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Letter from the Editors

It is a great pleasure and privilege to present the 17th volume of *The Hemlock Papers*. Our team has worked diligently to revitalize our journal in the past two years following a significant hiatus, and we are delighted to share the following philosophical works with the greater academic community. *The Hemlock* strives to feature exemplary undergraduate scholarship and promote fruitful discourse, and we find this edition to be an outstanding realization of these goals. We chose to call for a wide range of philosophical subjects this year; the enclosed works, we hope, will present the reader with a richly diverse set of perspectives, styles of argument, and academic engagement.

I want to give special thanks to the members of the PST society for engaging with and reviewing our submissions. I would also like to thank our chapter advisor, Dr. Graham Hubbs, and administrative assistant Omni Francetich for their unwavering support throughout this process.

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The Benefits of Epistemological Skepticism in Philosophical Inquiry

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ABSTRACT: The inductive skeptic argues that we can know no inductive inferences to be certain. Although the skeptic's methodology is sound, it is impossible to carry out the skeptical belief system into one's actions. In this paper, I argue for a less radical skepticism than that held of the traditional inductive skeptic. I posit that we can make use of skepticism in philosophical discourse through use of a restricted domain of focus which allows us to aside the practical issues of a more *complete* skepticism.

Epistemological skepticism is both sound and *not* a fruitless inquiry, which many have contended in the past. Skepticism is widely regarded as an impractical viewpoint due to the consequential rejection of all positive philosophical theories and the impossibility of action. I argue that the restricted form of skepticism I describe, as opposed to radical universal skepticism which most are familiar with, is philosophically beneficial. I will be pulling primarily from the arguments of Abraham Meiden and Peter Unger to establish my position on different forms of skepticism. I will conclude by offering an overview of more plausible and pragmatic uses of skepticism, relying on domain of focus and degree of probability, pulling from Brian Skyrms' "Grades of Inductive Skepticism". All accounts of the refutation of skepticism, while well intended, fall short of the skeptical scope. Skepticism is sound in all accounts put forth thus far and as epistemologists we must contend with this fact and attempt to make use of skepticism throughout our philosophical investigations.

The classical skeptical argument is that we have no proper grounds to assert any statement's certainty. There are two methods of reasoning to determine the certainty of a statement: deduction and induction. Deduction involves the logical and systematic "elimination" of statements in order to reach a truly verified conclusion (*i.e.* mathematical, logical, and definitional truths). Induction is the method of drawing a probabilistic conclusion from *some* evidence. I will be concerned with inductive skepticism as deductive arguments are uninformative by nature (*e.g.* "all teenagers are between the ages of 13 and 19" or "A=A"). An inductive skeptic critiques induction on the grounds of its uncertainty. Philosopher David Hume is widely regarded as the founder of modern inductive (Humean) skepticism. Hume claimed that "to try to justify (it) inductively is to beg the question: "It is impossible, therefore, that any arguments from experience can

prove this resemblance of the past to the future, since all these arguments are founded on the supposition of that resemblance."[1]

Philosopher Abraham Meiden lays out some popular formulations of the radically skeptical argument[2] as follows:

- (a.1.) To show that a statement is in fact certain is to prove or justify it. In order to do so, one must justify all assumptions within the statement and subsequently justify all assumptions within those justification statements… Forming an infinite regress of (doubtful) justificatory statements.
- (b.1.) Human information (*e.g.* perception and thought) is imperfect by nature.
- (c.1.) It is logically possible that some 'evil demon' is controlling our beliefs and causes us to be mistaken.[3]

Arguments such as these lead the skeptic to form the conclusion that we can know nothing at all to be certain.

Many philosophers have adopted the project of attempting to find a sound argument against skepticism, for highly rational reasons. It seems as though if we cannot know anything to be certain, then much of the work being conducted in epistemology, philosophy as a whole, or any discipline for that matter is fruitless and contingent upon the *weakly assumed* reliability of human belief. A notable group which took on the challenge of skepticism are known as the justificationists. The justificationists argue that "skeptical arguments show just that statements such as 'The sun will rise tomorrow' are not certain; but they do not show that such statements are not justified, plausible or probable. Therefore, we may still claim that it is rational to believe that the sun will rise tomorrow and irrational to deny it."[4] The justificationists agree with the skeptics in their fundamental argument of uncertainty, but posit that we ought to shift the focus of our epistemological pursuit of knowledge to a more pragmatic model concerned with justification, plausibility, and probability rather than the former quest for absolute truth and certainty.

Despite the fact that the justificationists agree with the skeptics on their foundational claims, some strong-willed skeptics have still found a way in which to refute the justificationary thesis. The justificatory skeptic claims that a statement like 'I have a body' (or any statement supposing a belief to be true) is not only uncertain, but is also no more justifiable than any other

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[1] David Hume, *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding,* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1896), 32.

[2] These radically skeptical arguments are applicable to both deductive and inductive reasoning, but once again I am concerned only with inductive skepticism here.

[3] Abraham Meiden, *Arguments for Skepticism,* (Canadian Journal of Philosophy 16 no. 2, 1986), 298.

[4] Abraham Meiden, *Arguments for Skepticism,* 299.

claim, including the claim that 'I do not have a body.'[5] The justificatory skeptic effectively applies modifications of the classical skeptical argument to disprove the probability, plausibility, and justification of claims in order to assert their position against the justificationists. Consider the following skeptical argument modifications which target justificationists:

(a.2.) The justificationist argues that statement p is not certain but is in fact justified. It follows then that the justification of p is not certain, but at most only justified. The justification of p is at most only justified, which is at most only justified and so on, leading to yet another infinite regress.[6]

(b.2.) Consider an extremely simplistic and widely accepted scientific theory[7] such as: "All physical objects on earth are affected by gravity." This leads to the infinite conjunction of justificatory claims that 'object x on earth is affected by gravity.' According to skeptical tradition, this theory ('all physical objects on earth are affected by gravity') is not certain, as proved formerly, leading the probability of the theory to be less than one.[8] It follows that the probability of the infinite conjunctive sentences ('object x on earth is affected by gravity')

diminishes quickly and *tends to be* zero, or rather close to it.[9]

With this, I intend to have persuaded you to adopt the belief that the skeptical thesis (in both the certain and justificatory formulation) is sound. I will further show how that plays out in terms of human experience.

If one were to accept the radically skeptical position as more than a mere conceptual philosophical outlook, that is to incorporate the core thesis of skepticism into their belief system and live according to its principles, said individual would run quickly into some damning consequences. Suppose that you, the reader of this paper, was utterly amazed by the arguments for skepticism laid out above and immediately self-indoctrinated yourself into the skeptical camp. Following the guidelines of true skepticism, you would likely stop reading, as it is skeptical whether you were ever reading at all and whether some evil scientist was not actually making you believe you were reading per usual when in fact with each statement you read you are killing thousands of innocent sheep in some pasture in Maryland. You quickly would become skeptical of your need to perform essential human functions, such as drinking, eating, breathing, and so on. Although these examples may seem rather deranged, the global skeptic, in staying consistent with their belief system can

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[5] Ibid., 299.
[6] Note the synonymy of the argument here (a.2.) to the argument for radical skepticism (a.1.).

[7] Scientific theory, used here, meaning simply a justified conclusion formed through the observance of empirical data.
[8] "One" being absolute certainty.
[9] Ibid., 300.

accept no form of reasoning to be certain. Bertrand Russell put it best in saying: (radical) "skepticism, while logically impeccable, is psychologically impossible, and there is an element of frivolous insincerity in any philosophy which pretends to accept it."[10]

Although the form of global-radical skepticism laid out thus far is psychologically impossible to carry out, I posit that this is no reason to throw skepticism to the curb. I agree with Russell in stating that skepticism is logically impeccable, but I suggest a modification to the latter half of his view on the subject. Skepticism can be implemented as a useful tool in philosophical discourse when restricting its domain of focus. We have already done this in the preceding paragraphs (potentially unknowingly so) when speaking of inductive skepticism, rather than the traditional global skepticism which attacks all claims. As we have seen, inductive skepticism still leaves the scope of arguments under consideration fairly broad. I will now lay out some examples of philosophers who have utilized this tool of domain-specific skepticism and found fruitful results in doing so, without being forced to accept a holistic skeptical outlook on the world.

Philosopher Peter Unger offers us a domain-restricted example of skepticism in his article "A Defense of Skepticism." Unger argues here that humans know at best, hardly anything at all. He does not argue in favor of the classical skeptical thesis, that nobody knows anything to be certain, but rather takes a more restrained approach to the topic.[11] Unger's argument primarily utilizes two linguistic concepts, which he refers to as *relative* and *absolute terms*. A relative term is one which has degrees to it, such as the properties of roughness or courageousness. A road may be a certain degree n rough after three years of use, but after fifteen years it likely will have a larger degree of 'roughness.' Just as a child going on a roller coaster may hold degree x of courage, most would agree that a firefighter rushing into a burning building surpasses the child's degree of courageousness. In contrast, an absolute term is one which has no degrees, such as flatness or straightness.[12]

Unger argues that epistemological terms such as certainty or knowledge are absolute terms, while "confident", 'uncertain' or 'doubtful' are relative.[13] One can assert a certain degree of uncertainty, but in terms of our language can assert no degree of certainty. For example, I am some degree x uncertain that it will rain tomorrow. If I check the weather report and see that there is a 50 percent chance of rain, my degree of uncertainty may likely level out to be somewhere around 50 percent. If I were to check the weather and see a 100 percent

[10] Bertrand Russell, *Human Knowledge, Its Scope and Limits*, (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1948), 9.

[11] Peter Unger, *A Defense of Skepticism*, (Knowledge: Readings in Contemporary Epistemology, n.d, 2000), 324.
[12] Ibid.,327.
[13] Ibid.,331.

chance of rain my degree of uncertainty would diminish, but I would still not be correct in saying that I am certain it will rain tomorrow. If I claimed that I was 'very certain' or 'fairly certain' that it will rain tomorrow, I am, according to Unger, truly asserting that I have a low degree of uncertainty that it will rain tomorrow. It is never the case that I am x degrees certain, but it is always the case that I am y degrees uncertain. In short, certainty must be an "all-in matter" and as the skeptics have shown, this is not the case for matters of inductive reasoning.

Although this is a simplified version of Unger's entire argument, I present it to show the applicability of skepticism upon a specific domain of inquiry. Unger is not arguing that we cannot know anything, but rather focusing in on the semantic issues of our speech when discussing knowledge and certainty to show that we ought to be skeptical (to a degree) of the beliefs we discuss as certain. I found his argument compelling and psychologically compatible with a rational being's lifestyle.

Epistemologist Brian Skyrms offers us a defense of skepticism similar to mine in his article "Grades of Inductive Skepticism". Skyrms argues that there are grades or degrees of inductive skepticism which vary in what the skeptic's concerns may be and what they choose to accept. The Humean global skepticism most

epistemologists are familiar with is not the *only* reasonable method of skepticism.[14] Further, Skyrms claims that "it is possible, and sometimes quite reasonable, to be skeptical about some things but not others."[15]

Skyrms asserts his position by citing the works of various philosophers of mathematics who made use of the concept of probability. For our purposes, I will cover a simplified reiteration of Skyrms' explanation of the work of Thomas Bayes. Bayes was concerned with establishing a way to calculate the exact probability of all inductive conclusions.[16] I do not believe he was capable of achieving this task, but his work offers us some interesting insight into the mechanics of induction. Bayes argues that chance must be a random variable[17] and that there must be varying possible 'chances' when reaching a conclusion through induction. Bayes recognizes what are known as 'priors,' which are "the beliefs an agent holds regarding a fact, hypothesis or consequence, before being presented with evidence."[18] Bayes presumed the 'uniform prior' for his work in which equivalent intervals are given the same probability of truth. One can imagine a uniform prior as analogous to drawing names randomly from a hat. Each name within the hat presumably has an equal chance of being drawn, assuming all conditions are equal. In short, Bayes sees a quantifiable probability of a certain outcome t,

[14] Brian Skyrms, *Grades of Inductive Skepticism,* (Philosophy of Science 81, no. 3, 2014), 304.
[15] Ibid., 304.
[16] Ibid., 306.

[17] A random variable is defined as: "a variable whose values depend on outcomes of a random phenomenon."
[18] *Priors*, (Lesswrongwiki, n.d.).

when all conditions are equal and all data has been assumed correctly.[19]

Bayes further shows that when one assumes the uniform prior, the probability of a certain outcome *t* increases and grows more resistant to an abnormality by the amount of data received verifying outcome *t*.[20] Suppose I was testing the probability of a certain light switch turning on a light in my new home. If I were to test it once and the outcome was that the light did in fact turn on the probability would be close to 1 based upon my experience, but if I were to try it again and it turned on a different light the probability would diminish quickly, especially if I were to receive the negative result of the other light turning on multiple times thereafter. I would likely assume that it was either a strange electrical fluke that the light switch initially turned on the incorrect light or that some wires had been temporarily crossed. However, if I were to turn the light on hundreds of times without fail and went to flip the switch once and it turned on another light, despite the oddity of such a scenario, the probability of the light switch (in a Bayesian style analysis) not turning on the assumed light in the future is more resistant to this deviant sample of data than if it had occurred after fewer trials. I find Bayes to be useful in his analysis of the components of probability in induction, but his work resides primarily in the mathematical and logical domain in which the uniform prior is assumed. The uniform prior does not

usually align with the way things function in the real world.

Bayes shows that we can, when assuming the uniform prior, determine approximate chances *a posteriori*, but there is a notable 'ignorance prior' which must be addressed in the discussion of induction. An ignorance prior is a prior which assumes no knowledge and is the foundation of most skeptical arguments. An ignorance prior, according to Skyrms, can have *some* positive probability between 0 and 1.[21] I might know nearly all the variables of a given situation *s* (giving me an ignorance prior of nearly 0), no variables of *s* (giving me an ignorance prior of 1), or likely somewhere in between the two. It is this principle of grades of ignorance priors which allow us to conduct skeptical reasoning in a more localized manner. I may hold a certain ignorance prior *p* of my knowledge of the sun rising tomorrow, but it is likely rather low, considering the priors which contribute to my belief that the sun will in fact rise tomorrow. That is not to say I cannot examine such ignorance prior if it pertains to an inquiry about the sun rising tomorrow, but rather that I can set it aside while considering another more relevant matter without compromising my belief system.

To summarize, a global skeptic focuses in on human's ignorance priors and uses them as the basis of their argument for uncertainty. While it may be the case that we cannot in fact be certain of our knowledge, we can rely on the principles of probability to

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[19] Skyrms, *Grades of Inductive Skepticism,* 306.

[20] Ibid., 307.
[21] Ibid., 307.

determine an outcome which is most likely to occur. This does not equate to the rejection of skepticism as a useful tool in inquiry because the principles of probability allow us to conduct skeptical inquiry on specific relevant matters. Bayes' probability theory allows us to set aside concerns of skepticism and focus in on a specific domain of inquiry and acknowledge our ignorance priors in said domain which can lead to fruitful philosophical results.

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Definitional Inconsistency and Conceptual Misrepresentation: A Critique of Thomas Kelly's "Peer Disagreement and Higher Order Evidence"

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ABSTRACT: Peer disagreement occurs when epistemic peers come to contrary conclusions despite having been exposed to the same body of evidence and the same arguments that bear on the acceptability of a proposition. The relevant question concerns how each peer should revise their original views based only on the knowledge that an epistemic peer disagrees. The commonly suggested equal weight view holds that peers should split the difference between their contrary positions. However, Thomas Kelly offers an alternative in his total evidence view that does not prescribe the adoption of a median perspective by dissenting peers. This essay will seek to explain the shortcomings of Kelly's critiques of the equal weight view and his defense of the total evidence view, including his use of an inconsistent definition of a "reasonable response" to peer disagreement and his reliance on an improperly understood characterization of the claims of the equal weight view

After several hours of deliberation, a diligent and fair-minded jury remains split on the guilt of the accused. Two equally qualified meteorologists utilizing the same meteorological data report different opinions on the chances of rain tomorrow. These are real-life examples of peer disagreement presented by Thomas Kelly in his article "Peer Disagreement and Higher Order Evidence."[1] But what, precisely, is peer disagreement? As defined by Kelly, epistemic peers are persons whose available evidence indicates that they each have an equal track record when it comes to assessing a relevant kind of proposition, as well as the relevant background information needed to make such an assessment. In addition, no peer is aware of any defeaters, or pieces of evidence that suggest that their peer's assessment abilities are currently compromised.[2] When epistemic peers are exposed to the same body of evidence and the same arguments that bear on the acceptability of a relevant proposition X, and nevertheless come to contrary conclusions about said proposition, they experience peer disagreement.

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1. Thomas Kelly, "Peer Disagreement and Higher Order Evidence," in *Social Epistemology: Essential Readings,* eds. Alvin I. Goldman and Dennis Whitcomb (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 183.
2. Kelly, "Peer Disagreement and Higher Order Evidence," 183.

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The main philosophical question concerns how, if at all, each peer should revise their original views under these circumstances, based only on the knowledge that an epistemic peer disagrees.[3] One suggested response, termed the equal weight view, holds that in such cases, peers are "rationally required to split then difference" between their beliefs.[4] Accepting this view entails adopting a middle position between each peer's belief. To do otherwise would involve unreasonably privileging one's own opinion over that of one's epistemic peer.[5]

Thomas Kelly disagrees with this view and offers his total evidence view as an alternative in "Peer Disagreement and Higher Order Evidence." The total evidence view advocates for revising one's position on a proposition X based on an assessment of the initial evidence in combination with the evidence created by a peer's contrary belief. However, this revision will not necessarily require one to split the difference between one's view and that of a dissenting peer.

This essay will argue that Kelly's argument against the equal weight view and for his total evidence view suffers from two major shortcomings. First, Kelly relies on an inconsistent definition of a "reasonable response" to peer disagreement that is too idealized to function in real-world scenarios.

Second, Kelly criticizes the equal weight view using a conception of the relationship between evidence and the belief formation process of the involved peers that is fundamentally different from the conception of this relationship adopted by proponents of the equal weight view. Therefore, his critiques of the equal weight view rely on an improperly understood characterization of the claims of the equal weight view without recognizing it as such.

Kelly's Total Evidence View

Kelly's total evidence view states that the reasonable response to a peer disagreement is to treat each peer's beliefs about the disputed proposition X as pieces of evidence. This view utilizes a distinction between what Kelly calls first and higher order evidence. Higher order evidence comprises of the beliefs formulated by peers on the truth or falsity of proposition X. All the other pieces of available evidence used by the peers to form their initial beliefs about the truth or falsity of proposition X constitute first order evidence.[6] The higher order evidence is weighed in combination with the first order evidence by each peer to render their final decision about the proposition.[7] As such, the total evidence view considers the disagreement of a peer as some form of evidence against an individual's belief in proposition X. However,

3. Kelly, "Peer Disagreement and Higher Order Evidence," 184.
4. Kelly, "Peer Disagreement and Higher Order Evidence," 184.
5. Adam Elga, "Peer Disagreement and Higher Order Evidence," in *Social Epistemology: Essential Readings,* eds.

Alvin I. Goldman and Dennis Whitcomb (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 168.
6. Kelly, "Peer Disagreement and Higher Order Evidence," 200.
7. Kelly, "Peer Disagreement and Higher Order Evidence," 202.

this higher order evidence does not typically outweigh all the first order evidence used to formulate each peer's initial position.[8] Thus, peer disagreement should generally result in each peer having less confidence in their belief, but they are not reasonably required to split the difference between the dissenting views. Given the introduction of more peers, there may be a point when the amount of higher order evidence outweighs the first order evidence, requiring the peer with the widely opposed view to change their position. However, for a revision in position to occur, the total evidence view requires a much larger batch of evidence than is necessitated by the equal weight view.[9] Under the equal weight view, the disagreement of a single peer necessitates adopting a median position, while under the total evidence view, the opinions of peers as higher order evidence is considered a much weaker form of evidence. As such, higher order evidence must meet a comparatively high threshold to outweigh first order evidence and cause a change in the widely disagreed-with peer's position.

The First Shortcoming: Defining Reasonableness

Kelly's first identifiable argumentative shortcoming is that, even though his argument aims at defending a stance on what should constitute a reasonable reaction to peer disagreement, he fails to rely on a single, clear, and consistent conception of what it means to be reasonable. Within the history of western philosophy, philosophical understandings and uses of the concepts of reason and reasonableness have varied considerably. In his streamlined account of western philosophical development, Schaffer identifies four different philosophical conceptions of reason and reasonableness.[10] The first early western conception of reason identified by Schaffer defined reason as a mental capacity or faculty to draw conclusions from premises.[11] There was significant debate as to whether this faculty existed to discover knowledge of substantive truths or merely to formulate connections among acquired sensory data, and whether the faculty of reason itself can speak normatively for a specific course of action.[12] Within this context, "to call something 'reasonable' [was] to say that it is in accordance with a properly functioning faculty of reason (however this [was] understood).[13]

This early conception of reason relied on the idea that reasonable beliefs were based on demonstrably

8. Kelly, "Peer Disagreement and Higher Order Evidence," 200.
9. Kelly, "Peer Disagreement and Higher Order Evidence," 199-200.
10. Karl Schaffer's account is by no means exhaustive of all the philosophical uses of "reason" and "reasonableness"; it is merely a broad summary of general trends. Karl Schaffer, "A Brief History of Rationality: Reason, Reasonableness, Rationality, and Reasons," *Manuscrito* 41, no. 4 (October – December, 2018)
11. Schaffer, "A Brief History of Rationality," 505.
12. Schaffer, "A Brief History of Rationality," 505-506.
13. Schaffer, "A Brief History of Rationality," 507.

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certain linkages; however, with the advent of probability theory, a reasonable belief could be based on merely probably grounds rather than "demonstrably certain grounds."[14] Thus, reasonableness became a "matter of responding correctly to uncertainty in the face of less than fully conclusive evidence."[15] This definition creates a layer of separation between reasonableness and objective truth, allowing for the possibility of a reasonable response that nevertheless leads an individual to an incorrect conclusion.

Both classical and probabilistic conceptions of reason rely on normative justifications of reason's value. A third, "rationalist," conception of reason abjured normative justifications for the value of reason in favor of instrumental or rules-based considerations. Reasonable actions could be justified by either their ability to achieve certain ends or for their compliance with *a priori* rules of logical thought.[16] The rationalist conception was met by a backlash by "reason fundamentalists," who wished to restore the normative paramountcy of reason. They created a fourth conception of reason that sought to reassert "reasons," abstract objects which individuals utilize to justify actions, as the dominant concept in terms of which all other philosophical concepts should be defined.[17] This branch of philosophers would define reasonableness as "being (disposed to be)

properly responsive to one's (possessed) reasons."[18]

Schaffer's account provides a small sampling of how the definition of reason can and has varied widely depending on the philosophical persuasion of the person using it and the historical and cultural context one exists within. Given the wide variety of definitional choices, it is essential for a philosopher to clearly define the concept of reason and use it consistently within the parameters of their argument. Unfortunately, Kelly does not achieve this goal in "Peer Disagreement and Higher Evidence," when he utilizes an ambiguous and internally inconsistent definition of reason.

As indicated above, Kelly begins his paper by providing real-world examples of peer disagreement.[19] These examples suggest that whatever Kelly prescribes as a reasonable response to peer disagreement must be something an individual can achieve in the real world. In real-world scenarios, it is not possible to know with absolute certainty that one has formed a belief in response to available evidence in a way that corresponds with objective truth. Thus, in such a case, a reasonable approach might align with the probability theorists' definition of reasonableness identified by Schaffer above. On this account, "being reasonable [is] fundamentally a matter of responding correctly to uncertainty in the face of less

14. Schaffer, "A Brief History of Rationality," 509.

15. Schaffer, "A Brief History of Rationality," 510.

16. Schaffer, "A Brief History of Rationality," 514.

17. Schaffer, "A Brief History of Rationality," 519.

18. Schaffer, "A Brief History of Rationality," 519.

19. Kelly, "Peer Disagreement and Higher Order Evidence," 183.

than fully conclusive evidence."[20] An individual with a reasonable belief is, therefore, excused from knowing one has a correct response to a proposition, assuming it is based on an appropriate probabilistic evaluation of uncertain evidence. The requirement of having secure knowledge of the objective defensibility of one's response to a proposition could never be a practical response to peer disagreement, as it would require secure knowledge of the objective truth. However, this kind of knowledge is lacking in the context of peer disagreement since peers would not be evaluating evidence in the first place if they possessed definitive knowledge of the objective truth.

Kelly initially seems to align with a probabilistic conception of belief and reasonable response, as in many of his arguments, he uses a standard Bayesian convention. Rather than thinking of beliefs in a dichotomous way as either true or false, Bayesians conceptualize beliefs as numerical confidence levels on a 0 to 1 scale, from absolute confidence in a proposition's falsehood to absolute confidence in a proposition's truth, with the value 0.5 representing suspension of judgment in the middle.[21] Kelly's use of Bayesian conventions suggests he accords with the type of probabilistic version of reasonableness outlined above, which at a minimum, indicates that there is a possibility of uncertainty around the correctness of one's response to a proposition. However, other parts of Kelly's argument suggest that he aligns partially with Richard Feldman's conception of reasonableness. For Feldman, a reasonable individual is someone with identifiable and objectively defensible reasons for thinking they have evaluated some evidence about a proposition correctly in a specific case and who has actually done so, from an objective point of view.[22]

Kelly seems to align with the first prong of Feldman's approach when he argues that "typically when one responds to the evidence, one is not utterly blind to the fact that one has done so."[23] This quote suggests that according to Kelly, as for Feldman, one has an ability to possess and be aware of possessing objectively defensible reasons to believe that their evaluation of the evidence is correct. However, he does not adopt the second prong of Feldman's definition, that one must have actually evaluated a proposition in an objectively correct way to be reasonable. For Kelly, a peer can weigh all the first order evidence in favor of their initial opinion much more strongly than the contrary evidence represented by a peer's disagreement, based only on the requirement that they have defensible reasons to believe that they evaluated the first order evidence correctly. Thus,

20. Schaffer, "A Brief History of Rationality," 510.
21. Kelly, "Peer Disagreement and Higher Order Evidence," 183.
22. Interestingly, despite arguing for this level of self-awareness of one's reasonableness, Feldman advocates for adopting a version of the equal weight view in cases of peer disagreement in "Respecting the Evidence," *Philosophical Perspectives* 19 (December 2005): 116.
23. Kelly, "Peer Disagreement and Higher Order Evidence," 200.

Kelly's approach allows one to weigh one's beliefs more strongly than would be the case on the probabilistic view, based on the first prong of Feldman's definition of reasonableness, but it lacks the assurance of Feldman's second prong, namely that one has objectively evaluated a proposition correctly. By going beyond the probabilistic view without the guarantee of objective certainty of the truth, impossible as that is to attain in real situations, Kelly's total evidence view allows for a strange form of overconfidence in the correctness of one's beliefs.

Because Kelly seems to partially accord with Feldman's definition of reasonableness, he criticizes the equal weight view as unreasonable, as its prescription to split the difference between conflicting beliefs seemingly ignores how well one supposedly responded to the initial evidence. If one is in a peer disagreement and possesses objectively defensible reasons for thinking they have evaluated the evidence about a proposition more correctly than their peer, but then adopts the equal weight view, they may move substantially further away from the most defensible position on proposition X than their initial position. Kelly sees this as unacceptable since each peer's final position on proposition X will not be causally related to their respective evaluation abilities, which is one of Feldman's requirements to achieve reasonableness.[24]

The problem with Kelly's (at least) partial reliance on Feldman's definition is that it seems to require that

either peer can have secure knowledge of how well they responded to the initial evidence for some proposition (and be aware that they know), allowing them to maintain most of their confidence in their initial belief. However, in real-life scenarios, peers can have no such knowledge. Indeed, the evidence they do have access to, the dissent of a peer, suggests there is a not-insignificant chance that they responded to the initial evidence incorrectly. Kelly's use of "reasonable" in his work is, therefore, internally inconsistent. It both admits of the formation of an opinion based on an adequate response to the available evidence as a sufficient condition for reasonableness, while seemingly implying a stronger requirement that one can and must have knowledge that one has responded correctly to the available evidence to be reasonable. Given that, according to the Bayesian view of how one forms beliefs, the strength of one's belief should correspond to the strength of the available evidence (even when it is incomplete), it also implicitly requires that one's formulated opinion (e.g., that X is true at a certainty value of 0.7) is also objectively true.

A Second Shortcoming: Belief Formation

The second major shortcoming in Kelly's argument concerns how he conceptualizes the relationship between evidence and belief formation in

24. Kelly, "Peer Disagreement and Higher Order Evidence," 191-192.

peer disagreement. Kelly's total evidence view treats the evidence used to formulate beliefs about a disputed proposition and the formulated beliefs of others as different forms of evidence. In contrast, proponents of the equal weight view do not conceive of the beliefs formed by a peer about a proposition as a form of evidence. Instead, what Kelly calls first order evidence is considered an input that is used to formulate each peer's belief about a proposition. Those beliefs then serve as a summation of the available evidence arrived at by an individual, rather than as a new class of evidence in themselves. The value of this summation is determined by each peer with the identification of epistemic peer status. If an individual believes that another person possesses the relevant background information and intellectual ability to assess proposition X, has been exposed to all of the same evidence as they have about the truth or falsity of X, and is not compromised in their ability to assess X, then they are considered an epistemic peer. The summation of the first order evidence by a peer should, therefore, be equally valuable as one's own. In peer disagreement, this leads to a deadlock as to which belief is correct. Thus, the equal weight view advocates for splitting the difference between the dissenting views.

This principle is best demonstrated by the example used by Adam Elga in his defense of the equal weight view. He presents a scenario involving two individuals who are equally competent at judging horse races being asked to judge an extremely tight race.[25] Both individuals evaluate the race individually and come to different opinions on the winner based on the available optical evidence. They each possess a belief about the outcome, but the "first order evidence" is no longer accessible as the race is over. Given that they come to contrary conclusions, and that the mere fact that they have done so does not constitute any evidence that one peer is a better judge of horse races than the other,[26] they split the difference between their views. This is based on the idea that, lacking any evidence that suggests otherwise, both peers are "equally likely to be correct."[27]

For proponents of the equal weight view, this idea holds true even if the first order evidence is still accessible but unchanged. If both peers have evaluated all the same evidence and used it to form contrary judgements on the truth of some proposition, the fact that the first order evidence remains available and unchanged offers no additional value in determining the truth of that proposition. The equal weight view does not merely dispatch with the first order evidence in this scenario, but instead it recognizes that the first order evidence no longer offers any utility. There is no way to be certain about

25. Adam Elga, "Reflection and Disagreement," in *Social Epistemology: Essential Readings,* eds. Alvin I. Goldman and Dennis Whitcomb (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 166.

26. Elga, "Reflection and Disagreement," 166.

27. Elga, "Reflection and Disagreement," 167.

which peer has correctly evaluated the evidence, even if each peer is confident that they have done so, which, as Kelly suggests, is often the case. Due to the uncertainty posed by peer disagreement, the fact that each peer believes equally strongly in the defensibility of their beliefs, and the lack of access to the objective truth surrounding the appropriateness of their responses to the evidence, the reasonable response is the one prescribed by the equal weight view. Each peer should temper, significantly, their confidence in their original belief. This action will cause their perspectives to meet in the middle.

Because Kelly conceives of the relationship between opinions and initial evidence in a way that is fundamentally different from those who promote the equal weight view, he unduly criticizes the equal weight view for privileging higher order evidence over first order evidence. However, the equal weight view recognizes that a belief in how well one evaluated the original evidence cannot be used as evidence in favor of one's position, as each peer will hold equally strong (and justified) views. That is why it seemingly ignores the first order evidence in prescribing that the peers split the difference between their beliefs. In contrast, the total evidence view privileges an individual's initial opinion, the objective truth of which cannot be accessed in peer disagreement, based on their certainty that they have evaluated the evidence correctly over that of their peer. Given that both peers will likely be justified in privileging their opinion in this way,

the total evidence view seems to amount to a recommendation that each person unduly privilege their own opinion in cases of peer disagreement, a recommendation at odds with the new evidence presented by that disagreement itself.

Conclusion

Given Kelly's failures to adequately dispute the equal weight view, and the identified shortcomings with Kelly's total evidence view, the equal weight view is a more reasonable response to the problem of peer disagreement. It is more reasonable based on a probabilistic theory of reason that recognizes it is not possible to determine the correctness of a peer's belief who is "responding … to uncertainty in the face of less than fully conclusive evidence."[28] In contrast, Kelly's total evidence view takes the position that it is reasonable to mostly maintain one's initial belief simply because one believes they have correctly evaluated the initial evidence. To do so implies having an objective, secure knowledge that one has evaluated the evidence better than their peer, something that is not achievable by epistemic agents. Kelly implies the need for a reasonable response to peer disagreement to be operational in real-life; thus, the total evidence view is internally inconsistent based on Kelly's parameters. Kelly also defends the total evidence view and criticizes the equal weight view based on a flawed understanding of the relationship between initial evidence and belief

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28. Schaffer, "A Brief History of Rationality," 510.

formation and the implications of the equal weight view based on this relationship. As such, Kelly's total evidence view is a problematic response to peer disagreement.

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Philosophy and the Muslim Masses: A Discussion Surrounding Ibn Rushd's Decisive Treatise

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ABSTRACT: The debate between faith and reason has not gone to sleep, certainly not in the mass Muslim community. This essay aims to bring awareness to the importance of philosophy and reason in light of Ibn Rushd's Decisive Treatise. Ibn Rushd argues philosophy is obligatory on Muslims and this essay expounds on this main premise with examples from scripture, historical accounts, and Muslim thought. Reasons Muslims give for their apprehension to philosophy is namely twofold: it is seen as devoid of purpose and a cause of doubt in faith, and it is sometimes believed to be forbidden. These two main points of their discourse is addressed throughout this essay. As it is, the Muslim community is growing in an age of learning, questioning, and modernity. All things, which can bring about a refined form of gaining faith if we follow logical prescriptions and practice philosophy.

The practice of philosophy may sometimes threaten theists and this apprehension is cause for a lack of appreciation for reasoning. Argumentation and debate surrounding faith often take place, but with little appreciation for reasoning, conclusions stand to be inaccurate or unsupported. This is common practice in Muslim discussion and communities. It can be easy to sympathize with the Muslim who is hesitant to promote philosophy for the mass Muslim public, because they usually feel the mass public is incapable and uninterested. However, there are many cases when even a capable and interested Muslim is ridiculed for practicing philosophy. Examples are scattered throughout history, when for instance Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi was executed for cultivating philosophical teachings. Similar events and threats of execution were not rare, and perhaps there is a less aggressive tone today, but the point is made: philosophy is unwelcome. Contrary to this point, Muslim masses should not eschew philosophical discussion; philosophy, insomuch as it is a practice of reflection and consideration, is well advised to building a foundation for genuine and valid belief to be possible.

The philosopher Ibn Rushd[1]'s Decisive Treatise argues that philosophy and logic are not only virtues, but obligatory by Law (Divine). He argues, "If the activity of philosophy is nothing more than reflection upon existing things and consideration of them insofar as they are an indication of the Artisan — I mean insofar as they are artifacts, for existing things indicate the Artisan only through cognizance of the art in them, and the more complete cognizance of the art in them is, the more complete is the cognizance of the

Artisan."[1] In other words, knowledge of creation leads to knowledge of the Creator. There is clear support for this in Islamic scripture, the Qur'an, which is said to be the word of God and from which the Law is derived. Consider, "Have they not reflected upon the kingdoms of the heavens and the earth and what things God has created?"[2] as well as numerous other instances where the text urges readers to "Look"[3] or similarly, "Reflect"[4]. Ibn Rushd highlights the importance of the Qur'an's urging continuing, "— and if the Law has recommended and urged consideration of existing things, then it is evident that what this name indicates is either obligatory or recommended by the Law. That the Law calls for consideration of existing things by means of the intellect and for pursuing cognizance of them by means of it is evident from various verses in the Book of God."[5] He then goes on to cite various verses from the "Book of God" including the one cited above.

The education of proper reasoning must be endorsed by Muslim faith communities. Since reflection is a natural inclination and activity, reasoning may not be required for reflection as much as it is for consideration. However, these activities go hand-in-hand. Ibn Rushd defines consideration as syllogistic reasoning which is "nothing more than inferring and drawing out the unknown from the known…"[6] and

if the Law (or God's word) makes it obligatory for Muslims to reflect and consider existing things, then "it is obligatory that we go about reflecting upon the existing things by means of intellectual syllogistic reasoning[7]."[8] One cannot reflect properly without consideration, because the work would only be half-done. Reflection and consideration differ in that by reflecting, one notices features of the known and by consideration, one makes the effort to conclude things about the unknown, i.e. God or the "Artisan". Consideration of existing things is primarily different from reflection, because it focuses on the relationship between the artifacts and the Artisan. It is an activity that aids in answering questions such as: *what does this artifact and its defined features tell about the kind of Artisan Who made it?*

It must be made evident to anyone who doubts permitting syllogistic reasoning or philosophy in the Muslim community that not only is it permitted, but obligatory. There is no merit in following one's own presumptions or accepting anything as true without making the proper sufficient investigation. To cite a verse from the Qur'an, "Do not pursue anything that has not come to your knowledge. Indeed, hearing, eyesight, and the heart-all these are accountable."[9] The philosopher Allamah

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[1] Decisive Treatise, p.1
[2] Qur'an, Chapter 7 Verse 185 [7:185]
[3] Qur'an [10:55], [80:24], [86:5], … etc.
[4] Qur'an [56:62], [16:44], [6:50],… etc.
[5] Decisive Treatise, p.1
[6] Decisive Treatise, p.2

[7] This essay refers to intellectual syllogistic reasoning as syllogistic reasoning for brevity
[8] Decisive Treatise, p.2
[9] Qur'an Chapter 17, verse 36

Tabatabai[10] in his commentary on this verse says the following, "The verse forbids one from following what one does not know. Given the unconditional form of the verse, it includes every form of following whether in beliefs or practice."[11] And later says, "Sometimes one assumes things that satisfy his soul and pacify his heart to be knowledge, even though they are devoid of the certainty that is called knowledge as in the technique of demonstration in logic." [12] We may be comfortable with our faith and harbor no doubts, but this cannot be a reason to abandon logic or reflection.

It can be easy to empathize with the apprehension some have to delve into philosophical discussion especially when faith is concerned. Closely examining beliefs that shape and cultivate the way to live one's life is an intimidating task. What if our belief of the truth is different than the truth in reality? The fear may scare us into being complacent with our ignorance and stick to our habits. Perhaps sometimes, it is a question of desire instead of fear. Many of us are not naturally interested in researching the faith we adhere to, such as Islam. Other times, the affinity for our beliefs may cloud our judgement as well. Past spiritual or religious experiences can also aid in our complacency to not pursue a logical course of action. These are all areas where people who believe in Islam sometimes fall short, but it is the same Islam that obligates its adherents to logically dictate its validity.

It is commonly believed among Muslims that God does not create a thing without a designated purpose. His creation of humanity and their distinct intellect gives grounds for speculation of its purpose. Ibn Rushd makes his argument clear; human beings can gain knowledge of the Creator through syllogistic reasoning of creation[13]. The purpose of human intellect can vary, but perhaps its ultimate purpose is to know the Creator. Muslims are not asked to believe because their parents or some notable figure believe, which was precisely the cultural norm of the pre-Islamic era before Islam called for reform. The Qur'an explicitly brings attention to this when it says, "When they are told, 'Follow what God has sent down,' they say, 'No, we will follow what we have found our fathers following.' What, even if their fathers neither exercised their reason nor were guided?"[14] Immediately following this verse, the Qur'an describes said people as "deaf, dumb, and blind, they do not exercise their reason"[15] Belief must be based on one's own conviction and belief in what is true. In many cases, however, communities promote a different path for belief. One that is based on maybe fear, habit, culture, or a blend of all three. The problems are innumerable to mention for a Muslim who does not have their belief founded on reason, but perhaps the most unfortunate is the

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[10] Allamah Muhammad Husayn Tabatabai, 1904-1981

[11] Al-Mizan, An Exegesis of the Qur'an, p. 122

[12] Al-Mizan, An Exegesis of the Qur'an, p. 123

[13] or what is known or apparent

[14] Qur'an, Chapter 2 Verse 170

[15] Qur'an, Chapter 2 Verse 171

eventual loss of faith. It is not difficult to imagine a Muslim in today's western world. Islamic belief is scrutinized in the world today. There is a constant pressure to answer questions as well. Most times, it happens inadvertently in a university classroom. It is important for Muslims to make the effort to know what they are believing, because it not only stands to benefit communities as a whole, but more importantly, it is of utmost personal benefit for the Muslim him/herself.

Muslim parents should be aware that while it is encouraged to raise one's children Muslim, their children should have the opportunity to delve deeper and practice syllogistic reasoning whenever possible. If children are uninterested in proving their own faith, this is when a parent can encourage it in the same way syllogistic reasoning is imposed in schools. As children mature as well, an atmosphere of learning and questioning surrounding belief will go a long way in helping children keep an interest. It is a process cultivated over time and one worth our while. Some fear that in quest of becoming cognizant of the Artisan, someone might stumble and leave Islam or find that the evidence does not conform to the faith they were born into. They might stumble for various reasons, which Ibn Rushd lists as "either a deficiency in his innate disposition, poor ordering of his reflection, being overwhelmed by his passions, not finding a teacher to guide him to an understanding…"[16] but it is an accidental case in that it is not the universal experience of all. Ibn Rushd

addresses this as a deficiency on their part and we cannot write-off the obligation for reason simply because an accident occurred. He says, "For this manner of harm coming about due to them is something that attaches to them by accident, not by essence. It is not obligatory to renounce something useful in its nature and essence because of something harmful existing in it by accident."[17] Unfortunately, many Muslims promote religion and philosophy as incompatible and even further renouncing it and believing it is forbidden. The reasons they might have are countless and to list them all would be out of the scope of this essay. Generally, Muslims who support this view and understanding of philosophy fear that the authority of the Qur'an and the wisdom it contains is being called into question and is made subversive to the whims of human speculation, which is often mistaken and misguided at the direction of cultural biases. Thus, it can be seen as a reinforcement of human arrogance and indulgence of ego, things Islam calls to minimize.

Here, it is important to state the fundamental rule of philosophizing or questioning, and that is to be in a state of neutrality. In any science, we must collectively and personally curtail bias the best we can manage. Indulging in bias and ego is not necessary to conduct philosophy. In fact, indulging in one's ego in practicing philosophy would not be conducive to good results. Philosophy, again, requires a state of neutrality for logic to take its course validly. Moreover, I would argue, as would Ibn

[16] Decisive Treatise, p.5

[17] Decisive Treatise, p.5

Rushd, if a person believes something to be true, philosophy or demonstration should not intimidate them. Ibn Rushd affirms, "Since the Law is true and calls to the reflection leading to the cognizance of the truth, we, the Muslim community, know firmly that demonstrative reflection does not lead to differing with what is set down in the Law. For truth does not oppose truth, it agrees with and bears witness to it."[18] Reason is a means to know the truth and to thereby validate it.

In order to make syllogistic reasoning or philosophy more inviting to the Muslim masses, it is important to educate what is expected and what is not, because surely it is not necessary to know the nooks and crannies of philosophical studies to be a Muslim cognizant of Law. Philosophy in the classical sense is not an obligation on anyone, Muslim or not. Muslims are not obligated to know and discuss Ibn Sina's *Metaphysics* or Plato's idea of forms. This in fact can be helpful in many cases as it can be used to demonstrate the valid or invalid use of logic in an argument that typically has little to no bearing on one's personal belief. It is a "safe" method of practicing philosophy and logical skill, which aid in one's reflection and consideration of the world. Near the end of the Decisive Treatise, Ibn Rushd discusses making demonstrative books less available to the masses, because it can cause more harm than good when the reader is a Muslim who is incapable of understanding. He further supports the idea that interpretations or commentary must be included in books using demonstration. He references Abu Hamid al-Ghazali's works as the sole cause of a lot of demonstrative texts moving into the public sphere causing people to be misled. Prior to al-Ghazali's work, most demonstration was done and shared with capable people, mostly scholars.

While Ibn Rushd had good reason to make this point during his lifetime, I believe the times now call for a different approach; books of philosophy should be widely dispersed and absorbed by the Muslim community. The last century or so has increasingly caused doubt to be a natural state of being among any person of faith, let alone a Muslim who may consistently find their faith taunted and ridiculed publicly. It is important, now more than ever, to seek reasonable proof for one's beliefs. Muslims, individually, must make an effort to seek the truth using their intellectual capacities, but only insomuch as they are capable. No one is asking for more. It not only serves to help prove one's belief in God but further used to guide how to carry out His Law. Just as a patient must completely understand a medication's purpose and how the prescription should be carried out beforehand, the Muslim must be well informed about their religious beliefs in their totality. We must try with our best efforts to seek the truth, not what is comfortable.

The historic Islamic figure, Imam Ali Ibn Abi Talib[19], has famously said, "Learn your religion, do not inherit it." Is there another way to learn besides

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[18] Decisive Treatise, p.7

[19] Cousin and successor to the Prophet Muhammad

reflection and consideration? Is it not learning through these activities of the intellect that allow us to reach true conviction? Conviction in belief is stressed in religious atmospheres, because it sets the foundation for a firm belief and practice to follow; however, a type of learning is required to reach conviction. Intellectual conviction is not something a person is born with or naturally has, it is worked for and until it is reached, a proper effort is made to learn and confirm things as true. How true is one's belief if it has never been tested (through questioning)? Just as a person's character may be refined with struggle, the same applies to a person's belief. How pleased would a God be if one believed out of habit, fear, or one's culture? Could we really rationalize it to be true belief? More often than not, in an age of questioning, most cannot defend their beliefs to themselves or to others. There is an urgency to reflect and consider. A contemporary Muslim scholar writes, "The Qur'an asks the intellect not to hold onto anything which has not been proved with certainty and beyond doubt. It requires the intellect not to accept anything until there is a clear and decisive proof."[20]

Most are aware that there are people who claim to be Muslims who do not follow reason, that is people who are followers of ISIS or the Taliban, and the like. There is no precise way to validate belief without logic. If we were, as a Muslim community, to argue against the use of logic or reason, then we would have no way to prove we are different from followers of ISIS or similar groups. It is helpful to keep in mind that philosophy can be as simple as reflecting on how day turns to night or how we eat our foods as in Ibn Tufayl's fictional tale *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*. In which, a man named Hayy is devoid of language and was cut off from other human beings at birth. Throughout his life, he reflects on the phenomena around him, such as the animals that inhabit the same island and how he is different from them, or how the moon, sun, and stars travel in the sky. He reflects on such phenomena until he realizes there must be something in control… a Creator. He considers what he has reflected and noticed in the world he experiences. Whether or not all human beings in reality would come to the same conclusion under the same conditions is not for consideration here, but that philosophy can be as simple as taking notice and appreciating what surrounds us in the most complete way-reflecting and considering.

Philosophy insomuch as it is a practice of reflection and consideration is required of every Muslim and the Muslim masses must cease their disdain for philosophical discussion given its possibilities for genuine belief to take place. The Muslim community should realize it is not only important and recommended, but obligatory to reflect and consider creation to maximize knowledge of the Creator. We use logical deduction throughout our daily lives and mundane tasks, so why not in the faith to which we adhere? The Muslim community's interest in rational thought is growing as time passes. We

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[20] Ethics and Spiritual Growth by Lari, p.57

should accept these times as opportunities to grow intellectually and sincerely. Philosophy is not an excuse to attack one's faith or another's, but to find the truth that all are capable of believing with an open mind and sincere questioning.

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Aristotle is a Rationalist: Necessity in Aristotle's Metaphysics and Ethics

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ABSTRACT: Abstract. In discussions of modern epistemology, Aristotle is typically referred to as an empiricist rather than as a rationalist. However, this paper, in stride with the work of some modern commentators, argues that Aristotle is better classified as a rationalist. To accomplish this, a definition of rationalism is given, along with context of the empiricism and rationalism division of the early modern period. The discussion of the early modern period culminates by exploring Kantian epistemology, outlining the foremost role of necessity in classifying rationalist thought. Then, necessity is highlighted in Aristotle's system of philosophy by exploring Aristotle's Physics, Nicomachean Ethics, and the secondary literature, with reference to the work of Jaroslaw Olesiak and some other recent commentators. Specifically, this paper demonstrates necessity in Aristotle's metaphysics and in his ethics. If these claims hold, then it is most likely that Aristotle is more accurately classified as a rationalist than as an empiricist.

Aristotelian epistemology is foundational to modern discussions of epistemology, in part because of its influence on early modern debates between empiricism and rationalism. To typify the two sides of the rationalist/empiricist debate, Aristotle is normally defined as an empiricist and Plato as a rationalist. This paper argues that Aristotle's system of philosophy is more accurately classified as rationalism than as empiricism, and this claim is not without support in the greater philosophical community.[1] However, while Hoshyar (2019) mainly focuses on rationalist elements in Aristotle's epistemology, this paper provides a more broad account of necessity in various aspects of Aristotle's system of philosophy. First, the conclusion that there is necessity in the metaphysics and physics of Aristotle, is explored and then accepted. Next, Aristotle's teleological ethics, as described in the *Physics* and *Nicomachean ethics,* implies what can be called necessity in accordance with a thing's natural tendency. Before concluding, I consider the objection that Aristotle's teleology is not derived from necessary claims but rather from contingent experience. In conclusion, necessity as found in Aristotle's metaphysics and his ethics is antithetical to

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[1] Cf. Hoshyar (2019) and Frede (1996) to find the claim that Aristotle is better classified

as a rationalist than as an empiricist.

classical conceptions of empiricism. Thus, Aristotle's system of philosophy is more accurately classified as rationalism than as empiricism.

Rationalism is the historical school of epistemology which maintains that the world can be known through thought or "pure concepts" alone, sometimes entailing belief in innate ideas. In this paper, the working definition of what classifies a thinker as a rationalist, as set out in Priest (2007), is that rationalist epistemology adheres to at least one synthetic a priori metaphysical claim. For the purpose of this article, Priest's definition of rationalism is accepted as accurate. Further, the claim that anything synthetic a priori must be necessary is explored below. Again, according to Stephen Priest, rationalism, which opposes empiricism, entails at least one synthetic a priori metaphysical knowledge claim. For example, Plato was a rationalist because his theory of 'the Forms,' or of the ideal realm of pure thought, was a synthetic a priori metaphysical knowledge claim. Typical examples of the rationalists of the early modern period are Descartes (whose famous "cogito ergo sum" is known a priori and for whom the idea of God is innate) and the Cartesian Spinoza, for whom the universe obeys strict and necessary laws which determine all things in nature, including the human will. Gottfried Leibniz is another rationalist, for whom God is a necessary a priori being from whom the universe is necessitated in a preestablished harmony. Other rationalists from the early modern period include the Cartesians Nicolas Malebranche and Antoine Arnauld, as well as scientist Christian Huygens. A modern example of a thinker with rationalist elements in their philosophy is Gottlob Frege, whose concepts are said to belong to a "third realm" of thought.

Aristotle is typically classified as an empiricist rather than as a rationalist. To be sure, in a survey of rationalist and empiricism throughout the history of philosophy, Stephen Priest says that "Plato's pupil, Aristotle, is an empiricist."[2] According to Priest's chapter "What Is Empiricism?", empiricism is "the thesis that there is no a priori [prior to experience] metaphysical knowledge and [that] all concepts are derived from experience."[3] Aristotle's philosophy has been classified as empiricism because he is a nominalist; that is, for Aristotle, all things in the world are individuals.[4] This claim fundamentally opposes Plato's theory of the Forms, because for Plato things in the world are instances which participate in the idea of that thing. However, for Aristotle, a thing is that thing and what you see is what you get. On the Aristotelian epistemological account, then, all sources of knowledge are derived from the senses, and this is a classic tenet of empiricism typified in British empiricist John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689). This typical classification of Aristotle's epistemology as empiricist

[2] Stephen Priest, *The British Empiricists*, (New York: Routledge, 2007), 16.

[3] Ibid., 5.

[4] Ibid., 17.

is accurate as regards knowledge derived from the senses. However, there are other aspects of Aristotle's thought which have more rationalist tendencies, as discussed further below.

The furthest extreme of empiricism is David Hume's position, which can be called arch- empiricism or radical empiricism. For Hume, everything in nature is contingent and nothing is necessary: "there are no ideas, which occur in metaphysics more obscure and uncertain, than those of *necessary connection*."[5] Specifically, any necessary connection between a cause and its effect is untenable. That is, at least, knowledge of causes and effects cannot be connected inferentially by using reason alone. Rather, any idea of a necessary connection or a cause and an effect is merely a psychological expectation which arises from "constant conjunction". Thus, the only necessary thing in Hume's philosophy is that everything is contingent, and therefore any knowledge claim must be considered with the utmost skepticism.

Immanuel Kant, in a direct response to Hume, argues that there are necessary rules (the form or canon) of the human understanding that can only be known a priori, and that these rules

of the understanding are "synthetic". Kant's theory requires three important distinctions to be understood, which are the distinction between a priori and a posteriori, between synthetic and analytic knowledge claims (which mean expansive of knowledge and explicative of knowledge, respectively), and between necessity and contingency.[6] First, necessity describes universal interconnectedness (that something *must* be a certain way and cannot be any other way). For example, Kant describes the form of the human understanding as necessary; "all rules according to which the understanding proceeds are either necessary or contingent."[7] The contingent rules according to which the understanding operates are when the understanding is employed as a contingent and dependent type of cognition; "the contingent rules which depend on a certain object of cognition are as variegated as these objects themselves."[8] Next, a priori refers to things which can be known prior to experience, such as God or Kant's categories, and a posteriori refers to things known empirically and from experience. To be sure, necessity can only be known a priori. An example which demonstrates the relationship between necessity and the a priori

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[5] David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1974), 350.

[6] Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* in *The Norton Anthology of Western Philosophy After Kant: The Analytic Tradition*, (New York: Norton, 2017), 59

[7] Immanuel Kant, *Logic* in *The Norton Anthology of Western Philosophy After Kant: The Analytic Tradition*, (New York: Norton, 2017), 64.

[8] Ibid., 64. These contingent and dependent types of cognition can be mathematical cognitions, metaphysical cognitions, musical cognitions, etc. They are derived from empirical experience (which is a posteriori).

is mathematics, when Kant says that "we must observe that all strictly mathematical judgments are a priori, and not empirical, because they carry with them necessity, which cannot be obtained from experience."[9] Kant here is referring to the fact that mathematical judgments (which are both necessary and universal and therefore a priori) are synthetic (expansive of knowledge).

Mathematical knowledge, then, must be synthetic and necessary, and necessary things are fundamentally a priori. Thus (according to Kant although seriously debated afterward) Hume was incorrect in his claim that all knowledge is contingent, because synthetic a priori knowledge claims carry with them necessity.[10]

Again, according to Kant, knowledge of necessity can only be obtained a priori, not through experience alone. So, if there is necessity in a system of philosophy, then that necessity is known a priori. Recall that according to Stephen Priest, a rationalist is classified by synthetic a priori metaphysics in their system of philosophy. Any source of a priori knowledge, which if Kant's thesis is accepted is therefore necessary, then justifies the classification of a thinker as a rationalist and not as an empiricist. As will be demonstrated, Aristotle is better classified as a rationalist than as an empiricist because there is necessity in his system of philosophy, specifically in his metaphysics and in his ethics. Again, according to Kant, anything necessary can only be known a priori. So, Aristotle cannot be a true empiricist with merely a contingent understanding of the world, because there is necessity in the aforementioned aspects of his philosophy. The claim that there is necessity in Aristotle's philosophy, which would constitute rationalist elements in his philosophy, is not necessarily a radical claim. For example, the Medieval Scholastics spent centuries attempting to reconcile God (a synthetic a priori and therefore necessary being) with Aristotelian empiricism.

Again, there are several elements of necessity in Aristotle's philosophy. These necessary elements are in his metaphysics and his ethics. First, there is necessity at work in Aristotle's metaphysics. According to Olesiak (2015), there are in Aristotle's works four different kinds of necessity, although three of these kinds are derivative of one, which is absolute necessity (that which is eternal and exists necessarily).[11] The types derivative from absolute necessity are simple necessity,

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[9] Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* in *The Norton Anthology of Western Philosophy After Kant: The Analytic Tradition*, (New York: Norton, 2017), 60.

[10] Hume claimed that mathematical judgments are analytic a priori knowledge claims (or relations of ideas). That is, they were descriptive judgments only, not expansive, and could be known adequately through experience. Opposing this claim, Kant considers these relations of ideas to be synthetic a priori knowledge claims.

[11] Jaroslaw Olesiak, "Nature and Necessity in Aristotle's *Physics*," *Studia Philosophiae Christianae UKSW* 51.1 (2015): 64.

hypothetical necessity (those basic things necessary for subsistence), and necessity in accordance with a thing's natural tendency. In *Physics*, Aristotle describes how things in nature occur or act with necessity: "we must explain then (1) that nature belongs to the class of causes which act for the sake of something; (2) about the necessary and its place in physical problems."[12] The first class mentioned, of causes which act for a certain sake, is what Olesiak calls necessity in accordance with a thing's natural tendency. This refers to Aristotelian teleology, commonly known as the "final cause" or end purpose of a thing. As final causes in Aristotle are more appropriately discussed in a physical or an ethical framework, details are given below.

The second class which Aristotle refers to is simple necessity, and herein is the necessity within Aristotle's system of metaphysics. Simple necessity refers to the necessary existence of an existing substance (that is, if a thing exists then it must have existence), and the necessary classification of a substance according to the properties of which it is possessed. The metaphysical concept substance is that which is 'standing under'. The substance bears the properties of a thing which classify it as that thing. For Aristotle, that a thing is classified as it is because of the properties it bears is a matter of necessity, and therefore there is necessity in the classification of a thing in Aristotle's metaphysics. Again, simple necessity is a metaphysical concept in Aristotle, which refers to the existence of a thing *as a thing* as necessary. In turn, necessity in a system of philosophy is an adequate characteristic to classify a thinker as a rationalist. This is discussed in more detail below.

Teleological necessity is another type of necessity, and this is present in Aristotle's ethics. First, regarding physical cause and effect, Aristotle proposed that there are four answers to 'why?' questions. One of these four causes, the 'final cause,' is "the sense of end or 'that for the sake of which' a thing is done."[13] The idea that there is necessity in Aristotle's teleology is supported in the recent literature. For example, Abbate (2012) gives the distinction between hypothetical necessity and absolute necessity in Aristotle, demonstrated through the logical implication.[14] Again, in Aristotle's words, the final cause refers to the tendency of "those things which, by a continuous movement originated from an internal principle, arrive at some

[12] Aristotle, *Physics*, (Kansas: Digireads.com Publishing, 2006), 25. Aristotle's physics and metaphysics are interrelated in many ways. Therefore, a passage from *Physics* is still a relevant representation of his metaphysics.
[13] Aristotle, *Physics*, (Kansas: Digireads.com Publishing, 2006), 19.

[14] Giampaolo Abbate, "The Role of Necessity in Aristotle's Teleology as Explained by Logical Implication," *Bochumer Philosophisches Jahrbuch für Antike und Mittelalter* 15.1 (2012): 5.

completion; the tendency in each is towards the same end, if there is no impediment."[15]

Concerning ethics and necessity in teleology, Aristotle maintains that rational human action is necessary: in the *Nicomachean Ethics* he says that "the rational principle of the continent man urges them aright and towards the best objects,"[16] and that "intelligent action is for the sake of an end; therefore the nature of things also is so."[17] Aristotle here gives a version of his definition of the essence of the human as rational social animal. That is, everything in nature acts with a purpose, as a means towards a given end. In the case of human action, rationality is the cause guiding action and decision-making. Further, rationality is a necessary aspect of the essence of being human, because for Aristotle humans are defined by their rationality. Again, rational human action necessarily works as a means towards rationally determined ends. This final cause, or the sake for which something is done, is fulfilled necessarily when human rational ability is used. In Olesiak's terms, this type of necessity is the fourth kind, which he deems necessity 'in accordance with a thing's natural tendency'.

Rationality is not determined necessarily for Aristotle, but since it is the natural human tendency, and these final causes or teleological tendencies are necessary characteristics of what it means to be human, final causes are fulfilled necessarily. One might object

that the specific end or completion of a thing is contingent, can be learned from experience and observation, and therefore the end is not necessary (because then it would not be known a priori). However, the *end itself*, which can be *any* end, is necessitated by the very fact that there *must* be an end for the movement all the things in nature. In the case of humankind, this end is necessarily achieved through the employment of rationality, not because rationality is necessarily determined, but because rationality is the necessary aspect of what defines humankind. In sum, teleology, which for Aristotle constitutes the metaphysical essence of a thing, could not be discovered a posteriori because, as has been demonstrated, it defines a *necessary* metaphysical property of a thing.

Recall here Hume's position of radical empiricism, in which knowledge of cause and effect is merely conditioned psychological expectation. Contrarily, Aristotle's teleological ethics, which claims that humanity is necessarily typified by acting rationally, must appeal not only to cause and effect, but also to a given purpose which connects these events. To use the attainment of good health as an example, health is the effect, rationality is the cause, and the human as a 'rational social animal' is the teleological purpose which connects the cause with its effect. Clearly, this ethical teleology is incompatible with Hume's radical empiricism because teleology requires some idea of

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[15] Aristotle, *Physics*, (Kansas: Digireads.com Publishing, 2006), 27.

[16] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 1999), 19.

[17] Ibid., 26.

necessary connection between cause and effect, which is fundamentally incompatible with radical empiricism. In relation to rationalism, the knowledge that employing rationality is a necessary and distinctive characteristic of what it means to be human could only be known a priori. This teleological necessity can only be known a priori because knowledge of necessity, according to Kant, cannot be obtained from experience. Thus, necessary ends in the actions of rational creatures supports the rationalist opposition to radical empiricism, and further supports the claim that Aristotle is better classified as a rationalist than as an empiricist.

In summation, rationalism is the epistemological thesis that one can know necessary aspects of the world through thinking or mentation alone, whereas for the empiricist knowledge is only attained through the senses. According to Hume, everything is contingent and there are no necessary connections, whereas Kant asserts that there are indeed necessary claims, and these necessitated claims can only be known a priori. Therefore, a rationalist obeys necessity in their thought, and this fundamentally opposes empiricist epistemology. Aristotle is typically classified as an empiricist. However, this paper has argued there are several aspects of Aristotle's system of philosophy, namely in his metaphysics and in his ethics, which are classified as a priori knowledge because they entail necessity. Therefore, because of this a priori necessity, Aristotle's philosophy is more accurately classified as rationalism than as empiricism.

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A Critique of Hume's Skepticism of Reason

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ABSTRACT*:* As exposited in his *A Treatise of Human Nature* and *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals,* David Hume holds that reason is subservient to passions—innate emotions which motivate action—and that morality is a product of these passions. In this paper, I argue, contra Hume, that reason both supersedes and precedes passion and that it is reason, rather than passion, which informs moral distinction. I make this argument on the following grounds: (1) passions are not innate but arise from reason, (2) reason supersedes passions—even to the point of being able to mitigate them, and (3) only a rational ethic (as opposed to Hume's emotivism) can be prescriptive in nature. In proving these three points, I demonstrate that Hume's skepticism can construct neither a meaningful ethic nor a sound moral philosophy.

From Aristotle onward, numerous philosophers have affirmed humanity's biform nature: animality and rationality. We are indistinct from baser creatures with the notable exception of our gift of reason. Accordingly, it is common and justifiable to believe that our rationality influences most facets of our lives—our decision making, our morality, our desires. This assumption, however, is rejected by David Hume. In his works, *A Treatise of Human Nature* and *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Hume so greatly minimizes human rationality that he deems reason unable to compel action, an operation he assigns to the passions. He instead deigns morality to be a product strictly of sentiment. This restrictive view of reason's abilities, though, is inaccurate. Reason and passion are not

as far removed as Hume posits nor is morality a notion alien to reason. Rather, reason informs our passions and is the basis for morality.

Before any critique of Hume's model is made, his conceptions of both reason and passion ought to be explicated. Hume views the former as highly limited, ascribing it only the ability to judge veracity ("reason is the discovery of truth or falsehood"[1]) and to create associations between events ("reason is nothing but the discovery of this connection"[2]). Yet, for Hume, reason is incapable of producing passion or inciting action. Regarding passion, Hume maintains a broader view. He defines it as, "an original existence, or, if you will, modification of existence, and contains not any representative quality, which renders it a copy of any

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[1] David Hume. *A Treatise of Human Nature.* In *Ethics*, 6th edition, ed. Steven Cahn and Peter Markie, 277-288 (New York, NY: Oxford University Press), 281.

[2] Ibid., 278.

other existence or modification."[3] That is, passion is an innate impression or emotion and that which motivates action. Perhaps what is most telling about Hume's view of both faculties, however, is his presentation of their relationship: "Reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them."[4] In other words, rationality is subservient to passion in the realm of action and morality—almost to the point of impotence.

Hume's perspective mistakenly demotes the defining feature of humanity to an ancillary role in moral decision making to an emotive expression. Indeed, reason not only influences passion—and thereby action—but is the very basis for it. This is evidenced by a simple teleological analysis; after all, things receive their definition, at least in part, by their functionality. Admittedly, reason's end as maintained by Hume is accurate. "It regards the abstract relations of our ideas, or those relations of objects of which experience only gives us information,"[5] "directs our judgment concerning causes and effects,"[6] and, "conveys the knowledge of truth and falsehood."[7] More succinctly, the function of reason is the ordering of data for the sake of drawing conclusions from it—hence, its utility in the world of math and science. What Hume fails to see is that passion shares the same end. Passion takes pleasure in

patterns, fears chaos, and detests disorder.

The human experience is an intersection amongst numerous systems. Every human being is embedded in thousands of interpenetrating and competing structures: political bodies, sports teams, religious organizations, Toastmasters clubs, moral codes, traffic laws, and the like. The products of a person's embeddedness (say nothing of her psychological archetypes and tendencies) are narratives—some conscious, others subconscious—concerning how the world ought to operate. These narratives may be social, moral, practical, or aesthetic in nature. When life works in accord with these narratives, we consider things to be properly ordered; conversely, when circumstances depart from our narratives, things are disordered. Since order and disorder are the objects of reason and passions arise upon rational stimulation, an emotional response occurs appropriate to the current state of affairs. A positive emotional reaction to a painting, for instance, begins as a rational appreciation for its symmetry and color complementarity—even if these technical elements are not consciously analyzed.

At the risk of belaboring this point, permit me an example. If one day I found myself the victim of theft, I would no doubt become angry. Why does this anger arise? It is because I have a certain concept of how life

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* 278.

[5] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* 277.

[6] Ibid., 278.

[7] David Hume. *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals.* In *Ethics*, 6th edition, ed. Steven Cahn and Peter Markie, 289-313 (New York, NY: Oxford University Press), 313.

ought to operate—how it ought to be ordered—and it was broken. In the context of our illustration, I believe that life should be ordered in such a way that wealth is proportional to work and private property is respected. My infuriation is a result of disregard for this presumed system. Now, suppose that I find my transgressor who, after several minutes of sorrowful apologizing, explains that he is recently unemployed and has a family to feed. Certainly, my anger will not dissipate wholesale, but it may be tempered by pity for the man. This is the case, for while one situation was thrown into disorder, I recognize the potential for the reordering of another chaotic situation (i.e., I expect families to be ordered in such a way that parents provide for their children). Therefore, passion is orientated toward the preservation of order *pro rata*.

To further clarify, passions are derived from reason rather than reason being a means to rationalize passion. This is proven by the fact that reason *precedes* and *supersedes* passion. *Precession* is demonstrated in instances where a person comes to a logical conclusion about how a thing should be ordered without becoming passionate when it is disordered. For example, I may believe that grades should be earned (order), but I may also be indifferent when I hear of a classmate who cheated on a test (disorder). We must tread carefully, for this example possesses the potential to be interpreted in

a Humean vein, as any disconnect between passion and beliefs about order could be taken to show passion as an 'original existence.' Thus, I posit two alternative explanations. First, some instances of disorder may not be of enough consequence to elicit an emotional response. If every instance of disorder did evoke such a response, we would be very disgruntled people indeed! The second explanation is that in situations like this, there exists a corresponding affective dimension, but it is not strong enough to be considered an emotion. I present these options simply to demonstrate that such an example need not be interpreted in a Humean manner, and I leave it to the psychologist to sort out which proves to be a more viable explanation.

In addition to the disorder-passion argument, there is no such thing as a passion that is unable to be rationalized—specifically in terms of order. Reason, then, must come before passion but does not necessitate it. Likewise, *supersession* is demonstrated in instances where reason transfigures or nullifies a passion. As Spinoza taught, "Emotion, which is passion, ceases to be passion as soon as we form a clear and definite idea of it."[8] Plainly put, we have the ability to rationalize-away emotion. If I enter a haunted house lacking foreknowledge of what is to come, I will be terrified. If I enter knowing what to expect at specific points, my fear will be curbed. If I

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[8] Baruch Spinoza. *Ethica Ordine Geometrico Demonstrata et in Quinque Partes Distincta.* The Latin Library. "*Affectus, qui passio est, desinit esse passio, simulatque eius claram et distinctam formamus ideam.*"

enter having helped construct the props, I might even enjoy the experience. Passion is wholly contingent on reason. Consequently, reason precedes and supersedes passion, and passion is derived from reason, rather than the inverse.

Here, another possible Humean objection ought to be addressed: if passion is situated solely in reason, then reason would always be effective in mitigating irrational emotion, which it is not. How can it be that a woman may be shown—even with the full force of propositional logic—that there is no need to be afraid of a spider, yet she remains fearful? Why may volumes of biological evidence be unsuccessful in changing a man's racist biases, but a positive interaction with a minority catalyzes an ideological about-face in him? It would almost seem that Hume is correct when he writes, "Nothing can oppose or retard the impulse of passion, but a contrary impulse."[9] The proper response to this objection is a concession: reason is fallible. Reason can easily come into conflict with itself. Two lines of reasoning may be present in a situation which are irreconcilable. Logic may be at odds with pre-reflective reason—reason inherent either as a result of millennia of evolutionary processes or by virtue of our being made *in imago Dei*—as in the spider scenario or any other instance of natural repulsion. Or else, reason may be based on incomplete data perception. A man may be racist from a young age, having been fed inaccurate information throughout his childhood. Logic *in se* will not be a sufficient counter to the data he has perceived, but a positive experience with a minority—that is, additional data—may be. Simply put, reason cannot always reconcile itself to form a coherent order.

Despite the relatedness of reason and passion, however, passion cannot be considered mere reason. We do not, after all, become emotional over every rational conclusion we draw (see the above discussion on the relationship between disorder and passion). I may recognize disorder in the form of the world water crisis, but it rarely evokes a passionate response, let alone action. What, then, transforms reason into passion? There are a variety of factors that lead to this metamorphosis, the most notable of which are fecundity (will the object of my potential passion lead to future negative/positive experiences, or is it self-contained?), proximity[10] (does the event concern me? a loved one? a compatriot? a stranger on the other side of the world?), and mutability (does a passionate reaction have the potential to engender order?). These are the elements upon which the reason-passion threshold is contingent. Note that the word 'threshold' is somewhat

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[9] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* 278.

[10] A note about proximity: Hume would consider proximity's role as a factor in the reason-passion equation as evidence of his principle of benevolence (*c.f., An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*). I counter that proximity is nothing other than a component of fecundity. It is the pragmatic consideration that fecundity is increased with propinquity. I will more easily be able to help my next-door neighbor than someone on the opposite side of the globe.

imprecise, for as stated above, intensity of passion is variable.

One question remains: what bearing does Hume's distinction have on morality? Hume's ethic is indelibly bound up with his skepticism of reason. He claims that, "Moral distinctions, therefore, are not the offspring of reason. Reason is wholly inactive, and can never be the source of so active a principle as conscience, or a sense of morals."[11] His assertion is as follows: reason exclusively determines truth and falsehood in matters of fact; our actions are outside the scope of fact and reality; therefore, morality cannot be judged on the grounds of conformity or contrariety to reason. Thus, he concludes that, "since vice and virtue are not discoverable merely by reason, or the comparison of ideas, it must be by means of some impression or sentiment they occasion, that we are able to mark the difference betwixt them. . . Morality, therefore, is more properly felt than judged of."[12] Pleasure becomes the measure of virtue and pain of vice.

There is danger, though, in grounding morality in sentiment. If, as Hume proposes, morality stems from passion, an original existence, then a divorce arises between action and accountability. Surely the further morality is removed from rationality, the further it is removed from agency. How much merit is there in rectitude and culpability in depravity if they are simply the product of innate disposition? If emotion is uncontrollable, so too is action. Hume encourages us to make reason slave to passion and, by extension, morality slave to whim and preference.

To be fair, Hume attempts to maintain personal responsibility by arguing that while reason does not produce morality, it does recognize it, and it is this recognition that creates accountability. "According to this system, then, every animal. . . must be susceptible of all the same virtues and vices, for which we ascribe praise and blame to human creatures. All the difference is, that our superior reason may serve to discover the vice or virtue, and by that means may augment the blame or praise."[13] This, though, is little more than equivocation. Awareness of a subjective standard does not constrain me to obey it. If two people experience different emotional reactions to the same event, then, by Hume's standard, that event is both moral and immoral. "It is the object of feeling, not of reason. It lies in yourself, not in the object. So that when you pronounce any action or character to be vicious, you mean nothing, but that from the constitution of your nature you have a feeling or sentiment of blame."[14] If I act contrary to my natural inclination, the worst I can be accused of is cognitive dissonance and inconsistency. An objective and knowable standard is required in the discernment of moral value.[15]

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[11] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* 281.
[12] Ibid., 286.
[13] Ibid., 285.
[14] Ibid.

[15] This paragraph hints that Hume's theory may fall into a subjectivist trap. To fairly address this idea, though, it is necessary to engage with his mechanisms of sympathy

Reason, however, presents a much more palatable moral alternative to passion and its lack of accountability. Unlike passion, reason does not necessitate a specific action (or inaction, for that matter). It rather presents the reality of a circumstance and judges the merits and disadvantages of particular actions, upon which we subsequently decide and act. Where passion impels action—and in the process, removes responsibility—reason demands action based on the information it has provided and, in so doing, preserves personal responsibility. Moral accountability requires free choice, something nonexistent in Hume's system. Even if we grant Hume the idea that only passion can motivate, reason must discern the disparate passions present in a situation and decide which, if any, is worth giving one's self over to, again preserving accountability. When a man is cut-off in rush hour traffic, he must decide if he will give himself over to anger or compassion and is responsible for the resulting actions of his choice. Whether we deny Hume's distinction in part or in full, it is clear that only reason is able to make room for moral acclaim or culpability. Truly, an ethic without accountability is an ethic to which it is not worth subscribing.

Hume paints a unique illustration of the relationship between reason and passion, from which his ethic flows. Nevertheless, despite his creativity, he fails to acknowledge that reason is the progenitor of passion and that morality is indelibly bound up with it. He limits our rationality and, as a result, constructs an unstable ethic—an ethic lacking the possibility of moral responsibility. This gift of reason, however, does not belong in a box. To underestimate reason is to underestimate the defining feature of human nature and morals. Our rationality is fecund. Our rationality is potent. Our rationality is subservient to nothing but the truth.

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and benevolence, concepts too large for a paper of this size and scope.

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