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A Quick Word - Foreword

Petru Dragnef – MA Student, Concordia University

I don't want to bore anyone with platitudes about writing and reading and philosophical theories so I will keep this brief. There are novel problems surrounding the rapidly evolving technologies we're seeing evolve today. These problems have already risen in generative A.I., the mass adoption of social media, data brokering practices, and on and on and on the list goes.

Today's world context is that of immediate, constant, un-editorialized content production. Given this context I believe it is primordial to take the time and think about what we are consuming. There is constant chatter, a stream of uninterrupted thought available at all times of day and we must be careful in making sure that we do not get caught in the undertow.

In journals like this there is a twinge of resistance. The practice of sitting to study, read, and develop ideas forces one to hold thought for more than 15 seconds; it forces one to stand in the stream. It is one of the fundamental practices of philosophy and is a practice that, if there is hope for any of us, should be kept alive.

I wish both writers and readers good luck and I hope you enjoy the works in this edition of Gnosis.

A Puzzle about Graduate Journals - Foreword

Dean Joseph – PhD Student, Queens University

The graduate student journal is something of a philosophical puzzle. This is widely understood but seldom discussed. I believe the puzzle may be partitioned into three questions – each may amount to the same problem approached differently. First, the graduate journal is an entity persisting through, typically, complete changes in membership each year. *How can this be?* Second, it is run gratis and composed purely of articles by the notoriously “starving,” already overburdened graduate student. *Why would they do that?* And lastly, it is troubled in attaining consensus on its most basic question: *What is the purpose of the graduate journal?*

Call this the *graduate journal puzzle*. One or many of its segments have crossed the minds of countless students and faculty alike. Nevertheless, graduate journals in universities around the world release new issues each year. We have before us, then, an ostensible Janus-faced predicament for the graduate journal, a problematic second aspect beyond its cheery, official capacity as the productive industry of early scholarship. To my knowledge, this puzzle has been given little attention. I will aim to give a rough account of it within the context of the philosophy graduate journal, and a short, speculative response as an introduction to our effort in carrying on the tradition through this year’s issue of *Gnosis*.

The first question leads to many further, and in my estimation is the most perplexing of the puzzle’s three parts. Much ink has been spilled, heavy logical and metaphysical machinery mobilized in response. Figures from Plutarch, twenty centuries ago, to David Lewis, in years just past, have wrestled with the question *how may an entity persist through changes in its constituent parts?* Others, with how groups persist through the coming and going of members. The clank and clash of these debates led some like Leibniz and Lewis to hold that *identity* was never the problem. What changes, if not an object’s physical parts are its temporal parts. How could we have missed time! Unfortunately, our negligence ran deeper (see modal properties, sortal concepts, and worst of all, vagueness). And what about groups? Our best theories posit they are tethered by “we-intentions,” “group minds,” or ordinary planning. The point is to sort the conjectures that commit the “crime of metaphysics” into one of its two branches: controversial metaphysics, and bad metaphysics. I will spare the reader any further probing of this literature, but what matters is that a paradigm of philosophy lies before us. The graduate journal is one instantiation of a fundamental ontological problem. It is a philosophical quandary incarnate. Many philosophical problems seem so far removed from the world that their importance is unclear. But they don’t crop up in abstract space worlds removed from us. They are found within our own reasoning, among us all the time but frequently unnoticed. This is expressed in Gilbert Ryle’s great dictum that “Philosophical problems are problems of a certain sort; they are not problems of an ordinary sort about special entities.”¹

But there is another sense in which we may ask how the philosophy graduate journal persists through membership changes. What we might mean is how it *survives* these changes. This is expressed in the second question, *why do students run and contribute to these journals?* If you are reading this issue, the perils of graduate school may be more or less known to you. These include managing the following: duties of research, duties of teaching, duties of career-building, duties of socializing, and contrary-to-duty obligations to friends, having failed duties of socializing. A common fallacy is in inferring from their range of duties and constraints of time that the grad student faces a trilemma, which is customarily put as “pick only **two** of the following **three**: health, socialization, academic excellence.” Such platitudes capture the limits of good time-management, but are overly

¹ Ryle, G. 2009 (1971). *Collected Papers (Volume 2): Collected Essays 1929-1968*. Routledge: xxi.

simplistic and assume that the first two items are really desired at the graduate level anyway. So, while less perplexing than the first, the second question can only be answered if the third is soluble.

What is the purpose of journals of this kind anyway? It might be complained that the question is not well-posed. The word “purpose,” it may be said, already suggests a teleological flavour, which would lead to the peculiar result that journals fulfilling their final cause more than others – those which publish more often – are “more journal” than others. Alternatively, having a purpose might suggest the journal has only instrumental value, thus inviting the disagreeable implication that the parties involved work to selfish ends (i.e., they fulfil their career-building duties). We might drop the notion of a purpose altogether and settle on the *prima facie* attractive idea that these journals have an intrinsic value (such has been suggested of sunsets, stars, and seas).² But this leaves our analysis with a brutish “unanalyzable” goodness. My suspicion is that an answer is not as elusive as it might seem.

I believe our intuitions about the positive value of the philosophy graduate journal and the reason we run and contribute to them can be vindicated in the face of these problems. The Analytical (or self-styled “Non-Bullshit”) Marxists, Erik Wright, and Montreal native G. A. Cohen, offer two useful ideas. In his efforts to find elements of a better world already present within our own, Wright outlined a concept he called “real utopias.” This oxymoronic term of art is, roughly, any existing institution or practice which embodies ideals constitutive of a just social world, ideals contrary to those most existing institutions hold dear. One of his examples was the public library, where books are borrowed for free, highly demanded items are better stocked, and one day of possession for every borrower is evaluatively equal. The point is that the library’s distributive principle is antithetical to that of the free market, despite existing within free market societies. We can think of many other real utopias - Red Cross, Wikipedia, free drinks at department events - but what matters for us is that the philosophy journal is one such institution. It embodies a robust principle of cooperation within a competitive milieu, being a gratuitous, student-run industry, and it also embodies two principles Cohen held to be integral to human flourishing.

In his famous “camping trip” example, Cohen makes a case for arranging social organizations according to the principles of community and solidarity rather than in the spirit of cutthroat competition. Each camper is expected to share their equipment and expertise to contribute to a successful trip. Individuals who would violate the principles of solidarity and community thereby threaten the wellbeing of their fellow campers, undermine their common goals, and would rightly be admonished by the others. Cohen’s intention was, of course, to advance an argument for socialism, the relevant principles being constitutive of that ideal. But we need not extrapolate from this analogy any such inferences. My focus is solely with the continuity in principles between Cohen’s example and the operation of the graduate journal. To subsist each year, journals need new staff, authors, and funding from faithful organizations, all of whom act in accordance with these principles. If you have found yourself in a student association meeting voting on the allocation of funds or on elections for yearly positions, you have experienced the coercive power of the principles of solidarity and community. Deploy the spirit of cutthroat competition in one of these meetings and reap the whirlwind.

But do these remarks at all answer the questions of identity, motive, and purpose we set out to investigate? We have waded along on a Ship of Theseus of our own, whose planks are about to be replaced, through the perils of graduate life and the purity of motives, all to explore territory seemingly too mundane to warrant philosophical attention. If problems of philosophy are, as Ryle held, not of special entities, but a special aspect of ordinary entities, then we have carried out this exploration in the spirit of philosophical cartography, mapping the neutral points of an ordinary object we were previously familiar with in only an ordinary way. I have used our initial “puzzle,” real utopias, and the principles of solidarity and community, to point us towards one aspect of the value

² Moore, G. E., 1903. *Principia Ethica*. Cambridge University Press: pp. 83-5.

of this journal's texts. This might be expressed in a favourite piece of advice I have received from professors: a graduate student's most valuable resource is not their faculty, but their fellow students. This journal is but one form of that ethos, and this issue its matter.

Defending Indirect Duties to NPCs and a Kantian Dissolution of the Gamer's Dilemma

Graham O'Brien – MA Student, Concordia University

For most, the non-player characters (or NPCs) in video games are not given much moral consideration beyond the confines of the video game they are present in. A player might care, to some extent, about the characters in a video game in relation to its story. However, most do not assign much moral weight to what players do in video games, even less so with regards to how a player might treat a non-player character (NPC) in a single player game. This is for a few key reasons: first, because they do not consider the events of video games to be real events; secondly, because they do not impact anyone, unless those events affect a real person as they might in a multiplayer game; and third, because the things players do in video games may not really suggest much about their moral character, largely based on the first notion. My primary aim, however, will be to show that the things a player does within a game can have some bearing on their moral character. Moreover, I hope to show that the way we might treat NPCs has some moral weight, and that we have duties regarding them. Subsequently, I will discuss the Gamer's Dilemma, as described by Morgan Luck, to elaborate on the weight of a player's actions within a video game. In short, the Gamer's Dilemma poses the following question: if it is permissible for a player to commit virtual murder because nobody is harmed, does that argument extend to acts of virtual pedophilia (Luck 2009, 31). From here, I will provide a Kantian account of duties to and regarding oneself and others and offer a possible Kantian dissolution of the problem. I will then conclude that there are duties regarding NPCs and that the way one treats them is reflective of their moral character. Afterward, by way of conclusion, I will discuss Gordon and Nyholm's "Kantianism and the Problem of Child Sex Robots" and extend my argument regarding NPCs to child sex robots. It is also my aim to defend Kantian ethics from charges, like those lodged by Gordon and Nyholm, that it is inadequate for dealing with modern ethical issues, like these dilemmas, by showing that the Kantian system offers a special means of dealing with these problems, primarily in the form of a Kantian conception of indirect duties.

1. The Gamer's Dilemma

In "The Gamer's Dilemma" Morgan Luck aims to determine if there are any strong arguments that reconcile the notion that virtual murder is permissible and virtual pedophilia is not (Luck 2009, 31). Regarding the dilemma, it is worth noting that Luck is not considering any actions a person commits in the real world as a part of the scope of their article, nor are they discussing player versus player interactions (31-32) but rather actions taken by a player involving non-player characters, or NPCs (Luck 2022, 1288). Luck describes an example in the following: "An example of this would be a player directing their character to drive over an innocent pedestrian—killing them—in the game *GTA 5* (in circumstances such that, were the game world actual, it would constitute murder)" (1288).³ Luck explains that most consider virtual murder permissible on the grounds that it is harmless and just a game (1288). However, Luck contends that the defence that it is just a game, and thus harmless, could very well be used in the defence of the second type of type of act: virtual child molestation (virtual pedophilia) (1288). As Luck writes: "Broadly speaking, virtual child molestation occurs when [...] players intentionally cause their adult character to molest a child character in a computer game" (1288). This situation is fairly similar to the previous murder example, and thus, Luck contends that on the grounds that it is just a game, one might be able to

³ Emphasis in original.

argue that it is permissible (1288). In short, the arguments around the Gamer's Dilemma have two primary prongs that one must address and reconcile:

1. That there is sufficient evidence to suggest that acts of virtual pedophilia injure one's moral character, or at the very least one is engaging with virtual pedophilia because of an already present flaw in their moral character, and
2. That there is sufficient evidence suggesting that virtual murder does not suggest a pre-existing flaw in one's moral character, or that engaging in acts of virtual murder does not injure one's moral character.

My aim for this section will be to recount two of Luck's possible resolutions to the Gamer's Dilemma, one related to the harm it does to others and the other regarding the harm to one's character. I will address the two prongs of the argument directly in §4.

Luck's second argument is concerned with how significant the likelihood of the act occurring is. Luck, drawing on the common argument that violent video games lead people to commit more violent acts, extends this to virtual pedophilia (Luck 2009, 33). Luck offers the possible argument that any acts that are significantly likely to result in harm are immoral, and that when applied to this case, committing acts of virtual pedophilia must result in an increased likelihood to cause harm for it to be immoral (33). Essentially, this demands that there is sufficient evidence that acts of virtual pedophilia are more likely to cause harm (33). Luck notes, however, that Neil Levy argues that not allowing virtual pedophilia could be immoral because allowing it may prevent harm to real children "by providing an acceptable outlet for [the] dangerous desires" of pedophiles (33).⁴ Luck notes that this suggests that gamers would "have to allow for instances where people have a moral obligation to commit acts of virtual paedophilia" and that they must also present evidence suggesting that virtual pedophilia is more likely to result in its real world equivalent than virtual murder is (33). As such, the argument cannot be properly concluded until there is sufficient evidence for or against the claim that virtual murder is less likely to undermine one's moral character.

Luck's third argument steps away from the focus on harm that the agent causes others and instead focuses on the harm the agent does to themselves. The argument goes as follows: the player who enjoys performing acts of virtual pedophilia harms themselves and injures their character on the grounds that enjoying virtual pedophilia suggests that there is something they enjoy about the notion of actual pedophilia or would enjoy about acting on actual pedophilia (33). On the grounds of Aristotelian virtue ethics, according to Matt McCormick, virtual pedophilia would be immoral because the harm it does to one's character distances them from the goal of living a flourishing and virtuous life (*eudaimonia*) (34). The consequence of this argument is that the burden of proof, so to speak, is shifted onto acts of virtual murder and showing how they do not undermine one's character in a similar manner (34). Luck explains that one possible difference between virtual pedophilia and virtual murder is the reason for engagement, namely that one may not necessarily enjoy virtual murder itself, but enjoy satisfying a desire for competition (34). This view, according to Luck, would suggest that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with virtual pedophilia in the case that the act is not sought out by the player as a means of fulfilling the player's desire and is instead a means to some other in-game end (34). This would allow that some instances of virtual pedophilia are permissible insofar as the player's intentions are not to act on virtual pedophilia as an end in itself. This argument would also suggest that some acts of virtual murder might be undertaken for the sake of enjoying the act itself. Recall the earlier example of indiscriminately running over civilian NPCs in *Grand Theft*

⁴ Luck citing Levy, 'Virtual child pornography: The eroticization of inequality', *Ethics and Information Technology*, 4: 321, 2002. in "Gamer's Dilemma", p. 33.

Auto. If the player does this for the sake of their own enjoyment, then it would be considered immoral if one commits to the argument that the player's enjoyment determines the morality of the action. The average onlooker, however, might find this behavior strange, and it could impact how they assess your moral character. Luck concedes, however, that most people do not play games for the sake of enjoying virtual murder, but that for some an amount of enjoyment can be derived from the act of virtual murder (34). With that said, however, enjoyment of an in-game action, whatever that may be, is not sufficient to assess the morality of that action. If it were merely up to one's enjoyment and other's perceptions of it, then one would be reducing good conduct and moral character to mere opinion. In order to resolve the dilemma, then, there has to be some metric by which we judge one's character or actions to be right or wrong, and a way to determine one's moral character. Moreover, for the resolution to the gamer's dilemma to elucidate an ethical relationship between a human player and NPC's, and more specifically whether the player owes them any moral consideration, we will need some kind of schema of moral obligations generally. Kant's ethics provides a robust account of both duties and a means to determine one's moral character. As such, I will give an account of Kantian

2. Direct and Indirect Duties

The purpose of this section is to give a Kantian account of how our actions reflect our moral character and to show, at least in part, the handful of interlocking parts that show Kant's schema of duties. I will explain Kant's notion of duties to oneself and duties to others, as well as elaborate on the difference between direct duties (duties *to* someone) and indirect duties regarding someone (including oneself). In discussing these concepts my aim will be to show that we owe it to ourselves to act in certain ways regarding others, and that even when we do not have direct duties our actions still reflect our moral character.

Duties to oneself, according to Kant, are the primary form of duties as they are the precondition for all subsequent forms of duty (namely other-directed duties) (Kant 2017, 173 [6:417]). Foundationally, Kant's position on duties to oneself, and duties generally, is derived from two interconnected components of his ethics, notably, his Formulation of Humanity and his conception of human dignity. The Formula of Humanity, as a moral principle, commands that one act in such a way that they "*use humanity, in [their] own person as well as in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means*" (Kant 2012, 41 [4:429]).⁵ Essentially, the demand here is to act only in ways that do not undermine one's own humanity, or the humanity of others, by treating it as merely instrumental. One's humanity and the humanity of others is more than a thing (Ding) and it has an innate value that must be respected, in Kant's view, because they are persons. Moreover, persons and their ends are above being merely exchangeable as a thing might be precisely because they, as persons, possess the "absolute inner worth" of dignity (Kant 2017, 201 [6:435]). Kant holds that humans are both sensible, animal beings and intelligible, moral beings (Kant 2017, 201 [6:435]). Expanding on this distinction, Kant writes:

Since he must regard himself not only as a person generally but also as a *human being*, that is as a person who has duties his own reason lays upon him, his insignificance as a *human animal* may not infringe upon his consciousness of his dignity as a *rational human being*, and he should not disavow the moral self-esteem of such a being, [...] this *self-esteem* is a duty of the human being to himself (Kant 2017, 201 [6:435]).⁶

⁵ Emphasis in original.

⁶ Emphasis in original.

Essentially, our status as human beings demands that we not disavow or infringe on our self-esteem in our actions, and that this is a duty we owe ourselves by virtue of our innate moral worth and our capacity for reason.

With that said, our rationality itself is essential to our possessing dignity and in our moral capacities with respect to duty. Prominent Kant scholar Jens Timmermann, in his article “Kantian Duties to the Self, Explained and Defended” elaborates on Kant’s schema of duties and his concept of duties to oneself. Timmermann writes the following: “The agent’s self is not just the *subject* that has to comply with duty. It is the *object*, defined as the authority to which the duty is owed [...] the source of this obligation, *qua* obligation, is my own self, my own faculty of reason” (Timmermann 2006, 508-509).⁷ Essentially, for Kant, the capacity to reason is what underlies duties. Moreover, the agent is both the source of duty and under obligation to fulfill certain duties.

A common example of a duty to oneself from the *Metaphysics of Morals* is that we owe it to ourselves to not be servile to others (Kant 2017, 201 [6:435]). What Kant means by servility is that we ought not to allow others to treat us in ways that treat us as mere means to another’s end; essentially, we owe it to ourselves not to be the kind of person who allows themselves to become servile to another person. As Kant puts it, “Be no man’s lackey” (201-202 [6:435-436]). Additionally, this sort of behavior, Kant claims, undermines our dignity as rational agents, the source of respect, both for ourselves and others (201 [6:435]). In short, we owe it to ourselves to act in certain ways towards others and in ways that reflect our own respect for ourselves. Conduct that violates our required respect for ourselves and others, naturally, reflects poorly on our moral character for Kant such as, for example, habitually wantonly stealing from small local businesses. On a Kantian view immoral actions undermine one’s character. This is evident from the Formula of Universal Law (FUL) variant of the Categorical Imperative and from Kant’s notion of indirect duties, among other elements of his ethics. Defining the FUL, Kant writes: “*act only according to that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law*” (Kant 2012, 34 [4:421]).⁸ Essentially, considering this formulation elucidates two relevant things about an agent’s maxim. First, considering whether one’s maxim is universally applicable reveals whether the action is internally consistent at either a conceptual level, or in practice. For example, part of why lying is prohibited in Kant’s view is because lying is conceptually inconsistent in the sense that the act of lying is premised on a concept of truth, and when universalized its conceptual foundations are confused. Servility, on the other hand, simply cannot be universalized because it requires at least one person to take advantage of that servility, which would be impossible if everyone were prostrating themselves before another. Secondly, the FUL helps individuals identify exception granting maxims. If, for example, I view myself as inferior to others and act in a servile manner to them, I would be granting myself an exception from the moral law. Namely, I would be positioning myself as less than all other humans, which is impossible as per my innate dignity as a human being, and thus as exceptional from all others, albeit in a lowly way (Kant 2012 17n and Kant 2017, 202 [6:436-437]). So, in this sense, the agent’s moral character is reflected in their actions. It says something about the agent to others, as well as to themselves; specifically, that they have a low sense of self worth. By virtue of our capacity for reason and our inability to reject the moral law entirely, the agent should be aware of this flaw in their character (Kant 2008, 31).

As mentioned earlier duties can be direct (*to*) or indirect (*regarding*) oneself or others. In “Duties to and Regarding Others” Robert N. Johnson uses an example of promising to watch a friend’s elderly parents to illustrate the difference between direct and indirect duties. He writes: “If I promise to keep your elderly parents company while you are away, my duty is to *you*, not them, and I am obliged to keep *them*, not you, company. The duty is *to* you, not them, but *regarding* them, not you” (Johnson 2010, 192-193). This case of a promise illustrates

⁷ Emphasis in original.

⁸ Emphasis in original. The FUL has a twin, namely, the Law of Nature formulation. For the sake of brevity I will be taking the FUL and FN variations as one in the same, on the grounds that the latter is, for Kant, merely the FUL imagined as though the given maxim is posited as though it were everyone’s action.

the difference quite simply: because, say I made an agreement with you, I owe it to you to fulfill my end of the bargain. Furthermore, the duty not only involves your parents, insofar as they are a part of the promise, but also the demand to respect their dignity places me under obligation. Additionally, there is another direct duty at play when making a promise, namely, that I owe it to myself not to be the kind of person who breaks promises. Essentially, I owe that duty to myself, and it is regarding both our promise and your parents. So, all this is to say that when a duty is owed to someone there are instances where that duty is indirectly owed to someone or something else.

Indirect duties need not only be towards persons or agreements either. It is worth discussing Kantian ethical views on animals and the duties we may have regarding them. Kant, in his *Lectures on Ethics*, is clear that the duties we have towards animals are only indirect duties, really, we owe a duty to ourselves (our humanity) that regards animals (Kant 1997, 212). Kant uses the example of an old and faithful dog. If we kill the dog rather than caring for it, we would be failing in a duty regarding the dog. We cannot have direct duties to animals, Kant explains, because we can only owe duties to humanity because, in the case of animals, they lack the capacity for judgment that humans possess (212). So, we simply owe it to ourselves not to be the kind of person who kills our dog because it is of no more use to us; in other words, we owe it to ourselves to cultivate, and not damage, the capacity of decency, and we would be failing our duty to be kindly and humane by killing the dog (212). In this sense, the way we treat animals is reflective of our moral character, to Kant, and this in turn reflects our capacity to be decent towards humanity (212). As such, how we treat ourselves and others (including animals) is reflective of our moral character, and our actions towards

3. Dissolving the Gamer's Dilemma

Now that we have discussed the concept of direct and indirect duties I would like to return to the Gamer's Dilemma and offer a Kantian argument. Luck's third argument is what I view as the key for differentiating the acts of virtual murder and virtual pedophilia: the intention of the player being the primary factor in determining the morality of these actions.

As discussed earlier, Luck suggests that one such argument differentiating virtual murder and virtual pedophilia is that the latter action may be harmful to oneself insofar as it injures your moral character (Luck 2009, 34). The sticky part of this, for Luck, is that one must be able to determine that engaging in virtual murder does not damage your character, unlike virtual pedophilia. Speaking generally, from a Kantian standpoint we certainly owe it to ourselves to act in ways that do not undermine our dignity (humanity) or that do not betray a lack of respect for the dignity of others. I think that this much should be clear from my earlier discussion of Kantian duties; however, as many know, one of the most fundamental obligations of Kantian ethics is to act in ways that respect humanity, both in oneself and in others (as derived from Kant's Formula of Humanity) (Kant 2012, 41 [4:429]).⁹ All this is to say that there is a coherent link between Luck's notion of actions injuring one's moral character and a Kantian one.

As Luck noted before, the second and third arguments demand that the gamer prove that virtual murder does not increase the likelihood of actual murder, and that by engaging with it a player is not injuring their character by committing acts of virtual murder. Both Matt McCormick and David I. Waddington (both mentioned in Luck's article) address the possible Kantian concerns with acts of virtual violence in "Is it Wrong to Play Violent Video Games?" and "Locating the Wrongness in Ultra-violent Video Games," respectively. Both authors address the same elements of Kantian ethics that I have so far; namely, Kant's perspective on animals, the Formula

⁹ "So act that you use humanity, in your own person as well as in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means." See, Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Translated by Mary J. Gregor. Edited by Jens Timmermann. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012. p. 41 [4:429]. Emphasis in original.

of Humanity, and duties. McCormick's assessment of what a Kantian might say about playing violent video games is straightforward. He claims—I think rightfully so—that there are things we can do that reflect poorly on our character and that a Kantian might be troubled by things like being a bad sport (win or lose), hurling insults over voice chat, or doing other things that do not respect the humanity of others in game (McCormick 2001, 282-283). McCormick explains that these things in the context of video games, however, are just as bad as if one does them on the rugby pitch (283). Premised on the Kantian notion that we ought to be kind to humans and animals as representations of our respect for humanity, McCormick's treatment of violent video games is largely focused on behavior in a player versus player (PVP) setting, rather than in a single-player setting (282-283).¹⁰ McCormick notes that it is very likely that harming animals will affect the ways in which we interact with other people (283). I am inclined to agree with this assessment, but this does not necessarily suggest that playing a violent single-player game will make the player harder in their interactions with people, or as McCormick puts it “pull the real trigger” (283). As such, McCormick concludes that there is not really anything that the Kantian account can say that isolates playing a video game from other activities (284).

On the other hand, Waddington takes up McCormick's account and attempts to extend some elements to single-player games and the treatment of NPCs. Waddington, taking up the Kantian view that animals are analogues of humanity, suggests that “perhaps video-game characters are as well”, on the grounds that “video-game characters are often representations of humans” (Waddington 2007, 125). Waddington holds that if it is wrong to gouge out the eyes of an animal “because it inures us to cruelty (one among many reasons why cruelty to animals is wrong),” then, on the same grounds, it could be wrong to do this to a video-game character (125). As we have seen, if there is some truth to the notion that violence toward animals inures us to cruelty, then it may be the case that, for similar reasons, insofar as it is possible that behaving violently in video games could make us more accustomed to violent imagery or injure our moral character.

What is left, then, is to show that acts of virtual pedophilia do injure one's character, or that flaws in one's character leads them to virtual pedophilia. In the article “Can Virtual Sex Prevent Pedophiles from Harming Children in Real Life?” Cecilia D'Anastasio reports on cases of people attracted to minors and how they interact with video games, like *Second Life* or the *Elder Scrolls* series, as a means of fulfilling their desires. In the former game, players use child-like avatars to participate in simulated sex and age-related roleplay (D'Anastasio 2016). These individuals, interviewed under pseudonyms, disclosed their practices in detail. One such individual, Camryn, explains that they use video games as an outlet for their desires and to avoid any instances of “slipping up” and abusing children (D'Anastasio 2016). One example is that they use modifications for the *Elder Scrolls* games to live out their fantasies in graphic detail without harming any “real” children (D'Anastasio 2016). D'Anastasio explains that these individuals, at least in Camryn's case, are morally opposed to using children in this manner, and do not want to risk the repercussions of pedophilia (D'Anastasio 2016). Moreover, according to D'Anastasio, experts argue that not all individuals like Camryn have offended and that there is data that suggests that not all of them will offend (D'Anastasio 2016). To give credit to this view, a consequentialist might hold that using virtual pedophilia as a means of reducing harm to actual children is permissible and morally acceptable. A Kantian, however, would have trouble swallowing this because its concept of duties of respect towards others, and oneself, do not allow for them to accept representations of pedophilia as permissible. This is because acts of pedophilia not only degrade one's humanity, but also show wonton disrespect, for lack of a better term, for the

¹⁰ The kinds of actions he covers in his discussion are wrong on Kantian grounds because of how they affect other people, rather than for any reason intrinsic to the violence of a video game. Any of these in-game behaviors, he suggests, are capable of spilling over into the real world, so to speak, affecting our behavior at a soccer match, for example. (If we are taking Chalmers' view that virtual worlds are an extension of our own, it is hard to see anything that differentiates rowdy behavior in a video game from that of rowdy behavior at a soccer match, apart from escalation to physical violence.)

humanity and well-being of the most innocent of human subjects. While acts of virtual pedophilia against NPCs may not directly harm any actual children, wilful engagement and enjoyment of the depiction of such a reprehensible action could not be, under any circumstances, acceptable on Kantian grounds, if only by virtue of the duties we owe ourselves.

What is salient here, for the sake of my argument, is the notion that from a Kantian standpoint, the act of seeking out special modifications for video games for the purpose of fulfilling their desires is reflective of one's moral character. If we are taking Chalmers' view that virtual worlds are extensions of our own world, this puts us in a place to consider how seeking out and playing out these desires in a virtual space is ethically relevant. Moreover, as Chalmers holds, the objects (including NPCs) of video games are, effectively, real. The act of modifying the game space to allow for pedophilic gameplay makes the acts in those spaces real. As such, a Kantian could very well hold that the NPCs of a video game are akin to animals, insofar as we may be able to have indirect duties regarding them because they represent humanity in a similar fashion. Naturally, they are not flesh and blood like an animal is, but they can be viewed similarly, at least according to Waddington (Waddington 2007, 125). As such, we can view NPCs in a similar way to animals, insofar as we are not obligated to treat them in any specific ways, according to any direct duties, but rather the ways we treat them in-game reflect the fulfillment (or lack thereof) of our duties that we owe ourselves; in other words, our duties can regard them in the ways similar to that of animals. Consequently, on Kantian grounds, engaging with virtual pedophilia injures one's moral character, or is a result of a failing of one's character, insofar as one fails to respect humanity writ-large via objectionable sexual acts, or active virtual engagement thereof.

With all that said, the question of whether virtual murder reflects negatively on one's character remains, and as I see it we are left with only two options regarding the Gamer's Dilemma: we either accept that there is insufficient empirical evidence to exonerate virtual murder from the charge of injuring one's character and bite the bullet that virtual pedophilia is permissible, thus leaving the dilemma unresolved, or we classify acts of virtual murder as injurious of one's character, effectively dissolving the dilemma on the grounds that all acts of virtual pedophilia are impermissible and that while all acts of virtually killing NPCs are injurious of one's character, some are permissible. This is, admittedly, more of a dissolution of the dilemma, rather than a total resolution wherein virtual murder is wholly permissible and virtual pedophilia is not. While this may not be wholly satisfactory, it does charge virtual pedophilia with being impermissible on Kantian grounds, which may be enough to satisfy some.

So, take for example, two scenarios of virtual murder. In the first, you are playing a soldier in a war game like *Call of Duty*, and an enemy soldier NPC is firing at you, and you return fire, ultimately killing the NPC. In the second, you are playing *Grand Theft Auto*, and you use your in-game avatar to kill a random NPC bystander. There is, possibly, a notable difference between these two cases, depending on one's understanding of murder as a term, and whether or not they have a wide or narrow definition of it. If, on the one hand, murder is merely homicide, a case of killing another, then both instances are murder. If, on the other hand, murder is strictly defined as an unlawful killing, then the first case is merely a case of virtual killing and the latter is a case of virtual murder. Regardless of whether one has a wide or narrow definition the results are the same, all acts of virtual killing are injurious to one's character, and that some acts of virtual killing are impermissible. If a comparison to the real world is permitted, then just as in real life, a hostile enemy soldier is a valid target for lethal force in self-defense, whereas an innocent bystander would not be, in any circumstances, considered a valid target for the use of lethal

force.¹¹ So, on a properly Kantian view, acts of virtual murder and virtual pedophilia are both injurious to one's character.

I would now like to discuss Kantian views on sex generally and provide an example pertinent to virtual pedophilia against NPCs and how a Kantian might view sex with a robot. The specific example I have in mind comes from Gordon and Nyholm's "Kantianism and the Problem of Child Sex Robots" from 2021. Gordon and Nyholm discuss the issue of Child Sex Robots (henceforth child sex robots) and consider possible Kantian arguments for and against their permissibility. They make a clear differentiation between Kant's ethics and Kantian ethics taken directly from Allan Wood (Gordon and Nyholm 2022, 134)¹² that I think is pertinent. This distinction is pertinent for both their papers, as they look at both orthodox Kantian accounts (meaning those directly from Kant) and contemporary Kantian ethics that somewhat depart from Kant. Throughout their article, however, they appear to focus on Kant's ethics over contemporary Kantian ethics.

Regarding Kant's views on sexual ethics, Gordon and Nyholm's account is accurate. In short, Kant held that sex is morally permissible only for procreation and within heterosexual marriage (134). Regarding Kant's discussion in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, the authors write the following: "There, Kant categorizes some sexual behavior as 'Defiling Oneself by Lust', stating that 'an unnatural use (and so misuse) of one's sexual attributes is a violation of a duty to oneself', which counts as a 'high degree of violation of the humanity in one's own person'" (134).¹³ Naturally, contemporary Kantian scholars have recognized these claims as being outdated, and have attempted to reject these elements of Kant's work to align Kantian ethics with more modern views on sex and some investigate what elements of Kantian ethics are worth maintaining, or at the very least discussing (135). The former arguments, as the authors point out, usually focus on consent between parties.

In their article on child sex robots, Gordon and Nyholm offer what is essentially an example similar to virtual pedophilia. The use of child sex robots and acts of virtual pedophilia, when viewed together, illuminate each other. Gordon and Nyholm first address the argument that it is not immoral to use child sex robots. According to them, this argument goes as follows:

1. Only rational and autonomous beings who have dignity are part of the moral community.
 2. Child robots have no rationality or autonomy (and hence no dignity).
 3. Therefore, child robots are not part of the moral community, because they lack the morally relevant features.
 4. Therefore, having sex with child robots does not involve a violation of a direct moral duty.
- (136)

Consequently, on Kant's grounds, because child sex robots have no dignity and only have value relative to humans, they can be regarded as being used as means for the ends of others, following from the Formula of Humanity (137). The authors cite two possible counter arguments: (1) that one's social interactions will become brutalized from using child sex robots (this is akin to earlier arguments that we have seen against virtual murder from McCormick and Waddington), and (2) that the similarity of child sex robots to children is itself morally problematic (137). I agree with their assessment that these are weak counter-arguments, at least on Kantian grounds. They explain and reject them swiftly, turning to their assessment of the possible argument that using child sex robots is impermissible on Kantian grounds.

¹¹ Originally, this paper took up David Chalmers' argument, as presented in "The Virtual and the Real", that virtual spaces, such as video games, are extensions of our own reality. Chalmers argues that, because virtual systems are grounded in real systems, virtual spaces are extensions of the real world. This has remained a grounding assumption in this draft.

¹² Quoting Wood, Allen. 2009. *Kantian Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹³ Quoting Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 192 [6:425].

The argument against the use of child sex robots also relies on the Formula of Humanity and its extended concepts of dignity and autonomy. They explain that there are two possible arguments prohibiting the use of child sex robots. Firstly, if child sex robots are autonomous (which might be possible in the future, they suggest) then it would be overtly impermissible on Kantian grounds to use the child sex robot as a means for one's fulfillment because of their autonomy (138). As they explain, Kant grants that humans need not be the only kinds of agents possessing a rational will, as other species that we either don't know of yet could very well possess a rational will (138). The second argument follows similar lines to the second objection to the permissibility of child sex robots (as previously noted). They outline it in the following:

1. We are obligated to treat humanity, either in our own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end.
2. Using child sex robots for pleasing one's sexual needs displays great social insensitivity towards important moral issues.
3. If a person shows great social insensitivity by their actions, then that person treats the humanity in themselves as a mere means to questionable ends.
4. Therefore, one should not use child sex robots. (138)

This, I think, can be extended to the case of the Gamer's Dilemma. So, just as an animal, on Kantian grounds, is reflective of humanity, so too is an NPC in a video game (or a child sex robot). As such, just as kicking a dog in the real world desensitizes you to violence, thereby showing great social insensitivity and injuring your moral character, so too does the act of virtual murder, insofar as NPCs also reflect humanity. Moreover, the same must be said of acts of virtual pedophilia as well. The core difference between virtual murder and virtual pedophilia, however, is that the former does have permissible instances, just as it does in the real world, and the latter does not. Furthermore, as I hope to have made clear, the ways in which we treat video game NPCs does reflect our moral character, and therefore, we do indeed owe them indirect duties.

4. Conclusions

It is my hope that, in discussing the notion that human moral agents have indirect duties regarding NPCs, I will have been able to successfully dissolve the Gamer's Dilemma. If my argument thus far—that NPCs, as extensions of the real world and representations of humanity, are owed duties indirectly and treatment of them in ways that undermines one's moral character (or suggests an already present flaw in one's moral character) is impermissible, then virtual pedophilia is also impermissible. Given that the difference between child sex robots and NPCs is a minimal one, to my estimation, then a similar argument to mine could be made to categorize their use as equally impermissible. Certainly, there is some difference, as NPCs are virtual objects, and a child sex robot is a physical object. But, as I hope to have shown, NPCs possess features that represent humanity in a similar manner to animals. To my mind, it is no stretch to suggest that this reasoning extends to child sex robots. They represent humanity in a more physical form than an NPC, and they have a similar level of capacities as well, insofar as both entities (as we can currently create them) lack autonomy in the way that humans do. If I am right, and there is not enough of a distinction to set them apart morally, then the use of child sex robots is as impermissible as the act of modifying a video game to allow acts of virtual pedophilia to be done to NPCs, on the grounds that you undermine your moral character by doing so. In both cases, the player and the child sex robot user are violating a duty that they have to themselves as a moral being by fulfilling these desires.

As such, if my arguments regarding NPCs have been successful, then they ought to extend to the problems of child sex robots, and hopefully the issues they presented are at least partially resolved. Gordon and Nyholm's

overall conclusion—via their discussion of child sex robots—is that Kantian arguments are inconclusive and, more drastically, that Kantian ethics on the whole fails to adequately address the complex ethical concerns of modern life (child sex robots being one such example) (142). In their view, other ethical theories are better suited to these modern challenges. Moreover, I hope to have provided both a satisfactory Kantian dissolution of Luck's Gamer's Dilemma and to have indirectly defended Kant's ethics, and Kantian ethics, against charges that they are inadequate for tackling some complex modern ethical issues. To Gordon and Nyholm, I would say that Kantians need not throw in the towel just yet.

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A Case for Contemporary Ideal Theory

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An academic of political science might recoil at the thought of their ideas being categorized as ‘idealistic,’ the root word seemingly yet unofficially synonymous with ‘naïve’ or ‘ineffective.’ Ideal theory, across literature, has been stamped with the word ‘infeasible’ by many, which is seemingly yet unofficially synonymous with ‘useless’ or ‘impossible.’ Laura Valentini’s article “Ideal vs. Non-ideal Theory: A Conceptual Map”¹ is an in-depth navigation through what she refers to as the debate between ideal and non-ideal theory within political philosophy. Ideal theory is an umbrella term for any theory on societal structure based on idealized assumptions, whereas non-ideal theory is built around assumptions more similar to current societal conditions. Valentini’s article contends that the debate between ideal and non-ideal theory tends to fall into three categories and describes the three senses in which we refer to ideal and non-ideal theory.

The first sense is full compliance vs. partial compliance theory, in which the debate revolves around the duties and obligations that apply to us when agents are either fully compliant or partially compliant to the conditions of justice. The second sense is utopian vs. realistic theory, in which the debate revolves around whether considerations of feasibility should limit normative political theorizing and, if so, which feasibility constraints are important. The third sense is transitional vs. end-state theory, in which the debate focuses on whether normative political theory should strive to identify a perfect societal state or concentrate on incremental improvements without necessarily determining the ultimate ideal.

A popular perspective produced out of this “debate” is a general denouncement of ideal theory’s purpose, citing lack of feasibility, practicality, and even necessity. The intention of this article is to breakdown this perspective and hopefully reach a new one regarding the significance of ideal theory and its relevance in contemporary political philosophy.

Section I introduces Mark Jensen’s² metaphysical breakdown of practical possibility in which he distinguishes direct and indirect diachronic ability. I provide an analysis that describes the relation between direct/indirect diachronic ability and transitional/end-state theory. In Section II, I question what is expected of philosophy when pushing for change or justice-improvements by proposing that the role of the philosopher is not necessarily to solve problems, but perhaps to construct an idea of what the results of the solutions should look like, suggesting that ideal theory can coexist with non-ideal theory as a separate subject with a separate purpose. Furthermore, I argue that ideal theory should hold legitimate value in contemporary political philosophy as elements of society continue to evolve past what was once considered unattainable.

1. Understanding Direct and Indirect Diachronic Ability

1.1. Jensen’s “Individual Abilities”

In “The Limits of Practical Possibility”, Jensen opens by addressing that one of the aims of political philosophy is to describe an idea of what the best society would look like. In considering this question, he follows up by acknowledging that the world operates with many constraints, shifting the question towards John Rawls’ ‘realistic utopia’ by asking: “What would ideal society look like under favourable but practically possible

¹ Laura Valentini, “Ideal vs. Non-Ideal Theory: A Conceptual Framework,” *Philosophy Compass* 7, no.9 (2012): 654-64.

² Mark Jensen, “The Limits of Practical Possibility*,” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 17, no.2 (2009): 168–84.

conditions?”³ This leads Jensen to clarify the idea of practical possibility, beginning by stating that it is “best understood metaphysically.” While his paper dives into various aspects of practical possibility, I found the root of it to be his initial explanation of “Individual Abilities” and that this alone is sufficient in my analysis of end-state and transitional theory.

Jensen⁴ begins by stating that if it is possible for an individual (S) to do an action (A), there are two distinctions in which S is able to do A. These two distinctions would be “synchronic ability” and “diachronic ability.” Synchronic ability describes the circumstance in which S can do A immediately. Jensen describes an example where Smith is holding a board in place with one hand and holds a loaded nail-gun in the other, making her synchronically able to fasten this board. Diachronic ability describes the circumstance in which “S is diachronically able to perform A in case S can do it later, whether or not S can do it now.” Following the example, if Smith runs out of materials, she is no longer synchronically able to continue her work, though she remains diachronically able to, given that she purchases new materials. This leads to the distinction between direct and indirect diachronic ability. Suppose as Jensen describes, Jones is a unilingual English speaker with an intention to learn Spanish as he conducts business in Mexico. He lacks synchronic ability to speak Spanish, but perhaps he holds diachronic ability to speak Spanish based on the fact that he has the capacity to learn. But there is a key difference between Smith and Jones. Smith, while lacking her materials, possesses knowledge in carpentry. Jones does not possess knowledge of the Spanish language. His ability is hinged on the possibility of him learning it first. This means another action must be completed before he has the ability to speak Spanish, which is then required before he can do business in Mexico. In the example of Smith, if she is in the process of building a house, as a carpenter she has direct diachronic ability to complete the framework but lacks direct diachronic ability to lay bricks until she receives formal education in masonry. So, we could say that Smith has indirect diachronic ability to lay bricks. In the case of running out of materials, she lacks synchronic ability to continue her work, but holds direct diachronic ability to complete the framework of her house, and indirect diachronic ability to lay the bricks. Jensen encapsulates it in the following table:

Technical Specification	
<i>Synchronic Ability:</i>	I can perform A now.
<i>Direct Diachronic Ability:</i>	I can perform A later, if not now.
<i>Indirect Diachronic Ability</i>	I can perform A later provided I perform B first, and I have the ability to perform B.

It should be noted that this table copied from “The Limits of Practical Possibility”⁵ has been modified to exclude an additional column containing ‘Immediate Ability’, ‘First Order Ability’ and ‘Second Order Ability’ which Jensen describes as additional terminology for synchronic, direct diachronic and indirect diachronic abilities, later expanding on his reason for adding said terminology describing the same concept. As stated earlier, for the simplicity of this paper I am sticking with the “technical specifications” of this concept to maintain consistency.

³ Jensen, “The Limits,” 168.

⁴ Jensen, “The Limits,” 173.

⁵ Jensen, “The Limits,” 174.

1.2. *Re-envisioning Feasibility*

The examples provided in section A err on the side of simplicity. For this reason, Jensen⁶ provides an example that drives the point I intend to make. Suppose Jones gets into an accident and becomes paraplegic, leaving him unable to walk. You could say he lacks direct diachronic ability to walk. Furthermore, no surgery or treatment can fix the spinal cord injury he obtained. You could say he even lacks indirect diachronic ability to walk. Jensen challenges this idea by saying there *is* a treatment that would allow Jones to regain his ability to walk, it does not exist in the frame of time in which Jones is living but rather at a later point in history, after Jones. This means that Jones has an indirect diachronic ability to walk, just in a far-removed sense. In recent history, perhaps a hundred years ago, many died due to diseases and infections that did not have effective treatment which we now have today. Healthcare professionals had an indirect diachronic ability to treat common bacterial infections, and now have the synchronic ability to treat them after medical advances have been made and antibiotics have been discovered. In both cases of Jones walking again and bacterial infections being treated, a separate ability of medical research must be fulfilled in order to be actualized. Jensen describes this as “instances where indirect diachronic ability can have a serialized structure”⁷ where S’s ability to perform action A is dependent on the fulfillment of action B, which is dependent on the fulfillment of action C, and so forth. This point is to address the complexity of indirect diachronic ability.

Pulling this back into the topic of political philosophy, Gilabert & Lawford-Smith paint a picture in which Jensen’s ‘Individual Abilities’ are applied to real-world circumstances: “Australia does not have the direct diachronic ability to escape the effects of drought, but it does have an indirect diachronic ability to do so, because it could build a pipeline infrastructure to pump water from desalination plants on the coast to troubled areas inland.”⁸

Ideal theory is often discredited by the ‘infeasibility’ argument. I argue that ideal theory is not necessarily infeasible theory, but indirect diachronic theory. Looking at end-state versus transitional theory, end-state theory could be described as ideas that are indirectly diachronic, specifically, as that serialized structure Jensen describes.⁹ Transitional theory concerns itself with direct diachronic ability where it takes real-world circumstances and proposes a transition to a point of which synchronic ability is obtained and a goal can be actualized. The indirectly diachronic end-state would be comprised of a series of transitions A, B, C, and so forth. With this understanding of feasibility, we can effectively address accusations of “ignorance to constraints” against Rawls’ ideal theory by asking “why should Rawls be accused of ignoring oppression rather than considering oppression in the sense that it has to be removed in order for a basic structure of a society to qualify as just?”¹⁰ The removal of oppression would be one of the serialized transitions described by Jensen. Maybe removing oppression in itself is indirectly diachronic, requiring its own set of serialized transitions. The creation of a goal, however, limits the set as finite.

⁶ Jensen, “The Limits,” 175.

⁷ Jensen, “The Limits,” 175.

⁸ Pablo Gilabert and Holly Lawford-Smith, “Political Feasibility: A Conceptual Exploration,” *Political Studies* 60, no.4 (2012): 811.

⁹ Jensen, “The Limits” 175.

¹⁰ Eva Erman and Niklas Möller, “Three Failed Charges Against Ideal Theory,” *Social Theory and Practice* 39, no.1 (2013): 42.

2. A Case for Contemporary Ideal Theory

2.1. *The Roles and Obligations of Philosophy within Political Science*

Despite philosophy concerning itself with the realm of abstraction and intangible matters, one should not underestimate its practical impacts on society. Even so, there is no requirement for philosophical thought to be constrained by the practical, or rather, material world. I say this as an address to those who say that “contemporary political philosophy should shift its focus from full-compliance to partial-compliance,”¹¹ which I interpret as a call for the production of ideal theory to be considered less important than that of non-ideal theory. I believe that this is a demand for “political theory [to aim] at guiding action in the real world,”¹² and by real world, I assume they mean the material world. But is it necessary to subject all modern production of political philosophy to a purpose of guiding action in the material world?

Erman & Möller¹³ present an argument against the claim that “ideal theory is not action-guiding” that is worth noting. They explain that in examining practical problems, one might argue that there is no applicable knowledge we can extract from ideal theory, this idea being supported by the thought of “contextual-insight”: to know what to do, one must take a general recommendation/principle and assess it in light of current circumstances. They further explain that ideal principles tend to be thought of as context-free, but “concrete action guidance requires judgement-in-application,”¹⁴ meaning that if we start with an ideal principle instead of the demands of a given situation, there is a risk of doing “more harm than good.” This is where their mention of Charles Mills’ argument of ideal theory being ideological¹⁵ makes sense; fast-tracking to ideal circumstances is dangerous and might involve efforts such as heavy state-controlled enforcement and/or violence, as seen in 20th century Russia. Erman and Möller, however, detect a false dichotomy¹⁶: if ideal theory is context-free and requires judgement-in-application, then it must be that non-ideal theory has full context and does not need judgement-in-application; this is not true. Erman & Möller argue that “all principles require judgement when they are to be applied” and that we cannot infer that ideal theory requires more judgement than non-ideal theory.

I appreciate Erman and Möller’s rebuttal and agree that it is not sound to hold ideal theory to a different standard than non-ideal theory in the context of requiring judgement-in-application. They outline the argument made by critics that ideal theory, “theorized under artificial idealized circumstances, lacks determinate content, and therefore fails to give us any knowledge in actual circumstances.”¹⁷ To this I say: *why should it?* Why is it required of ideal theory to give knowledge of actual circumstances? Giving knowledge in actual circumstances is at the core of non-ideal theory. It does not seem fair to assess the legitimacy of ideal theory using requirements of non-ideal theory. A philosopher writing ideal theory does not necessarily intend to solve a problem, but perhaps construct an idea of what the result of the solution should look like.

It seems as though ideal theory, according to some, fails to solve problems and that there is a requirement for effective political philosophers to come up with solutions for political problems in the material world. I contend that the philosopher's role might not involve generating solutions, but rather formulating a conception of the outcomes that would result from the proposed solutions. I analogize this to a mathematical problem wherein the value following the equals sign is provided, and the student needs to ascertain the variable's value to ensure that the value following the equals sign holds true. Example: $x + 1 = 5$, where the 5 represents ideal theory and

¹¹ Valentini, “Ideal vs. Non-Ideal Theory,” 655.

¹² Valentini, “Ideal vs. Non-Ideal Theory,” 655.

¹³ Eva Erman and Niklas Möller, “Three Failed Charges,” 29.

¹⁴ Eva Erman and Niklas Möller, “Three Failed Charges,” 27.

¹⁵ Charles Mills, “‘Ideal Theory’ as Ideology.” *Hypatia* 20, no.3 (2005).

¹⁶ Eva Erman and Niklas Möller, “Three Failed Charges,” 28.

¹⁷ Eva Erman and Niklas Möller, “Three Failed Charges,” 29.

$(x+1)$ represents non-ideal theory. In this format, the “answer” to the equation is given, but the value required to get to the answer is not, and it is up to the solver to determine what is required in order to obtain a value of 5. I feel this analogy helps me conceptualize a visual representation of what is perhaps the role of the philosopher in solving real world issues, which might not be to “solve” the problem, but to determine what the result should look like once the unknown solution is inputted. I would say that Plato’s *The Republic*¹⁸ fits into this model as Socrates describes what he thinks is the ideal city but does not truly explain what specific changes must be made in order to actualize these ideas, leaving it up to other thinkers to determine these transitions. The *Republic* is an Ancient Greek production of ideal theory. It is a foundational text for many students of philosophy and political science because it has influenced many great thinkers who built their own ideas around accepting Socrates’ initial ideas about governance, education, etc. If not Socrates himself, then the thinkers who came after him have influenced the material world. Perhaps the impact we speak of when discussing ideal theory is rather indirect.

I draw upon the example of meritocracy, discussed by Socrates in *The Republic*.¹⁹ Meritocracy manifests everywhere around us, from standardized tests to corporate executive hierarchy. While we live in conditions of partial compliance, it is difficult to seal the cracks in which corruption slips through. Yet, meritocracy exists in the material world through policy and law. The question of “who deserves what” is fundamental to any domain concerning itself with justice.

2.2. *The Relevance of Ideal Theory*

The question that follows pertains to the purpose of ideal theory in contemporary political philosophy: why should we continue to expand, or update, ideal theory? A commonly known argument given by Rawls²⁰ is that ideal theory provides a long-term goal. I am in agreement with Rawls’ description of ideal theory providing a long-term goal because a) there is no inherent assumption that it is achievable in a short-term context which b) aligns with the idea that ideal theory is indirectly diachronic. John Simmons also argues that the prescribed moves (the serialized transitions mentioned in section 1b) in transitional (non-ideal) theory require moral permissibility and likelihood of success.²¹ According to Simmons, without ideal theory, there is no way to gauge a) what counts as permissible and b) what counts as success, to which Valentini responds “Simmons is probably right in insisting that ‘ideal’ normative considerations should in part influence our choice paths for justice-improvements.”²²

It is common in any field of study to deem published theory as outdated, and there is reason to say that ideal theory is not exclusive to being outdated. While I hold the position that there is no requirement for ideal theory to be “action-guiding,” I find it difficult to claim that ideal theory *does not* guide action in the material world. It guides action in an indirect sense of impact. In our present conditions of partial compliance, we make justice-improvements towards, for example, improving equality. Perfect equality does not exist in the material world. It does exist, however, in the non-material world as ideal theory. If we strive towards a society with the highest level of equality among citizens, then how can we say that ideal theory does not guide action? In Valentini’s article, she summarizes the idea that end-state theory is not essential for identifying justice-improvements, as these can be recognized without having a clear concept of a perfectly just world. For instance, understanding that a world with racial discrimination is more unjust than one without it does not presuppose knowing the characteristics of a completely just world.²³ In other words, ideal theory is not required to produce

¹⁸ Plato. *Plato's The Republic*. New York Books, Inc., 1943.

¹⁹ Plato. *Plato's The Republic*, Book IV.

²⁰ John Rawls, “The Law of Peoples,” *Critical Inquiry* 20, no.1 (1993): 60.

²¹ John Simmons, “Ideal and Nonideal Theory,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 38, no.1 (2010): 23.

²² Valentini, “Ideal vs. Non-Ideal Theory,” 662.

²³ Valentini, “Ideal vs. Non-Ideal Theory,” 664.

non-ideal theory. This idea, however, neglects such a vital aspect of racial discrimination that can never be overlooked; that being there was once a point in time where a world without racial discrimination was *not* considered a more unjust world, and racial discrimination was considered fully justified by its enablers.

There is a source from which we determine what is just and what is not, and that source often takes the form of idealistic theorizing on what society could look like. That source is not limited to Rawlsian theories of justice, which are a focal point in Valentini's article. Pertaining to racial discrimination, the Martin Luther King Jr. speech "I Have A Dream,"²⁴ is somewhat of a utopian manifesto on the eradication of racial-based hatred and segregation within American society. Its deliverance is also a piece of history that preceded fundamental changes to the American justice system. The claim that ideal theory is not required to determine justice improvements seems to dismiss its legitimate, tangible impact on the present institutions of justice.

If utopia is defined as a perfect society, what is a perfect society? The specifics might be subjective, but general concepts that are widely accepted are harmonious community, equality, peace, high quality of life, etc. Mainly, universal happiness, and inherent fairness in institutions of justice. How these concepts are obtained is subjective and vary between theorists. But the idea of common good is at the base of a perfect society. The reason obtaining these feels impossible is because we live in conditions of partial compliance, where humans are imperfect and self-interested.

What is it exactly that makes utopia impossible? It does not seem to be hinged to resources or money. Let's use the example of ending world hunger. According to an OXFAM report,²⁵ as well as the U.N World Food Programme,²⁶ current estimates suggest that as of this year, we need donor governments to invest around \$37-40 billion every year until 2030 to tackle both extreme and chronic hunger. While donor governments already meet around half of that price, the required additional investment is roughly equivalent to 1 percent of what the world spends annually on military and arms projects.

So, the identified ideal is the end of world hunger, and there is no physical limitation preventing this, as there is enough currency in circulation to be able to pay for the infrastructure. The issues mainly lie in the notion that money alone does not necessarily cease conflict affecting food production, stop Anthropocene-induced climate change, or redistribute corporate power over agriculture.²⁷ These obstacles are less physical in nature and are rather socially-constructed. It would require significant changes in human behaviour at the highest levels of power/governance to redirect the money and resources to create a more equitable society.

With this example, I return to the original question of what exactly makes a utopian society impossible, given that we accept universal happiness and systemic fairness as the main principles? The possibility of achieving these principles depends less on money and resources, but rather the human behaviour that generates greed, inter-cultural disagreement, values, bias, incompetence, etc. These intangible obstacles may be difficult to rewire within society and human behaviour. However, values, perception, and ethics evolve consistently throughout history, as even within the most traditional societies there has been gradual change in what is considered right and wrong. *On the Education of Girls*²⁸ was published in 1866 by an anonymous writer called 'A Utopian.' Acknowledging that this pertains to Western society (as other areas in the world are still working on achieving this), the question of women receiving education has long been answered and fulfilled, as I write a philosophy paper at my

²⁴ King, Martin Luther, "I Have a Dream," Washington, D.C. , August 28, 1963.

²⁵ Oxfam, "How Much Money Would It Take to End World Hunger?" Oxfam America, December 9, 2022. <https://www.oxfamamerica.org/explore/stories/how-much-money-would-it-take-to-end-world-hunger/>.

²⁶ "How Much Would It Cost to End World Hunger?" World Food Program USA, August 10, 2022. <https://www.wfpusa.org/articles/how-much-would-it-cost-to-end-world-hunger/#:~:text=The%20U.N.%20World%20Food%20Programme%20feeds%20over%20100%20million%20of,end%20global%20hunger%20by%202030.>

²⁷ Oxfam, "How Much Money Would It Take to End World Hunger?"

²⁸ Utopian, A. 1866. "On the Education of Girls." *Fraser's magazine for town and country*, 1830-1869; London Vol. 74, Iss. 442.

university's library. What was 'utopian' theory centuries ago, in some ways, is reality in the present, especially regarding equality. With this idea in mind, I wonder if there were critics then who labelled these writings about a future of equality as 'infeasible.' Women, I would argue, had the indirect diachronic ability to receive education or vote, and now have the synchronic ability to do so.

In this article, I do not intend to claim that achieving utopia is possible, nor do I wish to insert any new concepts into Valentini's conceptual map of the ideal/non-ideal debate. This article intends to create a lens in which we can assess the infeasibility argument attached to ideal theory, and acknowledge the subjective nature of feasibility when we consider these real-time examples of ethics and conditions of society evolving over the last few centuries. Common beliefs of "good/bad" and "right/wrong" are quite malleable, so making hard claims against ideal theory's value in contemporary political philosophy seems to misrepresent the nature of human history and the notion of change within society.

I think there is a misconception about ideal theory, particularly ideal theory that falls into the "end-state" or "utopian" categories, which is that it represents a 'final form' idea of society. There is a symbiosis between ideal and non-ideal theory in which an ideal is established and justice-improvements are made until the ideal has become reality, like we see with *On the Education of Girls*. This cycle is what I describe as the serial transitions in indirect diachronic theory. Ideal theory, like non-ideal theory, is not static but rather dynamic and requires new thinking and development. By perceiving ideal theory as strictly ideas about an 'ultimate end', we are limiting our understanding of human society and neglecting what we know about its evolution, which is that it is constantly changing. The question that guides ideal theory in political philosophy is not necessarily "what does society look like when there is no more work to be done?" But rather, "what would universal happiness and fairness look like?" Consider this my request for contemporary philosophers not to shy away from ideal theory. There are ideas to be had about what the world could look like, and I want to read them.

3. Conclusion

The word 'infeasible' has tainted the category of ideal theory within political philosophy. In this paper, I explained Jensen's metaphysical concept of practical possibility as a way to reimagine ideal theory, and its relationship with non-ideal theory, as indirect diachronic theory. With that, I explained how indirect and direct diachronic ability could be lenses used to understand transitional and end-state theory and their dependence on each other. Following that, I challenged what is to be expected of philosophy when practically applying theory for the sake of justice-improvements by suggesting that it is unsound to assess the purpose of ideal theory with the specifications of non-ideal theory. Finally, after reimagining the common argument of 'infeasibility' against ideal theory and distinguishing its separate purpose from non-ideal theory, I concluded this paper with reasons for ideal theory's relevance in the new production of political philosophy, arguing for an "updated utopia" as society continues to improve itself, moving closer to what will hopefully be a just world.

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Ignorance et injustice structurelle : sommes-nous responsables de ce que nous ne savons pas?

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Par sa multi-dimensionnalité, ses diverses applications et son ancrage profond dans nos pratiques quotidiennes, l'ignorance se veut une notion épistémologique et éthique foisonnante. En épistémologie, on se questionne à savoir ce qu'implique ne pas savoir quelque chose. Est-ce la simple absence de connaissance ? Ces questionnements ont une portée dans le domaine social et éthique dans la mesure où l'ignorance se perçoit dans notre relation avec notre propre système épistémique, mais aussi dans nos relations interpersonnelles, avec les autres et avec le monde : nous affirmons souvent que nous aurions dû savoir ou qu'un individu *x* aurait du savoir, etc. Selon les contextes, l'ignorance peut avoir au moins deux connotations distinctes : une connotation positive, par exemple, quand on y voit ce qui stimule la recherche scientifique, ou un gage d'impartialité ; une connotation négative lorsqu'elle apparaît comme un échec épistémique (la négligence ou l'oubli) ou quelque chose qui fait obstacle à l'enquête (le refus d'accéder à ou d'utiliser de l'information pertinente). C'est à cette dernière dimension que nous nous intéresserons plus précisément dans le cadre de cette recherche : l'ignorance peut être une mauvaise chose parce que, dans de nombreux cas, son occurrence et sa perpétuation peuvent causer des torts épistémiques considérables envers certains groupes d'individus, ceux dont les pratiques, les croyances et les interprétations sont illégitimement ignorées.

Nous souhaitons ici rendre compte du caractère abstrait et multifactoriel de l'ignorance en proposant une conceptualisation intégrative de l'ignorance la comprenant à l'intersection de l'épistémique et du social. Nous présenterons une compréhension de l'ignorance comme intrinsèquement sociale et structurelle : comme se produisant et se maintenant dans les habitudes et les relations épistémiques des individus. Nous traiterons des cas où l'ignorance, qu'on la subisse ou qu'on la produise, a des dimensions sociales et politiques. En un sens purement descriptif et psychologique, ignorer quelque chose par erreur (par exemple ignorer l'âge du roi d'Angleterre) serait la même chose qu'ignorer ses droits quand on appartient à un groupe marginalisé (par exemple, ignorer ses droits à disposer d'un logement salubre quand on est une personne réfugiée en attente de papiers). Or, il y a entre les deux une distinction importante sur le plan normatif. Puisque l'ignorance qui nous intéresse est celle qui est de nature sociale et politique, on doit l'envisager dans un autre espace normatif que celui de la seule psychologie. Dans cette perspective, ignorer ses droits se distingue clairement du fait d'ignorer où nous avons pu laisser nos clés.

En soulignant les ramifications sociostructurelles de l'ignorance, nous observerons par la suite, le lien indéniable entre les injustices sociales et la production (ou non-production dans notre cas) des savoirs. La pertinence d'une telle conceptualisation est la possibilité d'attribuer à certaines instances d'ignorance le statut d'injustice structurelle dans la mesure où le maintien et la perpétuation de cette ignorance se conçoivent dans l'organisation de notre univers épistémique et dans le partage inadéquat et injuste de certaines ressources épistémiques. Avec ceci, nous observerons finalement la possibilité d'assigner une responsabilité envers ce phénomène dans l'optique de réparer nos habitudes d'ignorance préjudiciable.

1. L'ignorance

Dans le canon épistémologique contemporain, l'ignorance peut se comprendre comme un maintien de perspectives erronées aux sujets des autres (comme nous pouvons voir chez Mills ou Médina) ou comme une pratique épistémique substantive (chez Alcoff par exemple) ayant des effets directs ou indirects sur notre univers social¹. Considérer l'ignorance autrement qu'en comparaison à la connaissance, par exemple, en la comprenant comme un maintien actif de perspectives erronées permet de concevoir des notions importantes aux théories féministes et aux *Critical Race Theories* puisque, comme nous verrons, cette conceptualisation éclaircie le mécanisme à l'œuvre dans certaines oppressions². À titre d'exemple, le discrédit de la crédibilité de la parole d'un groupe ou d'un individu peut se percevoir par la perpétuation ou le maintien de l'ignorance dès lors qu'elle soutient une perspective inadéquate au sujet du groupe ou de l'individu concerné.

Mills théorise sa notion d'ignorance blanche (*White ignorance*) autour de ce type d'ignorance. L'ignorance ici se comprend comme un ensemble de croyances fausses au sujet des groupes n'étant pas considérés comme « blanc », déformant ainsi l'apparence du groupe et engendrant possiblement des injustices³. Pour Mills, l'ignorance est une pratique systémique basée sur le groupe et comprend donc ce phénomène en rapport aux oppressions raciales. En tant que membre d'un groupe social dominant, nous avons (parfois involontairement) instaurer des pratiques de formation de croyances soutenant une idée déformée ou inexacte au sujet d'un groupe⁴. La théorie de Mills se veut pertinente dans une conceptualisation de l'ignorance puisqu'elle inclut une notion de motivation quant aux attitudes du sujet, incorporant conséquemment une notion d'agentivité — notion qui n'est pas mise de l'avant adéquatement dans des théories traditionnelles de l'ignorance. Selon Mills, chaque individu est situé et donc se place dans sa spécificité en tant que membre intégrant de groupes sociaux « dans un milieu social donné, dans une société à une époque donnée »⁵. Les intérêts et motivations des groupes ont, en ce sens, un rôle dynamique et actif dans le maintien et la production de l'ignorance⁶. Cette position *agentiviste* rend compte du volet actif de l'ignorance dans la mesure où le sujet (que ce soit un individu ou un groupe) contribue au phénomène de l'ignorance en le maintenant et le perpétuant⁷. Ainsi, se détachant d'une conceptualisation purement cognitive, Mills accorde à un phénomène cognitif une définition sociale venant expliquer plus adéquatement comment l'ignorance — ici l'ignorance blanche — se perçoit à travers nos relations interpersonnelles. Ceci rend donc compte de cas plus complexes — des cas d'injustices par exemple — où l'ignorance nécessite une compréhension beaucoup plus détaillée. À titre d'exemple, pensons au personnage de Tom Robinson du roman d'Harper Lee, *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Accusé du viol et du meurtre d'une femme blanche dans les années 30 (actes qu'il n'a pas commis), Tom Robinson, homme noir, est victime de plusieurs injustices herméneutiques et testimoniales basées sur une ignorance blanche, plus précisément, basées sur un ensemble de croyances fausses au sujet de la relation qu'un homme noir peut entretenir avec une femme blanche. Tom voit donc son témoignage et sa défense discréditée en raison de sa couleur de peau, de sa race et du contexte raciste de l'époque. Précisément, selon Mills, l'ignorance doit se comprendre comme une pratique profondément inculquée à la pensée de certains groupes dominants — comme le groupe *des blancs* — en plus d'être une pratique

¹ Kassar, “*What Ignorance Really Is. Examining the Foundations of Epistemology of Ignorance*”, 301.

² Kassar, “*What Ignorance Really Is. Examining the Foundations of Epistemology of Ignorance*”, 302.

³ Mills, “Global white ignorance”, 217.

⁴ Alcoff, “Epistemologies of Ignorance: Three Types”, 48.

⁵ Mills, *Black Rights/White Wrongs: The Critique of Racial Liberalism*, 50.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁷ Nous voyons aussi cette conceptualisation *agentiviste* dans d'autres théories d'épistémologie sociale. Par exemple chez Médina et Alcoff. Cf. Kassar, “*What Ignorance Really Is. Examining the Foundations of Epistemology of Ignorance*”, 302.

subie par les groupes marginalisés. Comme nous observerons dans les prochaines sections, une conceptualisation comme celle-ci permet de comprendre comment se dessine concrètement l'ignorance en tant que phénomène épistémologique social en plus d'entrevoir l'intrication délicate entre l'ignorance et certaines formes d'injustices sociales.

Similairement, Médina conçoit l'ignorance comme quelque chose d'*actif* soit comme constitutive des habitudes et des attitudes épistémiques du sujet⁸. Dans une position comme celle-ci, l'agentivité de l'agente épistémique est reconnue puisqu'elle participe activement à l'ignorance. Dans son ouvrage *Epistemologies of Resistance*, Médina s'attarde aux situations d'oppressions et aux injustices sociales dans lesquelles les relations épistémiques sont à la base du problème. Dans les relations interpersonnelles (que ce soit dans les échanges ou dans les témoignages), selon lui, les biais cognitifs, les préjugés et les distorsions épistémiques affecte de manière notable la production de savoir dans la mesure où, par la perpétuation de l'ignorance, ces pratiques entretiennent et maintiennent les oppressions⁹. Plus clairement, selon Médina, les injustices sociales (comme le racisme ou le sexisme) nuisent à l'univers épistémique puisque les individus présentent une connaissance amoindrie au sujet d'autrui, mais aussi au sujet d'eux-mêmes ce qui affecte de manière considérable la santé épistémique de la société : en nuisant à la capacité de transmettre des savoirs, mais aussi à notre disposition à recevoir de l'information¹⁰.

Pour sa part, Alcoff suggère de comprendre l'ignorance comme une pratique épistémique substantielle en soi, et donc comme une pratique épistémique distincte de la connaissance et non comme sa simple négation¹¹. La pertinence de la théorie d'Alcoff se trouve dans le fait qu'elle soutient que ces pratiques substantielles d'ignorance sont structurelles¹². Ainsi, l'ignorance n'est pas simplement une pratique épistémique, mais doit se comprendre comme étant maintenu et perpétué par les structures sociales¹³. Les écrits d'Alcoff nous permettent de renforcer notre compréhension de la nature subjective et contextuelle de l'ignorance en nous la présentant comme étroitement liée aux identités de groupe. L'appartenance à certains groupes engendre certaines dispositions épistémiques en influençant ou non des motivations quant au développement de jugements ou d'opinions. Ainsi, selon Alcoff, bien qu'étant un phénomène épistémique d'abord et avant tout, il semble indéniable de soutenir que les intérêts et motivations des groupes sociaux jouent un rôle dynamique et actif dans le maintien de l'ignorance. En s'appuyant sur la théorie du point de vue, en tant qu'agentes épistémiques, nous connaissons toujours quelque chose en nous plaçant dans une position sociale et une spatialité x en plus d'avoir une expérience et une histoire spécifique¹⁴. Comme Mills, pour Alcoff l'ignorance est profondément inculquée à la pensée de certains groupes dominants en plus d'être subie par les groupes marginalisés¹⁵.

Alcoff rend donc compte de la pertinence et de la nécessité d'avoir égard à l'identité dans les considérations et les théorisations issues de l'épistémologie (se rapportant à la connaissance ou l'ignorance). Précisément, selon l'autrice, la non-reconnaissance des différentes identités sociales est aussi un refus de reconnaître l'autre pour qui il est ainsi que l'une des causes des problématiques de communication :

« Dans un contexte où l'on ne peut pas invoquer l'histoire, la culture, la race ou le genre de peur d'être accusé de jouer, par exemple, "la carte de la race" ou de la politique identitaire, ou encore du "féminisme de victime", nos véritables

⁸ Médina, *The Epistemology of Resistance*, 28

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Alcoff, "Epistemologies of Ignorance: Three Types", 39.

¹² *Ibid.*, 40.

¹³ Kassar, "What Ignorance Really Is. Examining the Foundations of Epistemology of Ignorance", 302.

¹⁴ Alcoff, "Epistemologies of Ignorance: Three Types", 41.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

points communs et intérêts partagés ne peuvent même pas commencer à être correctement identifiés. Quand je refuse d'écouter en quoi tu es différent de moi, je refuse de connaître qui tu es. Mais sans comprendre pleinement qui tu es, je ne pourrai jamais apprécier précisément à quel point nous sommes plus semblables que je ne l'aurais initialement supposé [ma traduction] »¹⁶.

Bien que dans certains cas l'ignorance peut se comprendre clairement en termes propositionnels, elle génère un phénomène beaucoup plus grand incorporant des notions d'agentivité d'identité et de structure. Il faut donc comprendre l'ignorance comme un phénomène complexe, emboîtant plusieurs caractéristiques dépendant de la proposition, de la situation et de la position des individus pour pouvoir être en mesure de rendre compte des causes et conséquences diverses de l'ignorance. Ainsi, pour proposer une conceptualisation de l'ignorance se voulant complète, il semble pertinent de soutenir une définition intégrative de l'ignorance soit comme intégrant son aspect épistémologique et social. Les théories présentées illustrent bien le fait que l'ignorance est un phénomène social en soulignant le caractère relationnel de notre ignorance et notre connaissance. Nous formons nos croyances en partie à l'aide de nos interactions sociales et par le partage de connaissances. L'ignorance est en ce sens sociale et structurelle puisqu'elle se produit, se maintient et se partage à travers une dynamique d'interactions faisant partie intrinsèquement des structures sociétales et épistémiques. Par une analyse sociale de l'ignorance, il est dès lors possible d'affirmer la pertinence de la prise en compte de l'historicité et de la dimension contextuelle dans la conceptualisation de ce phénomène — ce qui ne s'effectue pas de manière adéquate si l'on comprend l'ignorance qu'en termes propositionnels. La pertinence d'une conceptualisation intégrée de l'ignorance issue de l'épistémologie sociale est la possibilité de désormais considérer l'ignorance comme pratique préjudiciable soit comme causant, dans certains cas, des torts épistémiques¹⁷.

2. L'injustice structurelle

Cette section entend effectuer une analyse de l'ignorance et de son rôle joué au sein des injustices et plus précisément au sein des injustices structurelles. Nous verrons que, comme l'ignorance, l'injustice structurelle ne se comprend pas nécessairement de manière directe et volontaire. Les injustices structurelles sont parfois diffuses, n'impliquant donc pas un désir conscient et dirigé de causer du tort à autrui. De ce fait, par la manière dont l'injustice structurelle relève d'actions causant du tort de manière non intentionnelle, il semble que l'ignorance y joue ici un rôle crucial. Avant de s'attarder à la relation qu'entretient l'ignorance avec les injustices structurelles, il est pertinent de se pencher sur une théorisation de ce qu'on entend ici par « injustice structurelle ». Nous proposons de comprendre l'injustice structurelle au sens où Iris Marion Young l'entend soit comme étant une injustice présente lorsque « les processus sociaux placent certains groupes sous une menace systématique de domination ou de privation de développer et d'exercer leurs capacités » et que simultanément ces processus offrent aux groupes dominants « des opportunités notables d'exercer et de développer leurs capacités »¹⁸. Le

¹⁶ “In a climate in which one cannot invoke history, culture, race, or gender for fear of being accused of playing, for example, ‘the race card,’ or identity politics, or ‘victim feminism,’ our real commonalities and shared interests cannot even begin to be correctly identified. When I refuse to listen to how you are different from me, I am refusing to know who you are. But without understanding fully who you are, I will never be able to appreciate precisely how we are more alike than I might have originally supposed”. Alcoff, *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self*, 6.

¹⁷ Nous disons « dans certains cas » ou « certaines formes d'ignorance » pour souligner que ce ne sont pas toutes les instances d'ignorance qui se comprennent comme injustices structurelles. En ce sens, nous n'entendons pas une division catégorique claire. Faire référence aux « formes » d'ignorance veut seulement rendre compte de la possibilité de comprendre l'ignorance de différentes manières et non de réduire l'ignorance à l'injustice structurelle.

¹⁸ Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 52.

modèle yougsien est ici mis de l'avant puisqu'il se voit comme pierre de touche en ce qui concerne les injustices structurelles et la responsabilité que nous avons envers ce type d'injustice. Selon Young les injustices structurelles doivent se comprendre comme injustices ordinaires dans le sens où celles-ci sont produites par les conditions générales de la société et se perpétuent dans notre quotidien¹⁹. La pertinence d'incorporer une notion de structure à l'injustice permet d'apporter une compréhension plus claire à ces formes d'injustices qui se maintiennent et se perpétue à travers le fonctionnement « normal » et quotidien de la société. Plus clairement, nous verrons que l'injustice structurelle est un tort moral, mais, étant ancrée dans nos pratiques quotidiennes et s'œuvrant dans les limites de la coordination sociétale, elle se produit légalement. Par le fait même, l'injustice structurelle ne se conçoit pas à partir de l'action individuelle, mais doit plutôt se comprendre comme conséquence d'un amalgame « d'actions et d'intuitions individuelles » produit par des individus agissant, pour la plupart, « dans les limites des lois et des normes » de la société²⁰.

Par la difficulté de proposer une définition claire de ce qu'on entend par structure, Young propose de voir cette notion sous le terme de *processus* sociostructurels ce qui permet, selon l'auteur, de rendre compte du « dynamisme des actions dans les contextes institutionnels »²¹. Les processus sociostructurels se produisent et se reproduisent continuellement de manière simultanée. La structure n'est donc pas statique. Sachant ceci, Young définit quatre caractéristiques interdépendantes des processus sociostructurels comme étant à la source de la création des injustices structurelles. Tout d'abord, Young soutient qu'il y a des faits socialement objectifs dont certains individus font l'expérience comme étant contraignants alors que d'autres en font l'expérience comme quelque chose de permissif²². Les faits socialement objectifs sont les règles institutionnelles et sociales, par exemple, les règles entourant le droit au logement²³. Il est important de préciser que ces processus sociostructurels ne contraignent pas de manière directe les individus, mais plutôt de manière indirecte en limitant les possibilités²⁴. De plus, ces contraintes sont vécues en rapport à notre position sociale et nos relations interpersonnelles : le sexe, le genre, l'ethnicité, la religion, etc. La difficulté de se trouver un logement en raison de sa religion ou de son ethnicité est un exemple de contrainte vécu en vertu de la position sociale. L'importance de la considération de position sociale dans une conceptualisation des processus sociostructurels est qu'elle rend possible l'identification d'injustices justement dirigées vers la position sociale qui persistent à travers le temps²⁵. De surcroît, prendre en considération la position sociale permet de rendre compte des dynamiques interactionnelles de privilège et de désavantage s'œuvrant au sein même de notre structure sociale. La troisième caractéristique veut que les processus sociostructurels soient produits en action dans le sens où les individus agissent et interagissent dans leurs institutions, dans leurs sociétés²⁶. Finalement, les structures sociales doivent se comprendre comme une accumulation d'actions produites par des individus poursuivant des projets ou des désirs sans s'être coordonnés entre eux²⁷. À ce sujet, la combinaison d'actions des individus produit souvent des conséquences involontaires pouvant être injustes pour certains groupes. Sachant ceci, selon Young, les *processus* sociostructurels peuvent

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 93.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 52.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 53.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 54.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 55.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 57.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 62.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 62.

produire de l'injustice puisqu'ils se définissent comme contraintes objectives envers une position sociale spécifique, produites en action et engendrant des conséquences involontaires²⁸.

L'injustice structurelle fait donc référence à des limitations structurelles injustes qui restreignent les opportunités de certains, tout en accordant des privilèges à d'autres²⁹. À titre d'exemple, prenons les processus sociostructurels permettant de mettre de l'avant le *statu quo* avantageant une perspective masculine et blanche. Ce *statu quo* privilégie les individus issus d'un groupe dominant particulier, soit ici les hommes blancs, tout en désavantageant, au même moment et de manière considérable, les individus issus d'autres groupes sociaux tels que les femmes et les individus n'étant pas identifiés comme "blanc". Tel que vu chez Mills, l'ignorance blanche est une pratique systémique basée sur le groupe social impliquant, entre autres, que le consensus implicite, le *statu quo* en ce qui concerne les normes cognitives, l'interprétation du monde, la moralité des actions, etc., se fait en vertu d'une vision du groupe dominant c'est-à-dire les blancs. L'injustice structurelle est donc une injustice incarnée et construite à même les structures (que ce soit sociale, politique, économique, etc.)³⁰. Nous avons vu que ces injustices sont, majoritairement, produites de manière inconsciente et involontaire. Nonobstant, il semble pertinent de souligner qu'elles peuvent aussi être produites de manière délibérée. Comme le souligne Maeve McKeown dans son article *Structural Injustice*, l'injustice structurelle est aussi parfois perpétuée de manière volontaire par certains individus dans l'optique de servir leurs propres intérêts³¹. Clairement, selon l'autrice, ces injustices seront délibérément perpétuées par un maintien et une reproduction des conditions ou des normes institutionnelles et sociales soutenant ces injustices alors que les individus auraient le pouvoir d'agir et de contrer ces injustices en changeant les normes ou les conditions.

§ L'ignorance en tant qu'injustice structurelle

Ayant déjà établi la possibilité de concevoir l'ignorance comme un phénomène sociostructurel, il est désormais possible de comprendre la relation délicate qu'elle entretient avec les injustices structurelles. Précisément, nous proposons ici d'observer de quel est le rôle de l'ignorance au sein de ces injustices structurelles en plus d'admettre la possibilité de conceptualiser l'ignorance comme une injustice structurelle *en soi*. L'ignorance, incorporant des notions d'agentivité et d'attitudes épistémiques, peut nous permettre de comprendre certaines formes d'injustices dans les cas où l'ignorance maintenue et perpétuée cause un tort moral ou épistémique. Comme nous avons vu avec Mills et Médina, l'ignorance peut donner lieu à des formes d'injustices et d'oppressions dans la mesure où les pratiques d'ignorance volontaire, de biais cognitif, de censure, etc. sont des pratiques d'ignorance désavantageant épistémiquement certains groupes d'individus : en les faisant passer pour de moins bonnes agentes épistémiques qu'elles ne le sont ; en diminuant leur crédibilité dans la production de connaissance ; ou en nuisant à leurs capacités à connaître, etc. Bien que certaines de ces formes d'ignorance peuvent se produire de manière directe, la plupart du temps, elles se maintiennent et se perpétuent de manière indirecte et inconsciente dans nos habitudes épistémiques. Par exemple, les citoyen·ne·s canadien·ne·s possèdent une longue histoire de pratiques d'ignorance envers les conditions et les savoirs autochtones. Sans nécessairement être de manière directe ou consciente, les savoirs autochtones furent souvent ignorés et passés sous silence en

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Parekh, "Getting to the Roots of Gender Inequality", 676.

³⁰ McKeown, "Structural Injustice", 1.

³¹ McKeown, "Structural Injustice", 5.

inculquant notre propre manière de vivre et de voir les choses³². Cette ignorance, n'étant pas produite la plupart du temps de manière directe, est manifestée et maintenue en majeure partie par les institutions sociales, les structures et les mécanismes — ce qui rend compte de l'aspect structurel de l'ignorance³³.

Rappelons que l'injustice structurelle se présente lorsque les processus sociostructurels « place un certain groupe sous une menace systématique de domination ou de privation de développer et d'exercer leurs capacités » en se maintenant et perpétuant à travers les actions et habitudes quotidiennes des individus participant à la structure³⁴. Il est possible de caractériser certaines formes d'ignorance d'injustice structurelle dans la mesure où l'ignorance (en favorisant et soutenant des oppressions épistémiques ; en censurant ; en proposant des perspectives fautives ; etc.) se perçoit comme contrainte objective envers une position sociale spécifique, produite en action et engendrant des conséquences involontaires. Autrement dit, certaines formes d'ignorance sont des injustices structurelles en se perpétuant et se reproduisant par les processus sociostructurels, dans les habitudes et les actions de plusieurs individus. Certaines formes d'ignorance placent certains groupes (par exemple les groupes racisés, les femmes, etc.) sous une menace systématique et systémique de domination et de privation dans l'exercice de leurs capacités en niant ou en réduisant leurs portées et leurs développements épistémiques.

3. Responsabilité envers les injustices structurelles

Toute la pertinence pratique d'une considération de l'ignorance en tant qu'injustice structurelle se trouve dans la possibilité de conceptualiser une responsabilité envers l'ignorance. Il semble contradictoire de parler de responsabilité en lien avec un phénomène tel que l'ignorance puisqu'il rend compte de ce qu'on ne sait pas. Cependant, comme nous l'avons vu, l'ignorance n'est pas une pratique passive. Dans plusieurs cas, l'ignorance se produit et se reproduit de manière active à travers nos habitudes épistémiques et joue donc un rôle déterminant dans la production de nos connaissances. L'ignorance est quelque chose de partagé et d'acquis. Elle est en ce sens un phénomène épistémique profondément social. En outre, comme nous avons vu avec Médina, Alcoff et Mills, l'ignorance est un élément clef dans la reproduction des injustices sociales, et plus précisément des injustices structurelles. Par cette participation aux injustices et la possibilité d'attribuer le statut d'injustice structurelle à certaines instances d'ignorance, il semble pertinent de clore cet essai en ouvrant la possibilité de conceptualiser une théorie de la responsabilité envers ce phénomène. Nous proposons ici de concevoir une responsabilité partagée politique envers l'ignorance en soutenant le modèle de connexion sociale de Young, mais en le solidifiant en y ajoutant une théorie de la complicité structurelle.

§ *Le model de la connexion sociale*

Selon le modèle de la connexion social, en tant qu'individus, nous possédons une responsabilité envers les injustices structurelles dans la mesure où nous contribuons, par nos actions, aux processus structurels ayant

³² Pensons, par exemple, à la suppression continue des connaissances et des pratiques autochtones, au Canada comme aux États-Unis. Dans son article *Suppression of Indigenous Fossil Knowledge*, Adrienne Mayor souligne la négligence de certaines connaissances autochtones de la part de la communauté scientifique au sujet de découvertes paléontologiques, de théories sur le climat et l'environnement, des formes de vie observées, etc. Ces connaissances sont pourtant légitimes et correspondent même aux théories scientifiques modernes, mais semble avoir été négligée puisqu'elles ne répondent pas aux « standards » scientifiques. Cf. Mayor, "Suppression of Indigenous Fossil Knowledge." Dans *Agnology: Making and. Unmaking of Ignorance*, Proctor, R & Schiebinger, L (dir).

³³ Kassar, "What Ignorance Really Is. Examining the Foundations of Epistemology of Ignorance", 302.

³⁴ Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 52. [ma traduction]

des conséquences injustes³⁵. Nous sommes en ce sens, connectés aux injustices structurelles par notre participation aux structures sociales. La pertinence du modèle de la connexion sociale est qu'il ne concerne pas nécessairement les actions directes ou concrètes : l'amalgame des actions des individus peuvent produire des injustices structurelles sans que ces actions soient caractérisées d'illégalité, donc sans que ces actions puissent en soi être considérées comme faute morale. Étant produite par une multiplicité d'actions et d'individus distincts, il est parfois difficile d'assigner clairement la responsabilité à un individu en particulier³⁶. Le modèle de responsabilité de Young rend compte de ces résultats involontaires en concevant une responsabilité envers les injustices structurelles en vertu de notre participation aux processus sociostructurels. Parce qu'il arrive que plusieurs injustices se chevauchent, il n'est pas toujours facile de comprendre notre position puisque nous pouvons à la fois être victimes et bénéficiaires de certains processus structurels. Il faut noter que l'intersectionnalité complexifie la manière dont nous sommes reliés aux différentes injustices.

Considérant que toutes celles participant aux processus structurels possèdent une forme de responsabilité, il est possible de comprendre cette responsabilité comme partagée. Nous partageons une responsabilité puisque c'est l'accumulation de nos actions qui produit des conséquences injustes. Ceci implique alors l'assignation d'une responsabilité personnelle envers les injustices structurelles, mais partagée dans le sens où nous ne la portons pas seule — nous la portons tous individuellement³⁷. Young mentionne que nous portons cette responsabilité en ayant conscience que les autres la portent avec nous ; « la reconnaissance de ma responsabilité est aussi la reconnaissance de cette collectivité inchoative de laquelle je fais partie »³⁸. Cette responsabilité se veut aussi politique puisque nous avons bien une responsabilité envers nos actions individuelles, et indirectement, envers les structures auxquelles celles-ci participent³⁹. La responsabilité est partagée et politique dans le sens où elle ne peut s'acquitter que par des actions collectives⁴⁰. Nous devons donc nous engager collectivement avec les autres pour le bien de l'organisation de nos relations sociales et pour coordonner nos actions de manière plus juste⁴¹. Cette théorie de la responsabilité se veut pertinente puisque l'assignation de la responsabilité est « tournée vers l'avenir » en ayant comme objectif la formation de structure plus juste, mais accorde tout de même une importance instrumentale aux fautes passées dans la mesure où la responsabilité est assignée en observant les conditions générales de la société et la manière dont nous avons contribué aux structures injustes par le passé⁴².

Cette présentation, quoique non exhaustive, nous permet de cerner les éléments essentiels à la théorie de la responsabilité de Young. L'attrait de l'utilisation de cette théorie se trouve dans sa conception d'une responsabilité se voulant partagée et politique. Sous un modèle comme celui-ci, l'élimination des injustices structurelles concerne tout le monde puisque, par notre participation à la structure, nous possédons tous, individuellement, mais de manière partagée, une responsabilité envers ces injustices. Nous possédons donc, en tant qu'individu, une responsabilité permettant de joindre des notions politiques et éthiques en incorporant l'individu, son agentivité, le collectif et la structure⁴³.

³⁵ Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 105.

³⁶ Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 100.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 109.

³⁸ Zheng, "What Kind of Responsibility Do We Have for Fighting Injustice? A Moral-Theoretic Perspective on the Social Connections Model", 117.

³⁹ McKeown, "Iris Marion Young's "Social Connection Model" of responsibility: Clarifying the meaning of connection", 492.

⁴⁰ Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 110.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁴² Zheng, "What Kind of Responsibility Do We Have for Fighting Injustice? A Moral-Theoretic Perspective on the Social Connections Model", 119.

⁴³ Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 110.

§ *Complicité structurelle*

Bien que pertinente, la théorie de la responsabilité proposée par Young fait face à plusieurs critiques. L'une d'entre elles est l'affirmation que, en omettant des notions de blâme et de culpabilité ainsi qu'en assignant une responsabilité à tous, cette théorie risque d'engendrer un détachement où aucune personne ne se sent réellement concernée. En ce sens, la proposition voulant que notre connexion sociale génère une responsabilité devrait être plus claire et explicite⁴⁴. Autrement dit, comment notre participation aux processus sociostructurels engendre-t-elle une responsabilité ? Tout en conservant la théorie de Young, Corwin Aragon et Alison Jaggar proposent d'incorporer la notion de complicité structurelle soutenant que la complicité est une forme de connexion sociale permettant d'expliquer de quelle manière les individus d'une société ont une responsabilité envers les injustices structurelles⁴⁵. Aragon et Jaggar conçoivent une forme de complicité structurelle se détachant donc d'une théorie de la complicité interpersonnelle ou institutionnelle comme celle soutenue par Kurtz. En effet, la théorie structurelle ne prend pas base dans une théorie individualiste, donc se concentrant sur l'action individuelle, les intentions ou motivations des agentes (complicité interpersonnelle), et ne conçoit pas l'État comme une collectivité unifiée donc n'attribue pas une forme de complicité similaire à tous les membres (complicité institutionnelle)⁴⁶. La complicité structurelle proposée par Aragon et Jaggar peut s'incorporer à la théorie de Young dans la mesure où elle soutient que, en tant qu'individus appartenant à une société, nous devons être considérés comme structurellement complices lorsque dans l'exercice de notre agentivité nous renforçons les structures sociales injustes⁴⁷. Autrement dit, nous sommes structurellement responsables des injustices structurelles puisque nous participons (de manière consciente ou non) au maintien et à la perpétuation de celles-ci. Nous pouvons donc être structurellement complices sans avoir eu l'intention ou la conscience de contribuer à ces injustices⁴⁸. Pour Aragon et Jaggar, cette notion de complicité structurelle implique une liaison, une connexion à l'injustice structurelle ce qui produit une responsabilité quant à la réparation de ces injustices. En d'autres termes, nous sommes connectés aux injustices non seulement par notre participation aux processus sociostructurels, mais bien parce que contribuant par nos actions ou omissions aux processus sociostructurels, nous sommes *complices* de ces injustices structurelles.

§ *Sommes-nous responsables de notre ignorance?*

Ayant précédemment établi la possibilité de considérer l'ignorance comme une injustice structurelle et ayant par la suite présenté une théorie de la responsabilité envers ce type d'injustice il suit logiquement qu'il serait possible de considérer une responsabilité vis-à-vis notre ignorance. Considérant le modèle de Young en complémentarité avec la complicité structurelle, il est donc possible d'affirmer avoir une responsabilité envers nos pratiques d'ignorances préjudiciables. En effet, notre contribution aux processus sociostructurels entretenant des instances d'ignorance nous rend complices de ces pratiques et nous rend donc responsables de ce type d'injustice. Ces pratiques d'ignorance ne sont souvent pas visibles ou compréhensibles si nous les observons individuellement. En effet, l'ignorance en tant qu'injustice structurelle se maintient et se perpétue à travers un amalgame d'action, sans nécessairement avoir comme objectif conscient de placer certaines personnes dans une

⁴⁴ Aragon & Jaggar, "Agency, Complicity, and the Responsibility to Resist Structural Injustice", 446.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 446.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 449.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

position de vulnérabilité, sujettes à la domination épistémique. La pertinence d'établir une notion de responsabilité se perçoit ici. Invisibles et souvent indirectes, les occurrences d'ignorances ne peuvent être éliminées que par des actions collectives. Pour destituer cette forme d'injustice, nous devons donc nous engager collectivement avec les autres, et cet engagement collectif naît de notre responsabilité partagée et politique envers ces injustices.

Se distinguant d'une complicité institutionnelle, il semble possible d'élaborer un degré d'implication dans l'injustice produisant ainsi un degré différent dans la responsabilité. Considérer l'ignorance de cette manière permet d'assigner plus aisément une responsabilité plus élevée à certains groupes ou certains individus en vertu de leurs degrés de relation avec les structures générant les injustices. Par exemple, par leurs positions sociales, les institutions gouvernementales et leurs membres devraient se voir assigner une responsabilité plus importante en ce qui concerne les pratiques d'ignorance et avoir l'objectif de réparer ces torts structurels. Se détacher du blâme peut sembler, dans certains cas, inadéquat, surtout considérant le rôle déterminant de certaines personnes dans des injustices. Dans l'instauration de lois ou politiques racistes/sexistes, par exemple, il y a bien des individus ayant un pouvoir de décision quant à l'instauration ou la modification de celles-ci ci faisant preuve d'ignorance à l'égard de certains groupes sociaux.

L'idée pertinente derrière la théorie de Young est que nous sommes tous affectés par les structures. Nous sommes tous contraints. En ce sens, selon Young, personne ne cause explicitement ces processus sociaux. C'est donc l'accumulation de nos actions qui forme les injustices structurelles. Toutefois, par la problématisation des injustices structurelles, il est possible d'observer la présence de relations de pouvoir où certaines personnes ont un pouvoir d'action déterminant produisant et reproduisant délibérément certaines formes d'injustices. Étant tous incarnés dans des relations de pouvoir, nous devons partager la responsabilité et agir collectivement. À ce sujet, comme le souligne Maeve Mckeown, Young ne met assez l'accent sur le fait que certaines personnes ou institutions sont autrices principales dans la production d'injustices et doivent en ce sens se voir attribuer une responsabilité plus importante envers ces injustices⁴⁹. Certains individus sont placés en position de pouvoir, pouvant dès lors avoir un impact considérable sur la réduction des injustices. Si nous prenons l'exemple des *Sweatshops*, selon Mckeown, les gérantes, les propriétaires ou les hauts placés de ces industries devraient porter une responsabilité plus élevée vu leurs contributions et leurs participations déterminantes dans ces injustices⁵⁰. Nous devons donc remettre les relations de pouvoir dans l'équation. L'attrait d'une théorie de la complicité structurelle est qu'elle ne se veut pas le seul modèle applicable de responsabilité. Autrement dit, nous pouvons être responsables par complicité structurelle, alors que d'autres peuvent être responsables de manière plus directe, comme participant aux injustices de manière blâmable⁵¹. Ce modèle ne s'érige donc pas en théorie unique et admet l'apport d'autres formes de responsabilité.

Nous devons donc collectivement lutter contre notre ignorance, c'est-à-dire activement s'atteler à déconstruire certains « savoirs » établis (ceux qui conduisent à l'exclusion d'autres savoirs pourtant légitimes) et mieux reconnaître les cas et les pratiques d'ignorance qui causent du tort. Le rétablissement collectif de nos processus sociaux et épistémiques n'est pas une tâche facile. Mais, en cohérence avec les théories présentées voici quelques pistes d'actions collectives et d'attitudes qui pourraient permettre de corriger la situation: être attentif·ve à sa position sociale, à son rapport avec le groupe dominant et à la manière spécifique dont on acquiert nos connaissances; être attentif·ve à notre position privilégiée, le cas échéant, et nous forcer à sortir hors de notre bulle épistémique; proposer ou mettre de l'avant des contres-histoires, des expériences alternatives qui permettent

⁴⁹ Mckeown, "Social justice", 373.

⁵⁰ McKeown, "Structural injustice", 132. Selon Young, les *Sweatshops* exemplifient un cas d'injustices structurelles mondiales (*global*) se voyant aussi comme résultat de l'action de plusieurs individus.

⁵¹ Aragon & Jaggard, "Agency, Complicity, and the Responsibility to Resist Structural Injustice", 439.

de remettre en question l'unité de l'histoire et des normes établies, et rompre le silence entourant les perspectives marginalisées⁵². Lorsqu'il est notamment question de racisme et de sexisme, s'informer auprès de ressources produites par les acteur·trice·s touché·e·s en premier lieu nous permet d'avoir accès à une connaissance plus directe et même expérientielle des oppressions vécues, pour lever le voile d'ignorance sur les oppressions et la manière dont elles se perpétuent. Nous devons aussi motiver la discussion sur ces thématiques en cohérence avec notre degré d'influence, de pouvoir et notre possibilité d'agir que ce soit à grande échelle, en produisant des écrits à ce sujet, en intervenant auprès des organisations ou des institutions sociales et politiques, ou à plus petite échelle en canalisant notre énergie à motiver la discussion et la réflexion auprès de notre communauté et de nos proches, etc. Comme le soutient Medina, pour contrer notre ignorance et, de la même manière, dans certains cas, permettre une rectification de certaines oppressions, nous devons accueillir et adopter ce qu'il appelle une « épistémologie de la résistance » en étant sensible aux résistances épistémiques et aux oppositions, en s'outillant de reconnaissance et d'engagement⁵³. Selon lui, toutes les oppositions que nous rencontrons « doivent être reconnues et, dans la mesure où cela devient possible, elles doivent être impliquées d'une manière ou d'une autre (même si, dans certains cas, seul un mode d'engagement négatif est possible ou bénéfique sur le plan épistémique) »⁵⁴. La théorie de Médina nous engage à rechercher une forme d'équilibre épistémique, c'est-à-dire un équilibre dans l'interaction des oppositions et des croyances divergentes, sans que certaines prennent systématiquement le dessus sur les autres pour des raisons non épistémiques⁵⁵.

Nous devons favoriser et encourager le développement de connaissances sur des sujets qui restent sous-étudiés, en faisant collectivement pression sur les instances gouvernementales, les organismes de recherche ou en entamant soi-même ces recherches. À la manière de Robert Proctor, Naomi Oreskes et Erik Conway, si nous avons les ressources et la capacité de le faire, nous devons exposer les cas de *sciences non-faites*, exposer l'ignorance perpétuée et explorer les domaines laissés dans l'ombre⁵⁶. Bref, corriger l'ignorance implique une forme de correction de l'homogénéisation épistémique et sociale. Les processus sociostructurels et nos communautés épistémiques (incluant nos connaissances, nos croyances ainsi que nos méthodes d'acquisition de connaissance et nos ressources épistémiques) doivent être compris comme irréductiblement hétérogènes⁵⁷. Nos processus sociostructurels et nos communautés épistémiques doivent alors rendre compte de la pluralité et de la diversité des voix et des groupes, ainsi que soutenir la légitimité des différentes manières d'appréhender le monde, d'acquérir des connaissances, d'agir, etc.

4. Conclusion

Dans ce texte, nous avons tenté d'analyser l'ignorance sous un angle social en exposant la manière dont elle joue un rôle déterminant au sein des injustices structurelles. Nous avons vu que nous devons comprendre l'ignorance sous une conception intégrative donc incorporant le volet épistémique et social. Se détachant de l'épistémologie traditionnelle, considérer l'ignorance ainsi rend compte de l'agentivité des individus et souligne

⁵² José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance*, 289.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* [Ma traduction].

⁵⁵ José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance*, 50.

⁵⁶ Voir Naomi Oreskes et Erik M. Conway. *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Climate Change*, New York London Oxford New Delhi Sydney: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011 & Robert N. Proctor, *Golden Holocaust : Le Complot Des Industriels Du Tabac*. Paris: Des équateurs, 2019.

⁵⁷ José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance*; Iris Marion Young, *On Female Body Experience: « Throwing Like a Girl » and Other Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) et *Justice and the Politics of Difference*.

donc de manière adéquate le caractère social et structurel de l'ignorance. Tel que souligné par Mills, en tant que membre d'un groupe social dominant, nous avons (parfois involontairement) instauré des pratiques de formation de croyances créant de l'ignorance systématique en soutenant des idées déformées ou inexacts au sujet d'un groupe. Par le fait même, l'ignorance peut se considérer comme une injustice structurelle dans la mesure où elle se produit dans des pratiques sociales normalisées — maintenu et perpétué par les structures et les institutions — et place systématiquement certains groupes dans une position vulnérable où les individus appartenant au groupe sont à risque de domination épistémique.

Toute la pertinence de considérer l'ignorance ainsi se trouve dans la possibilité d'une assignation de responsabilité. En suivant le modèle de responsabilité politique partagée de Young, nous devons considérer être responsables des injustices structurelles puisque nous participons, par nos actions, aux processus sociostructurels produisant des conséquences injustes. De manière plus précise, en incorporant la théorie d'Aragon et Jaggar, nous sommes responsables de ces injustices structurelles puisque notre contribution nous rend complices de celles-ci. Par notre ignorance, en tant qu'action ou omission, nous contribuons aux processus sociostructurels produisant des injustices ce qui nous rend « connectés » à ces injustices. Ainsi, en tant que membre de la société, dans l'exercice de notre agentivité, nous renforçons les structures sociales injustes. Conceptualiser la responsabilité ainsi favorise l'engagement collectif et social envers la réparation des injustices et, dans notre cas, la réparation des pratiques d'ignorance. En effet, ayant établi une compréhension de l'ignorance comme phénomène épistémique social, nous avons défini l'ignorance comme un phénomène qui se partage, se maintient et s'acquiert. Par cette nature profondément sociale et relationnelle, la rectification des pratiques d'ignorance nuisibles ne peut se faire que par la reconnaissance sociale et l'action collective. Plus précisément, ce modèle rend possible l'attribution d'une responsabilité plus élevée pour certains groupes en vertu de leurs positions sociales et leurs complicités structurelles plus exigeantes : communauté scientifique, institutions gouvernementales, etc. Évidemment, bien que pertinente, cette théorie doit se comprendre comme un socle, une base, rendant possible les actions collectives plus concrètes. L'enjeu reste l'actualisation réelle d'actions collectives et l'application concrète d'actes ou de gestes permettant un vrai rétablissement de ces pratiques d'ignorance.

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The shame of the moral pioneer strategy: A Defense from Early Confucian Discourse

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In contemporary discussions of moral shame, on the one hand, many scholars argue that shame threatens individual autonomy since it is often imposed upon individuals. As Martha Nussbaum's psychoanalytic perspective suggests, being 'complete' means that moral agents have the capability to develop their internal abilities and choose the life they want. This is an essential condition that enables us to act autonomously. However, "shame is born from the fact that we can never fully live up to the standard of being 'complete,' given our inherent 'incompleteness'" (Jing Hu, 2022).

On the other hand, some scholars argue that moral shame and autonomy can be preserved and reconciled. Cheshire Calhoun concludes that there are two strategies for reconciling moral shame and autonomy. The first is the "shame of the moral pioneer" strategy, represented by Anthony O'Hear and John Kekes. Under this strategy, what matters is living up to some moral standards that one cares about, and the judgment of social others does not hold significant weight for someone who feels shame. As a mature moral agent, one will only be concerned with standards they have set for themselves autonomously, which may align with social morality. They also argue that there is a developmental progression for moral agents from moral immaturity to moral maturity. The second strategy is the "shame of the discriminating social actor", represented by Bernard Williams, which posits that 'shame is always shame in the eyes of real social others' (Calhoun 2004, 129-35).

In this paper, I primarily focus on the "shame of the moral pioneer" strategy, as I believe it has the potential to be reconciled with early Confucian thoughts. By integrating early Confucian ideas, this strategy can address the flaws pointed out by Calhoun. She argues that moral shame is intrinsically connected with the concern for the moral agent's standing in society. However, the shame of the moral pioneer strategy severs this connection by "forcing us to discount common shame experiences as immature" and "neglecting the weight of others' judgment" (Calhoun 2004, 135-40).

Rituals, in the early Confucian sense, were inventions of sages that contained normative moral standards connecting individuals, society, and nature (Book of Rites, 1). This insight suggests that rituals can provide a self-endorsed justification to shield moral agents from the vulnerability of social judgment. Meanwhile, shame can serve as a catalyst for our moral development, offering a positive approach to dealing with immature shame experiences. Following this line of thought, I argue that incorporating the concept of rituals can address the flaws Calhoun points out in the shame of the moral pioneer strategy.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the early Confucian thoughts I discuss in this paper arose before 221 BC, during what is commonly referred to as the Spring and Autumn period and the Warring States period, or the Pre-Qin period. Representative Confucian thinkers from this period include Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi, and the representative classics include the Analects, the Book of Rites, the Book of Songs, Mencius, and Xunzi.

1. The Flaws of the Moral Pioneer Strategy

In this section, I am going to review the shame of the moral pioneer strategy and then demonstrate Calhoun's critique of it. Normally, shame is considered an uncomfortable feeling that arises when a person fails to fulfill certain values, whether internal or external. If we adopt external values, we may have to face judgment from outside sources, including potentially critical social observers, leading to vulnerability. In such cases, we

must consider the perspectives of others when it comes to our moral conduct. These individuals may be either an imagined audience or actual people. In doing so, our autonomy in moral action may encounter significant challenges. Conversely, if we embrace internal values, this problem can be mitigated. Besides these two possibilities, Anthony O'Hear also points out that we can experience shame not only from failing external values but also from failing internal values. In this scenario, there is a developmental progression from feeling shame about failing external values to failing internal values. For instance, the values held by children, who are considered immature moral agents, are typically shaped by others such as their parents, teachers, and the community in which they grow up. In contrast, adults or other mature moral agents feel shame for failing internal values rather than external ones (Anthony 1976, 76-7). Following this line of thought, moral shame and autonomy can be reconciled. Apart from Anthony, some scholars also endorse this perspective, including John Kekes and Virgil C. Aldrich. Calhoun has termed their perspective the shame of the moral pioneer strategy (Calhoun 2004, 129).

According to this explanation, we can conclude that the shame of the moral pioneer strategy has two main points: a) an immature moral agent feels shame from failing external values rather than internal values; b) a mature moral agent can only feel shame from failing internal values. Based on these two features, Calhoun has formulated her critique.

First, Calhoun accuses the moral pioneer strategy of "forcing us to dismiss common shame experiences as immature." Since the moral pioneer strategy suggests that there is a developmental progression from feeling shame for failing external values to failing internal values, Calhoun focuses on subordinate groups, including racial minorities, the poor, women, Jews, lesbians, gay men, and others who are easily judged within social norms. However, the moral pioneer strategy categorizes them as immature moral agents. For example, Calhoun illustrates this by noting "when black men are routinely suspected of being shoplifters or muggers, or when the poor are assumed to have brought poverty on themselves through their own laziness or lack of self-control" (Calhoun 2004, 136). In these cases, social bias can trigger shameful experiences for the poor or black men. If their shame experiences are considered within the moral pioneer strategy, they would have to accept that they feel shame because they are not morally mature. However, this explanation is not plausible, even if it can reconcile moral shame and autonomy. As Calhoun concludes, "the price of reconciling moral shame and autonomy in this way is the loss of a plausible depiction of shame" (Calhoun 2004, 130).

Second, the moral pioneer strategy implies that a mature moral agent can only feel shame for failing internal values. However, in Calhoun's argument, a) "Moral shortcomings must first be exposed to public view before they can be the source of shame or, [b)] at the very least, the contempt that others would show us were our shortcomings exposed must be clearly imaginable" (Calhoun 2004, 131). To be precise, she posits that everyone plays a social role in our daily lives, and we fear being the subject of others' ridicule and gossip. Therefore, shame is inevitably tied to our desire to conceal our moral shortcomings from the views of others. In other words, we hardly disregard others' perspectives. However, Calhoun further argues that the moral pioneer strategy severs the connection between our experiences of shame and the views of social others, as we only feel shame when we fail the moral principles we have established for ourselves.

Based on these points, Calhoun concludes that "the moral pioneer strategy not only fails to explain the social character of shame; it also forces us to dismiss common shame experiences as irrational or immature" (Calhoun 2004, 135).

2. The Heart of Shame 羞惡之心, Yi Ru 義辱 and Self-Cultivation 修身

In this section, I am going to demonstrate that the early Confucian conception of shame can be seen as a sort of moral pioneer strategy. If so, it would be permitted for us to respond to Calhoun's accusations of the moral pioneer strategy by using the early Confucian insights.

According to the previous section, we can conclude that the moral pioneer strategy has two significant features: a) a mature moral agency can only sense the shame of failing the internal value; b) there is developmental progress for moral agents from being morally immature to become morally mature. So, if the early Confucian thoughts also have similar features in discussing moral shame, then we can say that the early Confucian conception of shame can be seen as a moral pioneer strategy. In *Mencius*:

The heart of compassion is the germ of benevolence; the heart of shame, of dutifulness; the heart of courtesy and modesty, of observance of the rites; the heart of right and wrong, of wisdom. Man has these four germs just as he has four limbs. 惻隱之心，仁之端也；羞惡之心，義之端也；辭讓之心，禮之端也；是非之心，智之端也。人之有是四端也，猶其有四體也。（“Gongsunchou First”, *Mencius*）

In this paragraph, Mencius claims that man has four germs existing as his four limbs, which means the four germs are a part of himself. Shame, as one of the four germs, is certainly internal. And shame is the beginning of dutifulness (義 Yi) which is one of the most important values in Confucian discourse. Mencius points out that shame as an emotion is the beginning of dutifulness. It can trigger our pursuit of moral values. So, this sentence implies two points: a) shame can exist without the necessary connection from outside, and b) dutifulness, as one of the most important moral values, is generated by the moral agent herself.

Xunzi, who is the great opponent of Mencius, might not agree with Mencius' accounts about how moral value can be generated, but it is indisputable that he also shares the point that shame should be felt by failing internal values. In *Xunzi*:

There is disgrace in terms of what is Yi. There is disgrace in terms of one's circumstances. [...] When one is perverse and corrupt, when one goes against what has been allotted and disrupts the proper order, when one is arrogantly violent and greedy for profit, this is a case where disgrace derives from within. This is called disgrace in terms of what is yi. When one is cursed at or insulted, when one is dragged by the hair or pummeled, when one is caned or has one's feet cut off, when one is decapitated or drawn and quartered, or when one's family records are destroyed or one's descendants are eradicated, this is a case where disgrace comes from outside. This is called disgrace in terms of one's circumstances. [...] And so, it is possible for a gentleman to suffer disgrace in terms of his circumstances, but it is not possible for him to suffer disgrace in terms of what is yi. 有義辱者，有執辱者。流淫汙慢，犯分亂理，驕暴貪利，是辱之由中出者也，夫是之謂義辱。詈侮捽搏，捶笞臍腳，斬斷枯磔，藉靡后縛，是辱之由外至者也，夫是之謂執辱。故君子可以有執辱，而不可以有義辱。（“Correct Judgements”, *Xunzi*）

According to this paragraph in *Xunzi*, there are two different types of shame: a) the shame of Yi; b) the shame of Shi. For a), the shame of Yi is the shame experience we could feel when we fail our internal values. In this shame experience, our autonomous behavior makes us feel shame. This behavior follows our will but disobeys our internal values. For instance, a person embezzles money when he is in charge of finance as a government official. In this example, he admits that he should not embezzle the money belonging to the public and his duty is protecting the money belonging to the public. Even though he still failed in his duty and value, and feels shame for his behavior, this shame experience is what *Xunzi* called the shame of Yi.

On the contrary, for b), the shame of Shi happens when a person is told that they should feel shame because they failed the value which social others hold. For instance, imagine a student from a poor family is told that he

should feel shame for his poverty and his lower-class background. In this circumstance, the student is experiencing the shame of Shi. In the end, Xunzi pointed out that “it is possible for a gentleman to suffer disgrace in terms of his circumstances, but it is not possible for him to suffer disgrace in terms of what is yi.” ‘Junzi’, translated as ‘Gentlemen’, in the early Confucian thoughts, represents the highest moral model for everybody to pursue in the early Confucian thoughts. Normally, a gentleman should contain all the Confucian virtues, such as benevolence, justice, propriety, wisdom, and trust. In the Confucian discourse, a gentleman can be seen as a mutual moral agent. For Xunzi, as a mutual moral agent, a gentleman can have the shame of Shi, but cannot have the shame of Yi. In other words, the shame from outside is morally acceptable, but from the inside is morally unacceptable. Furthermore, the shame from the outside does not make a person less virtuous or immoral, but the shame caused by the moral agent’s autonomous behavior and failure in her own values makes a person immoral. It is worth noting that if the shame of Shi is acceptable for a mutual moral agent, then Xunzi does not sever the connection between the moral agent and social others when the shame of Shi happens, which opposes what Calhoun contends of the moral pioneer strategy. This problem will be further discussed in the next section.

In early Confucian thought, there is also developmental progress from moral immaturity to becoming morally mature. This progress is called self-cultivation 修身, and the highest moral goal to achieve is to become a gentleman 君子. In *the Book of Rites*:

The ancients who wished to illustrate illustrious virtue throughout the kingdom, first ordered well their own states. Wishing to order well their states, they first regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things. Things being investigated, knowledge became complete. Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere. Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were then rectified. Their hearts being rectified, their persons were cultivated. Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated. Their families being regulated, their states were rightly governed. Their states being rightly governed, the whole kingdom was made tranquil and happy. From the Son of Heaven down to the mass of the people, all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of everything besides. 古之欲明明德于天下者，先治其国；欲治其国者，先齐其家；欲齐其家者，先修其身；欲修其身者，先正其心；欲正其心者，先诚其意；欲诚其意者，先致其知，致知在格物。物格而后知至，知至而后意诚，意诚而后心正，心正而后身修，身修而后家齐，家齐而后国治，国治而后天下平。自天子以至于庶人，壹是皆以修身为。（“Da Rue”, *Book of Rites*）

This paragraph clearly points out the importance of self-cultivation and demonstrates the method and progress of self-cultivation. From ‘rectifying their hearts’ to ‘the whole kingdom was made tranquil and happy’, a person needs to cultivate herself from inside to outside. The end of this developmental progress is being morally mature. Based on these paragraphs, we can conclude that the early Confucian thoughts can be seen as a sort of moral pioneer strategy in discussing shame since it contains two main features of moral pioneer strategy: a) a mature moral agency can only sense the shame of failing the internal value, and b) there is developmental progress for moral agents from being morally immature to becoming morally mature. By clarifying this, we can invite the early Confucian thoughts in addressing the flaws of the moral pioneer strategy Calhoun pointed out.

3. 'Look Not at What is Contrary to Rituals' 非禮勿視

According to Calhoun, moral shame is intrinsically connected with concern for the moral agent’s standing in society. However, the shame of the moral pioneer strategy severs this connection by “forcing us to dismiss

common shame experiences as immature” and “neglecting the weight of others' judgment” (Calhoun 2004, 135-40). In this section, I will argue that with the help of rituals, the shame of the moral pioneer strategy can overcome the flaws pointed out by Calhoun.

In the passage *Xue Er*, “有子曰：... 恭近於禮，遠恥辱也；Master You said: ... When respect is shown according to what is proper, one keeps far from shame and disgrace” (*Xue Er* 13, *The Analects*). In this sentence, Legge translated ‘禮 Li’ into ‘what is proper’. So, this sentence also can be translated as “When respect is shown according to Li [the rituals]”. This sentence implies that rituals can provide a solution for moral agents in experiencing shame. But, how? In *The Book of Rites*, “When about to go up to the hall (of a house), he must raise his voice. 將上堂，聲必揚” (*Qu Li* I, *The Book of Rites*). This means that the moral agent must inform the people in the hall before he comes. Why is this important? There is a story recorded in *Han Shi Wai Zhuan*: One day, Mencius' wife is sitting in the room, and her sitting posture is not in accordance with the ritual. Mencius is angry with his wife because of this and wants a divorce. Then, when Mencius' mother heard about this, she disagreed with Mencius since Mencius didn't inform his wife before he got in the room. According to the rituals, Mencius disobeyed the rituals first, but not his wife, so Mencius cannot divorce his wife. In this story, we can see that rituals play an important role in assigning who should be blamed for a shame experience. In the beginning, Mencius' wife was accused by Mencius of being ashamed of her behavior, and she became the target. But Mencius' mother invited rituals as an evaluation for both behaviors and then Mencius became the one who should be blamed.

In this case, rituals exhibit two functions: 1) when a shame experience happens, rituals can transform a problem regarding whether the victim should be ashamed of herself into a problem regarding responsibility assignment; 2) rituals assign responsibility through providing a clear and practical evaluation to both moral agents. About 1), in our everyday experiences, when a shame experience happens, it is easy to involve the victim in a socially uncomfortable situation. For instance, when the homosexual community is accused of being shameful for their sexual orientation, it is easy to make us focus on the problem of whether homosexuality is acceptable or not but neglect whether this accusing behavior is proper or not. But rituals can help us focus on the problem which mainly brings harm to the victims. For the 2), in a shame experience, as I also mentioned in the 1), we easily put our attention on the victim, but not the moral agents on both sides. When a moral agent is in an uncomfortable situation under social others' judgment, the social others' actions should also be justified by the rituals. However, when we begin to put both sides into the evaluation of rituals, it assumes that rituals have the justification for both sides. In other words, rituals have to be accepted as their value in common. Then, rituals can provide justification for the evaluation. But where does this justification come from? First, the justification comes from the rightness of the rituals. According to the *Book of Rites*, rituals hold the rightness in the relations among individuals, family, society, and nature (*Book of Rites*, 1). In contemporary discourse, this represents moral rightness. So, anyone who pursues acting rightly could be the one under the evaluation of rituals. Second, rituals do not merely represent rightness among moral agents, but as a practical method, they motivate and guide our self-cultivation. So, a ritual's justification also comes from the moral motivation of every moral agent. It is not only to justify a moral agent's action from outside law or social norms but also to justify a moral agent by herself from inside for who intends to act morally.

Confucius clarified this insight in responding to Yan Yuan's question about what the perfect virtue is. In *The Analects*:

Yan Yuan asked about perfect virtue. The Master said, "To subdue one's self and return to propriety, is perfect virtue. If a man can for one day subdue himself and return to propriety, all under heaven will ascribe perfect virtue to him. Is the practice of perfect virtue from a man himself, or is it from others?" Yan Yuan said, "I beg to ask the steps of that process." The Master replied, "Look not at what is contrary

to propriety; listen not to what is contrary to propriety; speak not what is contrary to propriety; make no movement which is contrary to propriety." Yan Yuan then said, "Though I am deficient in intelligence and vigor, I will make it my business to practice this lesson." 顏淵問仁。子曰：「克己復禮為仁。一日克己復禮，天下歸仁焉。為仁由己，而由人乎哉？」顏淵曰：「請問其目。」子曰：「非禮勿視，非禮勿聽，非禮勿言，非禮勿動。」顏淵曰：「回雖不敏，請事斯語矣。」 (Yanyuan 1, *The Analects*)

This paragraph explains the content of ‘ren’ (仁, Benevolence). Legge’s translation of ren into ‘perfect virtue’ is controversial, since we can emphasize the importance of ren as the perfect virtue we pursue, but the meaning of this word is not the perfect virtue. Ren has meaning itself and ‘perfect virtue’ can only describe the importance of ren. Thus, in this paragraph, I understand ren as benevolence. It highlights the meaning of “ren”, which is to “subdue one’s self and return to propriety”. Meanwhile, “subdue one’s self” is the method to “return to propriety”, and ren can only be pursued by relying on ourselves, but not depending them. Then we have to ask if what we have is the things or conducts we need to subdue ourselves. Confucius points out that the conduct is contrary to propriety, or rituals. Here we need to focus on two points: a) the cultivation to pursue ren can only rely on ourselves by following rituals, which highlights self-discipline but not heteronomy, and b) rituals stand in a position between ourselves and others' conduct. The latter point suggests that rituals serve as justifications for our own behavior and the behavior of others. Typically, looking and listening focus on others' actions or objects, as there must be specific actions or objects that we can observe or listen to. In other words, there must be objects of our attention. Therefore, looking and listening are behaviors through which we receive information, often from the actions of others. On the other hand, speaking and moving are behaviors through which we express ourselves, typically conveying our intentions or thoughts. Furthermore, whether we should receive or act depends on these rituals. Thus, rituals serve as a bridge of justification between our actions and those of others.

To sum up, rituals can help us navigate difficult and uncomfortable situations by indicating who should take responsibility or initiate action. For instance, it is the intruder's responsibility not to look or engage improperly; it is not the fault or weakness of the person who was seen inappropriately. Rituals like these provide guidance by helping us attribute responsibility, fault, or wrongdoing, determining who should change their behavior. I have shown that with the help of rituals, we have theoretical resources to guide us in difficult and uncomfortable situations, including when experiencing shame. Rituals serve as a buffer, facilitating a proper connection between moral agents and social others instead of severing that connection.

4. Conclusion

To recap Calhoun's critique, she believes that the moral pioneer strategy fails to reconcile shame and autonomy. This failure arises from the intrinsic connection between moral shame and a moral agent's concern for their standing in society. However, the shame of the moral pioneer strategy severs this connection by compelling us to dismiss common shame experiences as immature and to neglect the weight of others' judgment. Regarding the link between moral shame and the concern for a moral agent's standing in society, Calhoun, with the assistance of John Deigh's account (Deigh 1983, 238), emphasizes that shame is tied to the thought of social others' actual or imagined contempt. In her own words, “shame is strongly connected with the desire to conceal failure from others' view” (Calhoun 2004, 131). Thus, “moral shortcomings must first be exposed to public view before they can be the source of shame,” or “the contempt that others would show us were our shortcomings exposed must be clearly imaginable.”

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