PHILOSOPHY
of a
MARTYR

ADAM RICHARD

Philosophy of a Martyr

Adam Richard

Philosophy of a Martyr
Copyright (c) 2013 Adam Richard
Cover Design by Laura Shinn

This book is given away for free by the author and is not meant to be sold.

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

What is truth?

Such a silly question has been considered mysterious by various so-called philosophers for millennia. Of course, the truth is what's real - objects or entities that are really there. Children, laypeople, and professors alike understand what I mean when I talk about the truth - only a few philosophers have trouble grasping it. The statement "it's raining outside" is true (in a certain context) if there are physical drops of water falling from clouds nearby. The fact that I can't rigorously *define* truth is a mere limitation of language, not a limitation of our understanding.

But there is a much more interesting, related question that has arisen out of philosophy: How do we, human beings, know that the way our brains have developed, to tell us facts about the world, coincide with true facts about the world? How do we know that our experiences correspond to things that are really there? Presumably our brains evolved, or at least came about, by some process, resulting in some people in the world today, one of whom is you, the reader. Various inputs enter your brain and are processed by it. Is there any reason to believe that the process it uses to arrive at its "truths" ends up telling you true facts about things that are really there?

Actually, I'm afraid there isn't.

Rather, there is every reason to believe that the brain is tailored for *survival*. (This idea has been suggested by Alvin Plantinga [3], and by many others.) On first inspection, this may seem to coincide with truth - if a wild animal is about to eat me, I'm more likely to survive if I believe it's really there, with the goal of eating me. But there are many examples where a lie has more survival value. Suppose, for example, that some tigers ate humans, while others did not (perhaps they didn't like the taste, or perhaps they were vegetarian). Is it in my best survival interest to believe the truth, that some tigers don't eat humans, or would I be better off being deceived into believing the simplified prejudice "all tigers eat humans"? It seems that, at least in an environment where tigers are prevalent, those who believe the latter would be better off, because they would immediately run away from a tiger. The ones who believe the truth - that not all tigers eat humans - might be more inclined to stop and ponder what to do when encountering a tiger, and sometimes get eaten. Over time, the ones who believed the truth about tigers would become the minority.

This is a silly example that has little bearing on our lives. But there is another situation where survival and truth are often at odds, which is not

the least bit theoretical. Namely, when a collection of humans group themselves together into a society, that society is more likely to survive if its members do not believe truths that would give them an incentive to leave or rebel against that society. If group B occupies land that would give group A a survival advantage, then group A is better off believing that group B consists of people who are dangerous and should be killed, even if that is false. Therefore, if a member M of group A believes the truth, namely that group B isn't so bad after all, then that member would have a lower chance of surviving in (or at least, remaining in) group A. Perhaps M would rebel and be killed, or leave group A, or be shunned by the other members of group A and hence less likely to reproduce with one of them and teach the truth to M's offspring. All of these options would give a survival advantage to group A.

In any case, the result is that over time, societies gradually become more and more insistent on adhering to beliefs that are not true, but which help them exist. And, as we shall see, this fact has significant moral implications.

Chapter 2: The Attempt To Elide One's Own Viewpoint

There's a temptation, upon realizing that society and survival have shaped our point of view, to deny knowledge altogether. We can't tell which of our beliefs have been manipulated by people for survival advantage - the skeptic triumphantly concludes - so we can never know that any of them are really true. This, I think, is jumping to conclusions too quickly.

What are we really doing when we take this path? What's really going through my mind (and I bet, yours too) when I doubt all my own knowledge, is the following. I'm imagining a disembodied version of myself, like a ghost, floating outside my body and looking at it. The disembodied version of me looks at the embodied version and thinks, "look at all the stuff he can't see from that limited viewpoint - how clueless he is."

Of course, what the disembodied me says is true - I am clueless. But the problem with this approach is that the disembodied me has its *own* viewpoint, and I must therefore ask the question - does it know anything? If I apply skepticism to myself, surely I must create yet a third viewpoint and apply skepticism to my skeptical disembodiment? Of course, that's absurd - I can't regress viewpoints forever. In other words, I have failed to *elide my own viewpoint* by trying to step outside it and consider it, because whatever I consider it with - the "disembodied self" - is really part of my viewpoint.

It's not that I can't be wrong - it's just that I can't do any better that to believe my own viewpoint, to believe what seems true. I've been thrown into this unknown universe, not knowing where I came from or where I'm going, but with things I seem to know planted in my head. Let's call this "apparent knowledge". Shall I throw out this apparent knowledge just because I'm fallible, or shall I cling to it because I have nothing else to cling to? I confess that I cannot help but do the latter.

Does this contradict the previous section where I postulated that many beliefs are survival-based? Not really. I just don't advocate throwing out beliefs simply because they *might* have been survival based. It certainly does mean that I must consistently test my beliefs against scientific experiment and reason, so I can root out those beliefs that seem to have come from survival need. Once I find that one of them probably has, then I can throw it out or question it with more scrutiny, because then I no longer have a basis for believing it. In other words, scepticism is warranted, but not wanton scepticism - rather a more controlled, gradual discarding of

preconceptions as they're discovered to be such.

Chapter 3: Eliding the Conscience

Behind the discussion of scepticism lies a much more important and troubling issue. On the one hand, it's very difficult for us to determine what of our knowledge is real and what was implanted in us for survival. But on the other hand, we have to somehow address the question of our purpose. We find ourselves thrown into an unknown universe, not knowing where we came from or where we're going. Are we supposed to do something, and if so, what? I have an inclination towards certain things I'm supposed to be doing, which is commonly called my "conscience", and many other people report having these inclinations too. This is a type of "apparent knowledge" mentioned in the previous section, the other type being factual truths, which are known through "reason".

How do I deal with the fact that many of the things I think come from my conscience in fact come from society, which has a tendency to give me inclinations that help it survive? Can any of these inclinations be "rescued"? If so, how do I determine which ones? If not, how do I address the problem of deciding the purpose and direction of my existence from my utterly nescient state?

From now on, the discussion shall turn to building a framework to answer these questions and shall abandon questions of factual or scientific knowledge, which I consider to be of much lesser importance. If I deny logic, suppose that a cliff is also not a cliff, and walk off it as a result, I lose merely my life; but no one can further judge me for this action. Denying the factual kind of knowledge merely leads to stupid decisions. On the other hand, if I find myself thrown into this universe, not knowing where I came from or where I'm going, with certain truths about what I should do planted in my head, and I deny *those* - then perhaps I am in great danger. I'm in danger of rejecting the only purpose of my own existence that I have any clues about.

Of course, many reject that there are any morals at all that are known instinctively, saying - as I mentioned in Section 1 - that morals are learned from society as a mechanism for the survival of the society. I certainly agree that many, perhaps most, morals we seem to know instinctively are of that type - but why insist that they *all* are? It seems to me that that's a dangerous conclusion to jump to. As with the attempt to elide one's own viewpoint discussed in Section 2, the moral relativist here claims to be able to elide their own conscience and judge which of their morals aren't really their morals. At least, it seems prudent to investigate and discard each of our moral inclinations in a careful manner, rather than taking the

immediate path of the wanton sceptic. We might be very uncertain of our moral inclinations, but they're all we've got, so we can't elide them.

And we needn't be surprised at the prevalence of the moral relativist position. Our instincts have been selected for the belief "I should survive", or beliefs that lead to the survival of the group. Therefore, if real morals exist, they'll still necessarily be clouded by these instincts, and difficult to distinguish from the instincts, leading us to perhaps "give up" and adopt moral relativism. But moral relativism, or moral apathy, based merely on the inability to see a clear moral path is unjustified; we need a process to distinguish our survival instincts from what our conscience is really trying to tell us.

Chapter 4: In Search of the True Morality

How then can we sift out the false morals based on survival, and find any true morals that remain, so we'll know what we should do in an unknown universe? It must be a slow process of throwing out those imperatives we think are from our conscience, after discovering that in fact they're from society. I suggest going about it in the following way.

For a given belief or action that seems moral to me, there are two possibilities. Either it coincides with survival, with happiness, with the established order in society that aids its survival, or it does not. If it does, then it is not very interesting, because it doesn't matter whether it's truly the right thing to do. Even if it isn't virtuous, I might as well do it anyway, because it makes me happier (or helps me survive). I have no merit for doing such an action, of course, since I'm only doing it for myself, but unless I have some other reason to believe it to be wrong (in contradiction to my feelings), there's no reason not to do the action.

There are other moral beliefs or actions that oppose survival, happiness, and the established order in society. There is every reason to believe that these are truly moral precepts, because they could not be developed traits that have deceived me into surviving, since they don't aid survival. These are the morals which are difficult to follow, which we naturally recoil from, because they lead us into dangerous situations, or situations that make us feel self-loathing, or perhaps even situations that risk our lives; yet we still, on a deep level, know that they're the right actions. How could tendencies that cause us to risk our lives and alienate us from those around us have arisen as a survival advantage? If we follow these morals, then we have true merit, because such actions are done for their own sake.

There could also be moral precepts I seem to have that make me happy, but oppose the survival of myself or my group. Likewise, there could be precepts that aid survival, but oppose happiness. The first kind would probably be true morals, though their existence is rare (I don't know of any such *moral* imperatives I have that tell me to prefer my own well-being to the survival of others). The second kind are the trickiest, because they *could* be true moral precepts, but there doesn't seem to be any way to find out, because they could just as easily have evolved for survival of myself or my group. I suppose we have to hang onto these morals just in case.

Now let's look at some real-world examples showing how this view of morality might be applied, and really affect our lives.

Chapter 5: Well-Intentioned Lies

A common situation where a moral choice opposes survival / happiness is the well-intentioned lie. It's an interesting example because not everyone agrees that a well-intentioned lie is morally wrong. Most people would agree that lying for self-gain, such as to get oneself out of trouble, is not good, but many people would also say that such lying ends up working against the liar anyway, so it shouldn't matter to them whether it's morally wrong. But what about lying to help someone else? Claiming that this is morally wrong would be opposed to the survival of the species, and isn't it convenient that it is precisely at this juncture that it is commonly excused.

Indeed, my claim is that there is always a more difficult, and more moral alternative to a well-intentioned lie. The most common well-intentioned lie, that of telling someone an untruth that makes them feel good, is easy to defeat: feeling good is not necessarily best. In the short term, you may win someone's approval by lying to them, but in the long term you may alienate them or cause them confusion or harm. If I think I'm good at singing because you didn't want to hurt my feelings in admitting that I'm not, then I might be inclined to volunteer to sing at public events, causing distress to my audience and bitterness on their part towards me. Then when I do find out the truth about your opinion of me, my feelings would be more bitter than if I had learned it earlier. The hard, and the moral, thing to do would be to have admitted at first that I'm bad at singing, which may have caused short-term bitterness, but the best outcome in the long term. Yet, we have not evolved to do this, and those who do are often worse off in surviving within the established order.

A more difficult case is protecting someone from an aggressor. You say that if an aggressor is searching for someone, I have a duty to protect that person by lying to the aggressor; but is not that the easy way out? Don't I also have the option of explicitly refusing to divulge information, of standing up to the aggressor myself, probably at the risk of my own well-being? And is it not the greater difficulty of this new action, the greater courage required of it, that reveals it to me a much more right action than the well-intentioned lie, regardless of the lie's harmlessness?

Chapter 6: What Has Value?

Perhaps the greatest moral choice which threatens survival, of the species if not the individual, is the choice of whose well-being to care about. Evolution and the established society always give us an incentive to prefer the well being of members within our own society or group. In primitive societies, this was perhaps your own clan. At various times in history, it might have been your own nation. At one point those who were formerly slaves were included in the valued as well. Today (perhaps), most people believe all humans, at least, have value. But there is usually *some* group included and some excluded.

I find it no coincidence that humans are most powerful when working together as a large group, and that to care for other humans over and above everything else is to increase the chances of survival for humans. If someone tries to extend the "included" group beyond humans, he or she will face opposition from other humans, because the belief in the value of those non-humans provides no survival advantage to the human establishment. Indeed, such a belief provides a survival disadvantage, because there are many instances where we must choose between human happiness and the well-being of non-humans.

It's obvious (at least to me) that what has intrinsic value is whatever has experiences. If a rock can't experience what's happening to it, then it can't be harmed or made happy, so it only has value insofar as it can make another happy. The question to ask, then, is: what has experiences? There is no good reason to say "only humans". We already have an explanation for why humans have always said that humans alone feel pain or have language or are capable of higher thought: there's a survival advantage to humans as a species.

A digression: many people believe that a brain is the central element involved in the ability to experience. This is not true. A brain is what allows us to feel emotions, to feel pain, to be aware of ourselves, etc. It is not necessarily needed to have *experiences*, or in particular to have *good* or *bad* experiences. Nobody has ever or will ever find the part of us that is necessary for *experiences*.

The only thing I know for sure has experiences is me. People tend to infer that there are others with experiences because they see others who act like them. But to *restrict* the "others" to those who are like you is the essence of discrimination. Did not the slave traders believe that slaves were not truly human because they saw them as different from themselves?

You'll say that I have to draw the line somewhere. Perhaps you'll imagine that I'll draw it at animals, or at fungi, or at living things. I say that you do *not* need to draw a line. The only non-discriminatory, the most reviled, most difficult, and most honest approach is to recognize that you really *don't know* where the "others" are, and therefore *anything* could have experience. That implies that we have an obligation to avoid harm to *everything*.

Though this implies living in respect of nature, the respect doesn't necessarily look like the popular, romantic view of respect for nature, i.e. of never affecting it. Consider, for example, a rock - the fact that a rock might have experiences might naively lead you to believe that you should not smash it. But this does not actually follow. For all you know, the rock might *prefer* to be smashed, or it might prefer not to be smashed - you don't have the slightest clue. The only reason for your aversion to smashing is that you, as a brittle creature with a nervous system and fragile organs, would be harmed by being smashed. But a rock isn't similar to you in that respect, or in very many respects that have moral implications. In summary, you have no moral obligations toward that rock.

With other things that are more like me, I have more information about how to help them. Plants have no nervous system, so there's no reason to believe they feel pain, but there is a reason to believe they don't want to be killed (if they happen to have experiences), because life struggles to avoid being killed. Animals do have a nervous system and a brain, so I should avoid doing things to them that would cause me pain or suffering. Since I can't communicate with them very well, however, there are many things I don't know about how to make animals happy. With humans, I have the most information, because I can simply ask them for their preferences.

To actually treat everything as if it might have experiences is a very difficult undertaking, a joyless task often resulting in ridicule or even retribution from fellow humans. This makes it a prime candidate for a true moral that determines one's true moral worth, for I do feel a sense of wrongness when any living thing is needlessly killed. To restrict value to the needs of humans, though it may feel like a good thing, is only an evolutionary incentive. Such discrimination must be recognized for what it is and discarded.

Chapter 7: Environmentalism

From a young age, our society teaches us the morality of avoiding harm to others. Don't hit, don't call names, be nice, share what you have.

Yet there are many things our society does that causes harm to others. Driving cars kills and harms people through air pollution [1]. Garbage kills animals. Buying goods produced in factories causes pollution and deforestation of land. Even long before the modern era, there were cases of hunters driving entire herds of animals off cliffs [4] - even though a few animals would have given them enough food - simply because it was easier and safer for them.

But society doesn't teach us to avoid this indirect harm - it only teaches us to consider our direct actions, which involve being nice to people who appreciate it. Those who try to avoid indirect harm by living frugally and avoiding pollution are not praised, and those who cause pollution or go shopping are not rebuked. If such indirect actions are noticed at all, they are usually thought to be political actions, rather than moral ones. Why this difference?

Very simple: natural selection selects for those who avoid direct harm, but not for those who avoid indirect harm.

Those who amass resources for themselves have an obvious survival advantage (since resources, by definition, aid survival). Those who amass resources and distribute them within their social group increase the survival chances of that group, and are therefore praised by it. But those who don't amass resources at all, who only take what they need, are at a disadvantage in evolutionary terms. The poor have always been ignored at best and shunned at worst - we rarely even consider that someone might choose to be poor on purpose. Even if there were once those who intentionally took only the resources they needed, they would be less likely to receive help in time of greater need (such as a famine or recession), and eventually that mindset would die out. Or during a war or local conflict, the social group who had amassed the most resources would tend to win, and the mindset of amassing resources would prevail.

It's no wonder, then, that so many delusions have arisen to justify amassing far more resources than necessary. We're told that pollution will soon cause the end of the world, or at least mass destruction, from global warming. That's probably true, but it's usually given as a *motive* to avoid pollution, with the assumption that there would be no such motive if global warming were not real. The fact is that people, animals, and plants are being harmed by pollution *today*. The threat of global warming serves

only to spur fear-driven individuals to action at best, or pushes the problem into some unknown point in the future at worst. It provides no extra *moral* incentive to avoid polluting. The fact that we already have a moral incentive to do so - the fact that pollution is causing harm *now* - which is largely ignored by the population, shows beyond doubt that avoiding indirect harm is not part of our moral sense. The end result is that people continue to amass resources, because future global warming is the only reason they can think of not to, and it isn't enough to spur them to (sufficient) action.

Worse still, many are led to believe that amassing resources is good for the economy, and that if they stop doing so people will lose jobs and be unemployed. This is a gross misunderstanding, if not ignorance, of economic theory. Economics deals with *efficient* exchange, i.e. exchange that actually benefits both parties. Efficient exchanges are precisely the opposite of amassing resources - they allow you to require less resources to fulfill your needs. The more efficient exchanges that take place, the more the total well-being increases, i.e. the better the economy does. When you buy things for the sake of preserving someone's job, or when you buy more than you really need, the exchange is not efficient - it may increase the GDP, or make people appear busy, but it does not increase the overall well-being. If we stop making exchanges that aren't efficient, and instead direct our resources toward efficient exchanges, people are precisely not left unemployed - they are rather freed up to pursue worthwhile business enterprises in place of the inefficient ones.

Of course, because doing so would oppose the established society, and in particular the biological / evolved tendency to amass excess resources, the delusion that we need to buy "stuff" to help the economy tends to prevail.

Is it not a wonder that even among purported environmentalists, who should understand this principle most of all, luxury is still not shunned? The popular environmental movement consists largely of exhorting people to replace regular products with green alternatives. What nonsense! What brazen consumerism! Yes, probably it's better to buy books made of recycled paper instead of non-recycled paper, or furniture made of renewable resources instead of rare trees, or cars that use less gasoline to operate (but more gasoline to build). But logic dictates that it would be far better for the environment, and certainly cause less harm overall, to do without those products in the first place. To voluntarily live in poverty - to simply not make use of luxuries that you have the means to make use of - is clearly necessary to do the most good environmentally. The fact that rich, supposedly environmentally-conscious people (like those who live in

developed countries), don't even *consider* taking on poverty, seeing nothing wrong with buying (supposedly environmentally-friendly) luxuries that they can afford, shows that no real sacrifice is willing to be made for the environment. So here again, we see a potential for a true moral - to willingly live in poverty causes you to be shunned, to face disadvantages, and is not generally taught to you as a child, yet I have a moral sense that it's right.

It should be noted that the principle of taking on poverty may not turn out to be a very good measure of moral worth, because it's debatable whether it involves giving up happiness (aside from the unhappiness resulting from opposing the society around you). Many people say that luxury doesn't make one happier (although many people, possibly some of the same people, continue to pursue it). On the other hand, perhaps those beliefs do not pertain to extreme poverty, or extreme simplicity of living, but are only made by those who think they've shunned luxury sufficiently (as in the middle classed person who thinks piously of themself because they've avoided the rich furnishings of someone in an upper class, but hasn't experienced true need). I can't say for sure without actually taking on poverty myself; this example serves merely to illustrate what a real moral could be like.

Chpater 8: The Distinction Between Eating and Killing

Many people don't make a distinction between killing out of necessity (i.e. for food) and killing for self-centred reasons (such as to acquire luxury or out of malice). As a result, they find some of my claims, especially the claim that anything (plants as well as animals) could have intrinsic value, difficult to understand, let alone accept. On the one hand, animal rights activists might object - "if all living things are sentient, wouldn't the only moral option be to not eat anything, or to become a frugivore?" On the other hand, more human-centred thinkers might think that this implies choosing the lives of trees over the lives of humans. Or perhaps even that in the end, there could be no morality at all, because if we have to treat everything equally then we can't really show kindness to any living thing without showing favoritism.

To answer such misguided objections, I must first explain the moral theory of Immanuel Kant. Kant's Categorical Imperative [2], to put it in simple terms, says that we should act in such a way that we could will the existence of a world in which *everyone* acts that way.

Note the difference between this principle and the theory that we should do the least harm possible (negative utilitarianism). Of course I will the existence of a world without harm; however, there are ways in which I could avoid harm, but which would cause more harm if done by everyone. A well-intentioned lie, for example, could avoid hurt feelings, so it could be said that I could do the least harm by telling one. But I would prefer a world in which everyone was honest - in a world where everyone told well-intentioned lies constantly, it would be hard to know people's true intentions, but in an honest world, people would get used to blunt honesty and would not have hurt feelings as a result. So, by Kant's Categorical Imperative, I should not tell well-intentioned lies, even though it causes harm, because I should not be the cause of a dishonest world that I would prefer is honest.

I think Kant's morality is a good one, and it follows from the idea that true moral worth requires you to oppose selfish evolutionary tendencies. For the Categorical Imperative really means that I should not show favoritism towards myself, that I should expect of myself as much as I expect of others. But evolutionary tendencies require me to prefer my own interests (or that of groups closely connected to me), for survival.

Now, if we keep Kant's principle in mind and turn back to the problem at hand, we see that there is a vast moral distinction between killing to eat and killing in general. I couldn't will the existence of a world with

needless killing, because it would greatly increase the danger to me (and my loved ones). I would not myself want to be made into a fur coat, or a stack of paper, so I should not create that world for others. But a world without *eating* would not be desirable at all! If all living things were to willingly cease the struggle for survival, simply to avoid causing harm to other living things, then we would all starve and all life would die. I do not will the existence of such a world.

Most organisms struggle for survival, but that doesn't mean they need to kill whatever gets in their way. The moral approach, rather than passively ceasing the struggle for survival, is to have an attitude like those natives which asked the pardon of the animals they needed to kill and eat. When forced to fight, we should aim to disable rather than to kill; when something gets in our way, we should work around it. Far from being a passive ceasing to struggle, this path requires greater ability, greater strength, greater inconvenience. As a result, we don't have an evolutionary tendency to call it a moral, and it's a worthy candidate for one of those moral principles which determine true merit.

As an addendum, it follows that domestication of animals, something practiced widely throughout history, is generally immoral. Though pet owners suppose they love their pet, if the majority of them treated me the way they treat their pets, I would be infuriated. Originally, animals were domesticated for their utility in aiding survival, with the assumption that their needs don't matter; in modern times, they're normally kept because of an emotional attachment their owners have for them. To truly avoid favoritism to my own species, I can only assume that animals want to be free as I want to be free; certainly, since I can't communicate with them, I have nowhere near sufficient evidence to suppose that they prefer to be kept in a safe, restricted bubble. The truly loving action, of letting go of one's emotional attachment and releasing them (from safety as well as confinement), is the difficult, moral path. In the short term, this means giving pets to someone in the country, where they can roam free (and where you, if you choose to live in the city, won't have contact with them). In the long term, pets must be neutered and pet stores boycotted so that eventually, all animals will be wild and free.

Chapter 9: The Establishment

It's no coincidence that the larger a body of people gets, the more dogmatic, nearsighted, and enamoured of the cause of that body its people become. A body of people, though probably not sentient, is in every other way equivalent to an organic life form. In particular, the principles of natural selection apply to it as well, so that large bodies whose members work for the survival of that body will tend to survive, while large bodies whose members don't work for its survival will tend to die. Since the survival of the individual is increased, at least for a little while, by belonging to a part of a larger body, people tend towards large, organized, unthinking groups or mobs, for which I use the general term "The Establishment".

Inevitably, doing what's moral will conflict with doing what is good for a particular Establishment. Indeed, the Establishment will try to confuse its constituents into thinking that what is good for it *is* moral. Doing what's truly moral, then, will involve some amount of rebellion, and opposition to the tenets that society has tried to teach us. This frequently involves hardship and unhappiness, so it could sometimes be a test of true virtue.

The structure of corporations is a direct and obvious example of this principle. A corporation is legally a person, which can buy and sell things and make decisions independently of its founders, and which can live forever or until it declares bankruptcy. Its purpose for existing is to make a profit, which it pays to its shareholders. This would be fine, if in doing so its members did what is moral in the process. But inevitably there will be ways of making more profit by ignoring morality. Corporations with moral restrictions will suffer greater competition from those without them, and have a reduced chance of survival (be driven out of business).

It follows that small, independent businesses, and direct, small-scale exchange of goods and services, will tend to avoid some of these problems. It does happen in practice that small, well-run businesses produce better products than large ones, where innovation is stifled. Unfortunately, small businesses often are unable to produce goods as cheaply as larger ones, and consumers either can't afford or are unwilling to pay the higher costs, so buying exclusively from them isn't a simple, universal solution. As corporations tend more and more towards oligarchies producing poorer and poorer quality products, consumers trying to avoid immoral businesses are often driven to avoiding them entirely and doing without their services. Again, this can result in

hardships and disadvantage in order to do the right thing.

Advertising is the most common example of a large corporation becoming larger and more profitable by ignoring morality. Misinformation through dishonest or intrusive advertising, where a company tries to grab consumers' attention and make them believe their product is more important than it really is, is a significant detriment to the economy. When 2 parties A and B know the true value of goods being exchanged, and A's resource is worth more to B, while B's is worth more to A, then an exchange can take place and everybody's well-being increases (barring externalities). However, if A produces a good and makes B /believe/, through deceptive or intrusive advertising, that the good is worth more to A than it really is, then B's well-being, and thereby the total well-being, may well decrease by the exchange.

Yet the *principle* behind advertising, of putting yourself forward and trying to convince someone of something to benefit you, is difficult to avoid doing. Those who refrain from this kind of *immoral* assertiveness miss opportunities and thereby decrease their chances of survival, particularly in business. The overwhelming pressure of advertising in our society, and the frequent shoddiness of products that are pressed on people in this fashion, is evidence of the inescapable evolutionary tendency towards large, ad-based entities. The fact that large companies can afford more sweeping advertising campaigns than smaller ones worsens the problem further and makes competition a scarcer and scarcer resource in the economy.

Governments are another Establishment that threaten their individuals. As countries become larger and larger and governments have more control, we must not fall into the trap that their vast machinery of rules and regulations are meant to protect us and improve our lives. They're meant to preserve the existence of the government and the status quo of the society it governs, because a government which doesn't make rules to do so will tend not to survive. It follows that the best a government can do is tend towards libertarianism, that is, to continually reduce its influence and remove existing laws, beginning with the most oppressive or useless ones. It shouldn't need to provide jobs for everyone, or ensure that the economy is running smoothly, or protect its citizens in a bubble of safety. It should do only the bare minimum necessary to prevent injustice. When it oversteps these bounds, when it goes against justice and morality and restricts the freedom of its citizens, only the truly moral sacrifice of willful nonconformists can put it in its place.

Chapter 10: Relationships

Perhaps the most obvious area of human customs which is tailored for survival, rather than for our happiness or virtue, is the area of reproduction. If a person with certain qualities, or if a tendency in the brain, can't reproduce, then it will tend not to survive. If the qualities tending towards a high reproduction rate conflict with virtuous qualities, then those virtuous qualities will be difficult to discern and will eventually fade from accepted behaviour.

Perhaps the most obvious example is that people who have sex more often, with more people, will have a higher chance of reproducing. This means that the tendency to make moral sacrifices in order to have sex has a survival advantage. This causes things like lying in order to get a sexual partner, hurt feelings between lovers, or unwanted children. But because of the survival advantage to the tendency to free sex, many people don't recognize these evils as significant, or don't think about them until it's too late.

Even when people accept monogamous relationships as the only ethical kind, they still may have behaviours or protocols designed to woo a mate, which may conflict with morality and be considered more acceptable than morality. How many of those actions that are called "proper" or "polite" are not kindnesses at all, but evolved tendencies designed to attract couples into stable, monogamous relationships? The custom of being expected to compliment your partner may seem harmless. But when complimenting them requires dishonesty, this dishonesty is expected, because it has a higher chance of resulting in a successful relationship. The honest, moral option, which may result in hurt feelings and even a lost relationship, is sometimes the more difficult, unhappy path.

It might be objected that following these customs results in unhappiness anyway, and that when you connect with someone as a *true* friend, such protocols can be dispensed with. It's true that this would be the happiest ideal. But the problem is with the likelihood of such "soul mates" meeting. People who ignore established protocols until their true soul mate comes along may wait forever, whereas people who follow the established protocols are likely to find *someone* who is also following such protocols. Hence the latter are more likely to reproduce, and over time to be greater in number, even if they aren't as happy. Eventually the field of relationships becomes so confused that it's practically a given that people are either looking for sex *or* are expecting other interested people

to follow mating rituals. When someone succumbs to neither, though they may truly be waiting for a soul mate, it is assumed that they aren't interested at all. Therefore, such a person will tend to be alone and have a decreased survival advantage as a result. But for them it may be the correct path, sometimes even the virtuous path, regardless.

Finally, the most difficult situation of all is when two such soul mates do meet, and love each other, but are prevented from being together. Perhaps the fulfillment of some moral duty cannot be accomplished without them being separated, or perhaps they cannot meet except if a well-intentioned lie is told. If there is ever a case where doing the right thing doesn't make you happier, surely it's this. When a person nevertheless does the right thing in such a scenario, then surely they have, if anyone has, true merit.

Chapter 11: Happiness

The philosophy presented here could naively be thought dreary or depressing. Since the central thesis is that an action is only truly deserving of merit when it doesn't aid its doer or make them happy, it may be assumed that those who follow it will be constantly unhappy. Although hedonism has certainly been refuted, it does not follow that adopting this philosophy will cause great unhappiness (nor would that be a valid objection even if it did).

For one thing, the instances where the right action makes one feel unhappy may be rare. There may be many more instances where doing the right thing makes one happier, and one might as well do these things as well. Even if they don't determine goodness of character, they make one happier and aren't wrong. If I have a disposition of being honest in all cases, for example, there may be some cases where I'm harmed as a result, but there are probably many more cases where I feel good about, and benefit from, being honest. Even though one could be happier by picking and choosing *when* to be honest, one could still be happier than the majority by being always honest, since the majority are dishonest even to their own harm. It's probably a much different life, with many extra sufferings than average, but also with many extra sources of happiness than average.

Second, there's the question of existence beyond the universe. Now I do not mean that by following this philosophy you will have comfort in believing you'll have a happy afterlife, or even assurance that there's any point to your sufferings at all, or that you've done right in enduring them. No one can be sure of what lies beyond, and no one ought to believe with assurance that their own afterlife will be happy (that would be proud and self-centred). Even if you act according to your conscience *no matter what*, even if you always pay attention to that source of data which alone tells you what you're supposed to do in this universe, it is indeed possible that you'll find you acted wrongly. But you would have this advantage: that whatever happens, you would be able to say that you did everything you could, and you didn't know any better than that which you did. How many of us can say as much as that?

References

[1] Monica Campbell and Kate Bassil and Christopher Morgan and Melanie Lalani and Ronald Macfarlane and Monica Bienefeld. Air Pollution Burden of Illness from Traffic in Toronto. Technical report, Toronto Public Health, 2007. Available at http://www.toronto.ca/health/hphe.

[2] Immanuel Kant. Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals. In Michael L. Morgan, editors, *Classics of Moral and Political Theory*. Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis/Cambridge, 1785.

[3] Alvin Plantinga. *Warrant and Proper Function*. Oxford University Press, 1993.

[4] Ronald Wright. *A Short History of Progress*. House of Anansi Press Inc., 2004.