Likewise, he finds a definition of 'responsibility' also necessary, and offers one: 'we can call a man responsible for having done something if and only if we at least believe or assume that he could have done something else if he had chosen or wanted to and that he could have so chosen or wanted.'²⁴ Notice that his definitions make determinism and responsibility direct opposites: 'determinism' means no choice, and 'responsibility' requires it. For the duration of this summary of Prasad's article, I will assume these two definitions.

Strawson separates his article into handy sections. Since Prasad does not, I have taken the task on myself and have come up with thirteen sections, mostly according to discrete arguments. I'll address them in order, focusing for the most part on the arguments, themselves.

I. Summary of Strawson and Negativist Argument²⁵

According to Prasad, there is a type of moral sceptic who would assert that nobody can be said to be responsible for any action of his. A determinist who believes that nobody is responsible for their actions is, in this sense, a negativist. Strawson's claim is that any definition of determinism is irrelevant, but if a definition of determinism results in nobody being responsible, this seems to figure significantly in regard to the viability of the reactive attitude, Prasad argues.

Prasad picks up very quickly on Strawson's equivocation in regard to whether morality is possible in the face of determinism.²⁶ Strawson must come up with definitions that will reconcile these two, or be forced to abandon one of them.

II. Summary of Strawson and Preliminary Remarks²⁷

No discreet arguments against Strawson.

III. Futility of Blaming Determined Actions²⁸

Rather than feelings or attitudes, Prasad prefers to deal with the *expressions* of attitudes and feelings. The reason for this lies in his claim that it is in the logic of the reactive attitude that expression of attitudes or feelings entail the hope and possibility of influencing the other person's behaviour. To paraphrase:

Hope of influence implies belief of influence; belief of influence implies belief in the possibility of influence; belief in the possibility of influence equals belief in an agent's ability to change.²⁹

In other words, Prasad is making a similar exclusionist claim to Strawson's claim that *only* the inhibitors can justify the adoption of the objective attitude. Prasad is claiming that *only* a belief in the possibility of influencing another's actions can justify the reactive attitude. Hence, Prasad says, a determinist, believing that no one can influence anyone else's actions, would be irrational to continue the reactive attitude. However, Strawson claims, loudly and clearly, that there is another justification for continuing the reactive attitude—it is the only human thing to do. As I pointed out in (g), in order to resolve conflicting claims to rationality, a further criterion must be chosen. Strawson would say that humanity trumps all. Prasad would say that adherence to the implications of determinism trumps all. Without a common criterion, it's left to the reader to choose.

IV. The Logical Argument³⁰

In this section, Prasad formalizes Strawson's argument for the irrelevance of determinism to the Question of Adoption, which we found in (a) and (h). Prasad offers the argument in two forms:

(1) If any one of the three types of inhibitors exists, then it is inappropriate to feel or have any reactive attitude.

It is not that if determinism is true, at least one of the three inhibitors exists.

Therefore, it is not that if determinism is true, it is inappropriate to feel or have any reactive attitude.³¹

This argument is invalid, Prasad points out, because the conclusion could be false even if all the premises were true.

(1a) Add one premise to the above argument: 'if it is inappropriate to have the reactive attitude, then at least one of the three inhibitors exists.'³² Although this makes it a valid argument, it is still not a good argument. The reason, Prasad says, is that while the argument is supposed to prove the conclusion given in (1), the first premise of (1) and the added premise actually assume the conclusion. It remains to be proved that determinism is not an inhibitor or that the three types of inhibitors exhaust all inhibitors (determinism implying none of them). So, Strawson's mistaken assumption is that determinism cannot be valid simultaneously with the existence of an inhibitor.

*V. Determinism and the Pragmatic Commitment*³³

This section consists mainly of an elaboration of the argument given in Section III. Strawson emphasizes our participation in and commitment to inter-personal relationships. Prasad dubs this the 'pragmatic commitment'. Other than this nice turn of phrase, the argument contains nothing new. Adherence to the pragmatic commitment in the face of a belief in determinism is found to be irrational because we only adhere to the pragmatic commitment for reasons of influencing others. Determinism obviates that, rendering the pragmatic commitment facile. This argument runs into the same rational logjam as before, with no resolution.

*VI. Self-Nature and Defining Determinism*³⁴

Strawson makes the reasonable claim that the commitment to inter-personal relations is part of human nature, implying that any extended deviance from this commitment is impossible. Prasad accepts this claim of the make-up of human nature and adds two of his own: by nature we feel uncomfortable with conceptual incompatibilities and seek to resolve them; by nature we tend to have a preferred world-view. Prasad now offers the examples of the theist and the Hindu, two types of people who are committed to a belief in the world-view of determinism.

Of course, they are faced with a conceptual incompatibility: on one hand they are committed to determinism (which implies the suspension of inter-personal relations), and on the other they are committed to inter-personal relations. Prasad draws two conclusions from this dilemma. First, the person must abandon the reactive attitude or reveal a complete logical

insensitivity. Second, a definition of determinism can no longer be put off by Strawson. The person is forced to choose one world-view over another, and the only way to do so is to engage in a thorough evaluation of each. A thorough evaluation necessitates, at least, a definition of determinism. Hence, Strawson cannot just blithely ignore it.

The second of these conclusions seems valid to me and jibes well with the conclusion reached in Section I. The first conclusion seems unwarranted, with Prasad assuming that the person will, after thorough evaluation, choose the world-view of determinism over the world-view of human interaction. No justification is offered.

*VII. Duality of Human Nature*³⁵

We saw that Strawson says that the objective attitude and the reactive attitude are, if not mutually exclusive, profoundly opposed. Prasad suggests that we follow Hume and proposes a 'built-in duality in our nature'. Any lack of communion between the two sides of our nature, he says, is as likely to impoverish as the inhibition of all reactive attitudes.

*VIII. Equivocation of Concept of Rationality*³⁶

In this section, Prasad takes up the issue of the incompatibility of rationalities that we have faced twice already in his article, in Sections III and V. This time, however, he offers a clever method of resolving them, by subdividing the rational incumbency orientation. He says that there are two different criteria of rationality—utility and consistency, or coherence. Strawson, Prasad says, asks the Question of Adoption with the second criterion in mind, then answers it with the first in mind. It is not unacceptable for Strawson to answer the question with the criterion of utility, but he has still left unanswered the question in regard to the criterion of consistency.

Prasad has an excellent point here, but he is also assuming that the consistency criterion is at least as important as the utility criterion. If Strawson claims, as he does, that the utility criterion takes precedence over all others, then Prasad needs to offer a reason that it doesn't.

*IX. Calculating Gains and Losses*³⁷

Here, Prasad adopts Strawson's argument to turn it against him. He assumes the criterion of utility and extends it. Suppose, he says, one accepted that the reactive attitude is most reasonable based on the criterion

of utility. What if one then acquired a belief in determinism? On the criterion of utility, he would realize that the reactive attitude is useless in the sense that it could effect no changes in people.

I think Prasad needs to take this argument one step further. Strawson could easily sweep this objection away simply by appeal to the criterion of humanity—the reactive attitude is the only human way. If Prasad could show with the criterion of utility that determinism would render even humanity hollow by showing that it is just an illusion anyway, he would remove Strawson's trump card. Strawson would then be forced to cling to an illusion, which he may very well choose to do, but this would put him on even thinner ice.

*X. What is Human Nature?*³⁸

Prasad makes two important arguments in this single paragraph. Strawson claims that human nature requires the reactive attitude. Prasad contends that there is an Indian theory of human nature that claims just the opposite. According to this theory, it is possible to suspend the reactive attitude and withdraw into oneself.

The second argument is that, according to the same theory, not only is it possible, it is desirable.

Strawson takes it as given that the reactive attitude is both necessary and desirable. Prasad has provided a counter-example to both.

*XI. Human Nature is Irrational*³⁹

Prasad says that if we choose to retain reactive attitudes in the face of a belief in determinism for the reason that they are ingrained in our nature, then we admit that our nature itself is irrational. And so the high regard that Strawson accords our nature for being committed to inter-personal relations would be tainted forever by the stain of irrationality.

This is assuming that retaining the reactive attitude in the face of determinism is irrational, which Strawson is not yet compelled to admit.

*XII. Rationalizing the Reactive Attitude*⁴⁰

This is Prasad's response to Strawson's argument (k). Prasad interprets the argument the same way I do and responds that the 'opposite choice' is not a choice at all—it is the current state of affairs—and, therefore, does not require justification.

XIII. Summary⁴¹

Restatement of two points:

- ‘Determinism’ requires a precise definition.
- It is an empirical claim that determinism is never an inhibitor. The counterexamples of the theist and the Hindu disprove the claim.

*Strawson’s Response:*⁴² In his response, Strawson graciously concedes two points to Prasad: (1) that Prasad’s Logical Argument (Prasad, Section IV) effectively undermines Strawson’s claim of the irrelevancy of determinism, and (2) that determinism needs to be more precisely defined.

Strawson does not concede, however, the optimist’s ground. Instead, he offers his own minimal definition of determinism: ‘every event has a cause’. Notice that this minimal definition differs significantly from Prasad’s minimal definition (‘when an agent does something, it is not possible for him to have avoided doing it, or to have done something else’). Now when Strawson claims that free agency is possible, we can see why Prasad insisted that one’s definition of determinism would make such a great difference.

Evaluation and Comments: Generally speaking, Strawson offers four separate arguments to support the optimistic determinist viewpoint:

- (1) *Inhibitors only* (contra-objective): Only inhibitors can justify the objective attitude, and determinism is not an inhibitor. Therefore the reactive attitude is saved (since the objective attitude is not necessitated by determinism). See arguments (a), (e), and (h).
- (2) *Humans incapable* (contra-objective): By nature, humans are incapable of sustaining the objective attitude for long. Therefore the reactive attitude is saved (as the only alternative). See arguments (d) and (i).
- (3) *Appeal to humanity* (pro-reactive): The reactive attitude is the only desirable attitude for reason of its superior humanity. See arguments (f), (g), and (j). An offshoot of this argument is contra-objective in its claim that determinism entails universal abnormality, and is therefore inhuman. See arguments (b) and (c).
- (4) *Rationalizing the reactive* (contra-objective): Anyone who supports the pessimistic determinist must justify the objective attitude, and in doing so must also justify the reactive attitude from the premise of the falsity of indeterminism. See argument (k).

We can see from this capsule summary that Strawson never really offers a compatibilist argument, an argument that explains how determinism and free agency are compatible. Instead, he shows that they cannot be incompatible by demonstrating: (1) that the reactive attitude (an implication of free agency) is natural and desirable, and (2) that the objective attitude (an implication of determinism) is not natural, not desirable, not sustainable, and not compatible with the reactive attitude.

When Prasad sets out to challenge Strawson, he concentrates his effort on incompatibilist arguments, showing that determinism and free agency are incompatible. His arguments can be grouped as follows:

- (1) *Analytic argument* (contra-reactive): By definition, determinism precludes free agency. See Sections I and VI.
- (2) *Irrationalism* (contra-reactive): Given a belief in determinism, choosing the reactive attitude would be irrational. See Sections III, V, VI. An offshoot of this is the *failure to respond argument* (pro-objective): Strawson raises the Question of Adoption in the logically (in terms of consistency) rational sense, then fails to answer it, leaving the irrationalism argument untouched. See VIII.
- (3) *Against inhibitors only* (pro-objective): The *inhibitors only* argument is invalid. See Section IV.
- (4) *Against humanity* (pro-objective): It is actually Strawson's conception of humanity that is impoverished. See Sections VII and XI.
- (5) *Argument from utility* (contra-reactive): Assuming the criterion of utility, the reactive attitude would be useless since no influencing goes on. See Section IX.
- (6) *Against incapability* (pro-objective): It's not empirically true that humans are incapable of sustaining the objective attitude. See Section X.
- (7) *Against rationalizing the reactive* (pro-objective): The reactive attitude, as normal, does not require justification. See Section XII.

We can see that four of Prasad's seven types of arguments [(3), (4), (6), and (7)] are targeted directly at Strawson's four types of arguments. According to my evaluations of Prasad's arguments above, at least one argument of each type is successful, except for Section VII of type (4), which I will get to shortly. In addition to countering Strawson's arguments, Prasad offers three types of his own [(1), (2), and (5)] against Strawson's support of the reactive attitude. Prasad does not deny that the reactive attitude is desirable, but he does deny that it is natural or rational

in the face of determinism. Prasad's least successful forays are his irrationalism arguments (2) and his argument from utility (5). In these arguments, he attempts to attack the desirability of the reactive attitude, but since Strawson always hoists the flag of humanity, the only way for Prasad to capture the flag is to attack the *arguments from humanity*.

This is a tough nut to crack, especially since Prasad, himself, expresses approval at certain points. His argument in Section XI, that human nature is irrational, is a dismal failure because Strawson is not compelled to concede the point. His argument in Section VII, the duality of human nature, is much more tantalizing.

Prasad's comments on this subject are very brief, a short paragraph. All along, Prasad has been accepting without question two of Strawson's deepest presuppositions: that human nature is naturally reactive, and that attitudes and emotions are rational. In bringing this paper to a conclusion, I will comment on each of these presuppositions.

Prasad suggests in Section VII that Strawson's conception of human nature is essentially dualist, that there is a reactive side and an objective side, and they are separated by an incommunicable gulf. Prasad then offers a Humean model as a richer alternative. Hume said that reason would be a slave to passion, that only emotions compel us to action. Reason is important, as well, and both must function together to get the most out of life.⁴³

The problem with bringing Hume into the picture is that he upsets the delicate balance of terminology that Strawson has established and Prasad has, until then, hewn to. Strawson has opposed the objective attitude with the reactive attitude, both of which are reasonable. Hume, on the other hand, brings in this unruly power of the unreasonable and even suggests that it is integral to a normal life. Throughout their articles, both philosophers have shunned the irrational as categorically undesirable.⁴⁴ In fact, this *gestalt* shift in terminology is one thing that recommends Strawson's treatment. That doesn't exonerate him, however, from a further oversight.

In a footnote on p. 13 of his article, Strawson nearly broaches the topic. He puts forth the suggestion that perhaps the more objective one's attitude, the more rational the person. This tells me that he hasn't quite made the shift from rational/emotive to objective/reactive. In fact, he tentatively agrees with the suggestion and leans towards the reactive-as-emotive side of the dichotomy.

I would like to turn the reader's attention to a section of Strawson's paper that I have put off until now, the last paragraph of Section V (pp. 19–20). In this paragraph, Strawson admits to the crudity of his schema and seeks to mitigate it by offering the complex example of parents interacting with children (and psychoanalysts interacting with patients).⁴⁵ The importance of this passage is the borderline case of parents' attitudes towards kids: 'parents and others concerned with the care and upbringing of young children cannot have to their charges either kind of attitude in a pure or unqualified form.' The parent must be constantly shifting back and forth between the objective attitude and the reactive attitude because the young child is alternately capable of manifesting normal human attitudes and incapable. It is at this borderline that the weakness in Strawson's model of the human mind shows itself most clearly. If we look back at all the objective-attitude inhibitors, if they involve only one possible potentially blameworthy agent, and if physical mishaps and well-meaning intentions are discounted, then the only reason for inhibiting resentment is a psychological incapacitation. What is a psychological incapacitation? Strawson doesn't say explicitly what the nature of it is, but what can it be other than a temporary or permanent case of irrationality? We cannot have normal reactive inter-personal relations with unreasonable people. In the case of young children, it is exactly their unreasonableness that prompts us to take on the objective attitude towards them and manage them.

I submit that Strawson's schemata in which normal people are always reasonable is unrealistic. I cannot think of going through a single day in which I was completely rational at every moment, and when I witness other people, the same appears to be true for them. Notice Strawson's examples of normal reactions by offended parties or beneficiaries: gratitude, resentment, forgiveness, love, hurt feelings.⁴⁶ In my experience, of these five attitudes, only one of them is completely voluntary—forgiveness. This may explain why it is taken up as a worthwhile example by both Strawson and Prasad. The other four do not appear to me to be purely rational. I think that in addition to Strawson's or Hume's language, Sartre's language might also add a needed dimension to this discussion. The other four attitudes seem to me to be pre-reflective. And I think that very few people would disagree with the claim that for a large part of every person's life pre-reflective emotions arise due to habit, mood, prejudice, and a number of other factors that are generally taken to be non-

rational in nature. I believe it is the rare case that one is in full rational command of one's attitudes and emotions.

There is much more that can be said about this topic, and I won't attempt to exhaust the discussion here. I just have one more qualm to express, and I hope it is rational. Although I have sided with Prasad in most of the arguments, I find one unresolvable puzzle in his article. When he assumes determinism and denies free agency, how can he intelligibly discuss whether it would be rational or not for a person to take on the objective attitude or the reactive attitude? If determinism (in Prasad's sense) holds, there will be no cause for talk of rationality, and no amount of discussion will change anything. Everything would just march forward, inexorably. Perhaps to an outside observer (if that were possible) people would appear rational, but how would Prasad's article propose to change behaviour? I suppose it could if it led to a new deterministically rational decision to change to the objective mode. Prasad is insistent that Strawson provide a definition of determinism. I would like to see Prasad's *explanation* of determinism such that we can intelligibly talk about rationality and irrationality. I think it may be possible, and I think it would be fascinating.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Except, perhaps, in the article's penultimate paragraph, in which he tries to imagine a future state of human sciences which makes all reactive attitudes obsolete.
2. Those who affirm morality obviously affirm both the possibility and the incumbency of it. In regard to those who deny morality, they could be denying either its possibility or its incumbency.
3. A lower animal, for instance, is considered to have the power of decision and intention but is at the same time determined.
4. pp. 2-4.
5. pp. 20-22.
6. It is not clear how one can justify the possibility of morality without a freedom that will contradict determinism. For instance, how is it that we determine that morality is desirable, and then how is it that we *choose* morality over non-morality? Strawson seems to be saying that our choosing morality on the basis of the optimist's argument is a free choice, which could contradict determinism. If it is not a free choice, but we decide on some determined bases, the question becomes much more complex.
7. Strawson usually refers to the reactive attitude in the plural and the objective attitude in the singular, although he allows for plurality and singularity of

both. For consistency's sake, I will use the singular unless context suggests otherwise.

8. Strawson actually has several names for this second attitude: moral, reactive, vicarious reactive, and impersonal reactive. Although Strawson appears to prefer 'vicarious', using it more often, I will use 'moral' here, since that is what Prasad prefers.
9. The 'exempter' terms were suggested informally by Arindam Chakrabarti.
10. He provides no justification for the assumption.
11. My italics.
12. Argument and quotations on pp. 10–11, paragraph 7 of the section.
13. Argument and quotations on p. 11, paragraph 8 of the section.
14. Argument and quotations on p. 11, paragraphs 9 and 10 of the section.
15. Argument and quotation on pp. 11–12, second sentence of paragraph 11 of the section.
16. Argument and quotation on pp. 12–13, paragraph 11 of the section.
17. Argument and quotation on p. 13, paragraph 12 of the section.
18. Argument and quotation on p. 13, paragraph 12 of the section.
19. Argument on p. 18.
20. Argument on p. 18.
21. Argument and quotation on p. 18.
22. Argument and quotation on pp. 18–19.
23. 'Reactive Attitudes, Rationality, and Determinism', p. 350.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 350.
25. Through the third paragraph on p. 350.
26. See footnote 6.
27. Through the first full paragraph on p. 353.
28. Through the second paragraph on p. 356.
29. p. 354.
30. Up to the first full paragraph on p. 362.
31. p. 358.
32. p. 359.
33. Up to the first full paragraph on p. 368.
34. Through the first full paragraph on p. 370.
35. The single paragraph at the bottom of p. 370 and continuing on to p. 371.
36. The two full paragraphs on p. 371.
37. Through the first full paragraph on p. 372.
38. The single paragraph at the bottom of p. 372 and continuing on to p. 373.
39. Up to the first full paragraph on p. 374.
40. First full paragraph on p. 374.
41. To end.
42. Appended to 'Reactive Attitudes, Rationality, and Determinism', pp. 430–32.

43. P.K. Sen argues that even the urge to be logically consistent and to avoid contradiction is a passion. See his *Reference and Truth*. New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research, 1991.
44. Strawson the less so, since he is willing, as Prasad notes, to sacrifice consistency rationalism for utilitarian rationalism. He hints at his cognizance of this in his footnote on p. 13.
45. At the end of this example, Strawson takes an odd tack by suggesting that the concept of determinism itself is unintelligible because it would be 'grotesque' to suggest that a child's behaviour moves from the determined to the undetermined as he matures. This is an unnecessary argument. A determinist would hold that the child's behaviour is *always* determined, right through adulthood.
46. 'Freedom and Resentment', p. 4.

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