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# **Moral Improvement and Human Rights in the Absence of Foundations**

Brenna Triffo, University of Saskatchewan

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The traditional view of morality holds that there is something intrinsic in human nature, such as a universal principle, that provides us with our knowledge of human rights. According to this view, the closer we get to knowing this principle, the more moral we become. Richard Rorty, however, rejects this foundationalist view of morality with respect to human rights, arguing instead that we need to approach the question through telling stories that evoke feelings of sympathy, leading to the broadening of our moral communities and expansion of human rights. In this paper, I will argue that Rorty's antifoundationalism, with an emphasis on sentimental education, is the best approach to take in order to achieve moral betterment and promote human rights. In section one I will discuss Rorty's view, explaining antifoundationalism and sentimental education, as well as touching on the role of the novel. In section two, I will defend Rorty's stance, arguing first that his view avoids the narrowness of traditional moral theories, second that sentimental education leads more directly to increased tolerance, and third that an approach to morality and human rights without foundations gives us better, more genuine, motivations for acting.

In order to understand Rorty's antifoundationalism, it is first necessary to briefly look at foundationalism. Foundationalism typically refers to the metaphysical attempt at grounding certain objective moral norms<sup>1</sup>. This view "supposes that foundations are before and beyond things, that they are the origin of beings, giving objectivity to reality."<sup>2</sup> What this means is that morality is something that can be discovered through a faculty unique to human nature, such as reason.<sup>3</sup> So, our ability to determine moral action (and to treat people right) is innate, transcendental, and universal.<sup>4</sup> Rorty, however, disagrees with this position and proposes antifoundationalism as an alternative way of determining moral action.

Rorty argues that an approach to human rights that is not based on foundations is vitally important as he sees foundations as providing no practical purpose when it comes to moral action. Specifically, he states that "human rights foundationalism [is] outmoded and irrelevant," meaning that no pragmatic good comes of utilizing foundations to explain the correct moral action in our

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<sup>1</sup> Christian B. Miller, "Rorty and Tolerance," *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory*, no. 1 (June 2003): 98. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/41802225>.

<sup>2</sup> José Barreto "Ethics of Emotions as Ethics of Human Rights: A Jurisprudence of Sympathy in Adorno, Horkheimer and Rorty," *Law and Critique* 17, no. 1 (2006): 101-102. <https://doi-org.cyber.usask.ca/10.1007/s10978-006-0003-y>.

<sup>3</sup> José-Manuel Barreto. "Rorty and human rights Contingency, emotions and how to defend human rights telling stories," *Utrecht Law Review*, 7, no. 2 (April 2011): 96. <http://doi.org/10.18352/ulr.164>.

<sup>4</sup> Barreto, "Contingency," 97.

current context.<sup>5</sup> While Rorty does not explicitly reject the existence of an ahistorical human nature, he argues that if it were to exist, there would be “nothing in that nature that [would be] relevant to our moral choices.”<sup>6</sup> This is because Rorty does not reject that human rights are necessary and worthwhile notions, but he does reject the fact that we can remove ourselves from our history.<sup>7</sup> Given this, what exactly is the basis for moral action, for treating each other with respect, if there is nothing inherent in human beings that calls for it? The answer to this question can be found in Rorty’s concept of sentimental education.

Rorty argues for an approach to moral action based on sentimental education. According to Rorty, sentimental education is the only method that is sufficient for convincing individuals to move past foundationalism. Sentimental education can be defined as that which concentrates “on manipulating sentiments” with hopes to “expand the reference of... ‘our kind of people’ and ‘people like us.’”<sup>8</sup> Hence, sentimental education shows why one should care about a stranger, or, in other words, why one should

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<sup>5</sup> Richard M. Rorty, “Human Rights, Rationality, and Sentimentality,” in *The Rorty Reader*, ed. Christopher J. Voparil and Richard J. Bernstein (Chichester: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2010), 353.

<sup>6</sup> Rorty, “Human Rights,” 355.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Rumana, *On Rorty* (Belmont: Thomson Learning Inc., 2000), 77; Michalinos Zembylas, “Toward a Critical-Sentimental Orientation in Human Rights Education,” *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 48, no. 11 (September 2016): 1156. doi. 10.1080/00131857.2015.1118612.

<sup>8</sup> Rorty, “Human Rights,” 359.

care about someone who is outside of one's moral community.<sup>9</sup> Thus, according to Rorty, morality is not a transcendental, universal, and innate concept discovered through the use of reason, but is instead "a progress of sentiments" which is the ability to continue to see similarities between ourselves and others as outweighing whatever differences might exist.<sup>10</sup> In other words, Rorty believes that it is not moral knowledge that leads to betterment and an improved human rights culture, but rather the development of empathy—the appeal to emotions—through sentimental education.<sup>11</sup>

Rorty is focused on broadening the scope of our moral community. In other words, Rorty argues that we should seek solidarity, or the desire for intersubjective agreement as opposed to objectivity and the search for truth.<sup>12</sup> Rights, for Rorty, are afforded only to those who count as fellow human beings. To claim human rights, one must be a member of the same moral community in which all fellow human beings identify as belonging to.<sup>13</sup> Rorty places a great deal of importance on this, and argues that the need

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<sup>9</sup> Rorty, "Human Rights," 365.

<sup>10</sup> Rorty, "Human Rights," 362.

<sup>11</sup> Maria Granik, "The Human Rights Dialogue: Foundationalism Reconsidered," *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory* 60, no. 135 (June 2013): 8. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/42705254>.

<sup>12</sup> Richard M. Rorty, "Solidarity or Objectivity," in *The Rorty Reader*, ed. Christopher J. Voparil and Richard J. Bernstein (Chichester: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2010), 229.

<sup>13</sup> Rorty, "Human Rights," 359.

for sentimental education partly results from the inability of foundationalism to adapt to changing moral environments and help its adherents to recognize those outside their immediate circle (for example, one's family) as important. He argues that traditional moral philosophical theories have a history of only recognizing and praising individuals who treat those within their community in a moral fashion, but neglect to notice or be affected by the suffering of those who are out of their immediate moral community.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the task of sentimental education is to utilize our capacity to feel for others and to bring them into our moral community in an all encompassing fashion. That is, for example, to expand our moral community beyond one's family, one's friends, or one's country.

To look at this in another way, Barreto offers a good analysis of the above points. He argues that there are two aspects that are important with regard to sentimental education. The first looks to increase the amount of people we refer to as "people like us, by making us more familiar with them and emphasising the likeness between them and us."<sup>15</sup> The second seeks to enable us to more easily put ourselves in the shoes of those who are suffering, to understand that they are in pain, and to help us look at the world from their perspective.<sup>16</sup> Hence, "the first coaches us to think of our identity in a non-exclusionary fashion" and "the second invites

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<sup>14</sup> Rorty, "Human Rights," 359.

<sup>15</sup> Barreto, "Ethics of Emotions," 103-104.

<sup>16</sup> Barreto, "Ethics of Emotions," 103.

us to act in solidarity, as individuals or as a political community.”<sup>17</sup> These two points are important because they allow us to strengthen our human rights culture and to move past our original ethnocentric views, upbringing, and socialization.<sup>18</sup> Sentimental education not only exposes us to new and different ways of “being human” through the use of imagination, but also leads to greater solidarity.<sup>19</sup> According to Rorty, one of the best ways to achieve these goals is through telling stories, and—in particular—through the use of the novel.

The novel plays a central role in sentimental education.<sup>20</sup> This is because the sort of sad and sentimental story that allows one to connect with others can often be found in a novel.<sup>21</sup> By exposing oneself to stories about different cultures and different points of view, one can transcend the norms that constituted our upbringing and re-create oneself.<sup>22</sup> For example, Rorty states that if we were to read *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* as opposed to Kant’s *Foundations for the Metaphysics of Morals*, we would be in a better position to both ask and answer why one should care about their fellow human beings. According to Rorty, the traditional universalistic answer, offered by Kant and others, has seldom been

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<sup>17</sup> Barreto, “Ethics of Emotions,” 104.

<sup>18</sup> Barreto, “Ethics of Emotions,” 104.

<sup>19</sup> Barreto, “Ethics of Emotions,” 104.

<sup>20</sup> Rumana, On Rorty, 84.

<sup>21</sup> Rorty, “Human Rights,” 365.

<sup>22</sup> Barreto, “Ethics of Emotions,” 104.

able to move people to action because it begs the very question at issue: whether we actually are obligated to our fellow human beings in the same way we are obligated to our closer ties, such as family.<sup>23</sup> Instead, as Barreto argues, “stories would not only help to strengthen the capacity to sympathise with those who suffer...but they would also be able to form a spontaneous attitude or vital impulse to act, to transform this sentiment into effective human or social solidarity.”<sup>24</sup> By reading stories we realize that others not only feel pain like we do, but are also worthy of the same treatment that we are.<sup>25</sup> Thus, for Rorty, storytelling is a vitally important aspect of sensitizing individuals to the pain and suffering of others and, therefore, widens our “shared moral identity.”<sup>26</sup> Rorty argues that if a society were to use novels to create their moral vocabulary they would no longer ask themselves questions about human nature and instead would focus on how to get along better and how to be more comfortable with one another.<sup>27</sup> This change will line up with an increased ability to accept diversity—an increase in sentimentality which will broaden our moral communities and alleviate more human suffering.<sup>28</sup> Barreto sums up Rorty’s views on both sentimental education and the use of

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<sup>23</sup> Rorty, “Human Rights,” 364-365.

<sup>24</sup> Barreto, “Ethics of Emotions,” 104.

<sup>25</sup> Zembylas, “Critical-Sentimental,” 1157.

<sup>26</sup> Zembylas, “Critical-Sentimental,” 1157.

<sup>27</sup> Richard M. Rorty, “Heidegger, Kundera, and Dickens,” in *The Rorty Reader*, ed. Christopher J. Voparil and Richard J. Bernstein (Chichester: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2010), 318.

<sup>28</sup> Rorty, “Heidegger,” 230.

novels quite nicely by stating that “sympathy becomes a key moral virtue and a central feature of a culture of rights, while literatures and ‘telling stories’ [enliven] the global moral sentiment and [construct] a worldwide ethos favourable to human rights.”<sup>29</sup>

Ever since the occurrence of human rights violations that took place in World War II, and the subsequent creation of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the notion of human rights as a universal standard for moral treatment is generally understood as indisputable.<sup>30</sup> Typically, it is held that these rights have a universal foundation, necessitating the need for everyone to subscribe to and follow the same set of rules and principles. However, the continual violation of this supposedly universal set of rights all over the world gives rise to the question of whether positing these rights as a metaphysical standard for morality, discerned through something such as reason, could or should be looked upon as “an empty and abstract moral ideology” in a contemporary context.<sup>31</sup> Rorty’s antifoundationalism offers us a more malleable and flexible view of human beings that more accurately represents our reality with regard to self-creation and diversity. The world and those who exist within it are not static, but are subject to growth and development. The idea of self-creation goes hand in hand with Rorty’s argument, as

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<sup>29</sup> Barreto, “Contingency,” 112.

<sup>30</sup> Zembylas, “Critical-Sentimental,” 1153.

<sup>31</sup> Zembylas, “Critical-Sentimental,” 1153-1154.

antifoundationalism promotes the idea that our conception of self, the language we use, and the communities we find ourselves in, are contingent and subject to change.<sup>32</sup> Rorty argues that humans are fascinated with how we may recreate ourselves—the fact that we can make things better for not only ourselves, but for each other as well.<sup>33</sup> If we have this power of self-creation and are not tied down or restrained by transcendental rules or authority, then, conceivably, we can more efficiently work towards improving the way that we go about making moral choices, to which the flexibility of sentimental education lends itself to nicely.

Our current conception of human rights unfairly represents the perspective of the West, meaning that our “universal” set of rules is not actually universal at all. Hence, there is no utility in holding onto the foundationalist understanding of human rights, which is, as Rorty argues, both outdated and outmoded. We need to take into account the diversity of perspectives and viewpoints that have previously gone unrecognized or ignored. As opposed to a narrow, Western conception of rights, we need a more forward-thinking approach that takes into account the way we live and think now in our global context as well as how we may live and think in the future. The flexibility of Rorty’s approach will allow us to

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<sup>32</sup> Ulf Schulenberg, “Wanting Lovers Rather than Knowers—Richard Rorty’s Neopragmatism,” *Amerikastudien / American Studies* 48, no. 4 (2003): 583. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/41157894>.

<sup>33</sup> Rorty, “Human Rights,” 357.

move past our narrow conception of rights in order to adopt a more inclusive, broader, and globally applicable set of guidelines that will be adaptable enough to adjust to inevitable changes and developments that will undoubtedly occur over time. Rorty's view leaves the door open for our adapting to new situations with increased ease. It is sympathetic to circumstances that we have no experience with or recollection of—situations that may, at first glance, appear too difficult or too unfamiliar for us to deal with, such as in the case of obstacles affecting those of different cultures or upbringings, thus leading us to disregard and ignore them as we fall back on “universality” to tell us how to deal with them. But if we appeal to sentiment, we can see that those involved are “one of us.” Even if we do not have the tools necessary to deal with the issue at the moment, they can be developed, because our sentimental education will allow us to recognize similarities between them and us, leading to their inclusion in our moral community.

Following from my previous point, I argue that Rorty's emphasis on emotions as opposed to reason will make us more tolerant in the long run by creating a human rights culture that focuses on sympathy. Given that Rorty argues that the values that we endorse are the result of socialization and the particular brand of sentimental education that we received, we cannot fault those who were given a different set of values and we must refrain from

placing blame on those who may act in ways that are different.<sup>34</sup> However, this might point to a flaw in his theory. Miller, for instance, argues that, the way we determine what is morally acceptable or unacceptable does not follow this line of thought, as “we routinely hold other cultures and societies morally accountable for what we take to be morally reprehensible behaviour.”<sup>35</sup> I would counter that Rorty’s approach can overcome our current intolerance and lead to a more tolerant and accepting community. Zembylas argues that through the emphasis on storytelling, Rorty’s goal will lead to a society that “is more likely to be open to learn from others, to widen its moral identity, to accommodate strangers, and to profoundly reject all forms of cruelty,”<sup>36</sup> developing a different standard of what is taken to be morally reprehensible behaviour. Barreto concurs, claiming that by appealing to emotions, one’s identity is expanded by the idea that there is more than one way of being human; he argues that sentimental education can “lead to a definition of individual and collective identities in more inclusive terms, or...in a non-exclusionary fashion.”<sup>37</sup> If sentimental education can lead to this possibility, which I believe it can, then Barreto’s assertion that “members of a culture can think and feel that members of other communities, subcultures or minorities are similar to them,” regardless of differences, is true.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Miller, “Rorty and Tolerance,” 104.

<sup>35</sup> Miller, “Rorty and Tolerance,” 104.

<sup>36</sup> Zembylas, “Critical-Sentimental,” 1157.

<sup>37</sup> Barreto, “Contingency,” 110.

<sup>38</sup> Barreto, “Contingency,” 110.

Further, Rorty's approach does not just offer us a short-term solution. What he is advocating for is a complete transformation of how we approach human rights. Accordingly, the continued promotion of sympathy over reason and rationality—the creation of a mind open to change and diversity—will foster a society in which individuals are socialized in such a way to consistently protect their fellow people from being hurt, because sentimental education not only cultivates one's capacity to feel, but also one's capacity to act.<sup>39</sup> When taken together, an increased capacity to feel and an increased capacity to act will lead to a community that is more open-minded and tolerant.

Before I conclude, I would like to discuss the importance of sympathy as a motivator in two ways: first, as a more effective motivator and second, as a more genuine motivator. Typically, theorists have argued that actions based on moral motivation come from ideas of universal moral norms of fairness and justice. However, people are often more moved to moral action by appeals to emotion as opposed to appeals to reason. In a 2009 study conducted by Malti et al., researchers looked at a sample of six-year-old kindergarten students to examine the link between

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<sup>39</sup> Barreto, "Contingency," 111.

feelings of sympathy and prosocial action.<sup>40</sup> They found that there is a notable relation between sympathetic feelings and prosocial behaviour, specifically in that sympathy is an effective motive to act in prosocial ways.<sup>41</sup> In short, this study assessed kindergarten students' moral motivations, based on emotions felt and justifications given following moral transgressions, as moral emotions (e.g. guilt) and their justifications (e.g. deontological or altruistic) "reflect the child's personal acceptance of the rule validity."<sup>42</sup> What is specifically interesting from this study is that results demonstrated that children who had low levels of moral motivation (those who were less likely to abide by moral norms) displayed improved prosocial behaviour when they experienced levels of elevated sympathy, demonstrating that there was a distinct link between moral action and sympathy.<sup>43</sup> The reason that I bring up this study is to validate Rorty's argument that sentiment plays a greater role in our moral choices than positing that there are ahistorical moral rules that must be abided by.<sup>44</sup> Given the prevalence and power of sympathetic feelings in children, it seems to be much more beneficial to focus our pedagogic energies on the cultivation and manipulation of our ability to feel these feelings, therefore necessitating a place for sentimental education.

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<sup>40</sup> Tina Malti et al., "Children's Moral Motivation, Sympathy, and Prosocial Behavior," *Child Development* 80, no. 2 (Mar-Apr., 2009): 444.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/29738626>.

<sup>41</sup> Malti, "Children's Moral Emotion," 455.

<sup>42</sup> Malti, "Children's Moral Emotion," 443.

<sup>43</sup> Malti, "Children's Moral Emotion," 456.

<sup>44</sup> Granik, "Dialogue," 8

Furthermore, I think that if we view our moral actions as resulting not from ahistorical moral rules, but instead from sympathy, our motivations appear to be both more genuine and honest (e.g., motivations based on sympathy, love, compassion, etc.) which suggests that sentimental education will be more beneficial as a long-term approach to human rights. This is due to the fact that feelings of sympathy will lead us to understand not just that we should act in a certain way, but why we should act in a certain way.

Rorty rejects the traditional foundationalist view of morality, opting instead for an approach based on sentimental education. He argues that our current approach is no longer useful, and that we need to move past it. His view is beneficial for a variety of reasons. First, compared to the narrowness of traditional views, Rorty offers us a more flexible and adaptive view of morality and human rights. Second, what Rorty proposes is a society that is tolerant and more willing and able to accept diversity and differences. This society has moved past our overly exclusive Western conception of rights and is more open and diverse. Third and finally, Rorty's emphasis on sympathy as a motivator for moral action is important as it is both a more effective and more genuine motivating factor. Given the above, it is vitally important to reassess and realign our conception of morality and human rights by adopting Rorty's approach of antifoundationalism and sentimental education.

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# **Neither Present, Nor Enough: Why Consent Does Not Establish a Moral Equality Among Combatants.**

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In this paper, I will argue that Jeff McMahan is correct in his argument, provided in his *Killing in War*, that the idea of a ‘mutual consent’ to take on harm between combatants cannot be used to establish a moral equality among just and unjust combatants in war. Rather, I assert, the orthodoxy’s argument that just combatants do consent hinges on an incorrect understanding of what consent is, effectively confusing response under manipulation with free consent. Moreover, consent, even if it were present, would not be enough to secure a moral equality of combatants.

To facilitate my argument that McMahan is correct, I will begin by briefly outlining the two relevant ways of understanding consent that the orthodoxy proposes: the ‘Boxing Match Model of War’ and the ‘Gladiatorial Model of War’. I will then proceed to explain why McMahan finds both analogies for consent in war to be problematically disanalogous and lacking. Following this explanation, I will discuss some potential counterarguments to my argument that just combatants do not consent to being attacked in war, and that beyond this, consent is insufficient in establishing a moral equality among just and unjust combatants. To make my

argument, I will begin by explaining the term ‘consent’, and what it means for a person to give consent. To facilitate this discussion, I will draw on a common area of consent-discourse: sexual consent. I will then turn to McMahan’s concern that just combatants are ‘compelled’ to fight (McMahan 53), using this to illustrate the incompatibility of the conditions that just combatants fight under, and the concept of ‘consent’. I will then proceed to explain the significance of the cause for which one fights, highlighting how even if a just combatant could be understood as ‘consenting’ to being attacked, a moral equality still would not exist between just and unjust combatants.

The orthodoxy proposes two conceptions of consent in war; the first is that war is like a boxing match (McMahan 52). This line of argument holds that, in boxing, both boxers necessarily waive their rights not to be hit when they take on the role of ‘boxer’ and thus, their identity as a ‘boxer’ means that they have consented to being harmed. According to the orthodoxy, war works in a similar way: it “is part of the profession of arms to consent to be attacked by one’s adversaries” (McMahan 52). The second proposal for consent in war is the ‘Gladiatorial Model’. In gladiatorial combat, both combatants were forced to fight by a third party, under the threat of death to both if they refused (McMahan 58). The gladiators had a “shared servitude” and, with the knowledge that they had to fight if they were to have any hope of

surviving, both gladiators can be understood as giving “ex ante consent” (meaning consent ‘from before the event’, or consenting ‘from the outset’) to be attacked (McMahan 58). The orthodoxy draws parallels between this form of combat and war, suggesting that both sides of a war are “compelled” to fight by those that design a war and, thus, both can be understood as fighting out of an equal sort of necessity or coercion (McMahan 58). In the following section of this paper, I will explain why neither of these proposed models of war satisfies McMahan.

In response to the ‘Boxing Match Model’, McMahan first makes the distinction between consenting to be attacked, and agreeing to accept the risk of being attacked – a distinction that, he asserts, the model fails to recognize (McMahan 52). Where consent by just combatants to take on harm is to justify, and make permissible attacks by unjust combatants (such as is the case for boxers), agreeing to take on a risk is nothing more than a recognition of potential wrongs that may be perpetrated against them. Just combatants, McMahan argues, neither agree to be killed, nor waive their right not to be killed, when they enter into combat (McMahan 52). They acknowledge that there is a risk that they will be wronged by unjust combatants, but this acknowledgement does not in turn make the wrong any less wrong. Furthermore, McMahan notes that unjust combatants “compel” just combatants to fight, a manipulation that is not reciprocated by the just

combatants (McMahan 53). In simple terms, this means that unjust combatants, who necessarily impose a wrongful threat of harm to the just side, force the hand of just combatants to fight, for if there is no defense of the just cause, the unjust side wins (McMahan 53). So, to imply that there is any real element of choice in fighting for a just cause seems misguided.

McMahan also takes issue with the ‘Gladiatorial Model of War’, as this model is “relevantly” dissimilar to modern war (McMahan 59). While gladiators ‘consented’ to fight because to refuse would end in certain death to both combatants, McMahan argues that combatants are rarely threatened with death as punishment for refusing to fight in modern war (McMahan 59). With milder forms of punishment being the norm, it does not seem to hold that one is justified in killing (or attempting to kill) another person to avoid the non-lethal repercussions for abstaining from fighting. Moreover, he argues, even if execution were used as an individual form of punishment, it could not realistically be used against an entire army, so the claim that going to war results in fewer deaths than refusing to fight seems untrue of modern war (McMahan 59).

McMahan has one additional criticism of both the ‘Boxing Model’, and the ‘Gladiatorial Model’ understandings of consent in war: that consent could only ever be considered a necessary, not a

sufficient condition in establishing a moral equality among combatants (McMahan 57). While it seems that the just combatant must consent to being attacked in order for the unjust combatant to be permitted to attack, it also seems clear that this is in no way enough. The different justness-valences of the two sides do not cease to be important, even if just combatants consent to take on a liability of harm. That unjust attacks promote an unjust cause, and that just attacks defend a just cause, matters. With or without consent, it seems, there is still a moral inequality between just and unjust combatants.

Having now outlined the orthodoxy's two proposed models for understanding consent in war, and explained McMahan's response to these models, I will now briefly turn to some potential counterarguments to my stance. As I will proceed to argue, McMahan is correct when he denies that appeals to consent can establish a moral equality among combatants. I will attempt to show how the 'consent' that the just combatant is suggested as giving under the two models does not actually constitute consent, using sexual consent as a useful analogy to guide my discussion. I will then evaluate the role that consent plays in combatant moral equality considerations. One possible objection to my argument is that my sexual consent analogy is not actually useful in criticizing the orthodoxy's argument. I hope to show, however, that this example from the domestic sphere is helpful in framing what

consent is widely accepted to mean, and that this definition of consent carries over into the sphere of war. A second possible counterargument is that if coercion is understood as being incompatible with consent, then unjust combatants fight under an equal lack of consent, as they may be manipulated into fighting by their own side. This objection, however, fails to recognize that just combatants may also be coerced to fight by their own side (e.g. by their government), and additionally by unjust combatants (in a way that is not reciprocated). So, while it is a fair comment that many unjust combatants may not give their ‘consent’ to take on liability to attack, it does not seem true that they are equally coerced, as the unjust combatants themselves directly coerce just combatants to fight.

My first major contention is with the orthodoxy’s proposal that the just combatant ‘consents’ to being attacked. To consent is a specific kind of action; consenting is not swimming, it is not eating a sandwich, and likewise, it is not the mere recognition that something is happening or will happen to oneself. Rather, to consent is to accept and actively agree to something that is happening or will happen to oneself. It is not clear, then, that ‘consent’ is the right sort of concept to draw upon when discussing just combatants’ participation in war. The following scenario will be used to highlight this misuse of ‘consent’ in the orthodoxy:

*Anna is at a party. She goes upstairs to use the washroom and, when she is alone, she is cornered by Charles. Charles tries to initiate sex with Anna and, when Anna tries to make him stop, he tells her that if she does not have sex with him, he will physically hurt her friend Carmen, who is also at the party. Out of fear for Carmen's safety, Anna does not stop Charles from having sex with her.*

The relevant question following this scenario is: did Anna consent to having sex with Charles? I argue (and I hope this is unopposed) that she clearly did not, as the freedom for Anna to choose not to have sex with Charles was severely diminished by Charles' threats against her friend, Carmen. Rather, it seems evident that Anna's participation in sex with Charles was a response to manipulation and coercion, and did not reflect an active agreement to sex, but rather a strong disagreement to his harming Carmen. If an unjust combatant necessarily poses a wrongful threat of harm, as is implied by their 'unjustness', then it seems as though they take on the role of Charles in this analogy. Like Charles, their goal is unjust. Just combatants, however, do not actively agree to take on liability to harm, rather, they take on the role of Anna. Just as Anna is coerced by Charles into having sex with him in order to defend Carmen from potential harm, so is the just combatant coerced into fighting by the unjust combatant, in order to defend the just non-combatants and the just cause. If it is

as clear as I find it to be that Anna does not ‘consent’ to having sex with Charles, then it appears equally wrong to assert that just combatants ‘consent’ to being attacked when they fight a defensive war. The models that the orthodoxy proposes, then, appear to misuse the term ‘consent’ and/or misunderstand what it means ‘to consent’.

My second point of disagreement with the orthodoxy’s appeal to consent in establishing a moral equality of combatants is that, as McMahan argues, even if just combatants could consent to take on liability to attack in war (which I have suggested is not clearly the case), there would still exist a moral inequality between unjust and just combatants. The following scenario may be used to illustrate the insufficiency of just combatant consent in creating this moral equality:

*Charles tells Anna that he is going to step hard on her toes. After being told this, Anna replies by telling Charles that she is okay with him stepping hard on her toes. On this day, Anna has borrowed a pair of shoes from her friend, Carmen. She is wearing these shoes. Charles proceeds to step hard on Anna’s toes, hurting Anna’s toes, and scuffing the shoes that Anna has borrowed from Carmen.*

In unpacking this analogy, it is important to consider three key elements of the scenario. The first of these considerations is

that it appears as though Charles is intent on stepping on Anna's toes, whether or not she consents. In terms of combat, this is paralleled by the offensive attack by unjust combatants. While an orthodox Just War theorist may assert that a just combatant does 'consent' to being attacked, it is worth noting that the unjust combatants' attack does not hinge on receiving that consent. In this way, it does not appear as though the sort of consent that is discussed in these arguments is of an equal sort. Secondly, in this scenario, Charles receives Anna's permission to step hard on her toes, causing her pain. This seems like an objectively bad or wrong thing to do. That Anna agrees to his morally wrong course of action does not make it any less wrong. Rather, the action itself can be understood as holding a distinct 'unjustness' to it. This is reflected in the sphere of war, where combatants fight for a certain cause. These causes, be them just or unjust (and to varying degrees), are not erased by consent of individual combatants. It seems deeply counterintuitive to argue that the key factor that determines the justness of a war from the outset – the just cause – is not an equally essential consideration when attempting to establish a moral equality among combatants. Thirdly, this scenario demonstrates the insufficiency of consent in establishing a moral equality among combatants by showing the way in which Charles' stepping on Anna's toes negatively affects Carmen. When Charles steps hard on Anna's toes, he also (albeit unknowingly) does harm to Carmen, by way of damaging her

shoes. While Anna has consented to Charles' stepping hard on her toes, Carmen has not consented to Charles doing damage to her shoes. Here, it seems Anna has consented to the damage to Carmen's property on her behalf – something that she is not actually able to do. Similarly, in war, even if a just combatant could consent to being attacked by unjust combatants, it does not seem as though just combatants are able to consent to unjust combatant attacks on behalf of the just non-combatants and just cause. Rather, it appears that the models of consent that the orthodoxy proposes as sufficient in establishing a moral equality among combatants, fail even to gain consent from all of the relevant people involved in the war.

In closing, in *Killing in War*, Jeff McMahan disagrees with the orthodox assertion that a moral equality of combatants may be understood as existing in virtue of just combatants' 'consent' to take on liability to harm. Rather, he argues that the models that the orthodoxy proposes to support this assertion are flawed analogies for modern war. In this paper, I have agreed with McMahan's conclusion that just combatant consent does not establish a moral equality among combatants. Moreover, I have argued that just combatants neither appear to 'consent' at all to being attacked by unjust combatants, nor would this consent successfully make just and unjust combatants moral equals, even if it were present. My argument draws on the field of sexual consent – an analogy that,

upon close scrutiny, is useful and relevant in determining who consents to taking on a liability to harm in war.

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## **Useful Anger**

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I argue that expressions of anger are usually the most and sometimes the only fitting way to deal with systematic recognition-based injustices. I will argue this point principally by appealing to examples taken from First Nations' movements in Canada. First, I will deal with what an effective response to recognition-based injustices would require. I will identify three requirements: that it handle the functional inability of our institutions to grant more freedom to the marginalized social group, that it handle how the general public's perception is governed by misrepresented categories of identification of the social group, and that it address the inherently urgent nature of the issue of redressing injustices. Second, I will show that these requirements are best met by expressions of anger. Such expressions will be analyzed fundamentally as expressions of urgency and of the presence of epistemic barriers on the side of the listener that prevent the listener from making sense of what the speaker is trying to communicate.

To demonstrate what effective responses to recognition-based systemic injustices would require I will first explain the features of this sort of injustice. I will outline its structure by appeal to the status of First Nations' as recognized by the Canadian government. The main features of these systemic injustices—

which will serve to guide my exploration of the First Nations' situation in Canada—are the following: interactions between two parties as governed by a misrecognition of one party by the other which results in oppressive consequences for the misrecognized party; the status of the misrecognized party as subject to the authority of the other party (which makes objection by the oppressed party to the misrecognition affecting them illegitimate); and the oppressor's perceived non-epistemic lack as to the recognition of the oppressed party (sustained, for example, by a myth of prior proper deliberations between the parties about their statuses or via the assumption that one party can simply read off the inherent worth of the actions of the other). The example of official First Nations' status from the standpoint of the Canadian state will highlight how government discourse (in the wide sense including action) produces barriers in conversation pertaining to First Nations related policy, produces standards of action for First Nations people, and provides ready explanations for the failures of First Nations to conform to supposed proper conduct.

The state of injustice that First Nations in Canada are subject to I call neocolonial. As Coulthard explains (Coulthard 117), this state is the result of state misrecognition of First Nations which permits application of a transitional political model—meant as framework for managing situations after or during transitions from an unjust system towards a just system—in dealing with the

situation of persistent injustices to which they are subject. The way First Nations are recognized under the transitional politics model prevents them from bringing to the fore their actual concerns. Not only does the imposition of this model to this context fail to address systemic injustices (e.g. continued occupation of unceded territory), but it reframes the situation as of a finished, unjust event in the past, which then frames the responsibility of the state as satisfied by reparations for that event alone. Action in this framework positions First Nations as members of a social group that was victimized by historical events (e.g. residential schools), whose harm persists into the present day only via such vehicles such as intergenerational trauma. The use of the transitional model implies about First Nations in Canada that their suffering is not caused by ongoing systemic injustices based on misrecognition of who they are.

The resultant status of First Nations contrived via this political framework is that they are a Canadian social group with, like any other cultural group, a particular history and shared values and experiences, and that has suffered a form of institutional abuse which has now been recognized by the state and duly addressed. As a result of the affirmation of this social group in actions governed by a model of transitional politics, it appears to be out of question that there is systematic injustice against this group, for it is presupposed—and thus implied—by the political agenda

regarding First Nations that fair recognition of First Nations by the state has long been accomplished. The persistence of this political approach (along with the discourse that accompanies it) only strengthens the illusion of righteousness of this form of recognition. The terrain of legitimate political concerns that First Nations can have is therefore explicitly delineated and to go beyond—such as in rebellious or persistent actions for the purpose of changing how the state recognizes them—is easily considered irrational, especially since the explanation of trauma is ready to hand. The persistence in deemed irrational actions is also suggestive of a form of cultural failure to deal with the situation of trauma and allowance for such dishonesty as thinking that more is due to them than what has been obtained. One might expect, for example, that the community would care enough about the people making the mistaken claims to try and dissuade them or explain to them how the injustice has actually been redressed now. Another facet of the cultural group category of First Nations is that from this position they are subservient to the state and have to tolerate its decisions, since the state has the supposed function of impartially making decisions on the basis of the competing interests voiced by the different parties. This structure positions First Nations' claims as at least more prone to being erroneous than the state's because of the necessary presence of the factor of self-interest in them—which is supposedly absent from the state's operations, since as arbitrator it is supposed not to have a personal

stake in the issues. Thus, all claims by such a group will be heard as coming from this biased, partial position, with important consequences for the nature of the claims it can make.

With this in mind I will now express the main difficulties with which an appropriate response to the injustices outlined above has to deal. First, the status of being First Nations imposes institutional constraints on the agency that a subject having that status can have. For example, a First Nations' claim to something will not have precedence over another group's interest by virtue of it coming from the distinctive nature of First Nations' identity, because the recognized status of First Nations is not such that it would take precedence. If a claim made to official state institutions doesn't stay within the bounds of what is deemed an acceptable claim to be made in the name of that social group, then it would either have to be reinterpreted in a way which aligns with the rights the social group is recognized as having, or be abandoned. A further difficulty with appeal to state institutions is that the process of casting a judgment over the legitimacy or illegitimacy of a claim may isolate the one casting final judgement from a context permitting more of a back and forth, permitting clarification, identification of misunderstandings, and also making it perhaps more difficult to disregard the legitimacy of a claim of the grounds that the person making it is psychologically perturbed.

Another important factor is the gradual absorption of the state-fabricated notion of First Nation status by the general public. This phenomenon makes it especially difficult to come to view First Nations as having other political standings towards the state (for example, equal ones), because the issue is with a social category of identification. To recognize someone as First Nations becomes to recognize them as a historically marginalized minority (instead of as pertaining to both historically and currently oppressed social groups). In turn, identifying First Nations as historically marginalized minorities legitimizes certain explanations for their behaviour and delegitimizes others. In many cases—like most day to day interactions—one does not perceive oneself as having the time and leisure to stop and actually talk with a First Nations person about whether an act of theirs is legitimate for them to make and to hear their side--especially since one's conception of who First Nations are necessarily informs whether a particular action (such as bringing up a certain conversational topic) concerning First Nations makes sense or not, or makes more sense (and is thus more urgent) than another. Since, in this case, the content of this social category brings with it certain expected psychological conditions, there is a ready-to-hand explanation for any observed conduct that doesn't fall within the conduct which is considered legitimate for members of that category. Rather than seeing actions that don't fall into one's category of legitimate First Nations actions as a form of self-conscious departure from that

sphere of being, and symptomatic of perhaps too narrow a concept of First Nations in one's mind, one's category of 'First Nations' instead leads to the explanation of such acts as irrational. Thus, in any case, when dealing with First Nations persons, nothing new, intriguing, important is present in uncustomary behaviour because there is no behaviour that can be uncustomary. Also, since this behaviour is considered irrational, there is no use in trying to engage with First Nations people through any rational methods, like undertaking a serious conversation about politics with the hope of enlightening them. Thus, as Mills suggests, such identity concepts are hard to identify because we "see through them" and thus do not notice them (Mills 24)—thus, nothing significant can ever come from an everyday encounter with a First Nations person. Furthermore, not only does this problem affect people in the government who work in positions that deal with complaints from First Nations—thus rendering policy decisions based on these same categories of identification less recognizable as suspect—but it also affects the media—since it must cater to the public taste, and would be pressured not to present material suggestive of another status for First Nations because of the risk of it being widely perceived as obviously wrong, and thus banal and lacking interest (whereas, for example, novel development by the state in approaches to deal with First Nations trauma--since addressing the perceived significant societal problem of their irrational actions and possible claims--could be considered interesting). Social

media, by conforming to these social expectations, also reinforces social conceptions underlying these expectations as normal, since other views on the subject matter wouldn't receive coverage; coverage by social media (due to what is regarded as its political function) is commonly perceived as representing the different standpoints that one can take on an issue, thus retracting other views as regards to what First Nations can legitimately be perceived as doing as being legitimate.

The third and last aspect of the problem that I have identified as important to account for in articulating a meaningful response to the unjust situation of First Nations is the issue of urgency in redress of the situation. The present neocolonial recognition of First Nations encourages racism towards them. If the social group with which you identify is perceived as backwards, ineffective, and riddled with tendencies towards false consciousness, there is a greater likelihood that you will become unsure of yourself and your cultural endeavours, because such claims presuppose an epistemological advantage over First Nations about the worth of their ways of being. The systemic problems which affect them and those they love and care about directly and which they experience so clearly as injustices, will continue to proceed on their devastating course until they are corrected, making it an issue of great urgency to correct. Thus, the solution to such systemic, recognition-based injustices must take into account

the political instantiation of the misrecognized category of First Nations; the injustice of being reduced to a practically unassailable social category, and last the urgency of correcting the injustice.

In the following analysis, anger will be revealed to be paradigmatically the right response to systemic injustices. First I will analyze the significance of the form of anger, then the significance of form in anger, then what would be a legitimate content for this form, and finally I will analyze the legitimacy of deploying anger. Throughout, I will show how an angry response is the right response to a situation of systemic injustice, especially taking into account the three difficulties outlined above that such a situation presents. The following analysis treats anger insofar as it could be used as an effective means of expression; cases of unreasonable anger will be left to the side.

The form of anger primarily expresses a sense of urgency to its recipient. This urgency implies not only the objective importance of an issue, but also the importance of it being made known to the recipient. It implies that a manifestation of urgency is necessary for the communication of the information to be successful. Thus the expression of urgency—let's take an increase of voice volume as an example—frames the person at whom the anger is directed as not only lacking information, but also lacking the capacity (in their normal way of receiving and processing

information) to properly deal with certain aspects of the straightforward communication of the information. This could be because of prejudices concerning the importance of what that type of person has to say, or about the topic of the communication (the righteousness of the First Nations' cause in Canada for instance). In the second case it is noteworthy, however, that the prejudice infects the speaker, since for the speaker to take as reasonable a position deemed unreasonable is for them to be unreasonable. In any case, it is the assumptions that the person has made that render the normal communication ineffective.

An expression of anger that frames one as bearing a piece of information that is important to communicate to the recipient highlights the speaker's perception of prejudices in the recipient that undermine the possibility of successful communication on the issue from actually occurring. An expression of anger demands that one recognize that one's assumptions about the whole event of the communication could be wrong or, in any case, have to be set aside for the communication to effectively be delivered; the angry communication promises that, under these conditions, what the recipient of the communication will get is a worthy justification for putting these prejudices aside and entertaining the possibility of listening to the interlocutor as a rational being capable of insight into the subject matter, who should only be condemned as irrational when given the most explicit evidence. The angry person

thus assumes knowledge of the listener's assumptions about things that would affect the listener's capacity to take the care in listening that is required by the significance of the topic to both the interlocutor and the speaker. By bringing the status of these assumptions as issues for the communication (which is contingent on their at least temporary repudiation) these assumptions have to be consciously identified. This, however, is something that occurs rarely with them since, as we have seen, prejudices condition what shape the judgments, perceptions, and acts that we do form and undertake can take, and are not themselves among the objects that appear to be meaningful to think about. Rae Langton further highlights how often what is salient in belief formation concerns less the likelihood of the truth and more the societal pressure to conform to social norms (85, Langton). Thus one can find oneself with one's perspective heavily informed by very implausible convictions. When presented with anger, then, many of one's prejudices could reveal themselves to be problematic and it would be a shame if a person was so confident in themselves and in love with their beliefs that they could not even consider the possibility of them holding false beliefs or misplaced values in exchange for the possibility in (likely) just at most usually a few minutes of their time to have revealed to themselves problems that they would take to be important and thus lead to a more wholesome orientation in their lives.

I will now turn to the question of how angry communication manifests urgency. As has been discussed, it only makes sense for the listener to stop to listen--and suspend some of their prejudices--if it is understood by the listener that to do so would be in their best interest given the situation (something which anger is useful in communicating). In other words, only if the matter is portrayed as urgent for the listener and thus as needing to take precedence over their other interests. In the case that the anger is not an effort to communicate anything but is only symptomatic of a passion to destroy or hurt something, no matter if the act be right or not, it is clearly a bad thing. The question thus arises of how the expression of anger can be recognized as legitimate.

To legitimate itself, the angry expression tempts the recipient to see the expression as irrational and thus brings the significance of the judgement of irrationality, with all its presuppositions, to the surface of the communication. The solution to the problem of recognition-based injustice is to break through the surface of all the behaviours which are usually associated with some sort of irrationality which, to use our example, First Nations are commonly subject to. The wager is that the recipient of the communication will become attentive to the significance of their own looking for an explanation that avoids the usual assumption of entirely rational communication. An implication is that expressions of anger can be very diverse and means also that each one is individually significant because each unsuccessful attempt,

where anger fails to break through the barrier of prejudice, becomes another, new instance of the usual refrain that potential listeners have become accustomed to, thus reinforcing the association between anger and the explanation of irrationality as well as expanding the range of phenomena that the explanation covers (which also implies that the situation is more dire than expected to the listener). This means that subsequent attempts to communicate the same content will be increasingly pressured to employ new forms of anger. In reality, such expressions can take the form of a wholesale uprising of numerous bands who block public transit and access to land that they deem important—such as during the Mohawk Standoff (Coulthard 121)—or as a settler becoming a close friend of a First Nation and then at a certain point having a discussion along the lines (if need be) of the pattern of anger (although it could be infinitely gentle). Although it is often thought that anger involves screaming, yelling, violence, etc., if we recollect even for a few seconds we can all think of very “unangry” manifestations of anger that are yet very much angry.

Now I will turn to the issue of what kind of pressure the form of anger exerts on the contents of legitimate angry statements and show that it is perfectly suited to expression of recognition-based injustices. The most important feature of angry communication that I identified is that it permits one to expose perceptual limitations that would otherwise not permit a recipient

to see what the communicator is trying to expose. Anger is necessary in order to make the topic of communication visible as the communicator sees it, and only then is one able to judge its worth and henceforth reevaluate the truthfulness of one's original perceptual values. This is only necessary if there is a perceptual prejudice that lies in the way of way of what is intended to be delivered and if there is an injustice in considering the communication as somehow unable to provide what it is intended to provide.

Lastly, the question arises of how one could legitimately be so certain as to use anger—as laid out above—to express something. As we have already seen, anger relies on a claimed position of epistemological authority. The question is: can a situation occur in which someone—without recourse to anger—would be in the position to communicate something to another person who, were it not communicated, would end up losing out on some good or continuing to contribute to injustice despite being in a position to significantly reduce it? This assumes that the speaker, knowing well the culture that the recipient inhabits, knows they would be insulated from gaining this knowledge and also that such insulation would be somehow harmful. This must involve some good reasons for thinking that the recipient is lacking in significant knowledge. The legitimacy of the angry expression also requires from the recipient a conceptual closedness of their horizon

of possibilities which excludes the speaker from having anything to say that the other party doesn't already know or should value. I think this is exactly the case for groups that are marginalized because of conceptions of gender and/or race. I will again draw on my example of First Nations in Canada to frame the issue. Their position involves a misrecognition justified in terms of a past fiction of proper mutual recognition of them or by, as Coulthard points out (Coulthard 101), ethnocentric judgment systems, which conclude that there was no nation to be found, merely since they aren't able to identify anything resembling the forms of nationhood that they were familiar with. In this last case, the situation of First Nations in Canada requires an attempt by settlers to reaffirm the existence of different forms of social organization that are compatible in aim and value with forms of colonial social structure. This recognition, though, first requires understanding how First Nations see the world. On the flip side, the marginalized group can see flaws in recognition because colonial recognition of them informs policy choice, the consequences of which they experience. They know—in any case more than the colonizers who never got to see them for what they were—what the status and value of their society was, and thus to what extent colonialism and neocolonialism has done ill to them by misrepresenting it. Thus, expression of anger that I have analyzed as expression of urgency accounts for the urgency criterion (for obvious reasons, but also because anger lets one see who can be an ally and who will never

be, and does not let one be governed by misplaced hopes about time that others might give to address one's plight, as anger is a demand that they create time for the issue); it takes care of the perceptual disinterestedness with common-day plights and acts of First Nations by enabling new forms of activity to disrupt expectations and bring harmful prejudices to the surface of critical consciousness; and it enables one to counter the problem of institutional limitation of what is recognized as legitimate action by demanding that employees listen without peering through the lens of institutional recognition. The problem of institutional limitations is also countered by potentially bypassing some of the bureaucratic processes and skipping to, for example, meetings with people that otherwise they wouldn't have been able to speak to and on different grounds than they would have been able to without anger. Finally, anger can function effectively through an appeal to the judgments of individual people through a bottom up political movement, especially through the force of media coverage, social media, person-to-person interaction, etc.

In conclusion, cases of recognition-based systemic injustice—such as the case of First Nations in Canada—demand a response that counters the effects of institutional misrecognition, such as the limiting of one's capacity to change one's status, and having one's public actions misrecognized as irrational, and the persistence of appeal to institutional change within the transitional

model by the general public because of their internalized and incorrect notions of First Nation status. Most importantly, such a response must also deal with the urgency of change required by a situation of ongoing injustice. Anger in communication, according to my analysis, is an appropriate reaction to exactly this kind of problem due to its ability to bypass the problems just noted. The implication of this is that anger should be looked at with greater sympathy, especially in cases in which it might seem irrational and is in fact considered so by almost everyone. It is a call to be more conscious of and open to pursuing and accepting critique, even and especially when it at first seems violent or irrational.

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# **A Defence of Defeating the Closure-Based Radical Skeptical Argument with the Sensitivity Principle**

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According to the closure-based radical skeptical argument, it is impossible for us to have knowledge of the majority of everyday propositions because we can't have knowledge of the denials of the skeptical hypotheses they entail (Pritchard 96). In Chapter 6 of his book *Epistemology*, Duncan Pritchard describes a response to this argument which uses the sensitivity principle to deny the closure principle, thereby defeating the radical skeptic's argument. Despite Pritchard's concerns with this solution, denying the closure principle using the sensitivity principle is a plausible method of defeating the skeptic. I will begin by more clearly describing the issue at hand, before delving into my responses to Pritchard's concerns. First, I will argue that the reason the closure principle seems so intuitively plausible (despite being false) is that we tend to consider obvious entailments, rather than skeptical hypotheses, when considering the closure principle. Unlike the skeptical hypotheses, we can know the denial of the obvious entailments because those beliefs are sensitive. Second, I will explain why not allowing for inductive knowledge is no reason to reject the sensitivity principle, as true belief gained by induction can be considered rational belief, rather than knowledge. Finally, I will

argue that the sensitivity principle can, indeed, provide the necessary counterexamples to the closure principle— something Pritchard denies because he thinks the sensitivity principle demands an evaluation process that cannot be applied when considering skeptical scenarios. This paper will show that Pritchard's concerns are not sufficient reason to reject the sensitivity principle as a solution to closure-based radical skepticism.

So, what is the closure-based radical skeptical argument and how can rejecting the closure principle defeat it? The argument relies on something called the closure principle, which states that if I know some proposition, and I know that that proposition entails a second proposition, then I know that second proposition (Pritchard 95). The closure-based radical skeptical argument takes the following form. First (Premise 1), we must agree that it is not possible to know the denials of skeptical hypotheses, such as the brain in a vat hypothesis (Pritchard 96). Second (Premise 2), by the closure principle, if we have knowledge of everyday propositions, then we must be able to know the denials of at least some skeptical hypotheses (Pritchard 96). For instance, if I know that I have legs (an everyday proposition), and I know that if I have legs, I am not a brain in a vat, then I must know that I am not a brain in a vat. Since we don't know the denials of skeptical hypotheses (e.g. we don't know that we are not brains in vats), it follows that we don't

have knowledge of everyday propositions (Pritchard 96). Now, this argument seems to be deductively valid, so in order to defeat it we must deny the truth of one of the premises. Premise 1 seems quite difficult to refute. The whole point of skeptical hypotheses is that we are unable to know they are false— their denials are, by definition, unknowable (Pritchard 96). Therefore, if we are to defeat this argument, we must deny Premise 2 . One way to do this is to deny the closure principle, because if the closure principle is false, then we are able to have knowledge of everyday propositions without knowing the denial of some skeptical hypotheses (Pritchard 96). This is the solution that I defend in this paper.

One way to deny the closure principle is to appeal to the sensitivity principle (Pritchard 96). The sensitivity principle states that, in order for a subject to be considered as having knowledge that  $p$  (where  $p$  is some proposition), the subject's true belief must be such that, if  $p$  had been false (i.e., in the nearest possible world where  $p$  is false), the subject would not have believed that  $p$  (Pritchard 19, 22). In other words, the subject's beliefs must be sensitive to the facts in order to be considered knowledge (Pritchard 19). This principle, when taken as a sufficient condition for knowledge, allows us to provide counterexamples to the closure principle—cases where we know a proposition and what it entails (such as: If  $a$  is true, then  $b$  must be true), but we don't know that the proposition entailed ( $b$ ) is true (Pritchard 97). For instance,

according to the sensitivity principle, I can know that I have hair on my head while also not knowing that I'm not a brain in a vat. This is because the belief that I have hair on my head is a sensitive one (if I didn't have hair on my head—i.e., I am bald—I wouldn't believe that I did). In contrast, the belief that I am not a brain in a vat—and, likewise, all other denials of skeptical hypotheses—are, by definition, insensitive (Pritchard 97), for these hypotheses always involve the subject being unaware of their true circumstances. For instance, if I were a brain in a vat, I would still believe that I wasn't because “my experiences [would] be indistinguishable from” (Pritchard 97) that of my real-world counterpart. Therefore, if we accept the sensitivity principle, we can deny the closure principle.

The first concern raised by Pritchard is an issue with rejecting the closure principle in general, whatever the reason. He challenges us to explain why the closure principle seems so “highly plausible” (Pritchard 98) if it is actually false. If I know some proposition, *x*, and I know that *x* entails some other proposition, *y*, then it seems obvious that I should also know *y*. However, I propose that the closure principle seems so intuitive because, when considering what is entailed by everyday propositions, most of the propositions we think of are knowable because they are sensitive beliefs. When we think of the logical entailments of a proposition such as “I am sitting down,” we typically consider the most

obvious entailments, such as “if I am sitting down, then I am not standing up or lying down.” These types of entailed beliefs are sensitive (if I were standing up or lying down, I wouldn’t think that I wasn’t). We are very unlikely to think of entailments involving skeptical hypotheses, such as “if I am sitting down, then I am not a brain in a vat”—a belief that is insensitive. This tendency to stick to obvious entailments is what makes the closure principle seem plausible. Most of the propositions we think of as being entailed by everyday propositions are knowable, so it seems that if we know the everyday proposition, then we know the proposition it entails. However, just because the closure principle holds when considering obvious entailments, doesn’t mean it always holds. The sensitivity principle gives us good reason to doubt that it holds in situations beyond the obvious, particularly when it comes to skeptical hypotheses.

The second issue Pritchard raises is a concern about whether we should accept the sensitivity principle in general. Pritchard suggests that we shouldn’t, as the sensitivity principle doesn’t allow for true beliefs gained by induction to be considered knowledge (27). However, the fact that the sensitivity principle doesn’t allow for knowledge by induction shouldn’t be a reason to reject the sensitivity principle. It is not so intuitive that true beliefs acquired by induction are, in fact, knowledge, for true beliefs gained by induction are much less certain than those obtained by

deduction, for instance. To illustrate just how large the gap in certainty is between knowledge gained by induction and knowledge gained by deduction, I introduce the following pair of examples. Consider the following deductive argument. (1) All fish live in water. (2) Salmon are fish. (3) Therefore, salmon live in water. It is not very likely, in fact it's impossible, that we could be wrong about (3), provided that (1) and (2) are correct. In contrast, suppose that I have always arrived on time to my 8:00am class, when I've left home at 7:00am. If I infer that I will therefore, always be on time to my 8:00am class if I leave at 7:00am, I will be making a claim based on inductive reasoning. We can see that this type of claim is more likely to be wrong. Though it may be reasonable to believe I will be on time if I leave at 7:00am, it is perfectly possible that I could leave at 7:00am one day and not be on time. Because I have not experienced all cases under the umbrella of my generalization, I would not know if my belief was wrong in one or more of those cases, and therefore, my belief is insensitive to the facts and cannot be considered knowledge according to the sensitivity principle. Beliefs gained by induction are less secure than other types of beliefs, so they shouldn't be given the same status as more secure types of beliefs (such as deduction and perception). Instead of thinking of beliefs gained by induction as knowledge, we can consider them to be mere rational belief. Though this is certainly a controversial claim, it does not create any practical issues because, though the status of our belief

may have changed, we are not required to abandon it. It is still rational to believe the proposition in question and we still ought to believe it. We are merely acknowledging that our belief is less secure, and not quite deserving of the name ‘knowledge’.

Finally, Pritchard claims that the sensitivity principle, understood correctly, doesn’t actually provide the counterexamples to the closure principle that it’s meant to (99). As noted earlier in the book, the possible world we must consider when determining if a belief is sensitive is the nearest possible world where the proposition being considered is false, and the subject uses “the same belief-forming method as in the actual world” (Pritchard 26). In chapter 6, Pritchard reminds us that “what constitutes one’s belief-forming method needs to be understood externalistically” (99)—outside the mind of the agent. This means that “what counts is what in fact gave rise to your belief and not (which could be different) what you believe gave rise to your belief” (99). This is certainly true. We wouldn’t want to misattribute knowledge to a subject who doesn’t actually know the proposition in question, due to our incorrect evaluation of their belief as sensitive when it isn’t. We must identify how they are forming their beliefs, in order to determine what beliefs they would form in certain possible worlds.

However, Pritchard goes on to say that, in the case of skeptical hypotheses, we cannot use the sensitivity principle to show that a subject is unable to know that they are in a given skeptical scenario, because the same belief-forming method used by the subject in the real world is not available to them in the skeptical scenario. Pritchard claims that skeptical hypotheses “involve the agent forming beliefs in very different ways from how they would form those beliefs were the skeptical hypothesis not to obtain” (99). Take the example of the brain in a vat skeptical hypothesis. The belief that one is not a brain in a vat is formed using “a mixture of perception and inference” (Pritchard 99). Pritchard argues that we cannot use the sensitivity principle to show that a subject is unable to know that they are a brain in a vat, because the same belief forming method—perception—is unavailable to the envatted subject. He states that the envatted subject “does not perceive anything” (Pritchard 99). I disagree. The envatted subject is perceiving what appears to be an everyday world, just like their real-world counterpart. They are both having perceptions of waking up, going to work, etcetera. The only difference is the source of those perceptual experiences. For the real-world subject, the source is the actual world, while for their envatted counterpart, the source is the stimulation from the evil scientist. Both subjects are having perceptions of life-like experiences and inferring that these experiences represent something true about their state of affairs. Perception is only

unavailable to the envatted subject if we consider perception to be something like an imprinting of external objects on the subject's mind. This would be an externalist conception of perception—what determines the belief forming method is the source of the perceptions, rather than the internal process in the subject's mind.

However, we could instead view perception as the subject's mind receiving and interpreting stimuli (this would be an internalist conception of perception—what determines the belief forming method is the internal process occurring in the subject's mind). The sensitivity principle merely states that we must identify what gave rise to the belief “externalistically” (Pritchard 99)—meaning that the fact of what belief-forming method was used, need not be “accessible to the agent” (Pritchard 11). Contrary to what Pritchard seems to think, the sensitivity principle makes no claim about how we ought to understand, or define, the belief-forming method itself. Therefore, we are able to use, within reason, any definition of perception we choose, including the internalist definition described above. Using an internalist definition of perception means that the belief-forming method is available to both the real world subject and their envatted counterpart. This allows us to use the sensitivity principle to evaluate the belief of the envatted subject, showing that they can't know whether they are a brain in a vat. We are thereby able to produce relevant

counterexamples to the closure principle, just as the sensitivity principle was meant to.

In conclusion, Pritchard's concerns about using the sensitivity principle to defeat the closure-based radical skeptical argument are not as troubling as he suggests. We can explain the closure principle's intuitive plausibility without making it necessarily true, we do not have to abandon the sensitivity principle just because it doesn't allow for inductive knowledge, and with a proper understanding of what the sensitivity principle requires, we can use it to deny the closure principle. Therefore, this solution to the skeptic's concern still seems quite plausible. If Pritchard wishes to deny the plausibility of using the sensitivity principle to reject the closure principle, he will need to provide another rationale.

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## Returning to the New: Interpreting Wittgenstein's Methodology and Aims in *Philosophical Investigations*

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There is much dispute over the most appropriate and accurate way to interpret Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*.<sup>1</sup> *PI*'s remarkable form – a collection of over a thousand remarks – employs a 'rather unconventional' approach (Fischer and Ammereller 2004: ix). "Quite obviously, Wittgenstein's view of how philosophy *ought* to be practised, and is being practised by himself, diverges radically from how philosophers traditionally conceived of their own work" (Fischer and Ammereller 2004: x). Clearly, Wittgenstein is concerned with grammatical investigation. At *PI* 90 he states, "Our inquiry is therefore a grammatical one. And this inquiry sheds light on our problem by clearing misunderstandings away." However, there is no common consensus with respect to how *PI* should be interpreted. Some read this work as elucidatory, others as doctrinal, and yet others perceive Wittgenstein's *PI* as therapeutic.<sup>2</sup> Some have shown that the elucidatory and doctrinal readings do not do justice to this text.

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<sup>1</sup> Henceforth referred to as *PI*.

<sup>2</sup> There are a plethora of ways *PI* has been interpreted, with many nuances amongst them. However, for the purposes of this analysis an attempt to engage with all of them would be superficial and unable to capture the intricacies of the numerous interpretations. Hence, taking into account the scope of my argument I have selected a few of those readings among many.

While the therapeutic understanding of *PI* is ubiquitous in secondary literature, such prevalence is open to question. This reading has rather problematic implications because it likens the philosophical problems that philosophers encounter to mental afflictions. The pervasiveness of the therapeutic reading remains dubitable, since this discussion emerged from a small number of remarks found in Wittgenstein's work (Savickey 2017: 95). Despite the frequency of the therapeutic reading among scholars, it is not the most appropriate way to interpret *PI*. Wittgenstein's text seeks to alter how we think about language and about the practise of philosophy itself. *PI* is more appropriately read as encouraging us to return to the traditional practise of philosophy – that is through spoken dialogue with others.

In *PI* 109, Wittgenstein states that:

[In philosophy] ... we may not advance any kind of theory. There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. All *explanation* must disappear, and description alone must take its place. And this description gets its light – that is to say, its purpose – from the philosophical problems. These are, of course, not empirical problems; but they are solved through an insight into the workings of our language, and that in such a way that these workings are recognized – *despite* an urge to misunderstand them. The problems are solved, not by coming up with new discoveries, but by assembling what we have long been familiar with. Philosophy is a struggle against the

bewitchment of our understanding by the resources of our language.

In many ways this suggestion about how to practise philosophy is diametrically opposed to the way it has been practised throughout the history of philosophy – that is, the practise of proposing a doctrine to be critiqued and analyzed by others in an attempt to arrive closer to the truth. Additionally, Wittgenstein does not create his own specialized vocabulary to express himself – he actually introduces few original terms (i.e. language games). Unlike philosophers such as Kant and Hegel who use convoluted language of their own making which needs to be deciphered before one can begin to analyze their arguments<sup>3</sup>, Wittgenstein uses straightforward language, and thus one need not be a philosophy student to understand the words he employs. Nevertheless, Wittgenstein’s work raises critical philosophical questions from which we can glean valuable insights. The form *PI* takes is also notable. Instead of a linearly structured argument, Wittgenstein’s text contains over a thousand remarks which, upon careful analysis

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<sup>3</sup> It is not my intention here to be dismissive or disrespectful of these philosophers, who have made significant contributions during the history of philosophy, or any philosopher who has similarly constructed their own unique terms by which to express their arguments. I only mention them because, based on personal experience, it appears that some tend to hold such philosophers as superior or as possessing a greater intellect, in comparison to those who use language which I would describe as straightforward. Furthermore, I maintain that establishing one’s own language when writing philosophical works is often unnecessary, takes us further away from the truth rather than bringing us closer to it, and rather than being a marker of intelligence, is simply a façade.

can be linked (though not necessarily in the order they appear) in intricate ways. One might be tempted to construct a pseudo-theory by manipulating Wittgenstein's diverse remarks, or to impose a doctrine upon the text, but to do so would be inconsistent with his aim. Because he presents no doctrine, it can be immensely challenging to figure out how to even respond to Wittgenstein's writing, since, in philosophy we are taught to respond to a text by critically examining the argument put forth. Moreover, throughout the history of philosophy, regardless of whether or not philosophers did indeed explain anything, they believed there was something there for them to explain and generally attempted to fulfill this goal. Hence, they did perceive themselves as in fact advancing (sometimes even establishing) theses which engendered spirited debates (Fischer and Ammereller 2004: x). Thus, Wittgenstein's assertion that we should not be advancing any kind of theory, compels one to consider his goal in *PI*.

To investigate this consideration it is necessary to analyze the opening of *PI* where he cites the following from Augustine's *Confessions*:

When grown-ups named some object and at the same time turned towards it, I perceived this, and I grasped that the thing was signified by the sound they uttered, since they meant to point it out. This, however, I gathered from their gestures, the natural language of all peoples, the language that by means of facial expression and the play of eyes, of the movements of the limbs and the tone of voice, indicates

the affections of the soul when it desires, or clings to, or rejects, or recoils from, something. In this way, little by little, I learnt to understand what things the words, which I heard uttered in their respective places in various sentences signified. And once I got my tongue around these signs, I used them to express my wishes (PI 1).

Augustine's claim here reflects the commonly held notion about developing the skill of language, which is that one learns by recognizing an object and associating a word with it. However, Wittgenstein wants to show us that this is not consistent with how we actually learn language, and he aims to point out the inadequacies of Augustine's account. Wittgenstein wanted to do this because, "...whether or not we are aware of this, the fact that we tacitly assume its correctness tends to govern our thinking about words and meaning, and thus it has bearings on the way we think about many of the problems of philosophy" (Hertzberg 2014: 41–42). In response to this excerpt from Augustine's text, Wittgenstein notes that, "These words, it seems to me, give us a particular picture of the essence of human language" (PI 1). In other words, Augustine is clinging to an idea of how he thinks language is learnt; he thinks this *must* be the correct account for language learning.

Wittgenstein however, remains unconvinced and provides us with his own notorious shopkeeper example – an imagined scenario where a person is sent to the store with a slip marked five red apples and obtains these items by handing the paper to the

shopkeeper. Upon reading it, the shopkeeper opens the drawer labelled apples, then looks up the word 'red' from a chart and locates the color sample next to it. The shopkeeper says the series of numbers and as he is saying each number, removes an apple, matching the color sample from the drawer (*PI* 1). Initially, this remark appears baffling because it is clearly not an assertion and it raises a series of questions from the reader. Why would Wittgenstein include a scenario which, on first thought, never occurs in real life? Why would he have the shopkeeper carry out such peculiar actions in order to perform the simple act of handing over the items to the customer as requested? Moreover, what is the aim of this remark?

In response to the first question, upon more serious thought, one can come up with numerous examples in which we can (at least partly) relate this scenario to real life. A customer may request their required items by handing over a list of goods to a shopkeeper rather than verbally requesting them if they do not speak the predominant language (which the shopkeeper assumedly speaks), were hard of hearing (or were non-verbal as the result of some other condition) and the shopkeeper did not know sign language, or if the customer was a child sent to the store by an adult who wanted to ensure the correct items were purchased. While the actions of the shopkeeper still appear bizarre, they serve a significant purpose which underscores Wittgenstein's objective at

large in *PI*. “What Wittgenstein is trying to create here, however, is what might be called a distancing effect<sup>4</sup>: we are so accustomed to operating with words that we are not aware of the complexity of what is involved in doing this” (Hertzberg 2014: 42). In other words, this scenario aids the reader who likely does consider all the intricacies that language use encompasses, unless they themselves have encountered a serious struggle with language.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, it becomes abundantly clear how each word in this example requires a unique type of skill when we consider someone who is just beginning to master these words (i.e. someone who suffers from extreme memory problems). The purpose behind this scenario is that it, “...instantiates an important feature of Wittgenstein’s way of doing philosophy: he is not so much giving

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<sup>4</sup> An interesting choice of phrase because it brings to mind a theatrical technique of the same name employed by Brecht. For him, the distancing effect (*Verfremdungseffekt*) was a way to prevent the audience from becoming emotionally involved by establishing a distance between them and the actors. The purpose of creating this distance was to compel the audience to think objectively about what was unfolding onstage, contemplate the correlation between the artificiality of the theatre and real-life circumstances, and thereby engage their intellect in critical thought about the social injustices of society (Brecht 2000: 2). Likewise, as Hertzberg suggests, Wittgenstein wants us to, in a sense, step back and reflect upon the complexities that occur in our use of language. Moreover, Savickey (2017) suggests that Wittgenstein’s practise of philosophy is performative and so the phrase ‘distancing effect’ is arguably relevant to Wittgenstein’s text in more ways than one.

<sup>5</sup> By a serious struggle with language, I am not referring to someone being extremely challenged by learning an additional language. Instead I have in mind here someone whose struggle with language is so severe that they have immense difficulty stringing together a simple sentence in their native language.

arguments<sup>6</sup> as working on our habits of thought. That is, he is trying to make us aware of our tacit assumptions in order to liberate us from them” (Hertzberg 2014: 43). With this aim in mind, his inclusion *Confessions* excerpt becomes much clearer. Augustine holds on to the idea of how he thinks language *must* be acquired and Wittgenstein’s shopkeeper scenario challenges that notion. Hence, Wittgenstein wants to alter the way we think about language.

Amongst scholars, there is much diversity with respect to Wittgenstein’s method of carrying out this alteration. Genia Schönbaumsfeld divides readers of Wittgenstein into two broad groups: ‘resolute readers’ and ‘standard readers.’ Resolute readers claim that Wittgenstein’s primary aim in both his early and later works was, “... offering a therapy that will cure us of the illusion of meaning something where we really mean nothing” (Schönbaumsfeld 2010: 649). Whereas standard readers maintain that he was concerned with more than mere therapy and that there is a substantial amount of discontinuity between Wittgenstein’s earlier and later works. ‘Resolute readings’ of Wittgenstein emerged as a ‘radical new approach’ to his initial texts, but are now beginning to become a more common interpretation for his later work as well (Schönbaumsfeld 2010: 649). Scholars who interpret

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<sup>6</sup> This claim is not entirely precise. Wittgenstein is not giving arguments *at all*. However, I include this quote because it is consistent with my assertion that Wittgenstein’s aim in *PI* is indeed to alter our habits of thought.

Wittgenstein in this way are committed to nonsense monism, namely the assertion that from the perspective of logic there is only one type of nonsense – plain gibberish, and that they also deny that “ ... there is something we ‘cannot do in philosophy’” (Schönbaumsfeld 2010: 650). Both the ‘resolute’ and the ‘substantial’ readings of Wittgenstein are insufficient to adequately account for the complexities within Wittgenstein’s *PI*. Moreover, “... there are neither good philosophical nor compelling exegetical grounds for accepting a resolute reading of the later Wittgenstein’s work” (Schönbaumsfeld 249).

In contrast, Phil Hutchinson identifies three general ways of interpreting *PI*: doctrinal, elucidatory, and therapeutic (Hutchinson 2007: 693). Doctrinal readers suggest Wittgenstein, “...advances (putatively non-metaphysical) doctrines such as the use-theory of meaning and a raft of doctrines in the philosophy of psychology...” (Hutchinson and Read 2008: 143). However, to advance doctrines would be inconsistent with Wittgenstein’s *PI* 109 discussed earlier, where he explicitly says this is what he is not doing. Additionally, proponents of the doctrinal interpretation, to a certain extent, play fast and loose with Wittgenstein’s wording in his remarks on meaning and use, for example, *PI* 43 (Hutchinson and Read 2008: 144). Moreover, this reading is insufficient because it does not acknowledge the modal terms which play a crucial part in *PI*, and because this reading does not seriously take

into account Wittgenstein's metaphysical statements (Hutchinson 2007: 693). On the other hand, the elucidatory readers of *PI* argue that "...Wittgenstein practises therapy *and* elucidates the grammar of our language." However, elucidatory readers are distinguished from therapeutic ones because they place an emphasis on giving an overview of language and also on the significance of 'mapping' that language as something that plays a role separate from the therapeutic purpose (Hutchinson and Read 2008: 143). Hence, the elucidatory reading fails due to the fact that it, "...ultimately commits Wittgenstein to untenable philosophical positions" (Hutchinson 2007: 693).

At this point, I wish to examine the therapeutic reading in greater detail. The therapeutic approach consists of three variations: ones that compare Wittgenstein's philosophy to psychoanalysis, ones that compare his philosophy to therapy, and ones that perceive philosophy as an illness (Savickey 2017: 95). Among the initial therapeutic interpretations of Wittgenstein's work is the comparison of his methods to psychoanalysis which are mostly rooted in textual and anecdotal evidence dating back to the early 1930s. Sources utilized as a means to support this comparison include a disclaimer issued by Wittgenstein, a typescript submitted in the 1930s, and an article by Braithwaite which offers the first public description of Wittgenstein's philosophical pursuits with respect to psychoanalysis. However, Wittgenstein explicitly links

philosophy and psychoanalysis only twice in his posthumously published works. Furthermore, in these remarks he is not concerned with making an analogy between philosophy and psychoanalysis, but instead is directing our focus toward the analogies themselves (Savickey 2017: 96–99). Indeed, Wittgenstein often directs our focus to the use of analogies throughout his later works. Understanding the notion of philosophy as therapy rather than just being similar to it, is an overly literal reading of Wittgenstein's remarks (Savickey 2017: 100). Hence, therapeutic readings that compare Wittgenstein's philosophy to psychoanalysis do not accurately represent his work (Savickey 2017: 116).

Hutchinson is one scholar who perceives Wittgenstein's methods as therapeutic and philosophical questions as mental disturbances. He maintains that the therapeutic interpretation does not commit Wittgenstein to the untenable philosophical positions. Because of this, this reading is able to, "... make sense of Wittgenstein's text as a whole ..." Therefore, the therapeutic reading is the only one Hutchinson deems to be accurate (Hutchinson 2007: 693). He maintains that Wittgenstein referred to his methods as therapeutic and even goes so far as to say that after 1929, the motivating force behind Wittgenstein's philosophy was to relieve mental disturbances which emerged from struggling with philosophical dilemmas (Hutchinson 2007: 694).

For Hutchinson, Wittgenstein's methodology in *PI* is therapeutic in the sense that through his remarks, he helps to liberate us from the particular picture we hold onto and to show us that there are other ways of seeing things. When philosophers are confronted by an apparently impossible philosophical dilemma, said dilemma can be traced to one's being within the unconscious or unacknowledged hold of a certain picture of how things must be. The goal of the philosophical therapist is to fracture this hold that the picture has on the individual and demonstrate to them alternative ways of seeing things. This individual is then supposed to be cured of their mental disturbance, once they are released from the grip of the picture, and have freely accepted the alternative one as valid. "The acceptance of new pictures serves to loosen the thought-constraining grip of the old picture, the picture that had led the philosopher to the seemingly insurmountable philosophical problem, and thus to suffering the resultant mental disturbance" (Hutchinson 2007: 694). Furthermore, for Hutchinson a mental disturbance is not a *consequence* of a philosophical dilemma, but *is* in fact a mental disturbance. This assertion is putatively supported by Wittgenstein's perception of philosophical dilemmas as problems of the will which are rooted in particular pathologies<sup>7</sup>,

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<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Read and Hutchinson claim that therapy's goal is to liberate one from what might be referred to as pathologies of the mind, and while it can be carried out in numerous ways, Wittgenstein explored one of these and decided on the one which was the best according to him (Read and Hutchinson 2014: 153).

and needed to be treated in the form of therapy which target the afflicted individual's mode of engaging with the world (Hutchinson 2007: 695).

Likewise, Read and Hutchinson assert that:

Wittgensteinian philosophy is a quest to find a genuinely effective way of undoing the suffering of minds in torment. The analogy with therapy is with 'our method' of philosophy; it is not claimed to be with philosophy, per se. 'Our method', the therapeutic method, is concerned with bringing to consciousness similes or pictures that have hitherto lain in the unconscious, constraining one's thought (and, maybe, leading one to believe one needed to produce that theory, to do that bit of metaphysics) (Read and Hutchinson 2014: 150).

For them, the objective behind philosophy as therapy is to obtain freedom of thought and an enhanced understanding about the meaning of our words when we utilize them in actual and possible occasions. They argue that Wittgenstein's concern lies with helping liberate both ourselves and himself from the impulse to metaphysics. Wittgenstein carries out this therapy by engaging the reader in dialogues with a varied and dialectically structured series of philosophical impulses. The impulses are presented to the reader through the interlocutor whose voice is interspersed in the text between Wittgenstein's. *PI* consists of imaginary scenarios aimed at immersing the reader and the interlocutor. As the reader becomes immersed they try to make sense of Wittgenstein's text

and this is intended to result in a reorientation of their thoughts (Read and Hutchinson 2014: 152). Other scholars echo this view as well. For instance, Savickey asserts, “Wittgenstein’s art of grammatical investigation requires a change in mode of thought or philosophical practice” (Savickey 2017: 106). Similarly, Rom Harré claims that, “The first thirty-odd paragraphs of the *Investigations* (Wittgenstein 1953) presents the patient with an alternative way of conceiving meaning, loosening the grip of the picture that has been causing the sufferer such mental anguish...” (Harré 2008: 485) He likens the mental condition that Wittgenstein is supposedly offering therapy for to paranoia.

I agree that Wittgenstein is trying to free us from the particular picture we hold onto of how things must be and to show us that there are other ways of seeing things – this idea is supported by the excerpt from *Confessions*, where Augustine clings to his picture of how language must be acquired, and Wittgenstein’s shopkeeper scenario helps to free us from this picture by offering a different conception of how language is learnt. However, I would not agree that Wittgenstein’s philosophy is therapeutic. Reorienting the way in which one thinks is not best described as treating a mental disturbance or an illness in need of a cure, nor is it aligned with Wittgenstein’s aims in *PI*. Such a perspective actually results in many problematic implications. Firstly, the idea of therapy is closely linked to the ideas of a patient, illness or disorder, therapist

and optimal health” (De Mesel 2015: 567). Even if ‘therapy’ is being used metaphorically it implies an illness which needs to be cured either literally or metaphorically (Fischer 2011: 22). While philosophical questions and illnesses need to be treated in a way which will rid the individual of them, such similarities are not sufficient to support the argument that, according to Wittgenstein, philosophical questions are, literally, illnesses. Wittgenstein was notorious for being exceptionally exact with his use of words and would not have chosen to phrase his sentence as, ‘Philosophical questions are treated by the philosopher *like* an illness’ if he had really meant that a philosophical question *is* an illness. Furthermore, De Mesel remarks, “...an illness is often assumed to be a condition or a state or one’s personal experience of that condition or state...” (De Mesel 2015: 568) For De Mesel, it is unclear how a philosophical predicament could be consistent with that definition.

Additionally, if a philosopher grappling with a philosophical dilemma is indeed afflicted with a mental disturbance, as some scholars suggest, then this makes the philosopher a patient (De Mesel 2015: 570). But, we would be mistaken to think that professional philosophers are the only ones to confront philosophical questions. For De Mesel:

Philosophical questions arise through a misunderstanding of the workings of our language, and may emerge in, for example, psychology and mathematics, as well as in

philosophy. Wittgenstein's point is that philosophy is not a science about a particular subject matter, but that it is an infinite set of methods, ways of dealing with a particular kind of question, namely those based on conceptual confusions (De Mesel 2015: 570).

Furthermore, what sets philosophers apart from others who deal with philosophical ponderings is that their work is oftentimes explicitly concerned with conceptual confusions, and therefore, the difference, De Mesel concludes, is merely quantitative not qualitative. Hence, those who devote their life to the practise of philosophy are not the only ones to grapple with philosophical questions (De Mesel 2015: 570–71). Thus, if many others raise these questions also as De Mesel suggests, are we then to deem all these individuals as being afflicted with a mental illness too? Taking this implication further, are we then to say that all those philosophers throughout the practise's history have been suffering from mental illness. If we had decided so and proceeded to 'treat' them, would we not have lost out on numerous truly valuable insights?

Moreover, if we conceive of philosophers as the only individuals who concern themselves with philosophical inquiries, and view these types of questions as a form of mental disturbance, then such a line of reasoning could lead us to perceive these individuals as ill in comparison to others who are healthy (De Mesel 2015: 572). However, concerning oneself with

philosophical queries is not a mental illness, in fact these are entirely normal questions for any human being to raise. Since we often understand an illness to refer to a condition which prevents one from living a healthy, normal life, if we perceive philosophers as individuals with a mental illness, we are then implying that they are incapable of living a healthy, normal life (De Mesel 2015: 572). Needless to say, such an implication is glaringly problematic. De Mesel argues that Wittgenstein conceives of philosophical therapies as meant to dissolve philosophical questions, not to eradicate our urge to ask such questions. “The urge to misunderstand the workings of our language is not an illness, just like our inclination to misjudge distances in the dark or our vulnerability to getting a cold are not illnesses” (De Mesel 2015: 571). In other words, we are simply prone to misunderstand the workings of our language from time to time – this is simply a condition of being human. To attempt to ‘cure’ something within our very nature would be quite troublesome.

By perceiving the practise of philosophy as an intellectual or mental illness, scholars who hold this view maintain that the objective of philosophy is to put an end to philosophy (Savickey 2017: 95), which is inconsistent with Wittgenstein’s *PI*. Wittgenstein states, “...philosophical problems should *completely* disappear” (*PI* §133). What he means here, is that certain philosophical dilemmas can and should be entirely cleared up. But,

it would be inaccurate to take this statement as meaning that *all* philosophical dilemmas can or will be entirely cleared up. Clearing up such dilemmas can be accomplished through therapy, but Wittgenstein is not claiming that we will reach the end of our philosophical work, since our urge to misunderstand will cause new queries to arise and old ones to crop up in a different form. Hence, while it is possible to clear up questions in philosophy, this does not imply that the end of philosophy is imminent (De Mesel 2015: 577). Moreover, because we use language, we are prone to conceptual vulnerabilities which make the idea of the culmination of philosophy inconceivable (De Mesel 2015: 578). Furthermore, I would like to suggest that an end to philosophy, even if it were conceivable would not be beneficial, but instead rather disadvantageous. Philosophy is one of the foremost ways in which we gain new insight, and it helps us to continue asking questions which have the potential to result in new discoveries. Putting an end to philosophy would seem to suggest that we possess all the wisdom there is to know and that there are no more questions to ask, no more discoveries to make. If we were to stop practising the art, might we not be showing arrogance with respect to the extent of our wisdom?

Moreover, the prevalence of the therapeutic reading in Wittgenstein scholarship is questionable since Wittgenstein made few specific references to the link between philosophy and therapy.

In *PI* 133 Wittgenstein notes, “There is not a single philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, different therapies as it were.” This remark “...contains the only explicit reference to therapy in Wittgenstein’s entire *Nachlass*” (De Mesel 2015: 566). Hence, despite the extensive emphasis on the therapeutic interpretation, the relation between philosophy and therapy is rarely mentioned. A diligent reader of Wittgenstein finds that philosophy is not literally therapy but only similar to it. What Wittgenstein accomplishes in *PI* is the alteration of our conception about how things must be, including the practise of philosophy itself. The philosophy and therapy analogy which, among Wittgenstein’s numerous writings shows up the most in *PI* (about five times), occurs in total only about twenty times. When taking into account the thousands of remarks Wittgenstein penned, the number of times this analogy appears is clearly minimal. Yet scholars have dedicated significant discussion to these few remarks. The therapy analogy may seem more prevalent than is the case due to the fact that Wittgenstein dedicated a significant amount of his texts to discussing pain and other related concepts (Savickey 2017: 95–96). Hutchinson attempts to justify the pervasiveness of the therapeutic reading, by suggesting in a footnote that for therapy to be effective one must be, to a certain extent, covert in their intentions and practise of it (Hutchinson 2007: 694 fn 9). However, his justification here appears impulsive and is insufficiently supported.

Thus, I maintain that the therapeutic readings outlined above are inconsistent with Wittgenstein's aims and methods in *PI*. To offer my reading of how Wittgenstein proceeds to liberate us from our picture of how things *must* be, I return to the noteworthy elements of his text which I referred to at the beginning: Wittgenstein's statement about not advancing theses in philosophy, his form, and his style of language. These characteristics demonstrate his effort to free us from our picture of how philosophy *must* be practised. By supplying the reader with numerous comments regarding grammatical investigation, instead of theses or a doctrine, Wittgenstein compels us to verbally discuss his text with others. Upon reading *PI* alone, one can certainly begin to draw connections between the remarks and develop their own insights in response. However, if one stops there, they miss much of the richness and depth that Wittgenstein's work has to offer. Discussion about the text with others allows one to make new connections among the remarks that they had not seen before, to exchange interpretations, and to make sense of what is being said. When a philosophical work takes the form of a linear argument it is possible to read the text alone, then read what others have written on the argument and respond by writing one's own paper. Thus, it is entirely possible to go through this process without ever having verbally spoken to others about the argument in question.

However, one can only gain so much insight by looking at words on a page.

Additionally, it is evident Wittgenstein does not want us to just read his sentences, think about them briefly, and then lay them aside. Indeed, he asks us to be much more active when engaging with his text and frequently tells us to ‘imagine’ or carry out an action.<sup>8</sup> For example, at *PI* 330, he asks us, “Is thinking a kind of speaking?” Rather than respond with an argument, he asks us to carry out a scenario so that we can complete the investigation ourselves. Further on in the same remark, he orders us, “Say: ‘Yes, this pen is blunt. Oh well, it’ll do.’ First, with thought; then without thought; then just think the thought without the words.” In the following remark he says, “Imagine people who could think only aloud. (As there are people who can read only aloud.)” (*PI* 331). Such remarks are meaningless if the reader fails to engage with them by carrying out their own investigation as Wittgenstein suggests. Through form, Wittgenstein thus compels us to engage in discourse with others about what we have read.

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<sup>8</sup> One may argue that Wittgenstein’s suggestion for engaging with his text in this manner is not much different from traditional philosophy’s practise of carrying out thought experiments. However, I maintain that Wittgenstein’s method is quite distinct because in comparison to other philosophers who in the process of presenting their thought experiment also present and support a particular stance, at no point does Wittgenstein argue for a position that we should take and defend it. He presents a scenario and leaves us to conduct our own investigation independently and as such draw our own independent conclusions.

Moreover, Wittgenstein's employment of what I refer to as 'straightforward language,' allows him to raise crucial, meaningful philosophical questions in a more inclusive manner than philosophers who have been known to use technical jargon of their own making. Wittgenstein's approach makes philosophy accessible to a greater diversity of people and makes it possible for *PI* to be discussed beyond the university classroom. To say that everyone asks philosophical questions may be an overgeneralization, but it would be misleading to assume the only ones asking these questions are philosophy students or graduates. When philosophical works are written to be accessible only to those with a formal education in the field, they alienate a significant portion of the population from the discourse. Thus, we risk losing out on important insight and wisdom from this excluded population. It is of great importance that these discussions be inclusive, since the greater the variety of readers and interlocutors, the more likely it is to lead to an enhanced diversity of insights.

In closing, Wittgenstein is concerned with altering our way of thinking about language and our practise of philosophy. He attempts to free us from our grip to the picture of how things must be – specifically, he tries to free us from our picture of how we think philosophy must be practised. Wittgenstein's *PI* is intended to be read actively, verbally discussed with others, and not limited

to those with a background in philosophy. Thus, Wittgenstein attempts to encourage us to practise philosophy in a communal interactive fashion. Rather than assert a doctrine open to debate by fellow philosophers and scholars, his text is exceptionally interactive because of the imaginary scenarios and interlocutor he creates for the reader to engage with. Such an original form has the potential to help the reader develop valuable insights since it invites them to become active participants in the dialogue that Wittgenstein introduces, instead of a passive recipient of dogmatic views as is normally the case with other philosophers. While such a view may appear new, Wittgenstein is arguably returning to the practise of philosophy carried out by Socrates, who similarly did not profess a creed of his own, but rather engaged in dialogue with others to challenge their beliefs. Wittgenstein's practise of using non-technical language, inclusive to interlocutors of all backgrounds, reflects Socrates' practise because the latter was willing to talk philosophy with just about anyone, not only formally educated individuals. In sum, *PI* is an acutely complex work which explores a diversity of philosophical questions and is in many ways a revolutionary text with respect to how we practise philosophy.

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