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Moral Cultivation and Confucian Character

Engaging Joel J. Kupperman

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Anthropocentric Realism about Values

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> For if the Good predicated in common is some single thing, or something separated, itself in itself, clearly it is not the sort of good a human being can pursue in action or possess; but the latter is just the sort we are looking for in our present inquiry.
>
> —Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I.6

> The rules are the beginning of order, but the gentleman is the origin of the rules.
>
> —Xunzi, "The Way of a Ruler"

It is a commonplace to observe that, in contemporary academia, there is no connection between being a person who studies ethics and being an ethical person. However, my sense is that Joel Kupperman is both. Indeed, I think if Kongzi were alive today, he would recognize Kupperman as the sort of "gentleman" (*junzi*) that he hoped to produce via his process of ethical cultivation. But a gentleman like Kupperman does not seek acclaim, and I will honor his preferences by praising his character no more.

Some Typologies

While I fall far short of Kupperman in the more important level of practice, I am pleased that I share many of his views at the level of theory:

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realism, particularism, pluralism, and fallibilism. (1) *Realism*: Values are, in some sense, objective. This does not entail that they are objective in the way that properties like mass or entities like zebras are. However, neither are they purely subjective (in the way that my preference for chicken over fish is subjective) or a result of mere intersubjective consensus (in the way that "Three strikes and you're out" is).[1] (2) *Particularism* (or contextualism): Values are highly context-sensitive. If we ask, "Is it permissible to lie?" the right response is to ask back, "About what? To whom? In what circumstances?" and many other questions. Although there is a strong presumption in favor of honesty, it is defeasible in many situations, ranging from the trivial example of fibbing to a friend about a surprise birthday party to the weighty example of Miep Gies hiding Anne Frank and her family from the Nazis.[2] (3) *Pluralism*: There are a variety of incommensurable kinds of value. As a result, there are a plurality of worthwhile ways of life. It might be better for Bloggs to become an FBI agent and for me to become a college professor (because of our respective aptitudes, interests, and traits of character); but my life of theoretical inquiry and teaching is not intrinsically better than Bloggs's life of practical action and intervention. The two of us can achieve different but equally valuable varieties of human flourishing and manifest distinct but equally worthwhile forms of virtues such as benevolence and integrity.[3] (4) *Fallibilism*: Because there are evaluative facts that we can be wrong about, and because value is so context-sensitive, and because we cannot fully appreciate values in other ways of life that we have not experienced[4]—for all these reasons, we must be continually mindful of the possibility of error in our valuations.[5]

In this essay, I am going to focus on the first thesis: realism. Realism can take different forms.[6] (i) The default target of anti-realists often seems to be Platonic realism. The Platonist holds that ethical values are part of the fabric of the universe, and would be there whether any human beings had existed or not. For the Platonist, values are not reducible to natural or physical properties, but they are similar to them in that their existence does not depend upon human cognition or motivation. (ii) Anthropocentric realism is importantly different. In order to understand it, consider the following non-moral concept: "poisonous." "The respiration of pure carbon dioxide is poisonous" is true for all humans. But it is not true for plants. Furthermore, the very notion of "poison" is meaningful only in the context of living organisms. From the perspective of pure physics, nothing is poisonous. Nonetheless, it is true or false that something is poisonous (for humans), whether a

particular individual or a culture is aware of this fact or not. We might say that poisonous-for-humans is an anthropocentric quality. It is useful and meaningful only because humans exist, but since humans do exist there are objective facts about what is poisonous for them. Similarly, the anthropocentric realist about values claims that evaluative properties and judgments are meaningful and useful only because humans—with their distinctive needs, potentials and limitations—exist. Nonetheless, there are facts about values that do not depend upon the beliefs or endorsements of any particular individual or culture.

Kupperman draws the contrast between Platonic and anthropocentric realism in this way:

> In sorting out the issues of value realism, we need to decide between two starting points. One is putative value facts. . . . If this is our starting point, then we will need to train, as it were, our value telescopes to find out whether there was something we were talking about. The other is our talk and thought about values, including the standards of evidence and logical relations that are implicit in these practices. If this is our starting point, then we will need to inquire into justification of judgments of value, and in particular whether there is justification for claiming that some judgments are authoritative (telling us what really is of value).[7]

Kupperman recommends that we reject the first approach, along with its associated "images of [values as] spectral furniture of the universe."[8] Instead, we should focus on

> . . . the structure of our discourse about values, [which] includes standards (for being in a position to be confident of judgments of value) that sometimes are met. Hence, we are in a position to say that it really is the case that some things have high value and that others have low or negative value.[9]

Kupperman is one of several Western philosophers to offer versions of anthropocentric realism.[10] However, given Kupperman's interest in Chinese thought, I am particularly intrigued by the possibility that the Confucian Xunzi may also be seen as an anthropocentric realist.[11]

In contrast with most earlier Chinese philosophers, Xunzi is at pains to insist that Heaven is morally indifferent. Heaven does not

reward the virtuous (with long lives or good harvests) or punish the vicious (with illness or natural disasters): "The activities of Heaven are constant. They do not persist because of sage-king Yao. They do not perish because of tyrant Jie."[12] In fact, Heaven endows humans with a nature that is largely self-centered and will lead us into conflict with one another if unchecked:

> Humans are born having desires. When they have desires but do not get the objects of their desires, then they cannot but seek some means of satisfaction. If there is no measure or limit to their seeking, then they cannot help but struggle with each other. If they struggle with each other then there will be chaos, and if there is chaos then they will be impoverished.[13]

Furthermore, ritual activities such as funerals do not, Xunzi insists, influence Heaven or any spiritual entities. "One performs the rain sacrifice and it rains. Why? I say: There is no special reason why. It is the same as when one does not perform the rain sacrifice and it rains anyway."[14] But if Heaven is morally passive, where do human values and ethical practices come from? Xunzi explains that they are artificial constructs invented to meet human needs:

> In ancient times, the sage-kings saw that because people's nature is bad, they were deviant, dangerous, and not correct in their behavior, and they were unruly, chaotic, and not well-ordered. Therefore, for their sake they set up ritual and standards of righteousness, and established proper models and measures.[15]

For example, mourning rituals express and shape the feelings of loss that accompany the death of a loved one, and standards of righteousness provide guidelines for how to distribute goods so that everyone has enough. Despite the fact that ethics is artificial, it is objectively justified because it achieves the goal of bringing humans into a harmonious relationship with each other and with their environment:

> For Heaven can give birth to creatures, but it cannot enforce distinctions among creatures. Earth can support people, but it cannot order people. In the world, the ten thousand things and human beings all must await sages, and only then will they be appropriately divided up.[16]

Although Xunzi regarded the rituals as artificial, he seems to have thought that the particular formulation of them by the former sage kings was the one best version. For example, Xunzi states that,

> [f]or the ritual sacrifices, one engages in divination and determines the appropriate day. One fasts and sweeps out the site, sets out tables and food offerings, and has the "announcement of the assistant," as if the deceased were attending a banquet. The impersonator of the dead takes the goods and from each of them makes a sacrifice, as if the deceased were tasting them.[17]

Xunzi says of specific practices such as these: "Is not ritual perfect indeed! It establishes a lofty standard that is the ultimate of its kind, and none under Heaven can add to or subtract from it."[18] Consequently, someone like me, who does not honor his ancestors in the particular way described above, would be dismissed by Xunzi as one of those "foolish, ignorant, perverse men" who has not learned the proper way to express sufficient love and respect for his predecessors.[19] From a contemporary perspective, this seems like a significant limitation of Xunzi's thought. Surely my own "rituals" for honoring my deceased parents (visiting their grave, putting flowers on it, pretending to tell them what has happened in our family since my last visit, etc.) are just as good. As a pluralist, Kupperman will certainly agree that (contrary to Xunzi) there are multiple sets of rituals that can serve the same functions of shaping and expressing human emotions. Nonetheless, it seems to me that Kupperman and Xunzi share the general view that values depend for their existence on human needs, capabilities and practices, but are nonetheless "real" (not simply a matter of individual or cultural opinion). Now, Kupperman has written a very fine article on Xunzi's conception of human ethical cultivation, in which he notes that Xunzi is similar to Jean Piaget in holding that humans must go through distinct levels of development in order to become mature ethical agents.[20] However, to the best of my knowledge, Kupperman has not commented on Xunzi's meta-ethics. Consequently, I will be interested to see whether he finds my interpretation of Xunzi as an anthropocentric realist about values plausible.

Just as moral realism comes in more than one form, so does antirealism. (a) Moral relativism is the view that the truth of moral claims depends upon the perspective from which they are evaluated. This perspective can be either that of an individual (subjectivism) or that of a group (cultural relativism). (b) Non-cognitivists typically regard moral claims as expressing and encouraging attitudes of some kind. Since they

are expressions rather than descriptions, moral claims are neither true nor false. (c) Error theorists agree with realists that moral language is intended to be descriptive, but they argue that there are no objective values for our moral terms to refer to.

Theory	**Moral Statements Are . . .**	**Level of Objectivity**
Realism	descriptive and can be true or false.	Platonic
		Anthropocentric
Relativism	descriptive and can be true or false.	Intersubjective (cultural relativism)
		Subjective
Non-cognitivism	expressive rather than descriptive, so neither true nor false.	
Error Theories	descriptive but none are true.	

Moral anti-realism (particularly in its relativist form) seems to have become the dogma among many college students and their professors. Consequently, my two-part project in this paper is to challenge one of the standard arguments for anti-realism and to sketch an argument for a particular form of anthropocentric realism.

The Argument from Disagreement

The argument from cross-cultural disagreement is the anti-realist argument most likely to captivate students taking their first philosophy course. However, it is an argument that is both easy to misunderstand and difficult to establish. Indeed, I have sometimes been surprised to discover that even some philosophers are persuaded by what are demonstrably inadequate formulations of this argument. Consequently, it is best to begin by reviewing why it is fallacious to go directly from the premise that there is ethical disagreement to the conclusion that there are no objective ethical facts. Pick any topic (T) about which there is disagreement. Indeed, let there be sustained and seemingly intractable disagreement over T: each party to the disagreement is firmly convinced of his own views, and his efforts to convince the other parties seem to fail repeatedly. Can we infer directly from this sort of disagreement to

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the conclusion that there are no facts about T? We cannot. At least, we cannot make this inference without succumbing to an extreme and ultimately self-undermining ant-realism about all facts. Consider evolutionary theory. I assume that most of my readers believe that it is true and applies to humans. However, 40 percent of the current U.S. population believes that "God created human beings pretty much in their present form at one time within the last 10,000 years or so."[21] This percentage has varied since Gallup started asking the question in 1982, but it has always been at least 40 percent. Consequently, if persistent disagreement over T shows there is no fact about T, we must conclude that there is no fact about whether evolutionary theory is true. I anticipate at least three rebuttals to this argument. (1) "Whether people believe it or not, evolutionary theory has been proven to be true." However, "prove" is a weasel word, whose ambiguity allows it to suggest more content than it actually has. If we take "proof" to be synonymous with strict logical deduction, then no scientific theory is ever proven. (This is a commonplace of the philosophy of science, in which it is recognized that scientific theories are interesting and informative precisely because they go beyond the evidence that supports them, and hence cannot be deduced from that evidence.) In contrast, if "prove" means something weaker, such as convincing everyone of a conclusion, then the Gallup poll shows that evolution has not been proven in this sense.

This leads to a second potential rebuttal. (2) "Although not everyone accepts evolutionary theory, the only reason that people reject it is ignorance of the evidence." This reply does not hold water, because a number of people who have been exposed to the evidence, including some with legitimate scientific credentials, reject evolutionary theory.[22] I assume this will induce the following counterargument: (3) "Only a dogmatic bias prevents those who have been exposed to the evidence from accepting evolutionary theory." But we could say the same thing to explain why a man as obviously intelligent as John C. Calhoun defended slavery, or why well-educated and seemingly informed attorneys in the Justice Department of the Bush administration endorsed torture. The anti-realist will insist that there is still some difference between the case of the informed Creationist and Calhoun, but we see now that disagreement (even seemingly intractable disagreement) is insufficient by itself to establish that there is no fact about a topic. It is the precise nature of the disagreement that establishes this (if anything does).[23]

While we cannot *logically deduce* anti-realism about values from simple disagreement about them, some have argued that the *best explana-*

tion for the nature and extent of ethical disagreement is that there are no objective facts that we are disagreeing about.[24] However, no one has ever developed this argument in anywhere near enough detail for it to be compelling. In order to establish that the ethical disagreement we find is best explained by there not being ethical facts, it is inadequate to trot out vague anecdotes about how "some people think infanticide is perfectly fine." One must look in detail at what people believe, giving thick descriptions of their practices, their own accounts of those practices, and their sociohistorical contexts. Only then can one even begin the process of arguing for an explanation for their beliefs.[25]

I cannot prove that it is impossible to construct an inference to the best explanation argument for anti-realism. However, I would like to identify a few hurdles that any such argument must overcome. First, as Hume noted long ago, superficial disagreement over ethical matters may mask a fundamental agreement. "The Rhine flows north, the Rhone south; yet both spring from the *same* mountain, and are also actuated, in their opposite directions, by the *same* principle of gravity."[26] Similarly, a positive evaluation of perseverance in the face of danger (courage) may manifest itself very differently in a culture at war as opposed to a culture at peace. Second, there may be a variety of legitimate ways to express the same underlying human value. Herodotus was impressed with the starkly different attitudes of the Greeks (who cremated the remains of their parents) and of the Callatians (who supposedly ate the bodies of their deceased parents). Each was horrified at the practices of the other.[27] However, both rituals express the human sense that we must honor the memory of our parents by disposing of their remains in a respectful way. Third, the variety we find in ethical views may be best explained by pluralism about values. Not all values can be instantiated in any one form of life, so individuals and cultures must choose which values to promote. There is much to commend in the sort of intimate community life portrayed in Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*. Everyone knows everyone else, everyone trusts everyone else, everyone cares for everyone else. However, a community like this requires a great deal of homogeneity. As Wilder suggests with the suicide of "Simon Stimson," many would find this life claustrophobic. Conversely, the fragmented life of our modern cities provides much more room for individuality, but also a much greater danger of alienation.[28]

Fourth, let us not forget that a thoughtful examination of cultural disagreement may lead to what seems like deeper (and nonrelative) ethi-

cal insight. Although I cannot vouch for its accuracy as anthropology, Montaigne's essay "Of Cannibals" is useful as a model of what it would look like to use thick description of another culture as the basis for a critique of one's own. Many of Montaigne's contemporaries had concluded that the natives of "Antarctic France" (what is now Brazil) were "savages," because they practiced cannibalism. However, Montaigne arrives at a more nuanced view through a discussion of the role of cannibalism in the native culture as a whole. He notes that "Their warfare is wholly noble and generous, and as excusable and beautiful as this human disease can be," because (unlike European warfare) it is not motivated by greed, the desire for conquest, or religious intolerance. Rather, participation in warfare seems to be voluntary, and "its only basis among them is their rivalry in valor." Prisoners of war are treated generously, "so that life may be all the dearer to them," but are also warned of the fate that awaits them. "All this is done for the sole purpose of extorting from their lips some weak or base word. . . ." However, the natives display "the grandeur of an invincible courage," because there is "not one who would not rather be killed and eaten than so much as ask not to be."[29] When the time comes, prisoners are quickly executed, and their bodies eaten as a symbolic indication of conquest. Montaigne concludes with a nuanced evaluation of his own culture in comparison with that of the cannibals: "I am not sorry that we notice the barbarous horror of such acts, but I am heartily sorry that, judging their faults rightly, we should be so blind to our own." Mentioning such cruel tortures as racking and live dismemberment, which Europeans of his era had subjected one another to "on the pretext of piety and religion," Montaigne opines, "I think there is more barbarity in eating a man alive than in eating him dead."[30] Montaigne's exploration is intriguing precisely because he does not throw up his arms and announce, "Who's to say?" but instead looks for a deeper insight.[31]

Finally, it is worth noting that cultures are not as dissimilar as some would have us believe. Much of twentieth-century anthropology has stressed cross-cultural variety, to the point of sometimes suggesting that there is no such thing as human nature. This has been valuable as a corrective to the ethnocentrism that civilizations sometimes succumb to.[32] However, many of the paradigmatic studies that claimed to show practices and beliefs radically different from those in the West have been discredited. Margaret Mead's account of how adolescent sexuality in Samoa is unfettered, relaxed, and happy has been shown to be, at

best, dubious. Benjamin Whorf's claim that the Hopi language lacks any way of expressing discrete units of time is demonstrably false. Colin Turnbull's report of the complete lack of compassion among the Ik tribe turned out to be fiction. Bronislaw Malinowski's alleged counterexample to the Oeidipus complex among the Trobriand is also quite questionable. Even the favorite cocktail party example of cultural difference, the claim that Eskimos have 22 words for snow, has turned out to be a myth.[33] In contrast with these approaches, anthropologist Donald E. Brown (a recovering relativist himself) argues that we find a set of characteristics that are nearly universal among human societies, including the use of narrative and poetry, facial expressions such as smiling and crying, marriage, incest taboos, rituals to mourn the dead, prohibitions against theft and the wanton use of violence, and many others.[34]

Are the similarities that we find among cultures best explained by a Mengzian or a Xunzian account of human nature? Consider the fact that we find some form of the institution of marriage in every human culture. Mengzi would say that, as part of our shared human nature, we all find certain things ethically shameful: even a beggar will be offended if you offer him a handout with contempt (*Mengzi* 6A10). However, our innate sense of shame is merely incipient, like the sprout of a plant (2A6). Like a sprout, our incipient sense of shame can either mature or wither, depending upon both our social environment and our individual effort (6A8, 6A9). If our sense of shame is allowed to follow its natural course of development, we will disdain to furtively satisfy our sexual desires (3B3). Consequently, marriage rituals exist because they provide a social sanction for our sexual desires, allowing us to satisfy them without shame. In contrast, Xunzi would argue that we innately have the desire for sex but not even the incipient sense of shame. For us to come to regard the furtive satisfaction of sexual desires as shameful, our emotions must be reshaped, as arduously and artificially as "steaming and bending" a piece of lumber that is as "straight as a plumb line into a wheel."[35] This transformation is justified, Xunzi would argue, because unrestrained sexual desires would lead us to harm one another. The fundamental differences between the views of Mengzi and Xunzi is reflected in their metaphors. Mengzi's favorite metaphors for ethical cultivation are agricultural (like nurturing the sprout of a plant until it grows into maturity). In contrast, Xunzi prefers technological metaphors, which involve reshaping a passive and perhaps recalcitrant material (like grinding metal or carving wood). Mengzi would no doubt have said to Xunzi what he said to Gaozi (who

proposed that "to make human nature benevolent and righteous is like making a willow tree into cups and bowls"):

> Can you, sir, following the nature of the willow tree, make it into cups and bowls? You must violate and rob the willow tree, and only then can you make it into cups and bowls. If you must violate and rob the willow tree in order to make it into cups and bowls, must you also violate and rob people in order to make them benevolent and righteous? If there is something that leads people to regard benevolence and righteousness as misfortunes for them, it will surely be your doctrine, will it not?[36]

It is beyond the scope of this paper to fully adjudicate the disagreement between Mengzi and Xunzi. However, I think it is clear that Mengzi, like Xunzi, fails to do justice to pluralism: there are a variety of distinct but equally adequate forms of marriage ceremonies, funeral rituals, etc.[37] Kupperman's comments on this general topic are, as usual, judicious. He encourages us to

> reject two extreme (and I think untenable) sorts of positions. One is to insist that a worthwhile account of human nature must be definite and hold true of people at all times and in all social conditions. The other tempting extreme is to hold that there could not be such an account or anything even remotely like it. Human nature is various, and that is the last word on the subject. . . . It is not unreasonable, though, to think it possible to arrive at an account of human nature that is largely true. This would be an account that captured ways in which a great many people, in various cultures, tend to think and behave at most times.[38]

Whatever our specific view on human nature, it seems quite clear that we do not find human cultures as wildly divergent as some advocates of the argument from disagreement suggest. In addition, no one has yet given a sufficiently detailed account of why the disagreement we do find is "best explained" by anti-realism. The argument from disagreement is at best a promissory note that anti-realists have yet to make good.

The Case for Anthropocentric Realism

The Why Question

As I explained earlier, Xunzi argues that "rituals and righteousness" are artificial constructs that are objectively justified by their role in rescuing humans from their natural state of selfishness and intemperance, which (if unchecked) will lead to mutually destructive competition for scarce resources. This line of argument is anthropocentric, because it attempts to provide a justification for values that is objective, yet ultimately grounds value in human needs and agency. As Eric Hutton has noted, there are plausible ways of interpreting Xunzi and Aristotle according to which there are some broad similarities between their approaches. However, the differences between them are also quite significant. The emphasis in Xunzi is on the "the Way of human community, where this is understood as organized society."[39] In contrast, Aristotle "seems to concentrate more on the notion of *eudaimonia* [living well] as the individual's good."[40] In the remainder of this paper I shall offer an anthropocentric argument inspired by Aristotle's account of human practical reasoning.

In attempting to understand Aristotle's justification for ethics, readers often focus on the controversial "function argument" of *Nicomachean Ethics* I.7. Here, Aristotle suggests that just as what it is to be a good sculptor depends upon the function of a sculptor, so does being a good human depend upon the function of a human. Aristotle identifies this with what is distinctive of humans as a species, and thinks this is our rationality. For a contemporary audience, this argument is problematic on several grounds, which we do not have to rehearse here. However, readers often overlook the fact that the function argument is a detour (one of Aristotle's famous digressions) from an alternative justification for ethics based on practical reasoning (*Nicomachean Ethics* I.1–5). Indeed, Thomas Aquinas focuses on this alternative account in his own discussion of the human good (*Summa Theologiae* II-I, Q. 1).[41]

For Aristotle and those who follow him, the primary ethical question is whether our actions and motivations are rational. Words like "rational," "logical," and "reasonable" sometimes arouse negative reactions, especially when applied to actions and motivations. As a pop song from the 70s whines,

> When I was young, it seemed that life was so wonderful,
> a miracle, oh it was beautiful, magical.

> And all the birds in the trees, well they'd be singing so happily,
> oh joyfully, oh playfully watching me.
> But then they sent me away to teach me how to be sensible,
> logical, oh responsible, practical.[42]

So it is perhaps worth explaining that the starting point of this approach is nothing sinister or esoteric; it is the simple recognition that "Why are you doing that?" is always a legitimate question to ask of a human being. Sometimes this question is looking for a causal answer. "Why are you sweating so much?" "I just came from the gym." But Aristotelians are particularly interested in cases where the question seeks a justificational answer (the "final cause"): "Why are you going to the gym?" "I'm training for a marathon." So practical rationality is really just concerned with justificational answers to the question "Why are you doing that?"

This might seem to land us in relativism, though. Our answer to "the why question" depends upon what our goals are, and these are often assumed to be subjective. Such was the opinion of David Hume, who famously denied that our actions and motivations can be rational or irrational:

> 'Tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger. 'Tis not contrary to reason for me to chuse my total ruin, to prevent the least uneasiness of an *Indian* or person wholly unknown to me. 'Tis as little contrary to reason to prefer even my own acknowledg'd lesser good to my greater, and have a more ardent affection for the former than the latter.[43]

This is a provocative suggestion, but why should we assent to it? If I did prefer "my own acknowledg'd lesser good to my greater," it would seem natural (both as a matter of common sense and of ordinary language usage) to say that I was being "foolish," "stupid" and, yes, "unreasonable." However, Hume is confident about his claim because it follows from his particular philosophical psychology. The contents of the human mind, Hume asserts, consist solely of "impressions" and "ideas." Impressions are "all our sensations, passions and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul."[44] Ideas, in turn, "are deriv'd from impressions, and are nothing but copies and representations of them."[45] Truth and falsehood consist in the agreement or disagreement "of ideas, consider'd

as copies, with those objects, which they represent."[46] Given these assumptions, Hume's conclusion follows fairly directly:

> Whatever, therefore, is not susceptible of this agreement or disagreement, is incapable of being true or false, and can never be an object of our reason. Now 'tis evident our passions, volitions, and actions, are not susceptible of any such agreement or disagreement; being original facts and realities, compleat in themselves, and implying no reference to other passions, volitions, and actions. 'Tis impossible, therefore, they can be pronounced either true or false, and be either contrary or conformable to reason.[47]

In other words, only certain kinds of "ideas" can be true of false, because only they, being copies (of either sensory impressions or other ideas), can correspond or fail to correspond to their objects. A "passion," as Hume calls any motivational state, "contains not any representative quality, which renders it a copy of any other existence."[48] Therefore, no passion (and by the same reasoning, no action) can be rational or irrational. Unfortunately for Hume, no informed philosopher today would accept his philosophical psychology.

Even if we did find plausible Hume's account of impressions and ideas, his claim about the nonrationality of passions and actions is stipulative and arbitrary. Motivations and actions cannot be rationally assessed, Hume claims, because reason is solely the discovery of truth and falsehood, and neither motivations nor actions can be true or false. Admittedly, if I "prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger," my *preference* is neither true nor false. But it is question-begging to assume that rationality is only about truth and falsity. Consequently, unless we accept Hume's outmoded account of impressions and ideas, or his unwarranted stipulation that reason is only about truth and falsity, he has given us no reason to deny that the statement "You ought to prefer your greater good to your lesser good" is true.

Although we lack a good argument *against* it, we might still wonder why we need to make objective evaluative assessments of practice. (I don't have a good argument against square dancing either, but it's clearly not necessary and I don't want to do it.) My answer is that objective evaluative assessments are indispensable to anything recognizable as human agency. One type of such evaluation is captured by the Hypothetical Imperative: if you choose goal, G, then you ought to take

the most efficient means, M.[49] For example, if Bloggs (a novice runner) chooses to run in a marathon, then Bloggs ought to train four days a week for 18 weeks prior to the event. This statement is surely not a pure description of what Bloggs *will* do: Bloggs might choose to run in a marathon, but fail to train adequately. One might object that, if Bloggs doesn't train adequately, he really didn't "choose" to run in the marathon. Admittedly, if Bloggs didn't train for the marathon at all and didn't even show up, we could legitimately question whether he had actually chosen to participate. But there might be plenty of reasons to think that Bloggs *had* chosen to participate in a marathon (he signs up for the marathon, he trains intermittently, he shows up and runs in it) even if his preparation was inadequate. Perhaps Bloggs wants to run in a marathon but doesn't care if he does well? But it seems quite possible that someone like Bloggs wants and hopes to do well in the marathon, but succumbs to weakness of will by skipping too many practices and eating badly. So if Bloggs chooses to run in a marathon (really chooses, as would be evident not just from his words but from some of his actions), and if he wishes to do well in it, and if he is a novice runner of average health, then he ought to train for four days a week for 18 weeks prior to the event.

If this example (or any other instance of the Hypothetical Imperative) is true, then there is at least one objective evaluative claim. Let us consider a potential objection: "The 'ought' in this example is a subjective evaluation, not an objective one, because Bloggs's choice to run in a marathon is a matter of personal preference. Surely you don't think that Bloggs is objectively obligated to run in a marathon?" This objection fails to distinguish between the Hypothetical Imperative and its constituent propositions. The consequent of the hypothetical ("Bloggs ought to train four days a week for 18 weeks prior to the event") is not objective, because it only follows from the truth of the antecedent ("Bloggs chooses to run in a marathon"), which is dependent upon a contingent and subjective choice. However, the truth of the hypothetical as a whole is neither contingent nor subjective. If training four days a week for 18 weeks is in fact the best means for a human of Bloggs's physical condition to prepare for a marathon, then the complete hypothetical, "If Bloggs chooses to run in a marathon, then he ought to train four days a week for 18 weeks prior to the event," is true, and true independently of what any individual believes, true independently of what any group of people believe, and true independently of whether Bloggs does in fact choose to run in a marathon.[50] Instances of the Hypothetical Imperative

are central to our ordinary agency and practical reasoning. Consequently, we are committed to objective evaluations.[51] Although this is a very specific and limited conclusion, it is nonetheless important. Once we acknowledge the necessity of even one objective evaluation, we see that there is nothing in principle implausible or philosophically promiscuous about accepting them.

Although he does not use the phrase "Hypothetical Imperative," Hume was aware that this principle was a prima facie counterexample to his claim that motivations and actions are never irrational. He grudgingly admits that "by an abusive way of speaking, which philosophy will scarce allow of,"[52] we might say that an action or motivation is unreasonable "when founded on a false supposition, or when it chuses means insufficient for the design'd end."[53] Hume's response was to attempt to naturalize the Hypothetical Imperative by making it descriptive rather than prescriptive:

> The moment we perceive the falsehood of any supposition, or the insufficiency of any means our passions yield to our reason without any opposition.[54]

It is easy to miss what a stunning (and implausible) suggestion this is. If Hume is correct, there has never been anyone who, like Bloggs, planned to run in a marathon, but then skipped practice too many times; there has never been anyone who knew that having "just one more cigarette" would sabotage her efforts to quit smoking, yet smoked it anyway; there has never been anyone who continued to love someone after her illusions about him were shattered. Would that people were as practically rational as Hume assumes!

Although instances of the Hypothetical Imperative are objective evaluations, the "ought" of the consequent only applies to someone who satisfies the antecedent of the conditional. If I don't plan to run in a marathon, I have done nothing wrong by failing to train for one. Some philosophers would concede that there are facts about what we ought to do given what our goals are, but no facts about what our goals ought to be. In other words, one might concede that there are objective answers to the why question when it comes to means, but no objective answers when it comes to goals. I shall approach the issue of whether there are any objectively valuable goals in two steps. First, I shall argue that there are goals that actually motivate some human beings that can be seen to be rationally indefensible. Second, I shall propose some goals

that are not only defensible, but could only be challenged via moot or fantastic objections.

Four Inadequate Answers to the Why Question

Let us imagine that Bloggs seems to dislike his job as an attorney. We ask him, "Why are you working as an attorney when you don't enjoy it?" Bloggs can refuse to answer, but he cannot deny the legitimacy of the question. Perhaps he will respond, "I make more money as an attorney than I could make any other way." We persist by asking, "Why do you need so much money? There are other jobs that would give you enough to survive comfortably." Bloggs replies, "I need money for the sake of money." This fails as a rational justification, because money is only a means to other ends. If money were intrinsically valuable, then the best strategy would be to collect something like Confederate currency; it is much easier to get than U.S. dollars. Of course, you cannot buy anything with Confederate currency. But this just shows that what makes money desirable is the things other than money that you can get with it. Despite this fact, there are many people who, like Bloggs, act as if money were an intrinsically valuable goal: they struggle to accumulate far more money than is needed to ensure their physical comfort and security, without any clear conception of some other goal their money will help them achieve. But insofar as people do act like Bloggs, we can see that their behavior is irrational.

In reality, Bloggs is more likely to give a different answer, such as, "I work as an attorney because I hope to get a big case that will make me famous." Fame is one of the most valued goods in our celebrity-obsessed culture, so we know that people have motivations like the one Bloggs expresses. Indeed, there are people who seem to want fame at any cost. In 356 BCE, Herostratus set fire to the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus (one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World) simply because he believed that this gratuitous act of destruction would ensure his eternal fame. (Obviously, he was right.) However, it seems plausible to diagnose such an extreme craving for attention as a mental illness, perhaps brought on by a lack of personal validation earlier in life. If Herostratus had the talent and opportunity to be admired as a talented poet or skillful general, he would have preferred that to the choice he made. So suppose we press Bloggs further, asking, "Do you just want to be famous, or do you want to be famous for being good at something? If I offer you a choice between being famous because your incompetence

resulted in an innocent person going to prison, or being famous because of your skillful handling of a challenging case, which do you prefer?" Presumably, Bloggs would greatly prefer to be famous for being a skilled attorney. We might describe this by saying that what Bloggs really wants is not simply fame, but prestige.

Prestige is very plausible as a part of the reason why we do what we do. All of us want to be admired for our good qualities. This is not inconsistent with humility. To paraphrase C. S. Lewis, humility is not about smart people pretending they are stupid, or attractive people pretending that they are ugly.[55] Humility is about recognizing that our excellences are simply small parts of the big picture. Thus, I am entitled to enjoy the prestige that comes when students tell me they have gotten a lot out of my classes, or when colleagues tell me that they found something insightful in one of my papers. I just need to remind myself that my class is a very small part of any student's life experience, and all of my scholarship does not amount to a single brushstroke on the canvas of world civilization. As these examples suggest, one has to be prestigious *for* something good. Thus, while it is not completely inaccurate to state that one's goal is prestige, it is incomplete. Furthermore, fame and prestige are problematic goals, because they are so dependent upon the whims of others. Bloggs will undoubtedly get a certain amount of prestige as an attorney. However, many other people share the view expressed by one of Shakespeare's characters: "The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers."[56] The same will be true of any career Bloggs chooses.[57]

In our initial account of Bloggs, we stipulated that he does not enjoy being an attorney. Some would say that this shows he has already failed in his choice of goals, because pleasure is the only reasonable goal of human action. We can certainly agree that it should be part of our goal. But pleasure is similar to prestige in that both are incomplete goods. Just as one must get prestige *for something*, so must one take pleasure *in something*. There is the pleasure I get from scratching an itch. There is the pleasure I get from watching Bergman's *Hour of the Wolf*. There is the pleasure I get from making love with my wife. There is the pleasure I get from watching *The Simpsons*. There is the pleasure I get from a good workout at the gym. There is the pleasure I get from a fine meal at a gourmet restaurant. There is the pleasure I get from a greasy bacon double cheeseburger at a diner. There is the pleasure I get from writing this academic paper. There is the pleasure I get from talking and playing with my children. Notice that the singular word "pleasure" masks a

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huge diversity in states of consciousness, which sometimes have little in common besides the fact that we feel positively about them. There is really no such thing as pleasure simpliciter; there is only the pleasure-of-X or the pleasure-of-Y.[58]

"Be that as it may," the hedonist replies, "our goal is still to maximize pleasure in some form." There are at least three arguments against the hedonist, though. (1) All of us can imagine pleasures that we would prefer not to have. David Cronenberg's 1996 film *Crash* explores the possibility of people who are sexually aroused by viewing and participating in fatal or crippling car crashes.[59] I think most of my readers would be horrified to discover that they had developed such a fetish (and would seek therapy to overcome it should it develop) even if it turned out to be an intense source of pleasure. If this example seems too fanciful to have any bite, use your own imagination, and be honest with yourself about your gut reaction to certain pleasures. (2) Kupperman discusses another counterexample to the thesis that pleasure should be our only goal: the happy clam.[60] Imagine our mental life reduced to its most basic functions, such as the pleasures of relieving hunger and eliminating waste (like a mollusk perhaps experiences). Let us stipulate that we will have no awareness of the kinds of pleasure that we have lost, so we will have no occasion for regret. Since we will only know about the simple pleasures we still have, they will seem the peak of delight to us. Nonetheless, almost all of us would be unwilling to trade our current lives (with their complex but often difficult-to-satisfy preferences) for that of a simple but satisfied clam. The best explanation for our sense that there are shameful pleasures and that one can maximize certain kinds of pleasure yet still be missing something is that pleasures differ not only in quantity and kind, but also in value. (3) Once we acknowledge that pleasures are of fundamentally different kinds, we see that maximizing pleasure is not intelligible as a goal in itself. In order for the concept of "maximizing X" to have content, there has to be a metric for X that allows us to choose between alternatives based upon how much X each offers. However, since pleasures are so different, there can be no common metric by which they can be measured and compared. Consider a concrete example. I sometimes have to choose between spending quality time with my children and working on scholarly projects. Should I spend an extra hour with my children that I would have spent working on a book? Interacting-with-my-children pleasure simply feels different from writing-a-book pleasure, so I cannot directly compare one to the other, and make the choice based on which would maximize pleasure in some

neutral sense. (Sometimes we hear talk of "hedons" of pleasure, but this is at best a vague metaphor, and at worst a Procrustean quantitative fetishism with no basis in actual experience.)

Does this mean that the choice of how to combine pleasures in a life is irrational? No. Not all reasoned judgments can be settled numerically. Any of Rembrandt's self-portraits is better than any of C. M. Coolidge's paintings of dogs playing poker, even though we cannot quantify the difference. Furthermore, in ordinary practical reasoning, pleasure is normally not the first thing that comes into our consideration. In thinking about how to balance my role as a father with my role as a scholar, I am much more likely to start with assessments of the values I assign to the activities themselves, and of what kinds of time commitments I need to reach goals central to those values. I might be concerned that my child is having problems with school, so I spend more time helping with homework. Alternatively, perhaps I think I have a distinctive scholarly contribution to make with a particular article, but I have had trouble completing it, so one weekend I forgo a trip with my children to a Renaissance Faire in order to spend more time writing. I will get pleasure from either activity, but the pleasure is not the focus of the deliberation. Pleasure becomes the focus only in special cases, like when we are trying to decide what to do on our vacation ("Going to the beach would be nice, but I also like skiing. Which one would I enjoy more?"). I want to stress again that *pleasure is an important component of living well*. Perhaps someone could rationally choose a life in which there was little pleasure, but at the very least we would seriously question that choice. But there is a world of difference between saying, (1) it counts strongly against the rationality of a choice if it does not bring pleasure of some kind (true), and (2) the maximization of pleasure can and should be the sole determinant of all our choices (false).

I hope to have made two points in the preceding section. First, the choice of human goals cannot be completely subjective, because there are some (even ones that motivate many humans) that are simply unintelligible as ultimate goals. For example, wealth is rational as an intermediate goal, a means to achieving some further end, but it is simply unintelligible to suggest that wealth is an ultimate goal in itself. Second, we have seen that some things are reasonable to pursue as aspects of our ultimate goals (like prestige and pleasure), but they are conceptually dependent on some other goal to give them concrete form. In the next section, I shall argue in favor of six candidates for ultimate goals.

Six Adequate Answers to the Why Question

We have been discussing a variety of unsatisfactory answers that Bloggs could give to our question, "Why are you an attorney?" but now let us approach from the opposite direction and consider what an adequate response would be. Suppose Bloggs says, "I am a defense attorney because I think it is important to protect the innocent. Even when I know my client is guilty, I feel like I am serving the community because I am a bulwark against the indiscriminate exercise of government power." At long last, we have an intelligible, defensible answer. Bloggs has told us what he finds valuable in his career, and we can sympathetically understand it as an intrinsically valuable goal. When we imagined Bloggs saying that he is an attorney because it makes him the most money, it was legitimate for us to ask what he wants all that money for. In contrast, if Bloggs says that he is an attorney because he wants to help others and serve the community, it makes no sense for us to challenge him, "But why would you want *that?*" The difference is due to the fact that money is merely an instrumental good, while helping others is intelligible to us as an ultimate goal.

How does it affect the adequacy of Bloggs's answer that he seems not to enjoy being an attorney? Tortured geniuses like Ludwig Wittgenstein (in real life) or Dr. Gregory House (in fiction) have a sort of romantic appeal to them. My intuition is that their lives can be worthwhile, even though racked with pain and sadness. However, I am not certain of this, and even I admit that their lives would be better if they were more pleasant. But the case of Bloggs need not be so extreme. Let us suppose Bloggs explains, "Being a defense attorney is very stressful and frustrating, so I often seem to not be enjoying myself. However, I get immense satisfaction when I successfully defend the rights of a client. At the moment I can't imagine being satisfied by any other career." Not only does this answer make sense, but we might think that Bloggs gets more satisfaction out of his work precisely because it is so challenging. Not everyone would concur, but for many of us a life without the stresses and pains that come from surmounting challenges sounds horrific. This perspective is illustrated in the *Twilight Zone* episode in which a criminal, "Rocky Valentine," dies and awakens in a world where his every wish is instantly met: he has unlimited amounts of cash, he wins every time he gambles, police are powerless before him, and he is surrounded by beautiful women (who lack any personality that might lead them to resist

his whims). After a month, Rocky is almost insane with boredom, and tells the person whom he thinks is his guardian angel, "If I gotta stay here another day, I'm going to go nuts! I don't belong in Heaven, see? I want to go to the other place." The angel replies, "Heaven? Whatever gave you the idea that you were in Heaven, Mr. Valentine? This *is* 'the other place!' "[61]

Being a defense attorney is an example of what Aristotelians call a "political" life (in a broad sense of that term). While we should heed Kupperman's admonition that "it would seem doctrinaire to claim to be able to limit in advance the number of major types of very good lives,"[62] it would be potentially useful to many true "lovers of wisdom" if we could categorize some of the more plausible candidates. Three kinds of goods have been serious contenders for intrinsic value in the pre-modern Western tradition: (1) theoretical understanding and inquiry (as might be exemplified in the life of the theoretical physicist, the pure mathematician, and the academic philosopher); (2) practical activity with others for the good of one's community (as could be seen in the life of a senator, a bureaucrat at the FDA, and a defense attorneys like our friend Bloggs); and (3) religious devotion (as might be found in the life of a monk, hermit, or monastic nun). These goods can be combined in certain kinds of lives. No matter how "pure" our research, most of us in academia have to walk back down into "the Cave" and take our turn as chair or dean. Similarly, Jesuits like Frederick Copleston famously combine religious devotion with theoretical inquiry.

In addition to the traditional three candidates, there are other kinds of goods that have been proposed as intrinsically valuable. (4) G. E. Moore suggested that it is "universally admitted that the proper appreciation of a beautiful object is a good thing in itself."[63] He was perhaps overoptimistic about how universal this view is, but it is certainly a common and plausible one. It is rare that one will be able to organize one's entire life around just the appreciation of beauty; however, it is undoubtedly a valuable component of a good life. (5) Because we value the appreciation of beauty in art, most of us would acknowledge that the production of art also has intrinsic value. The appreciation and production of art are related activities, but not identical. I could have very good taste in music without being able to create it. In addition, artists are not always insightful about other arts or the work of other artists. But someone who said that she is working to produce beautiful paintings, sculptures, pieces of music, poems, or novels would not have to provide a further justification for her actions.

I think most of my readers will appreciate the value of the preceding categories. However, I want to argue now for a more controversial type of intrinsic value: (6) skillful activity in a practice. I am here appropriating Alasdair MacIntyre's specific notion of a "practice," by which he means a "cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized."[64] "Internal goods" are those that can only be obtained through a specific practice. External goods can in principle be obtained in other ways; the activity is only a means to external goods. We can illustrate the distinction with the practice of teaching. An external good of teaching would be earning a salary. An internal good would be the experience of finally "reaching" a student who was initially resistant to learning.[65]

Not every human activity has internal goods. Changing the bulb on my headlight is not a practice, because the only good that results is external (even though important): I can see when I drive at night. Nothing will be lost if I achieve the same goal in other ways (as by hiring a mechanic to fix it). Internal goods arise at least in part because practices present challenges to humans of potentially infinite complexity. Because practices are complex in this way,

> . . . human powers to achieve excellence [in a given practice], and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended. Tic-tac-toe is not an example of a practice in this sense, nor is throwing a football with skill; but the game of football is, and so is chess. Bricklaying is not a practice; architecture is. Planting turnips is not a practice; farming is.[66]

Let's consider the example of Western chess in more detail. Playing chess well is obviously a challenging activity. This is part of the reason that chess aficionados are intrigued by and admire especially good moves or ingenious solutions to chess problems. Chess is also an endless source of fascination because, although the basic rules have not changed since the nineteenth century, the tactics of chess continually evolve. One test of whether an activity is a practice is whether it is appropriate to say of at least one practitioner, "Not only was she really good at it, but she revolutionized the way we do it." For example, Wilhelm Steinitz, the first World Chess Champion, revolutionized the game with his subtle positional approach.[67]

Some of MacIntyre's examples of practices—including physics, chemistry, biology, painting, music, and "politics in the Aristotelian

sense"—are consistent with the valuable ways of life we discussed above.[68] However, MacIntyre's examples of chess and football fall outside our categories (1) through (5), as would similar practices like playing poker, cooking, bonsai, pumpkin carving, and jiu-jitsu. I would further expand the list of practices in directions not suggested by MacIntyre. I have no doubt that Plato and Aristotle, at least, would find accountancy a vulgar and banausic activity. I would argue, though, that being an accountant could be a practice. Because the business world is always changing, accounting procedures are always in flux, and it requires a thoughtful approach to determine what are legitimate and illegitimate ways of measuring revenues, expenses, assets, liabilities, retained earnings, etc. (Luca Pacioli's *Summa Arithmetica* of 1494 revolutionized accounting by publicizing and standardizing the method of double-entry bookkeeping.) Similarly, the various forms of engineering have not surfaced on traditional lists of intrinsically valuable activities, but the complex and ever-changing challenges presented by engineering problems make solving them a practice.[69] If engaging in practices is intrinsically valuable, chemical engineers, CPAs, and poker players who are devoted to their respective crafts and do them well can take their place alongside philosopher-kings and saints as paradigms of lives that are well-led.[70]

Conclusion

Let's return to an example I used at the beginning of this paper: the claim "pure carbon dioxide is poisonous" is true. This claim is only true because there are animals like human beings; there would be no content to the notion of "poisonous" in a universe without animals. However, the claim is not, for that reason, subjective. Long before any human being or culture knew that there was such a thing as CO_2, it was true that inhaling pure carbon dioxide would be lethal. I have argued in this paper that claims like "Producing beautiful works of art is a worthwhile goal" are similarly anthropocentric. This claim is true only because humans exist, and because humans have the needs and capacities that we have; however, its truth is not relative to either individual whims or cultural fads. Producing beautiful works of art is intelligible as an ultimate goal in a way that the mere accumulation of wealth is simply not.

There are far more potential questions and objections to the theses of this paper than I can answer here or even anticipate. But I want to conclude by addressing one counterargument that I suspect will have

particular urgency for many readers: "You seem to expect everyone to justify themselves to others and to their standards of rationality. Suppose Bloggs *did* insist that he wanted money for the sake of money? Suppose Herostratus *did* say that he preferred fame to prestige? Suppose someone said that his overarching goal in life is to count the blades of grass in various geometrically shaped plots?[71] Why should it carry any weight that these answers seem incoherent or unsatisfactory to you or to anyone else?"

To answer this objection, we need to take a step back and consider the nature of philosophy itself. For centuries, people have gone out of their way to denounce Descartes and accuse others of being Cartesians. But many of these same critics accept without reflection the fundamental subjectivism of Descartes's approach. To really exorcise the ghost of Descartes, we must reject his view of philosophy as a solitary monologue, in which each person is answerable only to his own standards. As both the *Analects* of Confucius and the dialogues of Plato show (in their distinctive ways), philosophy is a discussion between humans attempting to reach a shared understanding. The attempt is not guaranteed to be successful, and understanding is not identical with agreement. In our individual lives and human history we increasingly recognize the extent to which others disagree with our view of the world. But we are able to recognize this only because we understand the values and perspectives that we do not agree with. To give up on understanding others is not to respect them; it is to objectify them, to treat them as we do rocks, plants, or hurricanes, whose "actions" can be causally explained, but not justified. To treat others as humans is to treat them as beings whom you can potentially ask, "Why are you doing that?" and expect an intelligible answer. Their answer may surprise you, challenge you, or disturb you, but until you have understood it, you have not done justice to your shared humanity with them.

And if you don't agree with that, tell me "Why?" and we will begin a dialogue aimed at achieving a shared understanding.

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faults that remain). Of course, I am especially grateful to Joel Kupperman for his outstanding work on both Western and Chinese philosophy, as well as providing a living example of how to be a Confucian gentleman in the contemporary world.

Notes

1. "People often have a sense of having experienced how much value, or lack of value, various things have. In some of these cases, it looks reasonable to suppose that they have got it pretty much right; that what they value really does have value, or that what they disvalue really is boring, empty, or abhorrent" (Kupperman 2006, 143). Elsewhere, Kupperman remarks, "there seems no harm in speaking of value facts, as long as we bear in mind that to speak of the fact that X has high value . . . is equivalent to saying that X really does have high value" (Kupperman 1999b, 81). Formulations like this simply "draw a contrast between what Smith or Bloggs or a casual onlooker might take the value of some experiences to be, on the one hand, and some more authoritative judgment, on the other" (Kupperman 1999b, 80).

2. "Broad general rules provide a useful starting point and core of any morality; but there should be more to a morality than a core. . . . There is no requirement in logic or in the nature of moral thought that maxims take the form of general rules. Nor, if we do rely on rules, can we infer that for any given morally problematic case there is a single general rule that clearly and incontrovertibly is appropriate to that case" (Kupperman 1991, 77–78).

3. "Even if one accepts Aristotle's favorable evaluation of the highly intellectual contemplative life, surely it is also true that lives that center on aesthetic creation, aesthetic experience, effective political and social activities, or on styles of personal relations can be very good. . . ." (Kupperman 1991, 134. See also 144–145.)

4. Kupperman notes both that "It is easy to jump to conclusions about someone else's life because we have missed nuances that are important to its value," but also that "No one has ever advanced a coherent and convincing set of reasons for saying that judgments of this sort are nonsense or have to be false" (Kupperman 1991, 133).

5. Kupperman advocates what he describes as "a modest skepticism" about our knowledge of value, which "can be conducive to keeping an open mind." However, he quickly adds that "complete skepticism would be unwarranted" (Kupperman 2006, 138).

6. My typology of realism and anti-realism in this paper is not meant to be exhaustive. I am simply focusing on what I think are some of the more common and plausible positions.

7. Kupperman 1999b, 81.

8. Kupperman 1999b, 81. Kupperman also notes: "It is natural to speak of 'values' in connection with our thought about and experience of what is or is not of value; and then it is easy to go from that to thinking of values as like things, furniture of a peculiar sort among the other furniture of the universe. But the objects of our thought and experience, even when they are empirical features of the real world, are not always things. In this respect it is healthy to compare values to the rate of inflation or to magnetic fields. Neither seems particularly furniturelike, and each is an interpretative construct related to (less conspicuously interpreted) underlying phenomena" (Kupperman 1999b, 74).

9. Kupperman 1999b, 82.

10. See Wiggins 1987; McDowell 1998; Putnam 1992.

11. For a defense of the interpretation of Xunzi I sketch here, see Van Norden 2011, Chapter X, 163–183; Van Norden 2000; Van Norden 1993.

12. Ivanhoe and Van Norden 2005, 269. (Translation slightly modified.)

13. Ivanhoe and Van Norden 2005, 274.

14. Ivanhoe and Van Norden 2005, 272.

15. Ivanhoe and Van Norden 2005, 299.

16. Ivanhoe and Van Norden 2005, 281–282. (Translation slightly modified.)

17. Ivanhoe and Van Norden 2005, 284.

18. Ivanhoe and Van Norden 2005, 276.

19. Ivanhoe and Van Norden 2005, 283.

20. Kupperman 2000. Kupperman also makes passing reference to Xunzi in Kupperman 2001, 37, 77 and Kupperman 1999a, 101.

21. Gallup Poll, conducted December 2010 <http://www.gallup.com/poll/145286/>. In 2010, only 16 percent of those polled believed that a purely naturalistic view of evolution accounts for the human species.

22. In 2004, Nathaniel Abraham, who holds an MS in biology and a PhD in philosophy from an accredited university, was hired by Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution on the basis of his credentials, but he was dismissed when he revealed to his superior that he is a Creationist (Boston Globe, December 7, <http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2007/12/07/biologist_fired_for_beliefs_suit_says/>). In addition, Benjamin Stein (a law professor and former New York Times columnist) co-wrote and starred in *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed*, a film criticizing evolutionary theory and championing intelligent design (Frankowski, Miller, Stein & Ruloff 2008).

23. Kupperman asks, "What logic connects the claim that very often we cannot expect consensus in judgments of value with the conclusion that such judgments cannot be correct? There surely is no logical contradiction in the notion of correct propositions about which, nevertheless, people cannot entirely agree" (Kupperman 2006, 140–141).

24. Charles Sanders Peirce was the first to emphasize that inference to the best explanation (or "abduction" as he called it) is a form of argument distinct from deduction. See Fann 1970.

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25. Mackie 1991, sketches an inference to the best explanation version of what he labels (somewhat misleadingly) the "argument from relativity." However, he simply asserts that moral disagreement is best explained by the absence of moral facts, without discussing any detailed examples to make his case.

26. Hume 1983, 113. (Emphasis in original.)

27. Herodotus, *History*, Book III.

28. David Wong, 1986, has argued that the disagreements between Western and East Asian cultures over individualism and filial piety are sufficient to support "relativism." However, he has confirmed (in conversation) my sense that what he means by "relativism" is much like what I would label "pluralism."

29. Montaigne 1958, 156.

30. Montaigne 1958, 155.

31. Kupperman's extensive and insightful work in comparative philosophy is a further illustration of this approach to cultural differences. See, for example, Kupperman 1999a and Kupperman 2001.

32. For a thoughtful discussion of how contemporary anthropology has helped challenge narrow views of human nature, see Clifford Geertz 1973.

33. See Freeman 1986; Malotki 1983; Grinker 2001; Spiro 1992; Martin 1986.

34. Brown 1991, Chapter 6.

35. Ivanhoe and Van Norden 2005, 256.

36. *Mengzi* 6A1. Translation from Ivanhoe and Van Norden 2005, 144–145.

37. Some philosophers interpret Mengzi and Xunzi as being much more similar in their views of human nature than I suggest here. For one such account, see Ni 2009. Ni also presents a provocative account of Mengzi as holding a non-cognitivist view of human nature, according to which the claim that "human nature is good" is neither true nor false, but is rather a "performative" recommendation. For my own (cognitivist) account of Mengzi, see Van Norden 2011. In addition, I argue in Van Norden 2007, that, although traditional Confucians were not pluralists themselves, the core insights of Confucianism can be incorporated into a pluralistic philosophy.

38. Kupperman 2010, 189–190.

39. Hutton 2002, 373.

40. Hutton 2002, 374.

41. I hasten to note that neither Aristotle nor Aquinas was an anthropocentric realist about values. This is reflected in the important role that "final causes" play in Aristotelian physics and in the "function argument" of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. What I am doing in this paper is appropriating a particular aspect of Aristotle's approach that does not in itself require anything beyond anthropocentric realism about values.

42. Supertramp 1979.

43. Hume 1978, Book II, Part III, Section III, 416. (Emphasis in original.)

44. Hume 1978, Book I, Part I, Section I, 1.

45. Hume 1978, Book I, Part I, Section VII, 19.

46. Hume 1978, Book II, Part III, Section III, 415. For example, if I have a "complex idea" that consists of a mental image of the Space Needle in Seattle, my idea is true, because it is an accurate copy of a sensory impression of the Space Needle; however, if I have an idea of the Space Needle in *Portland*, my idea is false, because it does not accurately copy any sensory impression.

47. Hume 1978, Book III, Part I, Section I, 458.

48. Hume 1978, Book II, Part III, Section III, 415.

49. In order to be fully adequate, any account of the Hypothetical Imperative would have to be much more complex, and could not treat our goals in isolation. However, all I need for my argument is the acknowledgement that we cannot do without some version of reasoning about the best means to achieve our goals.

50. The truth of the claim *is* anthropocentric, though. If there were no human beings, there would be no fact about how long humans have to train for them (and also no truth about how long a "marathon" is).

51. Another potential objection is that the "ought" of the Hypothetical Imperative is non-moral. If I choose to run in a marathon but fail to adequately train, I am guilty of a failure of practical rationality, but not guilty of a moral failure. This is accurate, but I am not attempting to defend a distinction between moral and other kinds of value. It is sufficient for my purposes if I establish that there are objective values of some kind.

52. Hume 1978, Book III, Part I, Section I, 459.

53. Hume 1978, Book II, Part III, Section III, 416.

54. Hume 1978, Book II, Part III, Section III, 416.

55. Lewis 1992, Letter XIV, 73.

56. "Dick the Butcher," in *Henry VI*, *Part II* (Act IV, Scene 2).

57. Does Bloggs aim at genuine prestige or specious prestige? In other words, would he rather be admired for a good quality that he actually has, or for a quality people mistakenly think he has? Here I think we should say the same thing we said about fame: we can imagine someone seeking specious prestige, but we cannot imagine them rationally preferring specious prestige to merited prestige.

58. Aristotle puts this rather poetically by saying that the pleasure that accompanies an activity is like the bloom upon the cheek of a healthy youngster (*Nicomachean Ethics* X.5, 1174b30). Aquinas puts it more technically by saying that pleasure is not the "essence" of living well, but rather a "proper accident" of it (*Summa Theologiae* II-I, Question 2, Article 6).

59. Cronenberg, Thomas, & Lantos (1996) is not to be confused with the film of the same name by Paul Haggis (2005).

60. Kupperman 2006, 3–4.

61. Beaumont 1960.

62. Kupperman 1991, 134.

63. Moore 1903, §114, 189.

64. MacIntyre 1984, 187.

65. The internal goods of a practice can be ignored, as is illustrated by the character "Elizabeth" in the film *Bad Teacher*: "When I first started teaching, I thought that I was doing it for all the right reasons: shorter hours, summers off, no accountability . . ." (Kasdan, Eisenberg & Stupnitsky [2011]). MacIntyre would say, I think, that teaching is a practice, but "Elizabeth" does not treat it as such.

66. MacIntyre 1984, 187.

67. In a comparison of Steinitz to one of his leading opponents, someone said, "Kolisch is a highwayman and points the pistol at your breast. Steinitz is a pickpocket, he steals a pawn and wins a game with it" (Anderssen, 1887).

68. MacIntyre 1984, 187–188. It might seem that any human activity (other than the most mindlessly simple and repetitious) counts as a "practice." However, some engaging human activities will fail. Stamp collecting may be fun, but I do not think that it is challenging (except insofar as one needs money to buy certain rare stamps) or complex enough (because the standards and techniques of stamp collecting do not evolve).

69. A classic defense of the value of engineering, both for its internal and its external goods, is Florman 1994.

70. It will be evident to students of Confucianism that there is much more that can be said about the similarities and differences between the Aristotelian and Confucian views of the legitimate goals of human life. I explore these in more detail in Van Norden 2013.

71. The example is borrowed from Rawls 1971, 432.

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