

Contemplating Ethics:
A New Vision For Morals

Matthew James Spencer

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award
of MPhil (Master of Philosophy), Cardiff University / Prifysgol
Caerdydd on 10 December 2018

DEDICATION

To Matt

CONTENTS

PART I

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----|
| 1.— A Difficulty For Ethics | 1 |
| 2.— Philosophical Clarifications | 37 |

PART II

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| 3.— Practical Solutions | 131 |
|-------------------------|-----|

- | | |
|-----------------|-----|
| <i>EPILOGUE</i> | 237 |
|-----------------|-----|

1 — *A Difficulty For Ethics*

THIS IS an old story.¹

In the early nineteen-sixties a Psychology experimenter laid a trap for members of the public. He set up a fake experiment and invited members of the public — carefully prescreened in the event — to participate.

Stanley Milgram² did what he could to make sure he had screened out psychopathic tendencies. Nevertheless within weeks he had discovered that all it takes to make the difference between getting you to torture another individual, possibly to death, *and not doing so* is a set of variations in the environment around you.³

Imagine that you arrive at a research facility. You hang up your hat on the clothes peg provided and step into an experiment. You have entered in fact one of the most famous experiments in history. Some of its details are well known, others less so.

Most people will have heard or ought to have heard about, even if they do not remember all the details of the electric-shock element at the heart of Milgram's experiments. By putting each individual volunteer, or experimental subject, in charge of an impressive looking "Electric Shock Generator" Milgram showed that ordinary members of the public, seeming to lack all psychopathic tendencies, still were prepared to go to the limit in an extraordinary set of experiments.

If you had been part of (one version of) the experimental protocol then you would have been asked to come along to the research facility in question together with a loved one or close friend.⁴ But within minutes, the

chances are that you would have been prepared to deliver strong electric shocks even to the point where your friend or loved one had lapsed into unconsciousness and so was no longer able to respond.

Respond to what? Also at the heart of the Milgram experiments, besides the imposing Electric Shock Generator, was a series of questions. Volunteers were asked to pose each question in turn. If your friend or family member did not respond correctly — or even if they failed to respond at all — then you were asked to deliver a shock. On the Shock Generator there was a dial which could be turned, by increments, in order to increase the severity of the next shock the machine would deliver.

So if Aunt Pam was no longer able to answer your questions what are the chances that you would go on increasing the shocks (for every wrong or incomplete answer) even after your aunt had given up intentionally answering or (for all you know) was unconscious due to

the previous shocks?

The answer, as we have already indicated, is ‘quite high’. In his experiment Milgram categorised as Obedient those subjects who were prepared to keep increasing the shock level until they reached the highest value of the machine. In fact no actual harm was caused to anybody,⁵ in the original experiments, since Milgram’s Shock Generator was fake. Aunt Pam would have been safe but agreed to cry out, as if in distress, as she received each new “shock” while hidden from view.

Would *you* have been tricked by all this? Milgram demonstrated that, had you come along to his experiment with your aunt or uncle or a close friend there was only a relatively small chance that you would have refused to shock them up to the limit of the most extreme shock level on the (fake) Generator.⁶ The usual question asked by moralists and by others who specialise in related areas of enquiry is therefore: how could people in

general be so callous?

It should not however escape our attention that there is another question we need to ask. For another thing that Milgram showed was that, across all the different versions of his electric shock experiments, what turns out to be crucial is the precise scenario you step into when you sign up as one of his volunteers. For instance if the setup around you was such that you were psychologically pressured into *not* agreeing to administer the shocks then the levels of obedience fell dramatically.⁷

How did Milgram achieve such variation? In one version of the experimental protocol he arranged for each subject, i.e. the person with responsibility for administering the shocks, to reach their decision *not alone* but in company with another person who acted as their peer. In this peer scenario⁸ the level of “obedience” sometimes fell dramatically, depending on the precise nature of the peer’s involvement. And in yet another version sub-

jects had to physically hold the hand of the person they wanted to shock against a metal plate. (The shocks were however fake as before.) Although a surprising level of shocking went on in this version too, still it was (as expected) rather less than in other versions.

When Milgram changed the scenario in these, and other ways,⁹ he produced very different results from his experiments. Therefore it is not a complete statement to say — as a general truth — that we can easily be got to torture one another, possibly to death. The correct conclusion is: we can be (more or less easily) got to torture another person *if the surrounding circumstances, the situation around us creates the right kind of pressure.*

This headline news is worth pausing over and, as we will explain further below, it should not be sidelined as a result of some faux-scepticism over experimental-psychological methods. In general we do not ever make moral decisions in a vacuum of course; there is always

some situation in play, in the midst of which we must act. But this general truth, as Milgram and others have shown, can affect us in surprising ways.

For instance there are other experiments besides Milgram's which we need to worry about. In a notable if not uncontested series of articles,¹⁰ experimenters have come to the conclusion that very often all it takes to get us to act in morally disastrous ways is some slight modification of our environment. There are very many examples to choose from but one that will be of interest to the Christian, as to the non-Christian, is an experiment by Darley and Batson.

We are taught from a young age, many of us, that our individual conscience is important and that we need not only to make decisions using it but, most importantly, to make the right decision. An illustration of this comes in the form of the parable of the Good Samaritan. But because that parable, in the gospel according to Luke, is

so well known we would do well to notice what is broadly the same story, and the same moral point, in other traditions. For instance in the Buddhist tradition an ancient text tells the following:

Just as when there is a sick man — in pain, seriously ill — traveling along a road, far from the next village & far from the last, unable to get the food he needs, unable to get the medicine he needs, unable to get a suitable assistant, unable to get anyone to take him to human habitation. Now suppose another person were to see him coming along the road. He would do what he could out of compassion, pity, & sympathy for the man, thinking, ‘O that this man should get the food he needs, the medicine he needs, a suitable assistant, someone to take him to human habitation. Why is that? So that he won’t fall into ruin right here’.¹¹

The same kind of concern being evident in Luke’s gospel and in the Pali sutta just quoted, we naturally want to know what are the optimal conditions for acting in the correctly compassionate way. Would we, like the Good Samaritan,¹² have stopped and then paid for the person left for dead by robbers to recuperate in an inn? Would

we, like the traveller in the Pali Canon,¹³ have stepped in to help while journeying between villages? And there is, after Milgram, a further question. Might it be the case that a slight variation in environmental conditions is what triggers helping behaviour? It is this that Darley and Batson set out to investigate, culminating in their (1973) psychological study.

Imagine you are about to give a talk. The subject you have been assigned is careers prospects for Christian seminarians, that very group of which you are a member. You set off from one building and run into a friend. He is about to give a talk in a different building, and his theme is different again. Your friend has to talk on the subject of the Good Samaritan.

Since both of you have a few moments to spare you talk briefly about your nerves, about the audience, and then you go on your way. You have plenty of time to kill

since, just when you left the last building to head across campus, you were told by an administrator that they were not quite ready for you at the talk venue. Therefore it would be helpful if you could dawdle a bit. As you do so, strolling leisurely up the path between university buildings, looking out on the lovely lawn, you cannot help noticing that in the middle of that lawn there is a figure who looks out of place. He is sitting up in an awkward position, apparently groaning, possibly in pain. As you take a few steps towards the lone figure, you realise that he is probably a homeless person. Since you have the time — you were specifically instructed not to hurry — therefore you make an approach to check if he is all right.

It turns out he is not. So you make some further enquiries: where does he hurt? would he like some further assistance? The responses are slurred but appreciative; you do what you can to secure the help the man clearly needs. Later on after the talk, which went okay, you run

into your friend. How did his own talk go? Fine, he says. But then he begins to tell a story about a homeless man. Hang on, you think, we cannot both have helped the same guy. Your friend's talk was in a different building down a different path, going past different lawns.

The answer to this riddle is that you were *both* part of an experiment, whose details we have slightly adapted.¹⁴ Should it surprise us that two individuals came to the assistance of a homeless man on a university campus? Surely many, if not most of us, would do so if they recognised another was in serious pain. In our scenario you helped while being not too pressed for time. But what if you helped *because* you were not pressed for time? What is striking then, in the Darley and Batson study, is the following detail. If you were told to hurry up and get your skates on, in order to reach the lecture theatre where your talk was going to be based, then you would be much less likely to help the person in need.

A situational factor that Darley and Batson call “Degree of Hurry” was the only factor that made any difference when it came to a person deciding to stop and help a homeless person before giving their talk.¹⁵ And these results are perhaps particularly surprising for the reason that it made no difference at all — in terms of the likelihood of their helping — whether the subjects of Darley and Batson’s experiment were going to talk about careers or the Good Samaritan.¹⁶

This is odd, and so it is worth repeating. Preparing a talk on the subject of the Good Samaritan makes no difference to helping outcomes (in an important study). You might as well be thinking about something that has nothing directly to do with helping another. Now perhaps¹⁷ thinking about career prospects gets you in a positive mood and so makes you open to altruism — just as open as you would be if your sense of altruistic duty had been sharpened by thinking about the gospel story.

Either way the facts in Darley and Batson are clear: helping is on occasion, and we have reason to think on *all occasions* a matter of how the situation around you is finessed by how things are arranged. If that situation produced a range of time pressures then this range transferred directly across into a range of moral outcomes. Roughly, one-third of those in a hurry helped the stranger while two-thirds not in a hurry helped.¹⁸ No difference, as mentioned, could be found between those who spoke on the Good Samaritan and the others who did not.

Perhaps then we have been unfair, down the generations, to the priest and the Levite. What if they were simply hard pressed while the Samaritan, for whatever reason was in less of a hurry? Modern psychologists have considered this possibility and the fruits of their researches have given us many further instances in which helping or not helping seems to be a matter of trivial

changes in our environment.

One of our favourites (philosophers' favourites) is a study by Isen and Levin. You come out of a phone box after making a routine call. (This experiment was done in the 1970s long before there was a phone in most people's pocket.) Immediately in front of you someone drops all their papers. Do you stop and help them to pick them up? Now I have been in this scenario in the rain so it speaks personally to me. Meanwhile in Isen and Levin (1972) the people who did indeed stop to help were almost entirely restricted to the particular subgroup of experimental subjects who had experienced a fortunate incident only moments before.

Many people — and I am one of them — do not make a phone call in a phone box without rattling around in the coin return slot to check if some previous visitor has abandoned a small value coin there. It's a trivial thing but in Isen and Levin's experiment it made all the dif-

ference. Those telephone callers who found a dime (10 cents) were much more likely to help the person who dropped all their papers. Those who took a look in the coin return slot — but who did not then find any dime — were much *less likely* to help a stranger who had dropped their armful of sheets of papers.¹⁹

Why did this trivial detail make any difference? Some psychologists think that a lift in mood may be at the heart of Isen and Levin's dimefinders and their sudden helpfulness.²⁰ If you are surprised by a bonus then the subsequent warm glow may carry you through all manner of subsequent prosocial actions. The next person you encounter who needs your help has in a sense simply lucked out.

We live in exciting times where the data from modern psychology reveal something that the philosophical tradition has long suspected. If we are to live and act morally

and virtuously then we are going to have to think deeply about how our processes of moral reasoning can become easily compromised at the point where the rubber hits the road, the point at which real situations engage our feelings and engage other aspects of our psychological reaction. So then, after Milgram and other experiments we should feel a lot less secure that we are following our moral principles, rather than being swayed by situation-led disruptions, in our everyday lives. And this constitutes but one example where we should be interested in what the philosophical tradition may have already had to say about such a scenario.

We might for instance be tempted to summarise Milgram's findings, along with those of Darley and Batson and others, as offering a black mark against our ability to stabilise our tendency to act from moral reason. But this raises philosophical issues. What *is* Moral Reason and what is it, in psychological terms, to reason morally?

When we say, as we said at the start, that the Milgram experiments are an old story we have in mind the age-old wrestling with such questions.

If you have ever been drunk or angry, or had to make a moral decision in a difficult situation, then you will know that there is more to moral reasoning than simply knowing the moral reasons you ought to follow. Indeed the ancient thinkers, from Confucius to Plato — and the founders of certain religions — were never, as a rule of thumb, naive about this problem. So if you want another rule to live by then try this: *situations are important*. They are important as the backdrop to — and as influences on — the decisions we make. And no one has understood this more acutely and extensively over the past few years than the psychologist Daniel Kahneman.

Imagine a person called Linda.²¹ Linda is young, with a social conscience and a serious (but also playful) artistic

side. She lives, with many friends, in a bohemian quarter of a large European capital city. But if forced by circumstances to take a corporate job then what is the likelihood that she will be any of the following?

1. *Linda is a bank teller.*
2. *Linda works for a chain of childcare nurseries.*
3. *Linda works for a bank but retains a strong interest in Feminism and is vocal, even in her work, about such things. She is a feminist bank teller.*

Now if you were forced to rank the above three statements — putting the one that is most likely true of Linda at the top of your list — what statement would you rank as least likely to be true of Linda? Faced with Kahneman's version of this list²² most respondents choose to

put “Linda is a bank teller” towards the bottom. And they also think that it is more likely that she will be a feminist bankteller than that she will be, simply, a bank teller. But this is a statistical mistake.

If you learned Venn diagrams as a child then you might like to draw a large circle, on paper or in your head. In this circle put a hundred little crosses. These represent all the bank tellers in Linda’s city-quarter. Linda may or may not be one of them — she might work in child-care instead. But suppose for the sake of argument that she is indeed a bank teller. We can now consider some probabilities.

Draw another smaller circle around ten of the crosses within the bigger circle. These are the redheaded bank tellers of the district. Does this seem rather high, or perhaps too low for you? We have, at the moment no further explanation — just run with it. But we will be interested in another small circle within the big one.

This other circle (also quite small) reveals the feminist members of the bank telling profession within Linda's district. So go ahead now and draw a circle round three of the crosses in the large circle. Perhaps one of them is a redhead. In that case you would have to make sure your FBT (Feminist Bank Teller) circle includes a member of the redhead circle.

The question before us now is about probabilities. These can be read off in a straightforward fashion from our Venn diagram. What is the probability that Linda will be a redheaded bank teller? Looking at the diagram in front of you (or in your head) we can see that it is 10 out of 100 (10 per cent). What is the probability that she is a redheaded feminist bank teller? Again, consulting the drawing you've made, there would seem to be only a one percent likelihood of that. But there is one thing we do now know.

The circle of redheaded bank tellers must be smaller

than the circle of bank tellers (if it is not the same size). It cannot be bigger, in the sense of containing more crosses. This is simple maths. And likewise the circle of feminist bank tellers must be smaller than (if it is not the same size as) the circle of bank tellers. Since that is so we can calculate the probability of Linda being a feminist bank teller to be *lower* than the probability that she is a bank teller, plain and simple, and this is both interesting and important for the following reason.

If you go back to the question we asked above it turns out that usually people guess that Linda is more likely to be a feminist bank teller than just a bank teller plain and simple. But as we have also just seen this is an elementary statistical error. From our Venn diagrams it cannot be the case that Linda is more likely to be a feminist teller than a teller plain and simple. There are just not enough crosses in the smaller circles of our diagram for that to be so.

Perhaps you have never done any statistics in your life. Perhaps you had never done any probability. Small likelihood then that you know anything much more than a very small amount about the probability of statistics. That would certainly be true of the present author. But it turns out that even though you may have studied statistics at a relatively advanced level you are still more likely to think that Linda is more likely to be a feminist bank teller than a bank teller plain and simple.²³

Who else, apart from students of advanced statistics, makes the Linda mistake? The answer, according to the Nobel laureate Kahneman is that most of us get the Linda case wrong. Because we know a little about her we go on to surmise that she must be (most likely) this kind of person rather than another.

We follow the breadcrumb trail of the slender information we have about Linda and end up in the wrong place entirely. Extraneous information makes us reorder,

falsely order, our expectations about this person Linda. Likely as not such information makes us reorder, often erroneously, our views about everyone we meet. And, in following the wrong breadcrumb trail, we go against the hard logic which ought to save our surmises about people (and places and things). This, after the research of Kahneman and his collaborator Amos Tversky,²⁴ is verified fact.

Now there is a tendency for the psychologists, and for those who comment philosophically upon Psychology, to state outright or else to imply that all this is terribly new.²⁵ But the English novelist Frances Burney, born in the eighteenth century was on to the same set of problems. Consider a scene in her novel published at the start of the nineteenth century:

‘My Lord,’ cried Mrs. Arlberry, ‘do you know what a curiosity you brought in amongst us just now? A woman of rank who looks round upon other people just as if she thought they were her fellow creatures?’

‘Fie, fie!’ answered Lord O’Lerney, laughing, ‘why will you suppose that so rare? If we have not as many women who are amiable with titles as without, it is only because we have not the same number from which to select them. They are spoilt or unspoilt, but in the same proportion as the rest of their sex. Their fall, or their escape, is less local than you imagine; it does not depend upon their titles, but upon their understandings.’²⁶

Burney was onto the same kinds of problem that psychologists in our own time have identified. They are twofold. On the one hand there is the glaring statistical error²⁷ à la Kahneman which Mrs. Arlberry makes by forgetting how *small* is the pool of aristocrats from which the nice (egalitarian) ones must be drawn. Then also, as the Situationist philosophers we are about to meet make plain, we all have the tendency to moralise about other people based on what we *imagine* falsely is their real underlying motivation.²⁸

In order to correct these deviations, as Lord O’Lerney corrected his interlocutor, we could do with learning a

lot more about what actually is motivating the actions of those other people (and ourselves) whose actions and thoughts are the stuff of ethical enquiry. When we do this we will begin to see, as indeed we have already begun to see that all sorts of situational factors must be presumed to be constantly in play. Any viable Ethics must take account of this fact and we should not trust those that do not.

It certainly seems then as if we need a moral tradition which can guide us through the moral psychological pitfalls which psychologists and psychology-friendly philosophers have exposed.²⁹ But here difficulties rise up in a surprising direction. For a moral tradition that has appealed strongly since the late twentieth century gets into all manner of problems when situational factors rear their head. We speak of the moral tradition known as Virtue Ethics. For the school of (mainly American) philosophers, that are known as the Situationists, have

wanted for some time now to rain on the Virtue Ethicist's parade. Why that parade even got started, and what is supposed to be the problem with it now, must take us on a brief detour.

The conventional description of the movement in philosophy known as "Virtue Ethics" emphasises the difference between it and two other things. It is important to be careful here as the contrast may be emphasised too much. Nevertheless the contrast does capture something about what philosophers think makes the virtues historically important.

Whereas in the recent past moral philosophy — before the rise of modern virtue theory — had become preoccupied with moral rules and regulations, as well as the principled theories which might both ground and explain them,³⁰ on the other hand Virtue Ethics represents a self conscious shift away from such rules.³¹ Not because moral standards suddenly become unimportant but be-

cause they are insufficient to capture what matters in an ethical life. For the virtue theorist what matters is a rounded life where, certainly, the virtues play a central part. And one thing about the virtues is that they are bigger than (even if they sometimes include) moral rules.

Think of Generosity. Are there any precise rules for how and when to be generous? The question has seemed complicated to ethicists because even the generous person is not officially required to be especially generous on every occasion that turns up. Maybe the distinctively generous person is simply generous on more of the available occasions than is the average. But in that case we want to know the average — and how on earth would we go about determining that?³²

The questions then around the everyday virtues — the virtues we think we can easily recognise going on around us — are necessarily complex. And, as we are about to see, the Situationist philosopher wants to make them

more complex still. Before we examine that complexity, however, we still have a further feature of the virtues which we need to remark.

We said above that Virtue Ethics has to be contrasted, in an ordinary sense at least, with two things and that one of these is the rules-orientation of much work on morals. The feature we now need to add goes as follows. For if we know how to be virtuous across the piece — from humility to courage and beyond — then for thinkers like Aristotle, and we concur, it follows that we must have *previously* practised these things, the virtues, and honed them within (and by making use of) the right kind of situation. For example the brave person can only become brave by facing, or facing down, fear-inducing situations. If you have never had to confront such a situation then you will never be brave.³³

This feature of the virtues means that there is much more to virtue-education than simply following predeter-

mined moral rules. We have to get out in the world and, from an early age, learn both by example and practice, how to be virtuous in it. Rule following is surely a part but it is not the whole of the ethical life. So this was the first contrast we had to draw.

What is the second? Before modern virtue theorists made the point about rules and their general inadequacy, there was another strand of Ethics that attacked the primacy of rules. So while a philosopher like Kant seemed, crudely speaking, to base his morality almost entirely on rules and rule-following, it fell to another set of philosophers, known initially as Utilitarians and now, more widely, as consequentialists,³⁴ to challenge this rule-orientation.

The Utilitarians are famous of course, from the writings of Mill (and before him Bentham) for something called the Greatest Happiness Principle. In a nutshell it says that we should maximise “Utility”, or perhaps Pleasure, when we act selfconsciously *morally*. Because

rules are inflexible they are unfavourably contrasted by the Utilitarians with those actions that promote a sophisticated form of Pleasure — we should think here of those higher things that fall under the umbrella term ‘Pleasure’ which Aristotle, for one, spoke about.³⁵

The link with Aristotle is important in modern virtue theory because even though Utilitarianism may be attractive in many ways — it gets us away at least from blindly following rules — nevertheless the thing that the Utilitarian puts in the driving seat in place of rules as such, is Consequences. Until you know how any action is likely to generate particular consequences for the world as a whole you cannot be a good Utilitarian or consequentialist. You cannot know which rules to follow and which are ethically bogus. But now you have a problem for is it not impossible that you would ever be able to calculate all the consequences of any action, as it were, down the track?³⁶

This is a simplified picture of course. Modern Utilitarians have worked hard to refine their picture of rule-taking and in this they can end up coming somewhat close to Kant — and indeed (by joining with Kant’s own focus on the virtues) both consequentialists and ‘deontologists’ (the name we give to rule-followers in ethical philosophy) can end up seeming rather close to virtue theory.³⁷ All the lively debates about who is what and why — a deontological virtue theorist and so on — need not detain us here however for we already have in play the two contrasts we needed to draw.

One was the contrast between the virtues and rules. The other, a little harder to see, was the contrast between virtues and consequences. Whereas, on the one hand, the Utilitarian or (more widely) the consequentialist is, in a conventional sense, concerned by or even obsessed with (as their critics would say) the ramifying *consequences* for the wider world of any action or type of action —

stealing for example — yet, on the other hand, the virtue ethicist, meanwhile, wants to bring the focus right back, and constantly, to the individual moral agent.

What matters above all in Virtue Ethics is how the individual learns to shape their own life and this aspect leads to a famous contrast which modern philosophers³⁸ have drawn between a virtues-orientation and “consequentialism”. This can be seen from turning our attention, briefly, to Trolley Problems.

You might already know about such problems, which feature often in the news and other media, and they are as we will now see an excellent way to highlight the contrasting motivations of the consequentialist and the virtue ethicist.³⁹ An exciting area of modern ethics these problems test our intuitions about moral truths.

Would you sacrifice one individual — famously a fat man on a bridge — by pushing him off to derail a runaway trolley car heading for six others? It seems that

physically pushing the individual off the bridge is harder to bring oneself to do, and perhaps it may even be less moral, than switching a lever so that a lone individual is killed down one part of track rather than six on another part of the track.⁴⁰

These trolley problems seem however inadequate in an important way to the virtue theorist. For in their relentless focus on consequences they seem to ignore something fundamental about ethical life. This is the question which Socrates asked: what sort of person should I personally become — or, from the Greek, *how is it necessary to live?*⁴¹ Should I for instance become the sort of person who pushes individuals, fat or otherwise, off bridges in order to save another (set of others)? If I *should not* then no amount of calculation of consequences can tell me otherwise!

So while the consequentialist (or strict Utilitarian) is, as their names suggest, primarily focussed on con-

sequences (or onward-looking Utility) by contrast the virtue ethicist, while far from forgetful of consequences, is at the same time rather more centrally focussed on the correct shaping of their own ethical personality. Their reason for being so is to live, and more widely to make it possible for others to live, an ethical life.

The big word here — and in some cases the central concept for the virtue theorist — is none other than *Character*. The person who has it, who has a good character as we also tend to say, is that very person who has developed as many of the virtues as possible. And, usually, what a virtue is — for modern virtue theory — comes to be the same as what philosophers like to call a disposition.⁴²

If you are disposed to be generous, courageous and (where necessary) humble then you may be taken to have won half the ethical battle or even more perhaps of that important battle. Indeed for Aristotle, the hero

of most virtue ethicists, arriving at the point where you fully understand a single virtue will mean that you fully understand, and are able to practise, all of them.⁴³

This whistle stop hour of a half century (and more) of Virtue Ethics has taken us from Aristotle to Trolley Problems and back again. You need to know what sort of person to become and at the same time to learn by doing. Put yourself in fearful situations if you want to become brave. Learn the ins and outs of bravery if you want to understand and practice all the other virtues. Only then will you know how to respond in the face of runaway trains.

But with this thought on the table we circle right back to that major modern objection known as Situationism, an objection we have mentioned and which will now take centre stage. Situationism is a carefully phrased philosophical counterclaim against Virtue and against those forms of ethics that are based on Character as well as

the virtues. It draws on all the experiments we have so far mentioned. Seeing what this claim entails, and what in spite of a quarter-century of confusions in the philosophical literature it *does not entail* requires some urgent clarifications.

2 — *Philosophical clarifications*

IN ORDER to respond to the Situationist position we do best, it turns out, when we understand clearly *what Situationism is not*. Only then can we begin to see and understand the full range of mistakes that philosophers have made, as well as the severe practical limitations of their previous responses. Of these two sorts of inadequacy we begin with the first.

NOT THIS BUT THAT

As Geoffrey Miller has it, ‘Doris (1998) and Harman (1999) argued that virtue ethics cannot succeed because social psychology shows *there are no stable personality traits* that could correspond to virtues.’⁴⁴ Call such a view *Eliminativism* regarding the virtues. But while, so very often, Situationism is held up as an eliminativist view — if not about the virtues only then about character traits in general — it turns out that, in their own words, the Situationists are quick to distance themselves from any of these eliminativist positions.

Against their own protestations — vigorously made — the Situationists are mistakenly said to deny the existence or else, more broadly still, the possibility of the virtues. By whom and how this mistake is made, as well as why it ought to be considered a mistake, will now be

closely examined.

The mistake comes in two versions, one explicit, one implicit. So then the explicit assertion is made that Situationism denies character, moral character, virtue, or virtues. On the other hand, and rather more interestingly perhaps, certain philosophers have adopted strategies against Situationism which imply the mistake.

Even though some of these particular philosophers do not make the mistake explicitly still it is there for all to see beneath the surface. By the end of this section, however, you should be able to concur that no Situationist is a confirmed eliminativist against character or virtue etc., at least not in the sense which is so often attributed to the Situationist. For this sense is a mistake about Situationism which ought not to have been made and which therefore requires us to give a better description of the Situationist's position. Once the mistake is on view we will turn to the task of better describing Situationism.

Noone ought to state then, whether clearly and explicitly⁴⁵ or else more remotely or in a disguised fashion, that Situationism opposes ‘the thesis that character traits’ of any sort (virtuous or otherwise) ‘do exist.’⁴⁶ Indeed when Sreenivasan in seeking to oppose Situationism⁴⁷ argues that ‘social psychological evidence does very little to undermine the . . . assumption that certain people actually have character traits in the relevant sense’ we are compelled to reply that the Situationist could concede the point without any damage whatsoever to their fundamental claim.

By whom else Sreenivasan’s mistake is made is a question which profitably devolves to the more precise set of questions: who says that Situationism denies character traits explicitly and who, by contrast, implies this conclusion (without explicit assertion of it)?

In addition, as we will see, there are those who make both errors simultaneously (or almost so). For *these* crit-

ics of Situationism employ tactics against it which merely imply, but do not state outright, the Situationist's denial of traits or virtues. And then, almost in the same breath and yet at a certain remove, these same critics make explicit assertion of the Eliminativism at issue. In other words there is sometimes an overlap or, better still, an unclosed gap between the explicit and implicit forms of the Eliminativist view of Situationism. Where to start? There is a host of philosophers to choose from.

Christian Miller then writes, albeit a little vaguely: 'Gilbert Harman seems at times to hold that the upshot of ... empirical results in social psychology should be that *there are no character traits whatsoever*.'⁴⁸ Kuperman, meanwhile, writes that 'we need to know what character traits would be, if there were such, in order to judge how effectively Harman argues against their genuine existence.'⁴⁹ More concretely, both Alzola and Arjoon make the eliminativist error in a direct and straight-

forward manner.⁵⁰

Others who stray near to the wrong side of the line but who cannot then seem to decide which side of it to settle, or else who simply change course midstream, include Reed.⁵¹ For he speaks, incorrectly of course, of Harman's 'aggressive claim' to the effect that the virtues are 'never instantiated'. Nevertheless (and oddly against this) Reed eventually concludes in a well-turned anti-eliminativist manner that 'the relevant notion of empirical adequacy when it comes to the situationist challenge surely is not the idea that virtues or traits *are never instantiated and so do not exist*.'⁵²

We concede that what Reed might have in view here is the attempt to distinguish different (eliminativist and non-eliminativist) versions of Situationism. So then, on the one hand, he keeps the Situationist John Doris and Peter Vranas on one side of the anti-eliminativist line, while pushing Gilbert Harman to the other side of it.

Yet this will not do, for *none* of these Situationist writers is an eliminativist about Character/Virtue.

The Situationists on their own side have asserted then that they never claimed anything close to what is being attacked here. As Harman makes crystal clear, he neither meant to state explicitly, nor in any way to imply, that character-traits — or the specific kind of traits we would call ‘virtues’ — are confirmed as impossible or non-existent by scientific evidence:

research in social psychology shows that observers often wrongly attribute character traits to actors on the basis of inadequate behavioral evidence. This leaves it unclear whether we have any reason to believe there are character traits of a sort that people ordinarily attribute to others. Sabini and Silver (2005) interpret me (in Harman, 1999, and 2000) as claiming that “the psychological data show that people do not have characters, in the sense required by virtue ethics.” (Tucker, 2004, interprets⁵³ me in a similar way.) I prefer to say that the data show that people often wrongly attribute character traits to actors on the basis of inadequate evidence.⁵⁴

And again:

I do not think that social psychology demonstrates there are no character traits either as ordinarily conceived or as required for one or another version of virtue ethics. But I do think that results in social psychology undermine one's confidence that it is obvious there are such traits.⁵⁵

Meanwhile, Doris has issued similar denials. For instance he writes, discussing his own (2002) book, "Lack Of Character":

my title was meant to announce a skepticism about globalist conceptions of character, rather than to deny, implausibly, that individuals are possessed of personal characteristics that influence how they live.⁵⁶

We can now look back — as the Situationists themselves are currently wanting to look back — over the evolution of our debate. Recently we have what Doris calls his own 'most explicit attempt to correct this misreading',⁵⁷ the eliminativist misreading which we have been considering

here and which we have sought to highlight:

It is too often said, particularly in reference to Doris (1998, 2002) and Harman (1999, 2000), that character skepticism comes to the view that character traits “do not exist” (e.g., Flanagan 2009: 55). Frequently, this attribution is made without documentation, but when documentation is provided, it is typically in reference to some early, characteristically pointed, remarks of Harman (e.g., 1999). Yet in his most recent contribution, Harman (2009: 241) says, “we do not think that social psychology demonstrates there are no character traits”. For his part, Doris has repeatedly asserted that traits exist, and has repeatedly drawn attention to such assertions (Doris 1998: 507–509; 2002: 62–6; 2005: 667; 2010: 138–141; Doris and Stich 2005: 119–20; Doris and Prinz 2009).⁵⁸

In eliminating the eliminativist error and only when we do this can we begin to notice the overall form of the Situationist argument. And indeed as we said above, it is not only explicit forms of Eliminativism that we have to worry about. For it is also possible to see in the responses to Situationism certain disguised or implicit forms.

Take for instance the popular strategy of seeking to demonstrate that one or more of the following do exist: Character, Virtue, the virtues. A perennial favourite is the response to the Situationist which offers empirical evidence for the existence (or psychological possibility) of virtue(s). Jonathan Webber, for instance, combines the often-found eliminativist view of Situationism, which we have argued against, with concrete empirical evidence that the virtues do exist. So he writes on the one hand how: ‘John Doris has argued that empirical evidence indicates that we do not have characters as these are generally understood in ethical discourse. There are no such traits as prudence, temperance, courage, or fairness, he argues.’⁵⁹

Then, on the other hand, Webber presents (presumably as evidence against Situationism) a set of empirically-grounded reasons to believe in the existence or possibility of the virtues.⁶⁰ Without controverting these empirical

reasons — perhaps they are sound — nevertheless we now know that even if they are sound they will be insufficient to refute Situationism. Even if it is an impressive feat — and we think that it is — to demonstrate the actual existence or possible existence of the virtues (or traits in general) yet the success of this feat could be welcomed, without any self-contradiction, by the Situationist.

As we have claimed above and will support further below, no Situationist firmly espouses the slogan that the virtues do not exist or are impossible. So then even if, and wherever, the Eliminativist reading is not espoused explicitly by a critic of Situationism still we must be on our guard against empirical strategies which assume the slogan just referenced.

We can see the implicit use of Eliminativism in the following tactic. Offer empirical evidence for traits or virtues, while refraining from explicit Eliminativism, and

you are in danger of remaining an Eliminativist at one remove. The danger of this strategy is that it assumes, incoherently, that Situationism can be defeated by positive evidence of something whose existence the Situationist never denies.

Several examples of such strategy are on offer and, where found, they are impotent against Situationism for the reasons we have given. In an article whose title gives the game away⁶¹ Jayawickreme, Meindl, Helzer, Furr and Fleeson (2014) refrain from calling the Situationist an eliminativist about character traits, virtue, Character and so on. But their strategy assumes such eliminativism. These authors conclude that ‘broad traits are real, prominent, and consequential.’⁶² So when these “broad” traits ‘exhibit remarkable consistency’ we might be tempted to agree with Jayawickreme et al. that Situationism has been defeated.

This is not so however for reasons we have already

unearthed. It is not enough to say, or even to prove empirically that ‘even the classic studies cited by Situationists do provide some evidence that some people are compassionate.’⁶³ For the Situationist never denies that some people do, or that many of us can have virtues. What they deny *is that many of us, a sufficient proportion of us, have virtues — sufficient for Virtue Ethics to be worthwhile.*

Why has the eliminativising mistake about Situationism had such longevity? Appearing as it did in some of the earliest responses to the Situationist claim, and continuing as it has continued through to much more recent responses, we might now be tempted (as the Situationists themselves are understandably tempted) to say about the eliminativising answer that it is a waste of everybody’s time.⁶⁴

But if on the other hand to know all is to forgive all then we might be inclined to enquire more deeply into

how eliminativism is arrived at. Here a bibliographic study could be of some interest: who quotes whom? Do eliminativists rely solely or for the most part on other eliminativists who went before? Or do eliminativists (strangely) quote and rely on those respondents to Situationism who have successfully avoided the eliminativist mistake? More acutely still, have the respondents to Situationism deliberately or accidentally ignored the places in which the Situationist denies any form of eliminativism?

Peter Goldie opines that social psychological findings ‘have been adopted by a number of philosophers recently *to support the claim that there are no virtues of the kind that virtue ethics postulates*; and so virtue ethics is in deep trouble’.⁶⁵ Rachana Kamtekar meanwhile chimes in with this same theme, ascribing to the Situationist just such an eliminativist view⁶⁶ as do others (albeit in differently nuanced versions, depending on which Situationist

is being considered by which counter-Situationist).

Pithily then, but inaccurately, Sabini and Silver⁶⁷ say that in the Situationist view (of e.g. Doris) ‘Honesty exists, but generally honest people don’t exist.’ Sreenivasan⁶⁸ concludes that ‘Gilbert Harman and John Doris have recently argued that the empirical evidence offered by ‘situationism’ demonstrates that there is no such thing as a character trait.’ Sreenivasan goes on to say that he ‘dispute(s) this conclusion’ but so of course does the Situationist.

It seems that eliminativism is thick on the ground in the responses so far given to the Situationist. More and more critics, with each passing year, attribute to Situationism an eliminativism of Character, or of Virtue, or of the individual virtues. But one interesting thing here is that the authors just mentioned, on the previous page, constitute the near totality of the anti-Situationist writers referenced by (e.g.) Webber (2006c). So then it is

hardly surprising that a writer like Webber falls in line with eliminativism *in the sense that* he reads the Situationists as promoting an eliminativist view.⁶⁹

While the questions posed above — cohering around the concern about what brings so many of its critics to describe Situationism as at core an eliminativist position? — are tempting to address we are also tempted to offer a more robust philosophical defence of the eliminativist mistake. Not a justification as such but some movement towards an explanation of the mistake.

‘Exactly what does it mean’ asks Jonathan Webber, ‘to call somebody honest, compassionate, or courageous, and how are such epithets earned?’⁷⁰ The Situationist answers that often, far too often, what is involved in calling someone honest etc. is a sequence of thoughts that unreliably lead to the virtue-attribution at issue. Once we see the mistakes we all make in attributing traits to others (and perhaps to ourselves also) then we have

rather less reason to find in the real world the kinds of traits that we commonly believe we can find.⁷¹

Hand in hand with this procedural worry comes a second. For what if the traits we expect to find (in self and others) and which we do in fact consider we have found, often enough, turn out to be so chimerical as to be hardly worth believing in? Then it sounds as if we are back to an eliminativistically sceptical view at the very heart of Situationism; an understanding of Situationism as fundamentally sceptical about the existence of traits or virtues or character.

If then the Situationist distrusts the attribution of traits, including virtues, then what distinguishes Situationism from that Eliminativism about character which we just sought to discredit? If Situationism is a *non-*eliminativist form of Scepticism about character then what is this form best characterised as, so as to distinguish it nicely from Eliminativism?

The right claim to make here, on the Situationist's behalf, comes in two parts. The first part says that not enough of us can lay claim to being virtuous. The second part is more psychologically precise: what in the Situationist view *prevents* the virtues from existing (in the case of most of us) is just as much a matter of the surprising kinds of situational disruption, which the experimental psychologists have revealed, as it is of the more conventionally described failings that were previously known to philosophical and other kinds of tradition.⁷²

Now that this is tolerably clear we turn then more generally to the inadequacies of the sorts of response philosophers have given to the main Situationist worry, a worry that is twofold in the way which was just now described. Though we won't be exhaustive to the point of covering every single philosophical base from every response yet even so we will be able to discern the broad shape,

and certain details of the various kinds of response that philosophers have given.

On closer inspection, and speaking of the vast majority, they all seem to lack one thing. Because of this joint deficiency we think there is the danger of fastening too precisely on the subtle differences between the positions of the philosophers. If what they lack is something they share in common then we had better notice it.

Think of the responses offered to the Situationist position as a series of gambits. The general problem is that, just like in chess, a gambit only gets you so far. The particular problem is that the respondents have failed to notice that far from arriving at checkmate they have merely made a sequence of moves which, though they are intriguing and certainly worthwhile, are far from doing all that the anti-Situationists think they can do. In this short section we consider some of the tactics used and suggest by way of conclusion that they are little

more than interim manoeuvres rather than showstopping blows against the Situationist.

Once all of this is on view we will be able to see that the respondents unify, perhaps unwittingly around a central assumption. It does not cover contemporary moral psychology in glory and so we think that, wherever this assumption is found, efforts ought to be made to bring it to a halt. The assumption can be put in a nutshell: nothing further and specially new, so we are frequently told, need now be done to improve our resilience against situational factors. Nothing, that is to say, if our objective is to work the data from psychology experiments in a Situationist vein directly into our understanding of Ethics.

For the counter-Situationist generally holds that the data, though potentially interesting in various ways, does not imperil the age-old notions of Character and virtue in anything like the way that the Situationist holds. But

of course the conceptual battleground — to what extent do ordinary people have stable character traits of a virtuous kind? — is only a part of what the Situationist is trying to draw our attention to. At the end of the day, at the very least the Situationist wants us to appreciate situational factors for what they are. If they are disregarded and set aside simply because they have smaller teeth with which to bite into concepts like Character — smaller than the Situationist likes to think — then this is not good news for any of us.

Why not?

Have Milgram and, more recently Kahneman, revealed that the virtues are almost impossible for ordinary folk to achieve practically? They have not and they would have every right to be the first to abjure that conclusion. Indeed the distance between the evidence and such a radical conclusion is part of what gives the closely attending philosopher a degree of confidence.

If neither the stark results of a Milgram nor the pertinacious replications of a Kahneman are enough to cast doubt on the daily practicability of virtues Aristotle-style then Virtue Ethics would appear — would it not — to be home and dry as far as the Situationist objections are concerned?

Not so fast, we say. For if this very same conclusion is accepted then (we claim) something intrinsic to, and crucial for the contemporary ethical project, will have been missed. Milgram did not put the virtues beyond use. But on the other hand both he and latterly Kahneman have demonstrated the high degree of impact that situational factors have upon moral actions, and (as Kahneman in particular reveals) upon the way that we *think* morally.

In these circumstances it would be a moment of some complacency if the ethicist should turn their back on a body of evidence merely because, on balance, it is seen as failing to demonstrate an extreme conclusion.

The most extreme conclusion is derogated from by the Situationists who, despite repeated misreading by the critics of Situationism, have never denied the existence of traits, virtues, character and all the rest. Can we avoid the perhaps almost as alarming conclusion that it has been demonstrated that few or even next to none of us have or can, as things currently stand, have any virtues?

We think that we can. The Situationist does not put the virtues beyond use, even by the majority of us. But, cavilling fast, what they do say is this. Unless we come up with a strategy for handling situational factors then ethically we are lost. We cannot then reasonably expect to handle as a matter of routine the kinds of situational disruption which, social psychology advises us, sit in the background of our lives.⁷³

With such a conclusion we entirely agree. It is therefore a shame to see the counter-Situationists line up be-

hind the principle that there is really no ethical fire. This is especially worrying given that the first cousin of ‘There is no fire, nothing to see here, please move on’ is ‘People just do nothing!’ We do not intend to invite these troublesome cousins to the ethical party which we hope soon will get going. But that leaves open the question whom we should invite.

Not we think those formidable critics of Situationism who have done such intricate work unlocking the Situationist claims in a way that lets these gatecrashers in. And that means we will have to actively exclude almost everyone who has published on the Situationist debate for twenty years.

There may of course be some writers we are missing but those we know about are very few who stand aside from the complacency of the herd.⁷⁴ James Hughes suggests that what will matter in the future is the fusion of meditation practice and technological or pharmaco-

logical interventions. These he explains can be expected to combine together to yield degrees of resilience against situational disruption of the kind we have been exploring.⁷⁵

But, as we say, this kind of prophylaxis is uninteresting to the majority of commentators upon philosophical Situationism. For *those* commentators what is most pressing is to defang the criticisms of Character / Virtue which the Situationist attempts. And once this has been done to the level of satisfaction aimed at by the commentators in question no further interest is offered or explored concerning what seems to us (and to Hughes) the principal ethical matter: how we can actually get better at handling situational factors?

Though this is surely the elephant in the room we do not think that the subtle criticisms of the concept of Character which defenders of it can offer back to the Situationist are entirely without interest. We might go

further and say that a practical solution to situation factors and to the disruptive role they play *ought* to include some kind of theoretical account of the virtues. And we need theory of course if we are to understand what we mean, in the first place, by a “virtue”. It is for instance standard — but not unproblematic — to find the Situationist targeting a particular notion of the virtues. This would be that notion of Virtue which has, centrally and at its very heart, the related notion of a disposition.⁷⁶

What is a disposition? This is a venerable question across Metaphysics and Ethics and no doubt other areas of philosophy besides. It is certainly unclear to some philosophers what kind of regularities we should expect from any person or thing that enjoys the ownership of a disposition. Take for instance the ethical example of Generosity.

We raised above the question of whether the generous person is required to act generously on every occasion

which presents itself. Where an act of generosity is not absolutely and normatively the only option that there is, we want to know whether for instance the person who is generous — who has the disposition of generosity — can refuse the opportunity to act generously where that option is recognisably supererogatory.

This question ramifies into ever more technical reaches of the relevant explananda.⁷⁷ Mumford and Anjum introduce, à propos, the doctrine of “defeasibility”. It says that we make a mistake about dispositions when we say — if we say — that we may be generous *in spite of* our occasional failures to the contrary. For the defeasibilist it is not so much that the dispositions we have run counter to their occasional defeat as, rather, that we have dispositions *because of* the occasional defeats that such dispositions must by definition and in practice always do undergo.

This qualification is important for the conceptual light

that it may shed on what is at stake within the Situationism debate. So for example if a generous person occasionally fails to be generous (where we might expect them to be generous) then there is, for the defeasibilist, a sense in which these exceptions to the trait-based norm are what in fact underwrites the traits in which we are interested (generosity included).

There are several versions of this piece of defeasibilist Metaphysics within the Situationism debates. Though they are surely not going to be alone we can find it at the heart of the counterviews to Situationism expressed by Robert Merrihew Adams⁷⁸ and, separately, Joel Kupperman.⁷⁹

The problem for us now is not at all that these metaphysical reflections lack any point. Indeed we think that they may make a good one. The problem comes rather in how we ought to apply them if they were true. In Ethics unlike in Metaphysics more things are at stake

than getting at the truth intellectually.

Take the way that a writer like Kupperman, and to some extent Adams, would have us apply the Metaphysics of Defeasibility. The thought goes that (under the doctrine of Defeasibility) we should expect momentary losses of concentration or of the will. And, by dint of these lapses, a virtue such as Generosity may fail to emerge on particular occasion. Indeed it must so fail occasionally if a person is to be *generous overall*. Such defeats are not only to be expected but also they will be required if we are to have a dispositional virtue worth the name.

These metaphysical claims may be connected with what we already know about the moral lapses to which we are all subject, as a matter of conventional moral psychology. Whether we are speaking of *akrasia* or occasional viciousness (at the other end of the spectrum, as in the case of Milgram's subjects) we cannot reasonably require even

the recognisably virtuous to maintain a perfect record.

This means, does it not, that common sense matches up — for once — with a philosophical doctrine? But the problem lies not for us with the Metaphysics as such but rather with an elisory move which the ethical commentators now make.

When confronted with the facts of the Situationist's case the critic sometimes wants to say that, given the nature of Defeasibility and the nature of all the kinds of moral failure we already know about it is a tiny step to simply include a further set of moral disruptions — situational disruptions — under the head of Defeasibility. Then, according to this convenient manoeuvre, there is nothing particularly special about *situational* disruption; it is simply another species within a category we already recognise: the intrinsic Defeasibility of the virtues.

Our objection to seeing the disruption brought about by situational factors as just a normal part of the defea-

sibility of the virtues (qua inherently defeasible dispositions) goes, however, as follows. To say that situational disruption is just one more kind of defeasibility is to assume that we have known about it all along — just as we have known about *akrasia* or viciousness all along. But we do not think that the moral traditions of philosophy have recently had much of anything to say in detail about the class of situational disrupters. Maybe back in the day (Aristotle's day) things were different; and we will be coming on to that.

If however we were to focus on the last few centuries of moral philosophy then, pace the pro-Humean apologia of one of the Situationists — we speak of Maria Merritt⁸⁰ — still we do not think we are going to find much detailed discussion of situational disruption either in Hume or in his major modern rivals. Not only is a Hume (or a Kant or a Mill) theoretically naive about the special problem of situation factors but furthermore, and in consequence,

they offer little in the way of any practical advice we can use. That is to say, they do not offer us specific counsels for handling situational factors.

The tension between what we need and what we are given is most palpable in the work of Robert Merrihew Adams.⁸¹ He wants, on the one hand, to make the same kind of manoeuvre that is made by Joel Kupperman.⁸² Thereby situational disruption is said to be just one more type of disruption among an entire broad class of disruptions. As with any naturally defeasible virtue, we all lapse from time to time even if we have virtuous traits.

But then, on the other hand, Adams also wants to say that there is something particular going on with situation-factors. It forms a new or newly recognised ethical threat and therefore demands an appropriate response. Can that response be to say that we have always faced disruptions to our stable traits and that we can enjoy such traits with one or two normal interruptions to

the steady flow of (e.g.) our generous actions?

This seems to be best described as either a not very effective attempt to dodge the bullet or else as an attempt to change the subject. For we still need to know what to do about all this newfound inventory of situational disruptions that we have from the psychologists. Joel Kupperman⁸³ uses the defeasibility tack from the metaphysicians, notably Mumford and Anjum,⁸⁴ in order to try and sidestep this general practical-ethical difficulty. Meanwhile Robert Merrihew Adams⁸⁵ follows him up to a point while still recognizing there is a particular difficulty here. The special challenge facing us is to accept the force of many of the counter-Situationist arguments while still calling the counter-Situationists out on having failed to solve the root practical-ethical difficulty.

Perhaps the reader may feel that we place too much stress on having a practical solution. Is it not the task however (some may say) and an important task of phi-

losophy to clarify theoretical relationships while, where necessary, leaving the practical details well alone? Some might even be tempted to claim an Aristotelian warrant for this objection.

We prefer to follow Alastair MacIntyre who comments, reliably we think, that theory and practice are never far apart in Ethics. It may even be said that if you change your way of talking about something then, likely as not, a change in your behaviour will follow as night follows day. And so, across the ethical terrain, when we reflect on ethical concepts we are going to entail certain changes in how we act.⁸⁶

What change must be made when we object, following MacIntyrean principle, that the Situationist attack on Character falls short of the mark, practically *and therefore theoretically*? We suggest that we can start to avoid in consequence a disastrous complacency. For left unchecked the counter-Situationist typically concludes

that their own success against the Situationist leaves us free to suppose that, in the greater scheme, our virtues face obstacles to be sure — but we, and earlier moral philosophers, already knew that. Therefore, as such, Situationism brings nothing philosophically new to the table.

The counter-Situationist feels free to suppose now that, after their own ingenious arguments — and we agree that many of them *are* ingenious — we remain accordingly free from having to worry any longer about there being special Situationist faults with the venerable artifacts which are our virtues; therefore, we can simply get on with the task of simply living virtuously.

But as we said above, not so fast. And we need to notice that there is a special danger here when the philosophical strategies used against some part of the Situationist case are good ones. That is why we started with the defeasibility strategem. It seems to us to have meta-

physical legs which can clarify our virtue talk and what commitments such talk makes. However the powerfulness of such a stratagem cannot eclipse the fact that we do have a problem. That problem at a deep ethical level is not going to go away simply because the Situationists may have missed something intricate and metaphysical about what it is, conceptually to have a virtue.

Of course not all the objections to Situationism are as suave as the ones mounted on the back of the notion of Defeasibility. There are plenty of others we could have chosen from.⁸⁷ But we made the choice we made because we wanted precisely to see where it left us ethically if we ended up granting a principled complaint by its critics against Situationism.

What other lines of counterattack could we have chosen? The following list is not exhaustive. But if the Situationist thinks the problem is that the virtues are too rare, what then if Virtue Ethics makes its own virtue out

of rarity? Put it like this: the virtues are difficult and acquiring them is perhaps a lifelong task. Small wonder then that so many of us readily fail simple lab tests designed to pick up whether we have virtues that are strong and stable.

This is known as the Virtue is Rare line.⁸⁸ It expresses the view that we can take the data from psychology experiments, as it were, on the chin. What do those experiments show? In the case of the Dime Finder experiment almost nobody helped another, in particular circumstances, even though helping would have cost nothing and the rewards to both parties, in terms of amenity and pleasure, could conceivably have been considerable even great.

We might think, then, that almost none of the non helpers was a virtuous person. For the virtuous person would have stopped and helped whether they were in a good (dime finding) mood or not. And equally we ought

to agree perhaps that most of the subjects in Milgram's scenario, where only one-third were Disobedient, were also *non-virtuous* (which we prefer as a better term than vicious here, when speaking of the Milgram scenario).

But, agreeing with all of this, the Virtue is Rare theorist wants to add that none of these experiments and none in the wider Situationist enquiry have revealed that none of the subjects helped. Insofar as that is true we can say that there remains the possibility that some of the subjects were virtuous.

We agree: this, like the Defeasibility approach, is also an interesting line of response. Saying Virtue is Rare lowers expectations so that even if many people fail to help others we should not be too surprised. And the fact that so many are swayed (into nonhelping) by situational factors is simply a hallmark of their non-virtue.⁸⁹

Our counter-response, however, wants to know what is the answer to the same question we asked the Defea-

sibility critic? If we assume that the widespread lack of virtue is normal and if we feign (or genuinely feel) a lack of surprise about situational factors then we are failing to take those factors seriously as a new matter in Ethics.

New matters need new attention. The Virtue is Rare theorist, along with the Defeasibility theorist, has already come to the conclusion that, for differing reasons, there is no specially new kind of ethical fire here which we ought to deal with urgently in a new kind of way. Or if there is it is not a pressing problem that they themselves ought to join in tackling.

Small wonder that we see both responses as united in complacency and that we see the complacency as the central feature, a shared feature across both responses. This remains true for us even though, technically speaking, *Virtue is Rare* and *Virtues are naturally and intrinsically Defeasible* are highly individuated responses.

Individuated and independent of each other, yes, but

in functional terms they are for us the same. For both urge us implicitly, at the very least, not to worry too much about situation factors; and with this we cannot agree. Then again much the same story is repeated, regrettably, across yet more versions of counter-Situationism. Complacency is rife and needs to be addressed. For until we address it then we are not going to learn much about handling situational factors as a special practical matter in Ethics.

To say now that something must be done, regarding situational factors, is seemingly a Situationist trope. We think however that the call to arms against the occasionally malign effect of situation-factors ought not to belong to the Situationist alone. But as we have seen in this section we are severely restricted when we look to the counter-Situationist for the recognition that practical assistance in the matter of situational factors is needed.

One exception here is James Hughes⁹⁰ and there are

some others, even if no more than a few. Probably the largest group of individuals, however, who have (a) contributed to the Situationist debate (b) offered some practical suggestions (c) recognised that without practical suggestions being acted upon *we are no further forwards ethically*, is the group of cross-cultural respondents to Situationism. This fact both is promising and, yet, has limitations — as we now review.

Take Edward Slingerland. In a series of contributions⁹¹ he has considered closely and with some power the moral tradition, Chinese in origin, which we know as Confucianism. The reason we say ‘some power’ is that Slingerland has been able to demonstrate, to our satisfaction at least, how Confucius foregrounded the importance of situational factors for the aspiring courtly gentleman.

Given these facts it becomes difficult to maintain for very long the Situationist’s insinuation that the premod-

ern past was entirely naive about the relevance of the situation (aka ‘situational factors’) for Ethics.⁹² No, says Slingerland, the relation between situation and ethical action, as a way of life, was recognised in careful calibrations by the ancients. These calibrations ought, in principle, to serve us well now today as we turn our minds to getting round to an antidote to the ethical disruption caused by situation-factors.

Put like this it is clear that Slingerland recognises three things. One is the usefulness of the past; the second, because the past has an idea, we can now put it at the centre or close to the centre of our own response; and, thirdly, there is the implicit assumption in everything Slingerland has published on our topic that when the past is used to solve our current problems it will have to be according to the exacting empirical standards of our contemporaries rather than an exercise in misty-eyed romanticism or, worse, as some kind of ‘Orientalist’

or orientalising solution.⁹³

For us now the only problem with Slingerland's projected solution may be that it fails the third of these markers. But in order to see why and how that is a risk we need first to understand how Situationism stands to be defeated at all, and defeated in particular by empirical evidence.

Situationism is of course an empirical claim. It relies on psychological data from a range of experiments, data which (in the next section) we reveal to be methodologically problematic. Therefore everything that we now have to say about possible ways of refuting Situationism has the brackets of a contingency around it. For were it to turn out that Situationism has no firm foundation to stand on, then it would make strategising a refutation a semi-pointless task. Not completely pointless however for reasons we will explain.

How in principle might Situationism be refuted and

how can this be done in a way which honours that commitment to practical ethics — to finding a capable antidote to situational factors — which we described above as a cardinal element of any adequate response to Situationism? Answering this last question — what it would take to defeat Situationism but in a way which points forward to a solution for resisting situational factors — requires us to take a step back from the debate.

For as we have seen that debate has become ossified into a head-to-head between differing interpretations of certain explananda: character, virtue and so on. The problem (as we described it) lies in the fact that one could in theory resolve the terminological or theoretical matters which our debate has made much of without actually getting any nearer to a practical solution regarding situational factors. We therefore now propose an alternative solution.

Remember that the empirical basis of Situationism is

a series of experiments which purport to show that we can easily be deflected into immoral (or less than optimally moral) action by the presence and function of a range of ‘situational factors’. These ‘factors’ are things immediately in the world around us, in our ambient environment so to speak. They disrupt us morally in ways which are poorly understood. Yet, if the scientists are right then we should not doubt their power.⁹⁴

Now an interesting feature of the Situationists’ use of the relevant data (from Psychology) lies in the fact that even though Situationism targets the practical uses of a concept — ethical Character — its empirical methodology does not seem to require that Character, its presence or absence, ever get put under the microscope in the laboratory, even metaphorically speaking.

Because then the Situationist personally believes that we will never be in a position to determine the existence of any virtue in the real world, their argument proceeds

at one remove. (To establish that person X has virtue Y the kind of longitudinal study required would be practically and financially prohibited.) But how can one study the presence or absence of the virtues, in the real world, *at one remove*?

The answer lies in that fallback to which experimenters so often must have recourse: don't study the thing but rather its effects, and this is exactly what Situationism does. So instead of trying to operationalise, experimentally, some check list of parameters for the virtues, the Situationists (and the experimental psychologist before them) instead have focussed centrally upon one parameter rather than many. It has appeared overly behavioristic to some commentators but we think it has proved serviceable enough.

Given that, normatively speaking, in certain circumstances one course of action is palpably more moral than another therefore we can read off whether a subject acted,

in such and such a scenario *morally or not*. And pushing the boat out a little further conceptually, we can also say that subject X failed (or did not fail) to act *virtuously*. This and only this is the main parameter of interest to those experiments on which the Situationist builds their case, from Milgram to Darley and Batson (1973) to Isen and Levin (1972).

What does *virtuously* precisely mean? To some philosophers, as we have seen, it must mean that (other things being equal) the action performed by X is indicative of a stably held disposition to do those acts of a type under the head of which X's act itself falls. So then the generous or humble person acts generously or humbly. And if X acts with humility then we can say that *ceteris paribus* her humble action is both emblematic of and in a sense produces the *dispositional* virtue of humility which she has.

This conceptual terrain is complex, however, as we

have already seen, and it gets more complex the further we peer into it. For instance what if (so Thomas Hurka) having a virtue need have nothing to do with having a disposition? This controversial stance⁹⁵ characterises a virtuous action as *occurrently rather than dispositionally* meeting the conditions (whatever they may be) for an action to be e.g. humble or kind or generous or brave.

So then if an action is the kind of thing that a brave person does and if the internal motivations of this brave action go all the way down through the psychology of the person performing the action then it follows that we can call this person virtuously brave — they are exemplifying the virtue of bravery — *even if* we have no evidence that their single act of bravery is tied into a longterm disposition to be brave.

For Hurka then the dispositional aspect of the virtues which has proved so enticing to generations of moralists from Aristotle on is something of a red herring. Dispo-

sitions are neither necessary nor sufficient for the enjoyment and possession of a virtue. Nevertheless it is clear that for the Situationist dispositions do matter.

If person X is not reliably humble or brave and in consequence of that, on a significant number of occasions X fails to act in accordance with our normative expectations of humility / bravery, we can say in consequence that X is not humble or brave.

And therefore, contrary to Hurka, this dispositional view of virtue means that even if X goes on to do an action which has all the external appearance of being a virtuous one yet (we know from our godlike stance that) this ethical action falls into place within a pattern of mixed results for X. Mostly X is, say, not brave. So then when, on a relatively isolated occasion he acts bravely this would be just that — an act. This is the Situationists' disposition-based understanding of what it is to have a virtue and, if we may say, it is ours.

Where do these complicated reflections get us? They allow us to see, against the background of the differing (Hurkan) view that regularity is fundamentally important to the Situationist. If a person stumbles through life, acting in external accordance with such and such virtue on Wednesday but then the following Monday refrains for whatever reason from acting in accordance with it then we should say that person X — if this mixed pattern should continue — lacks the virtue in question. They are just not reliable enough to have that virtue.

This regularistic account should lead us to focus on the phrase, just used, ‘for whatever reason’. For of course the Situationist contention is that ‘situational factors’ get in the way so often in life that this imperils the stability of the virtues in all of us. None is likely exempt from a bit of situational disruption and this means that there is the constant threat that next to nobody will be reliably virtuous.

But if this seems a grim picture then it has a silver lining. For the threat to our virtuous stability can in principle be dissolved if another set of data were to suddenly appear. What is this data — of what type — and have we any reason to expect its appearance?

Imagine, for the sake of argument, some situational factor p . This p it would seem regularly gets in the way of a particular virtue. (We will assume, again for the sake of argument, that all this has been shown across many replications of a classic study.) Philosophers having got wind of the set of studies now agree with their psychological colleagues that p is, as they like to put it, a ‘moral disrupter’. What now? If unchecked the conclusion must follow, from the Situationist’s point of view, that p is yet more evidence that we have a problem, a situational problem, when we attempt to centre our Ethics on notions like (stable) Character and the virtues.

As we say, this will be the Situationist’s conclusion and

it expresses an understandable desire on the part of that figure to marshall all such instances as p (so this would include other situational factors known about through experimentation such as $q, r \dots$) in the service of the view that we are most of us far too at the mercy of situational disruption to have a hope of achieving stable virtues.

But on the other hand the Situationist, and the rest of us, need to consider the possibility that there is a way of checking p before it gets pressed into the service of the Situationist's case. How might this checking process unfold? As we will see in the next section efforts might be made to question the methodological integrity of the experiment which initially discovered p . But since it would seem, for the sake of argument, that p is empirically supported across many replications of the same scenario, we are going to want to resist the Situationist's use of p in another way.

What ways then are open to us? We now suggest that the most enticing way, though it is not one we can easily hope to achieve, is if we were to discover the effective antidote to p . Suppose that such an antidote exists and that it is discoverable by empirical science. And suppose further that the social psychologists are successful in discovering it. We will call the antidote p' .

What does the existence of p' now tell us about the strength of the Situationist case? That depends on various further facts about p' . For instance were it to turn out that p' only neutralises p in a very narrow set of circumstances and were it to turn out, equally, that p' has no effect whatever on q, r, \dots then we may doubt whether p gives us what we need to push back strongly against the Situationist's scepticism concerning the moral uses of the concept of Character.

But even so, push back it does. Whereas the Situationist often writes as if we live in a deterministic uni-

verse where situational factors routinely gain the upper hand, our piece of evidence about p' shows that this is not the case. We have the beginnings, perhaps only the beginnings of a systematic response to the Situationist's practical-ethical concerns.

It also seems to us now that if the facts about p' were to become, in our hypothetical scenario, increasingly amenable then we might eventually have on our hands an impressive antidote which is demonstrably worthy of further study. So then if p' turned out to work as a form of resistance against q and, say, s where both are other situational factors (but not, more or less strangely, against some situation-factor r) and if the circumstances were relatively broad in which p' is successful against p , q , s and perhaps other situational examples besides, then (again) we may really begin to feel that the longed-for systematic response to situational factors and to the worries of the Situationist is suddenly about to come to

fruition.

This point we are at, in our scenario, constitutes the confluence of two themes, both of which we have asserted as essential requirements of an ethical counter-strategy to Situationism. On the one hand our fledgling solution unravels or begins to unravel the deterministic picture sketched by Situationism which says: situational factors are a constant in life. Then, on the other hand, our evidence from this hypothetical account provides exactly what we claim to have always needed: a robust antidote to the effects of situational factors.

Remembering that previous critics neither tended to furnish such an antidote nor to be much interested, as philosophers, in acquiring one, we can now register this as an advance alongside two fronts. Sadly of course all that we have described remains hypothetical but since we are indulging in a flight of fancy we may as well press on and add some further morally delectable details.

Imagine not only that p' is effective against multiple situational factors but also that it is *easy to learn*. This additional fact must attract the defender of the virtues in philosophical and social life. For if the only evidence that the Situationist has against character is a set of effects some of which can now be easily offset then it may soon become time for the Situationist to have an empirical rethink.

We have sketched our ideal picture. How much of it already exists in the world as it is will now become our major theme through the rest of what we still have to say. But since (we believe) we have offered at the very least the general shape of a solution to Situationism both as a set of practical worries and as a theoretical position it is therefore time to return to some rival accounts and see how they fare themselves against the background of, and perhaps in contrast to our scenario.

We return therefore to the evocative researches of Slinger-

land into the moral effectiveness, contra situational factors, of Confucianism. Does Slingerland present a version of his chosen moral tradition that is capable of resisting Situationism to the extent that our ideal scenario would appear to be capable of resisting it? We now, regrettably, consider the relative inadequacy of Edward Slingerland's Confucian proposals vis-à-vis the ideal scenario we have just described and, specifically, what these proposals, under Slingerland's eloquent support of them, may reasonably hope to achieve empirically.

Slingerland's presentation, in a nutshell, explores the manifold ways in which the Confucian gentleman may hope to evolve the right moral capacities so as to produce the right set of virtues. What those virtues are will differ substantially from the alternative content correspondingly given to the Buddhist virtues, and again from the Christian virtues. Nevertheless there is much that can be carried across from one tradition to another.

And it is therefore here that we can expect to be instructed by a host of traditions, in our own day, and in our own more secular context. For were it to turn out that situational factors are both anticipated as disrupters by one or more moral tradition, and were it to turn out further that such tradition is vocal about precise strategies for mitigating any disruption then we should surely sit up and listen.

So far so good, at least in terms of intention. Returning then to Slingerland we must however insist on a further detail. For what concerns us now is not so much that Slingerland's strategic intention is misplaced as rather that the right intention has not or at least not yet found itself accompanied by a correspondingly convincing set of supportive data. We might be perfectly convinced, that is to say, that Confucianism gives an impressive and plausible account of situationally resistant virtues. But on the other hand we will want to

know in addition how much of this plausibility has been demonstrated as something more: something approaching a racing certainty.

The reader will remember that, in order to defeat Situationism, we have suggested demonstrating — and this most likely means for present purposes demonstrating experimentally — that some relatively easy to learn moral strategy is effective across a range of known situation-factor disruptions. If we were right above then this strategy has it within itself to defeat Situationism's theoretical worries about Character and the virtues precisely by showing that situational disruption can be (more or less easily) countered. Such disruption is not a hard and fast truth about the world, it is rather to be considered malleable and corrigible.

The urgent question is whether Slingerland's exploration of Confucianism amounts to an empirical demonstration of (what we will now call from here on) CSR

or Contra-Situational Resilience. For if it does not then, unfortunately, that will mean that Confucianism ‘à la Slingerland’ is not a candidate for insertion into the placeholder established by the arguments we have given above. Those arguments suggested that we simply need to find — and then test empirically / experimentally — those practical tactics which are candidates for generating CSR.

Has then Confucian practice, with its theoretical connection to situational resistance, been as such practically tested? There is no way, that we know of, which can support its being a leading candidate for insertion into the placeholder for candidate CSR-generators such as we have sought to describe. We do not say that no relevant testing of Confucian practices has been achieved by psychologists; only that it has not come to our attention. The regrettable conclusion is that Slingerland’s solution to Situationism, if solution is the right word, must be considered for present purposes a work in progress. We

see ourselves one principal way to deflate the Situationist attack on Character — a way that rests on practical effectiveness in generating CSR. Unlike those philosophers who appear uninterested whether any of their own work will produce novel forms of such CSR, we have here higher hopes. We hope and expect that we will find testable candidate solutions within our preexisting moral traditions; that such solutions may be tested; and that they may then not be found wanting.

But on the other hand, and as we say it is with regret, we will not be able to rely on Slingerland, at least not yet and as things stand, for the empirical data that we need to emerge from the kind of testing just described (very broadly and only in outline, we now readily admit). Therefore and intending here to keep our powder somewhat dry, we will now say something deliberately broad but we hope it will be to the point. The hope is then that wherever further detail is required in order to

substantiate the broad case (and point) we now make, such detail may be provided later but this should not prevent us from stating in outline our new position sans that detail.

Are we at a stalemate? We indicated above that we consider Slingerland's account to have significant advantages over almost every other contribution to debate from the side of those who oppose Situationism. For he does at least take seriously the need to resist, practically and effectively, the moral pains caused by situational factors. Until effort is made towards such resistance no philosophical solution to Situationism is, in our view, any kind of ethical solution at all.

But if now it seems that the advantages Slingerland brings are neutralised by a fundamental lack at the empirical heart of what Slingerland is able to propose then are we back to square one? Mindful of this problem we now set out, in progressive stages, a counter proposal to

Situationism about which we should make one further remark. Though we seek to improve on Slingerland we seek to do so in a way that both respects and may in the course of time actively complement what he has already achieved even to the point of promoting his own solution further. The door is far from shut on Slingerland's solution for reasons we now explain.

You will have heard, surely, of Mindfulness. But what you might not have heard of is its relevance to practical ethics. You might of course find such relevance surprising for the reason that very frequently, and across various media channels, it has been observed that where modern Mindfulness falls down is in its lack of any explicit ethical content or strategies.⁹⁶ We will not weigh in on this lively debate, at least not yet. But we will say this. There are reasons to find Mindfulness both an ethical strategy and one which it is reasonable to expect, in ways I hope will be made increasingly clear, can be put to the service of

generating CSR or Contra-Situational Resilience.

This should be of interest not only because, if what I have just said is true, we ought to be glad to find in Mindfulness a candidate for that refutation tactic which we have been at pains to describe. But also we can add this. That Mindfulness is exceptionally easy to learn. For decades people have been learning it in controlled environments up and down the United States and recently this momentum has been transferred both to Europe and also even to parts of Asia which produced the root-practices upon which the modern Mindfulness movement draws.⁹⁷

So then if Mindfulness is truly (a) ethically significant in broad or general terms (b) effective against situational factors in a more precise and targetted sense (c) is easily learnable — then who would not want to test particularly (b) in an experimental scenario? We have already made plain our reasons for testing something, testing whatever

in order to see if we can make something stick as the antidote to one or more, and preferably several, even many situational factors. Drawing on successful data from such tests allows us, in principle, to puncture the Situationist case. But perhaps even more significantly a successful test of a plausible candidate for generating CSR (Contra-Situational Resilience) will allow us, as ethicists, to say that yes we have made some progress in reducing the perfectly reasonable worries that the Situationists have described.

Those worries concern our apparent inability to even be sure of what situational factors we are facing. All we know, from the mass of experimental evidence so far produced, is that there is indeed something to be concerned about. We bemoaned the lack of strategies for pushing back against this worry, when we look for such strategies within recent historical tradition. If therefore Mindfulness, as a modern and available practice, can step up to

the plate then surely it would be something to urgently consider. As we say we do not intend any dishonour to the valuable presentations of Slingerland but on the other hand, unlike with Confucianism, there is already a sizeable body of experimental data to draw down from Mindfulness research.⁹⁸

The sheer amount will not of course be enough, in and of itself, to give us much confidence that Mindfulness can give us what we need for ethics and for meaningful opposition to Situationism. Yet, for all that, amid all this research and the data it has produced perhaps we can find reasons to confirm our general belief, just expressed, that Mindfulness is likely to be effective in stabilising resistance to situational factors and to be, moreover, effective in a way that it is relatively easy to learn.

Our suggestion about Mindfulness is not more than just that at present — a mere suggestion. We expect to deploy a full gamut of probing tests both experimental

and analytical in order to be sure that it has legs. But if we are right then there is something to be looked into closely here. And if we are further right then Mindfulness may expect to take its place as at least one of the candidates for the kind of antidote to situational complications which a century of psychology (and many centuries of philosophy) urge us to take seriously as requiring some kind of answer — especially a practical one.

We are, we surmise, at a pausing point. At this point it will be worthwhile looking back across the arguments of our first two chapters in order to establish where we have reached, by what route we got there and what there still remains for us to explore.

In our first chapter we set out a difficulty facing all of us as individuals in the world. Whereas our moral traditions have often emphasised that we should cultivate a robust character, it now appears that such robustness is in doubt — and from a surprising direction. Tiny little

details of the ambient environment are, it would seem, quite often enough to destabilise optimal moral action. On certain occasions we find it difficult to do the right thing because of what is going on around us.

Such a formulation may appear to state the blindingly obvious. It is difficult to resist a plate of cakes if there is one in front of you, if you have a right to partake and so on, and if you are hungry. The fact that on the first day of Lent you decided to abstain from all such cakes has thrown you into a scene of dilemma. But the Situationist goes further, in taking us in the surprising direction just mentioned. For it is not only morally obvious features of our environment but it is also, as it were, microscopically small and morally insignificant — seemingly insignificant — details of our immediate environment that can have a large say in how we act (morally).

This significance of the small would appear to throw recent moral philosophy for a loop. It is barely men-

tioned if at all by the great moralists of the last few centuries. Why did they not canvass it? The obvious answer is that they lived, most of them, a long time before the recent evolution of experimental psychology in a recognisably modern vein. Had they had our data, and the scientific practices which produce it, then undoubtedly they would have availed themselves to create ever more sophisticated ethical systems.

We certainly need sophistication here. For if we have no antidote to the effects of all the situation factors that are out there then we can hardly expect to achieve the kind of Character stability of which the ancients spoke. Indeed it is in this connexion that the Situationist wishes to press their point home particularly against that great moralist of Character, Aristotle.

Aristotle elaborates upon the virtues but if he is as naive as the rest of us were, before we spotted the psychological evidence used by the Situationist, then what

hope can there be that he has any answer to some very deep objections, situational objections, against his own theory? As a result of the shape of all these objections to ethical Character and to the more or less systematic use of the notion of the virtues within Ethics, the Situationist raises their fundamental point.

This is that whereas situational factors are revealed to be so extraordinarily and surprisingly impactful, this leaves us with, in the main, little hope of ever achieving the kind of situationally resistant and stable character that is conventionally required by an ethic of Virtue. Much more could be said, to bolster this summary but we think it sets out the Situationist's main warrants as well as their principal objection to the very idea of Character — when and wherever that idea is made the centrepiece of an Ethics.⁹⁹

What is the right philosophical response to these concerns? There is an ambiguity in our use, just made in the

question as given, of the word *right*. For might it not be the case that some statement is accurate and logical but yet that it gets us nowhere in handling a complex moral issue? The pressing and urgent difficulty for us now is that when we assess the range of interventions in philosophy which have responded to Situationism as a position we find therein a series of clarifications and contentions which leaves entirely open, and somewhat undiscussed, the question of what now practically to do.

A practical solution certainly is required. For if we do not come up with one then we are going to continue to founder morally. Sixty-odd years after Milgram we will be no closer to finding the answer to how to avoid the kind of moral disruptions that Milgram was able to bring about. I would not myself be the first person to observe the likely role in atrocities, as in everyday moral failures, that is played by disruptive situational factors.¹⁰⁰

Because of this urgent need, we decided above to con-

struct — *if only in principle* — a tactic for refuting Situationism which, at the same time, offers some hope that a *practically relevant* antidote will be found. In this sense we are in search of the right answer in two ways: (1) we wish to be accurate and logical in our philosophical discussion and ultimately our refutation of Situationism (2) we seek a practical answer to the ethical concerns arising from the (often surprising) effect of situational factors and as such we recognise the important contribution that the Situationists have made.

Our embryonic proposal is that we now consider a modern practice, a practice we have already mentioned but will consider further; a practice which can be considered (for reasons yet to be given in developed form) as fundamentally ethical in its orientation and effects. This is the practice popularly known as ‘Mindfulness’.

What are the advantages of attending to this modern practice, which is a practice based on an ancient one?

Apart from its being easy to learn as well as ethical we also have reasons to suspect that Mindfulness will be effective against situational disrupters of the kind our first two chapters present. If our proposal has legs and if the bald assertions just made are duly confirmed then we may have the beginnings of a theoretical refutation of and a practical response to Situationism.

This is exciting news, or at least it may become so. But on the other hand in looking forward we can say that we have some scientific obstacles in our way. These will not occupy us for too long now for the reason that we are about to engage with them much more fully, beginning with the next chapter. Even at this preliminary stage, however, it is worth drawing attention to some crucial, problematic, aspects which need to act as the hinge between all that we have discovered so far and what there remains to consider.

The cardinal point will be that, of the two main themes

our scientific section will now take up, one of these themes is expected to confirm rather than oppose the relevance of what we have been calling for in the shape of Mindfulness. We will, in the next section, be taking these themes in the following order: (1) empirical objections to the Situationist's data; and (2) an experimentally grounded response to our situationally produced ethical problem. Since (2) follows on, intimately, from the way that we understand (1) both of these themes are therefore going to be highly important.

We have then some themes to explore if we are to confirm our initial hunch about Mindfulness. On the one hand, some science will have to be considered. On the other (which will come after our scientific discussion) there are philosophical issues not yet considered. As we hope to now set out very clearly, both science and philosophy need to come together in our proposed solution to, and antidote for Situationism.

We have for a few paragraphs been speaking in general terms. It is time to put some flesh on the bones and while that will be done in the coming section, we would do well to at least try to summarise that psychological terrain where we are about to head. The last few paragraphs have attempted such a preparatory summary. But, as we move on in more detail, a principal question immediately before us now is whether we can trust any of the science on which Situationism rests its case. If we cannot then what is the point in offering solutions and antidotes to the Situationist's problems? To this important question we now turn our close attention.

PROBLEMS WITH PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology is different things to different philosophers. Without prejudice to its forebears, and their own sophisticated investigations, we consider here and now, and

first and foremost, the tradition of modern experimental Psychology. We leave out of the picture, at least for the moment, the ancient psychology of a Plato or Aristotle.

The experiments of modern psychology form a picture which has heavily influenced modern philosophical Ethics, and indeed other areas of philosophy besides. But there is, against this picture, a set of criticisms which are loosely termed by Psychology's critics the 'Replication scandal' or 'Repligate'.¹⁰¹ This has hit recently and some would say that it has *hit home*.

Problem 1. If you are conducting an experiment then usually you are going to want to know if the data you amass has statistical significance. This is a complex area of statistics but for Psychology's critics the bottom line is that if twenty laboratories were to conduct an experiment you should expect as a matter of course one of them would produce a rogue result. But what if the rogue result is the one that gets published because it

provides “headline news”? Put otherwise *a surprising, noteworthy, and ultimately publishable result may be an isolated occurrence well within statistical variation*. It may not, in other words, be compellingly accurate or true as an indication of how things are in the world (or even in the laboratory).

This means that a full scale experimental trial, conducted by a psychology department according to modern methods, can expect occasionally, *and by the law of averages*, to produce data appearing to have statistical significance across the board *without that in fact being the case*. Not only that but, as mentioned, we should expect on statistical grounds that this would be the outcome in 5% of cases. You are going to need to replicate your own laboratory’s experiment many times for a stable result to finally emerge. But is this usually done?¹⁰²

The principle that it is normal for a false appearance of statistical significance to turn up from time to time

should make us wary of unusual results. But the charge is that insufficient care and attention has been paid to whether the more unusual results of experimental psychology over the past half-century have been confirmed to be anything other than (expectable) outliers or the kind of rogue results we should expect anyway.

How did this state of affairs come about? There are two kinds of pressure, one virtuous and one rather more vicious, which exist in the field of Psychology. They are opposed to each other and must now be carefully described.

The good pressure first. To avoid the worry that some experiment, which your laboratory has performed, is just a rogue result you need ideally, as we have already indicated, for other laboratories to repeat the result. This is a healthy outcome: twenty laboratories perform the same study. Your data set is not an outlier since even though, as expected, one or two laboratories produce some unex-

pected data, going against the grain of the final analysis, nevertheless your own data turns out to form part of the normal range, as a result of that same analysis.

We call this good pressure the need to repeat or “replicate” your own results (or have them repeated / replicated by others) in ways which confirm that they are to be trusted. But unless this is done there will always be the worry that your own experiment, performed without any subsequent attempt at explication, has merely produced an unusual piece of headline news which on closer inspection would be revealed to be a rogue result. For instance:

***Headline:* Dime Finders Are The Only Ones Who Help!**

Or (another headline):

People Can Easily Be Got To Deliver Their Relatives Electric Shocks!

Which of these pieces of ‘headline news’ should we trust?

An honest answer is that the first result has not been widely replicated¹⁰³ while the second has been.¹⁰⁴ Milgram’s findings have been tested and tested again; they are stable.

As we have seen, the only variations to Milgram’s baseline figure — whereby two-thirds of us would have been “obedient” and gone all the way to the maximum level¹⁰⁵ on the Electric Shock Generator — can be put down to, and seen as being caused by, the different versions of his protocol.

Specifically: rearranging the scenario produced wide

variations in the resulting Obedience levels attained from subjects. In some cases (as reported above) a simple change — e.g. putting the subject in the same room as the shockee — reduces the level of obedience. This is interesting to ethicists and it takes its relevance directly from the fact that the baseline result (or approximately two-thirds obedience) is so highly stable under the particular scenario which produces it.

This stability has been demonstrated by the virtuous effort at Replication of Milgram's results — an effort which has been very successful in the case of, *in the aftermath of*, the Milgram studies. But when, as mentioned, we turn to another study we find a relative lack of replication.¹⁰⁶ Isen and Levin's (1972) dime experiment has certainly not received the same level of replication. As a direct consequence of the statistical concerns we have just outlined — perhaps Isen and Levin's data was some kind of rogue result — we would want to see it repeated

by multiple trials.

This then is the kicker. Because psychology journals have been, up till recently, in search only of the best and most gripping headline news, there has been great pressure to publish *only* experiments which might well have turned out to be rogue results — if anyone had ever bothered to attempt to replicate them. This publication pressure is the vicious pressure we mentioned. It is opposed by the virtuous pressure that experimenters ought to seek to repeat their own results or else to have them repeated by others.

Has Psychology in modern times created or fallen victim, unconsciously, to a publication bias? The replication scandal, so called, arises from the allegation that many of the surprising “results” that are constantly quoted by newspapers and introductory textbooks in Psychology may well turn out to be false.

Since however there is pressure constantly to publish

new findings it is harder to get replication studies of old experiments published than it was to publish the original headline news. This is especially the case when a replication study fails to demonstrate the same result as the original. No one wants an undramatic finding: Dime Finders Are Just As Likely To Help As Everybody Else.

As well as the Publication Bias just noted, and related to it, there is the File Drawer phenomenon. This is where (for example) an experimenter repeats their own experiment but is unable to repeat the statistical significance they found in the earlier study. Since journals are (or it would be fairer to say *have previously been*) uninterested in news that is not “headline news” therefore it is difficult (has been difficult) to publish studies that show no dramatic finding of statistical significance.

Going back to the Dime experiment, where dime finders were more likely to help a stranger than were those who did not find a dime, there is pressure in the case

where you fail to replicate your own dramatic finding to bung any failed replication to the back of the file drawer in your office. Perhaps if you had nineteen failed replications you might be minded to publish a retraction of your first dramatic study. The problem is that by the time careers have been built and headline news is in circulation there is the pressure to keep your own data formula firmly at the back of your file drawer.

According to a recent Radio 4 programme, psychologists have begun to feel unjustly chastened by the Replication “scandal”.¹⁰⁷ While there are cases of outright cheating — making up data completely and publishing the headline news — in most cases we are dealing with sins of omission rather than commission. And given the external or so to say structural pressures coming from the journal publishers it is no surprise that less effort has been ploughed into the virtuous cycle of replication attempts that would be needed to ultimately justify a sur-

prising piece of psychological news worthy of the headlines we are all after.

So what seems unfair to people in the discipline is that now they have become the headline: Psychology Professors Misreport. But there are different levels of misreporting. Somewhere between outright cheating and throwing your own data to the back of the file cabinet in your office comes a more active, but not necessarily sinful manipulation of the data you have. In the trade this is called *p*-hacking.

Suppose that you have been commissioned to provide a study to the cosmetics industry. We see these results all the time on our television screens. 15 out of 23 women agree that Beauty Serum makes their skin look healthier. Why the low number?

In any experiment there is the ideal sample size running to many thousands of subjects. When you test these subjects you can be fairly confident that you have found

a result worth noting (and publishing). Beauty Serum users find their skin healthier! But if $n = 23$ rather than $n = 8000$ (where n is the number of participants in your study) then there is rather less reason for confidence.

Time and money pressures exist. You may have insufficient amounts of either to complete a fuller study. But this is not the active manipulation — *p*-hacking — that experimenters are now being accused of, and which they routinely admit to.

Suppose that the cosmetics company who commissioned you (Beauty Products Inc.) asked you to study 150 women. Such a figure, for *p* (or in our case ‘*n*’) will look good on screen. You begin processing your data. Because people drop out you need to invite more than 150 to your lab. But when you start going through the results you find two things. One is that after you process the data from the first 23 subjects, you discover — much to the satisfaction of Beauty Products Inc. — that there

is a statistically significant result: a large number of the first twenty-three women who showed up for testing were positive about Beauty Serum.

The problem is that by the time you reached $n = 150$, any statistical significance has disappeared. Perhaps the early set of positive results were due to the enthusiasm of laboratory staff. As they had to get through applying serum to hundreds of women their own positivity waned. Which means that there is less surprise that in your study the cluster of positive results came at the beginning — when things felt freely and easily positive to all concerned.

What to do? If $n = 150$ you cannot put a very positive figure up on screen. *75 out of 150 women agree that Beauty Serum leaves their skin fresher* does not look so good. But if you pare back the result to the first 23 you studied then you get your headline news. This is “p-hacking” and if psychologists themselves are to be be-

lieved then versions of it are widely practised.¹⁰⁸ There are no doubt then other statistical manipulations of increasing nuance and complexity which researchers can use to justify their own headline news and so get published. The worry here is more pernicious than it was in the case of the Replication issue.

If there is a certain lack of interest in repeating old studies, to make sure they stand up statistically, then that is one thing. But if on the other hand it were to turn out that the original study published by a psych lab did not even justify the headline news in the first place then would this not be even more serious?

Let's say that Team A at Lake View University in the Lovely Area region of a certain European country finds (where $n = 5015$) that thinking about badgers improves your facility at sudoku. It certainly looks publishable! But if the full data set, produced by the researchers were to be declared then (where $n = 7000$) you get the very

non-headline-sounding news that Thinking About Badgers Does Not Improve Your Performance At Sudoku.

The problem is even more nuanced. For it turns out that if Team A had declared its result at $n = 6500$ they would have been the first to admit that the statistical significance of their Badger Sudoku experiment disappeared. Much better, for everyone's publication prospects — and ultimately their careers — to declare that where $n = 5015$ Badger-Imagining Is Good For Your Sudoku.

Do psychologists act like this? The evidence is that they do.¹⁰⁹ And in a sense they do so because they have to. Academics get grants for the projects they run which enhances the standing of the universities they are at, or wish to join. Learned journals, and ultimately the newspapers, get their headlines and ultimately everyone is happy.

Not quite everyone of course. Those who have started

to write on the cracks appearing in the profession sometimes seem to delight on how bogus Psychology is. But there is going to be evidence surely that scientists of all stripes are not immune from the kind of statistical strategising that goes on in psychology departments. We are human and it is very easy, and in a sense perfectly natural, to become energised by the prospect of a dramatic result. As that prospect is neared and then attained at the point where $n = x$ it is understandable that the study is stopped before $n = x + 1$.

It might even be that, conscious of the disappearance of statistical significance when $n = x + 1$ the researcher may think to themselves: let others come along and test whether they can repeat my statistical significance. The first stage of the data is arguably just that: the first stage. As a wise person once said, a PhD if done well is the first word on a topic, not the last.

Perhaps the deeper worry is that topics are emerging

all over the shop and many of these topics are not really topics at all. Maybe badger-thinking has nothing to do with sudoku performance. But the point for scientists, and all of us, is that it might do. In the initial evidence (the first part of it at any rate) there are indications that this might be the case. It is, as always, for scientists to enquire further.

We should not, then, be unfair to psychologists. But on the other hand there are some concerns here regarding the stability of the evidence base for Situationism. And if our moral topic is that philosophical theory which rests on a number of psychology experiments which are implicated in these concerns then we had better answer them.

What kind of answer can we give to the scientific worries just expressed? The answer we would seek to avoid is that answer which the Situationist John Doris, at one point in his recent (2015) book has supplied. For in rais-

ing in an effective way the methodological concerns we have just repeated, Doris himself clearly feels that he must furnish an adequate response. Indeed it is interesting that despite so many philosophical responses to Situationism over the years almost none¹¹⁰ of them seem to have canvassed the scientific worries that Doris rightly brings to the fore in his recent work.

This is somewhat surprising in the sense that it should not have to fall to the Situationist to supply the most obvious criticisms of their own position. Be that as it may, Doris is both cognisant of and hopeful about the difficulties arising from a certain sloppiness of method within experimental Psychology. He says that if Situationist-supporting experiments are so widespread then some of them must be true!

Our response to Doris's optimism, which we are about to put on the table, might be taken as a rebuke of that optimism. But this is only true insofar as we have already

come to agree with most of what Doris says about the method-problems facing Psychology. So in challenging his optimism we are really supporting the trenchancy of his previous statements about the entire matter. Let us look closely at the optimism first before delivering our rebuke.

Doris, as mentioned, says that while there are serious worries about recent method in Psychology, in the construction of its experiments and in the pressures exerted by publication, nevertheless there are also reasons to be cheerful. For (he says) we can take heart from the sheer volume of studies which tend in a situationist direction.

Never mind the quality; feel the quantity appears to be the basic thought here, which we have indicated. But like all basic thoughts it requires close consideration. For it cannot be that bad work done repeatedly is good enough to allay our fears about the inadequacies of experimental method. So in presenting those inadequacies, himself, so

capably it is not then reasonable for Doris to suggest, by the sequel, that after all we have less reason to fear them than he himself first, initially, urged.

It will be as well to bear in mind Doris's own warning about Psychology when we now present our first real piece of empirical evidence against Situationism.

3 —*Practical Solutions*

IMAGINE YOU are the subject — one of the subjects — of an experiment designed to test the impact of meditation on a set of measures. You show up for some routine tests which form part of it. When you get to the test site you're invited to wait a few minutes in the waiting room. There you find you are third in the queue but there is one seat left. You sit down, noticing that, as is the modern way, your two seat mates on either side of you are engrossed in their cellphones.

Then something a little unusual happens and you notice a soft padding sound; it approaches down the corridor. You look up and there at the entrance to the room is a person on crutches. This person appears to be having some difficulties. Slightly huffing and puffing she props herself up against the nearest wall, to wait her turn. (After all there isn't anywhere else for her to sit down.) For the three of you — you and the two able-bodied texters — occupy the only seats in the room. Assuming that you are able-bodied too, what is the right moral outcome of this scenario?

Two words — No Brainer — spring to mind. But before we take this thought further, what was supposed to be the overall point of this experiment we have landed right in the middle of? The point of Condon's experiment¹¹¹ is not as revealed to its participants at the outset. What was, however, revealed without artifice was that each participant would be invited into one of three

conditions. Either they would learn a form of meditation, or they would learn another form, or they would be assigned to a wait-list control and so receive their meditation instruction *after* the experiment was completed and the data gathered. (As the reader will remember it is not considered ethical to deprive study-participants of an intervention¹¹² if, as experimenters, you believe it likely to benefit them.)

The key point then is that everyone would learn some form of meditation at some stage. The true purpose of the experiment was not however disclosed to subjects at the outset. The purpose was to measure whether learning one or another form of meditation, as opposed to having learnt no form would lead to superior moral performance in a set task. For obvious reasons, the task was not revealed ahead of time. In fact the task was as we have already described and the experimental question connected to it was this: would somebody trained in

meditation be more likely to help the person struggling on crutches?

The short answer to this question is yes. Condon et al. found that where an individual has learned modern secular/therapeutic Mindfulness in a class setting — over the course of the standard¹¹³ eight weeks — they are more likely to offer their seat to a person on crutches in the scenario described. The outcome was not merely more likely but significantly so according to regular statistical measures. The general effect was replicated in a second related experiment.¹¹⁴

DISCUSSION

Why and how does Condon's experiment offer to solve our needs with respect to Situationism? It promises to do so by improving on what was on offer before and by meeting the important challenges we have already iden-

tified. Specifically these challenges require (a) coming up with a practical response to situational factors (b) coming up with — since ‘practical’ must mean *practicable* — that response which can see off the situational challenges we identified in the last two chapters. As a bonus to (a) and (b) we also have what we said we ought to be able to have from them, all being well, which is (c) *a path to refuting Situationism*.

Only by keeping the relevant (situational) challenges constantly in the back of our mind will we be able to avoid the mistake that so many other respondents to Situationism have made. This was, as we saw in chapter 2, to forget about the need to come up with an antidote. But we have just seen the shape of an embryonic antidote. Therefore we must consider whether it truly gives us enough of what we ethically need.

If for instance Paul Condon’s data is accepted then it would seem that one of the best prophylactics against

situational disruptions (that we have supporting empirical evidence for) is the practice of Mindfulness. But does Mindfulness fit easily or at all into the province of the moral, or into our standard conceptions of what an Ethics must be? And whether it does or does not, we can also ask: is Mindfulness strictly secular? The answers to these questions matter if we are to offer Mindfulness practice as our (potential) chosen solution to Situationism.

For instance, is it possible that Mindfulness may do more harm than good? To this and the other questions just set out we must now turn.

ADVERSE EFFECTS OF MINDFULNESS

In the view of Lindahl et al. (2017) ‘While meditation programs draw inspiration from Buddhist textual sources for the benefits of meditation, these sources also acknowl-

edge a wide range of other effects beyond health-related outcomes.’¹¹⁵

These authors therefore undertook to assess certain ‘meditation-related experiences that are typically *under-reported*, particularly experiences that are described as challenging, difficult, distressing, functionally impairing, and/or requiring additional support.’¹¹⁶

Their overall conclusions contest, in their view, the ‘assumption that meditation-related difficulties only happen to individuals with a pre-existing condition (psychiatric or trauma history), who are on long or intensive retreats, who are poorly supervised, who are practicing incorrectly, or who have inadequate preparation.’¹¹⁷

The list of relevant adverse effects, identified and explored by Lindahl et al., includes in general terms “depersonalisation disorder” and forms of “trauma” produced by practising meditation as well as different kinds of “sensory deprivation”.¹¹⁸

In order to provide more detail Lindahl and his collaborators collated self-reports so as to gauge what percentage of the following phenomena were found across the subject population in their study, *for example*: perceptual hypersensitivity (found in 28%); rage, anger, or aggression (30%); mental stillness (37%); gastrointestinal distress or nausea (17%); and (to complete this selection of examples) involuntary movements (37%).¹¹⁹

Not all of these phenomena of course were seen as necessarily negative by the subjects involved.¹²⁰ In that sense the phenomena represent a mixed bag when, that is, they are seen from the perspective of secular health and wellbeing outcomes.

Indeed according to the terms of religious tradition certain outcomes that are deemed negative from a modern wellbeing perspective may be seen rather differently — even potentially as positives — *sub specie aeternitatis*. The researchers in the study we are citing them-

selves attempted to be sensitive to this fact. As they write, ‘Even in cases where the phenomenology was similar across participants, interpretations of and responses to the experiences differed considerably.’¹²¹

We have offered some worrying thoughts about, and evidence for, the negative consequences for some of those practising Mindfulness. Against the evidential backdrop just reported, it may be slightly misleading but it is not after all so completely surprising (taking the widespread popularity of Mindfulness into account) to come across the following assertions. But on the other hand, we wonder if the blanket approval about to be expressed does not surprise even more when it comes from authorities in the field:

The world is all-abuzz nowadays about mindfulness. This is a wonderful thing because we are sorely lacking, if not starving for some elusive but necessary element in our lives. We might even have a strong intuition on occasion that what is really missing in some profound way is us — our willingness or ability to show up fully in our

lives and live them as if they really mattered, in the only moment we ever get, which is this one — and that we are worthy of inhabiting life in this way and capable of it. This is a very brave intuition or insight, and it matters enormously. It could be world-transforming, It is certainly profoundly nurturing and life-transforming for those who undertake it.

Life-transforming but not always in a good way.¹²² And then again we have more hyperbole from volumes of work authored by those who elsewhere in their own research work,¹²³ have been studiously careful to avoid it. For example from the introduction to a work partly authored by Mark Williams (one of the authors cited in the last footnote) has the following statements:

The practice of mindfulness has been shown to exert a powerful influence on one's health, well-being and happiness, as attested to by . . . scientific and medical evidence. . .

It is very important to have good guidance along this path for the stakes are actually quite high. Ultimately, the quality of your very life and your relationships to others and to the world you inhabit is

at stake, to say nothing of the degree of well-being, mental balance, happiness, and integration in your life as it unfolds.¹²⁴

Now we stand forewarned about the risks of a certain “jaw-dropping hyperbole” regarding the uses in our culture of both Buddhism and its offspring, the modern Mindfulness movement.

The risk is so named by Owen Flanagan¹²⁵ who has gone on to document its grosser products from new beliefs in our culture about the power of meditation to self-serving explanatory research projects designed to show forth the uncomplicated goods arising from such power.¹²⁶

Some of these projects exist to seemingly serve the reputation of already existing clinical interventions as well as the wider dissemination of Mindfulness in society. But in several cases the interventions were being offered as healthcare programmes before their complete empirical justification was available. We offer a case study.

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy

The psychological researchers John Teasdale, Zindel Segal and Mark Williams were originally tasked with developing a “maintenance form” of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT).¹²⁷ Its purpose was to stabilise those who had been depressed but who were not so currently.¹²⁸

In other words if it could be shown that such and such a form of CBT was prophylactic against the recurrence of depression then this form ought to be rolled out, as a healthcare intervention, into clinics (and perhaps beyond). The savings to health systems and society accruing from the (fended off) need to treat multiple episodes of depression, as well as being due to improvements in the quality of life for individuals, all seemed worthwhile goals — as indeed they are.

However for this group of researchers it quickly turned out that there was another candidate besides CBT for a

maintenance therapy of the general kind that was needed (prophylactic and so on). Instead of the forms of CBT that they were severally and as a group expert in, Teasdale et al. decided to investigate and then later on design a therapy based on Mindfulness.

To cut a long story short, the original Randomly Controlled Trial (RCT) that won their therapeutic (Mindfulness based) intervention further funding and eventual, if limited, clinical approval (as well as considerable take-up by clinicians) had limitations of its own.

The original RCT showed a benefit only to subjects who had experienced three or more episodes of depression. And, furthermore, the researchers had tested their own intervention. Therefore they needed (for fuller validation and to learn more about the reasons why those who had only been depressed a couple of times did not seem to benefit from Mindfulness) additional supporting evidence from further studies, including ones not per-

formed by the core group of Teasdale et al. (who continue our story as follows):

So the first important outcome of the second trial was the fact that it exactly replicated the finding that those with the longest histories of depression benefited the most, and those with only two episodes were no better for having done MBCT and may have been slightly worse.¹²⁹

This last comment neatly rolls into one two objections which may be considered to be distinct and yet which (as we are in a position to see) may also be combined: (1) meditation, of such and such a sort, may well be counterproductive (2) specific meditation programmes have been said to show benefits which turn out, on closer inspection, to be undersupported — or, at the very least, they are not as supported as all the hyperbole suggests. *In particular* it is not even the case that a clinical population presented as widely helped by Mindfulness can expect to be so supported (unless they fall into a precise niche).

And we should also consider the following question. Whereas the ‘second trial’ just spoken of was performed, again, by the same core group, what light did further studies done by others, apart from Teasdale et al., turn out to reveal? Do the other studies in the field of contemplative science clarify the questions with which we are currently concerned?

We can see that there is a problem concerning the often stated general truth¹³⁰ that Mindfulness improves or helps people to improve their own individual health and wellbeing. When we drill down and examine one particular clinical population — the group of people who have been depressed in the past but who have fortunately made a subsequent recovery — we find that the help they can expect to receive from Mindfulness produces a complex picture.

We cannot simply and without caveat say that Mindfulness is a help to those with recurrent depression for the

major therapeutic aim that clinicians have in respect of this population is not stably and robustly met by Mindfulness. The aim in question is to keep this target population well.

Since many of them will relapse and since, seemingly, it becomes progressively easier to fall back into depression, the more episodes you have already experienced, there is therefore a clinical desideratum to discover an effective “maintenance therapy”.

Such a therapy, if successful, will sustain the survival curve of those who have previously been depressed at superior levels above the curve (when plotted as a graph) for those receiving other standard forms of support — what clinical psychologists term ‘treatment as usual’. Since such ‘treatment as usual’ may be taken as continuing with antidepressants through the period after an individual has come back to psychological health, researchers have attempted to demonstrate that Mindful-

ness — specifically Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) was significantly more effective than treatment as usual.

They were not entirely successful. For as indicated by Segal et al., who were the primary clinical designers and authors of MBCT (Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy), significant improvement over treatment as usual (TAU) took place only in a niche population, in those that is to say with a history of three or more episodes of depression. Make no mistake: if you have been depressed previously two times or less there is currently no proof that Mindfulness will significantly maintain your psychological health by helping you not to fall back into depression.¹³¹

The slenderer finding, which researchers are entitled to fasten on, is that in the case where you have been depressed three or more times previously, you can expect to be assisted by MBCT qua so-called maintenance ther-

apy. Even here we need to be frank, as Willem Kuyken is frank. This current director of the Oxford Mindfulness Centre (Oxford's professor of Clinical Psychology in tandem) observes that 'we just don't know to be honest for whom MBCT is most effective or precisely via what mechanism it is effective'. Is then it even true to say that Mindfulness per se is the "active ingredient" in Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy?¹³²

The authors of the earliest empirical study to investigate the efficacy of MBCT were interested in this question and considered putting in place an experimental design to establish the answer. This experimental design would have attempted to exclude certain more or less obvious confounds. Though they did not put the relevant confound-excluding features in place nevertheless Segal, Williams, and Teasdale reflected upon the need for them in hindsight:

We cannot conclude that these reductions were specifically the result

of the mindfulness training in the MBCT program. As we pointed out earlier, the design of our trial does not allow us to say that MBCT produced better prevention of future depression than might have been produced by alternative procedures. We cannot be sure how many of our effects came from the support that patients gave to each other, the attention of a kindly health professional, and so on. We have a very strong impression that the benefits of MBCT did not come from such nonspecific therapeutic factors alone, but, at the moment, we cannot support that impression by empirical evidence. That is the task for future trials, with different designs or methods of analysis.¹³³

This “confounds” issue has also been noted by the Situationist contributors to the present debate¹³⁴ and, in that regard, represents a point of confluence between our concerns over Mindfulness and the concerns that certain philosophers have over Character Education. Doris for one asks:

. . . is an emphasis on character the essential feature here? Money, effort, inspired adults, and perhaps even an explicit moral training may all be of educational utility; how can we be sure that it is not these factors, rather than the discourse of character, that carry

the load? It remains uncertain that emphasis on “character” is the driving force in character education, uncertain enough that the advocate of character ethics should look elsewhere in support of her view.¹³⁵

Now the holy trinity as mentioned of ‘Money, Effort and Inspired Adults’ arguably undergirds much of the well-meaning hype over modern Mindfulness. There has been an explosion of research papers on the same and the funding dollars are flowing.¹³⁶ At the same time individuals have clearly been helped. Those with long-term histories of (multiple) depressions can expect not to relapse as much as they would have relapsed *without* Mindfulness (or at least, to be clear, without the modern programme of practices which we call Mindfulness with a capital M.)

Nevertheless when we compare the “hype” to the empirical research findings we find a gap. In philosophical terms, or indeed in any other, are we right to press upon it? For is it not true simpliciter that practising Mindfulness improves the prophylaxis against relapse that is

fundamentally needed in a maintenance therapy for depression? Who would gainsay such a good thing? When researchers charted the survival curve for those following MBCT against those following Treatment As Usual there was indeed a statistically significant improvement by the former over the latter. Therefore it may seem churlish to criticise the more general statements, like the following, which we come across in the ever-growing literature on Mindfulness:

. . . We know this to be true because we — and our colleagues — have been studying anxiety, stress and depression for over thirty years at Oxford University and other institutions around the world. This work has discovered the secret to sustained happiness and how you can successfully tackle anxiety, stress, exhaustion and even full-blown depression. It's the kind of happiness and peace that gets into your bones and promises a deep-seated authentic love of life, seeping into everything you do and helping you to cope more skilfully with the worst that throws at you.¹³⁷

Sounds good no? At the very least, a previously depressed person, exposed to multiple episodes of depres-

sion can have confidence that something like the improvement so eulogised is indeed a reality and is likely to occur in their very own case, *should they follow a course of Mindfulness*. We need to attract these people, arguably, to the practice. And if on the other hand there are individuals whom Mindfulness does not actively help then what is the damage? To the question of clinically induced harm we now return.

Willem Kuyken, and his colleague Ruth Baer, set our final scene now, for we do not wish to dwell only on the negatives of systematically taught meditation practice, Buddhist or Buddhist-inspired or other:

The benefits of mindfulness practice are increasingly well documented, but little attention has been paid to potential risks. The prevention of harm to people learning mindfulness skills requires the field to study both the benefits and the risks. . . . we have very little scientific information about the potential risks of mindfulness practice. Descriptions are emerging of problems brought on by mindfulness practice, including panic, depression, and anxiety. In some more extreme cases, mania and psychotic symptoms have

been reported. These problems seem to be rare, but nonetheless significant, and require further investigation and guidance.¹³⁸

The opinion of Kuyken and Baer is, as we have previously suggested, one of considered optimism. For while ‘it is possible that a small proportion of participants experience sustained deterioration or long-term harm’ and while the entire ‘question has not yet been adequately studied and is a priority for future research’¹³⁹ nevertheless there are reasons, in their view, to remain positive.

One way of arriving at such a view is to agree, with Kuyken and Baer, that when things go wrong there is usually an obvious explanation. For instance, they write that ‘Pre-existing mental health difficulties, such as a tendency to experience anxiety or depression, or a history of trauma or psychosis, may increase the risks.’¹⁴⁰ Alternatively the Mindfulness that has been taught may be substandard, its teachers insufficiently experienced or prepared. Or else we could say that problems are more

likely to occur in the context of longer term retreats well away from the tightly controlled healthcare setting.

On the other hand, the view that there is a ready explanation for harms that are caused by learning Mindfulness has, as we have seen, been recently challenged by a number of authors. For instance:

Willoughby Britton, a neuroscientist and psychiatrist at Brown University who has conducted studies on the positive effects of mindfulness, is now trying to map . . . more difficult experiences, which she calls ‘The Dark Side of Dharma’. Her interest arose from witnessing two people being hospitalized after intense meditation practice, together with her own experience after a retreat in which she felt an unimaginable terror. Reading through the classical Buddhist literature to try to understand what was happening to her, she realized that these negative experiences are mentioned as common stages of meditation. . . . Meditation retreats easily (lead) people to sense the world differently: the hearing gets sharper; time moves slower. But the most radical change that can occur is in what Britton calls ‘the narrative of the self’. Try this out: focus on the present moment, nothing else than the present moment. You may be able to do it easily for a very short time. However, if you try extending this ‘presentness’ for one, two hours and keep trying for some days, your

usual sense of self — that which has one foot in the past and the other in the future — collapses.¹⁴¹

We hope that, in company with all the contemporary authors just considered, we have given you food for thought concerning Mindfulness. But whatever the level of concern we should have, when it comes to all the things that can go wrong with this (or with other) meditation practice, still there are two bases we need to cover; one good, one possibly not so.

The first base will have us notice the way in which Mindfulness gets around a big problem for the Situationist — and for all of us who are on the look out for practical solutions to the problem of Situationism. Having dispatched it we can have ever greater confidence that, with the data of Condon et al. in our backpocket, we are well on the way to answering the Situationist, and to answering moreover their ethical fears. Therefore, as we say, we are moving now from shade into the light and

the better things that contemplative paths have to offer.

SOLVING KAHNEMAN'S CHALLENGE

The problem we will have in our sights now is the one we are minded to call, here, by our own chosen phrase: *Kahneman's Challenge*.

Mindfulness (we may as well notice) is a practice which does not offer specific ethical content.¹⁴² As such it has been widely criticised as a derogation from the sterling attention paid by Buddhist tradition as a whole to the matter of moral precepts.¹⁴³

Take away these precepts and you have Buddhism light — morally light. In even more dismissive terms you end up with what its critics call McMindfulness.¹⁴⁴ So given that we are facing a serious ethical matter it would seem that a stripped down, ethically light and even deracinated version of Buddhism — modern Mind-

fulness practice in other words — should hardly be the first port of call. But we beg, now, to differ.

Think about the structure of the cognitive problem Kahneman identifies. We will call this problem Kahneman’s Challenge. It functions by making plain that we cannot be thinking in two ways at once. Either you are attending to your environment in a sensible way that keeps your options open (System 1) or else you are narrowing your concentration into a particular focus (System 2) but of course this hampers your ability to take in information which you need.¹⁴⁵ The hurtling car may be ignored by the person lost in abstract thought.

Mindfulness offers a different approach to this dilemma. Indeed — if Condon’s helping experiment data is secure and reliable — there may already have been found, within the tradition of contemplative ethics, what is a plausible way of getting around “Kahneman’s Challenge”. At a stroke, by simply meditating, Condon’s subjects

seemingly found a way to repulse a well known morally awkward situational disrupter (bystander effect).

This effect is well known in the psychological literature and the Situationists have fastened upon it.¹⁴⁶ If there are others standing around doing nothing then it will be all too easy for you to do nothing, however grave the danger that threatens as a result. And of course so it was in Condon's Disability scenario. A person needed to sit down urgently and people just did nothing.

Unless of course they have previously studied and practised Mindfulness. For then, as we saw, a very different result was returned. Even just doing the basic Eight-Week programme — the cause of much of the hoo ha whose problematic features we have been surveying — was enough to correct for bystander apathy.

As we see it — good news indeed! But we are here just as interested in what the Condon results mean for Philosophy and, in particular, for the Situationist case. If

we can get a refutation of Situationism out of Condon et al.'s elegant experiment then this would be good news indeed for, as we wrote above, a philosophical refutation is not our only goal. Unlike the majority of Situationism's critics, we take seriously the need to provide a practical answer to the problem of situational factors. And this appears to be exactly what Condon has delivered. We have then, other things being equal, the likelihood of two birds with one stone.

We say *other things being equal* because of course Condon's data will need further confirmation (through replication). But for the moment let us look closely at how these data (Condon's pair of experiments) may address very directly indeed the problem we called Kahneman's Challenge.

As a culture, we do well to notice that an impasse has been reached. We called it "Kahneman's Challenge" and it reveals the following. In Ethics we experience a cogni-

tive dissonance whether we know all the details of that dissonance or whether many of them remain to be uncovered, or (if already partially revealed then) examined more closely.

The details in question are within our intellectual grasp in the following sense. We now know about them and call them, following the Situationist, situation-factors or situational factors. Put slightly differently, we know now that surprising twists occur — Daniel Dennett and Enoch Lambert have recently called them “goofy influences”¹⁴⁷ — so that what ought *not* to disrupt our moral flow, the virtuousness of our actions and so on, very heavily disrupts it.

We can either bury our heads in the sand about the practical consequences — as Situationism’s critics tend to — or else we can investigate possible solutions. But, on the other hand, the difficulty revealed by Kahneman lies in the fact that when we think directly, while living

through real scenarios out there in the world, about the need to handle situational factors then this very act of thinking takes off line all sorts of cognitive functioning that we need to survive and even to act morally.

It is this functional difficulty that the contemplative model of theory and practice cogently offers a way to get around. *Meditation* and other *contemplative* practices — although we have not gone much into the difference between these two terms which were known, for example, to Aquinas and distinguished by him¹⁴⁸ — are such that, if they work in the way they are supposed to work, they will simply sidestep Kahneman's Challenge.

You do not need (on the contemplative model of Ethics) to be thinking directly all the time about a whole set of things (situational factors included) which you cannot think on all at once but which — so tradition tells us — the practice of contemplation has got covered, in a practical manner, in any case.

We introduced some relevant data from the researcher Paul Condon and his associates. If confirmed (as must happen after Repligate) this data has it in it to give hope to the Situationist while unravelling their philosophical hostility to Character.

How so? In just the way we canvassed in detail at the close of the last chapter. For there we explained how the only supportive data the Situationist has — or seems to want to have — is data of the following kind. Data which, as the Situationist puts it, shows otherwise sane individuals being disrupted by the slightest variation, or trivial-seeming shift, in their environment.

From this slender reedbed the Situationist conjures their entire philosophical position. And we said good luck to them of course. For it has been a major tactical error in the responses to Situationism when ethical philosophers downplay the significance of situational factors — and do so to the point where they seem to want

to write them off.

Though this has not been our own strategy, and we counsel strongly against it, nevertheless we cannot help noticing that if the Situationist's data fails then so (by the Situationists' very own lights) does Situationism itself. The Situationist wants to be known for an empirical position and, in connexion with this desire, John Doris has been very vocal about the need for falsifiability in a Popperian sense to be available to the Situationist's position.¹⁴⁹

Well then we are happy to take up the invitation! For there are different kinds of falsification. The one we selected at the end of Chapter 2 made the claim that if it turned out that a situational factor could be easily and widely resisted — through a simple-to-learn technique — and if, even more widely, there could be evolved a one-to-many relationship between *this one Contra-Situational Resilience (CSR) fostering technique*, on the one hand,

and multiple situational factors, on the other hand, then we may just have to deduce that Character Ethics is back in business.

This breezy way of putting things is one that we mean entirely in earnest. The Situationist, after all, does not want to get into demonstrations of this virtue (any virtue) really existing or not existing somewhere in the world. We put that argument to rest in our section above (*NOT THIS BUT THAT*).

It is of no interest to the Situationist, taking John Doris as our main example — whether some Character Virtue turned up in the wild, and turned out to be empirically identifiable. However all that having been said, the Situationist is clear (Doris again) that he does not think there will ever be such demonstration, not as things stand at present.

Such a demonstration would be prohibitively expensive. It is just not going to be available at present.¹⁵⁰ So

then if the Situationist position is to remain falsifiable, to the content of its own adherents, how might this be the case?

We offered our own account, in Chapter 2, and it is as we have just revisited the matter. All we would need to be able to satisfy the Situationist — again, by their own lights — is to show that situational disruption is not a given, that it can be reliably headed off. Put bluntly and simply, if the problem disappears then so must the Situationist’s complaint against Character.

We do not expect, of course, the Situationist to give up without a fight. Any data that we offered as indication that a situational factor can be easily and routinely handled — after some specific piece of moral training — is going to require a lot of empirical review. But here the Situationists and we ourselves are of one mind. Never shy of taking seriously the Replication “scandals” (as indeed they ought to be taken seriously) Doris has

sought to reassert the stability of the Situationist data even after all the scandal. But in doing so his axiom, just like ours, is to put empirical integrity first, especially in moral psychology.

Like Doris we have tried to be appropriately sceptical about psychology experimentation; and that of course means that we ought to continue our scepticism so as to look closely at the experimental designs used by Condon. This task should probably fall, we frankly admit, to a psychologist colleague of Condon's. But for philosophical purposes we can already have from the Condon experiments *all that we need in principle*.

Without belabouring the point: if Mindfulness meditation turned out to reliably offset situational factors and to do so to an impressive extent — handling not just the apathy that is induced by bystander effects but also lots of other situation-factors besides — then this would not only be kudos to the experimenters but also it would

mean, *in principle and in practice*, curtains for the Situationist claim.

As we have consistently sought to emphasise again and again a crucial factor is how easy to learn is the moral training technique that we end up relying upon. And here, despite all the hoo-ha about its potential harm — and doubted effectiveness — still we have to point out that Mindfulness scores heavily on its ease of acquisition. It does not seem difficult to learn, even if it may (as seen) sometimes produce adverse or doubtable effects.

This fact about ease of acquisition has a high ethical relevance and so now we can confirm our first philosophical conclusion: *if* the data of Condon on successful prophylaxis against a known situational factor were to end up being statistically confirmed by further experiment, then we have good reason to suppose we are well on the road to refuting Situationism *via Mindfulness*.

The Situationist ought to agree on principle. But we

expect a fair fight over the data, including that data which has not yet appeared, on point, but will end up being directly relevant. And if the data (including future data) ends up supporting the morally prophylactic effect of one particular meditation technique, which is Mindfulness, then we may want to adopt it as our premier ethical counter to situational woes.

Nevertheless we cannot avoid a further worry, since we are minded to tackle as many objections as possible here. This concerns whether Mindfulness is fully or even adequately *secular*.

THE PROBLEM OF THE SECULAR

A final concern about Mindfulness, which we have not gone into so far, is whether it is properly secular. This can be doubted.

Of course it depends on your model of the secular.

For the Dalai Lama, for instance, who appears to be borrowing¹⁵¹ from voices like Amartya Sen, there is a difference between a broadly western conception of the secular space, on the one hand, and the traditional Indian conception of that space on the other hand.

How might we characterise this relevant difference? In the Indian context, so we are told, we have a jumble of different religions all and each vibrantly doing their own thing. It is the commitment and job of the secular world, with its various public arms (political and so on) to actively make sure that each of the religions is adequately heard and presenced within the public space. Think of this as a positive liberty of the religions.

Turning however to the western-style conception of the secular, the liberty of the different religions within the secular space is more negative. There, religions do not have an automatic right to share in public space. Rather they must show their conformity — a conformity which

must be tested — when it comes to the secular sphere. This sphere of *the secular* is a heavily protected space within, and to some extent symbolic of, the wider political and cultural society of the West (or North-West) and, in these places, of civil society as a whole.¹⁵²

Religions start off, under the second conception, somewhat on the back foot. They have to establish their credentials if they are to be taken seriously and permitted to feature within civil society. It would seem by contrast that in the Indian version of such society, the appropriateness of religions for the large space that they have a more or less automatic right to occupy in public is essentially a given.

We do not think that all parts of Indian culture, looking back historically, acknowledge such a right. This may be healthy. The *Pañcatantra* for instance is a text which is highly suspicious of religion and its set cast of personalities, those figures who intrude predictably and often

comically, sometimes counterproductively or aggressively upon social life and upon the presumed rights of those within social life to live a life free of religious molestation.

Such dissenting voices aside, however, the Indian scene could not be more different (the Dalai Lama implies) from the West. Perhaps Buddhism has a vested interest in the difference; and it is this that might conceivably trouble us with respect to Mindfulness/mindfulness.

In the West there is, predictably or otherwise, no one single uniform understanding of what it is for a person, place, or thing (an institution, a concept and so on) to be *secular*. But notwithstanding, there is arguably a conceptual substratum to which any and all western thought on “the secular” owes a more or less direct allegiance. This substratum is the Christian church.

Though it may seem an old-fashioned point, Christianity’s understanding of the secular sphere (*saeculum*) and secular time is not intended to create a free space

in which any number of different views has the right to take up its own standpoint. And if we think that we are past seeing the secular from a Christian (or, better, a Christianity-informed) perspective, then we would do well to remember how close to our own generally shared way of seeing things, across the North-West (and approved of course elsewhere) is this comment by the jurist John Finnis:

state law can rightly suppress threats to public order (that is, to public peace, public morals, and/or the rights of other citizens), including threats arising from external acts putting into practice one or another tenet of mistaken religious belief. And the last-mentioned . . . correct judgment entails . . . that it is false to assert that everyone has a right to religious liberty—a liberty to give practical effect to whatever is the content of what they believe to be a true religious tenet.¹⁵³

Now with regard to the above our conclusion could easily be that it is a mistaken belief, arguably a religious belief, that Mindfulness does not invade the secular realm.

This is important because, if it were so, then it would go against a considerable body of literature which holds Mindfulness to be innocuously free from any religious commitment. As such, its authors tell us, we can swap in a mindfulness practice — whatever our preexisting religious commitments or lack thereof.

Are things so simple? We mentioned above that modern Mindfulness is held, very often, to not be ethical. We have already introduced some argument on that point — notably in the form of the prosocial-behaviour demonstrations of Paul Condon (et al.) But if, as we now hope to show, we can say that there is a theoretical model of ethicality underlying Buddhist meditation practice then (as we will also show) this is not only interesting in itself but also it has implications for the question of Secularity.

The key word in the Buddhist version of the Good Samaritan story is a word for compassion, *anukampa*. There are two things worth noticing about this word.

One is that practices exist — cultivation practices as the Buddhists say — which are designed to foster it. (We would probably say that some of these practices are contemplative, in modern English idiom.) But the other thing we should notice is that in the Buddhist meditative tradition, some parts of it at least,¹⁵⁴ *anukampa* is seen as a propaedeutic or preparatory stage designed to lead to full-blown compassion — *karuṇa* — at the later stages of practice.

This analysis suggests that in Buddhist terms certain specialist forms of compassion-raising meditation are going to be required for the optimisation of Good-Samaritan-type behaviour but, in our view and especially in the view of those Buddhists who follow a particular path, this is not necessarily going to be the case. There is, it turns out, another path to virtue. It leads to enhanced compassion but by a seemingly roundabout way.

In the *Satipaṭṭhāna* sutta¹⁵⁵ it is written that if one practises mindfulness of breathing, and the other kinds of mindfulness, doing so in the right way (presumably) then it must follow that you will win Liberation or Enlightenment. This improbable claim is surely what, partly at least, lies behind the use of mindfulness by generations of Buddhists — sometimes it is called paying bare attention.

Given the strength of the claim in the *Satipaṭṭhāna* sutta there has opened up controversy: surely just mindfulness alone cannot be enough to get one all the way to the state, or non-state, of Nirvana? We do not think the claim should be ducked and here is what it says in the sutta:

‘Now, if anyone would develop these four frames of reference in this way for seven years, one of two fruits can be expected for him: either gnosis right here & now, or — if there be any remnant of clinging/sustenance — non-return.

Let alone seven years. If anyone would develop these four frames

of reference in this way for six years... five... four... three... two years... one year... seven months... six months... five... four... three... two months... one month... half a month, one of two fruits can be expected for him: either gnosis right here now, or — if there be any remnant of clinging/sustenance — non-return.

Let alone half a month. If anyone would develop these four frames of reference in this way for seven days, one of two fruits can be expected for him: either gnosis right here & now, or — if there be any remnant of clinging/sustenance — non-return.

This is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow lamentation, for the disappearance of pain distress, for the attainment of the right method, & for the realization of Unbinding — in other words, the four frames of reference.’ Thus was it said, and in reference to this was it said.¹⁵⁶

Here *frames of reference* is the translator’s (Thanissaro’s) phrase for mindfulness practice and about this passage we now think that modern westerners have underappreciated the link between mindfulness and ethical perfection.

Had the critics of secular therapeutic Mindfulness taken this link more seriously they might not have written so negatively about the ethical aspect of the modern Mind-

fulness movement. So, as we now see, a defence of Mindfulness and the Ethics, it is so often presumed to lack, may now be mounted.

We take the argument in stages. First the link between Nirvana and ethical perfection. In fact ethical perfection is reached at earlier stages of the path. At those stages the virtues — knowing how to use them and why as well as where — will already have been stabilised. Though it is probably something of a western-sounding projection to many Buddhists it probably does not wreak too much conceptual violence on early Buddhism and its thought world — on what the student of Buddhism Steven Collins calls its *imaginaire* — to say that at these earlier stages of the path the ethical character has already become complete.¹⁵⁷

Nirvana¹⁵⁸ adds certain other perfections which we need not go into here but if all this can be attained through the use of mindfulness then we ought to take it

seriously as an ethical practice. This leaves as sounding rather odd the assumption by critics of the modern Mindfulness movement that just because it does not overtly mention Ethics it must be without one. We could not disagree more.

For what does certainly do violence to the Buddhist imaginaire is to forget the implied link between ethical outcomes on the one hand and, on the other, those cultivation practices which do not look stereotypically ‘moral’ to the observer (probably western) who has been brought up in a different tradition!

Indeed it is precisely this implied link which brings to the Buddhist contemplative tradition specific practical advantages — at least in theory. Some of those advantages were considered earlier, regarding Kahneman’s Challenge especially. If all you have to do in order to make progress towards ethical perfection is to stabilise your mindfulness, rather than engage just your System-

2 mind,¹⁵⁹ then this offers a way around some of the difficulties facing philosophical ethics as it tries to come to grips with the problem of situational factors.

Having surveyed some of the problems *as well as opportunities*, superficially at least, which arise in the domain of mindfulness it is now time to turn West. We do this for two reasons. One is that whenever that figure, to whom we now cast admiring glances, appears within discussions of Situationism — we speak of Aristotle — then it is only for him to be pilloried or contrastingly championed as a supporter of Character. We do not have much to add to this debate which has been carried on in a more or less interesting fashion. But what we do mean to say is something about the selfconsciously contemplative strand in Aristotle's Ethics.

Whenever the Situationist speaks of Aristotle it is, essentially, to do him down.¹⁶⁰ The Situationist's point, as we have seen, is that the Virtue Ethicist selects a dubi-

ous concept — Character with its aligned virtues — in order to serve as the basis of Ethics. But if we cannot stably and reliably even expect to have anything like a plausible version of a virtue then using the virtues to build our Ethics around them is a mistake. And making fundamental mistakes in Ethics is necessarily a serious business.

Part of the problem, so the Situationist wants to reliably — if condescendingly — inform us, lies in the naivety to which Aristotle falls subject. Born as he was before the advent of modern Psychology and its experimental discoveries how could it be other than that he knew nothing about situational factors? Against this rhetorical question we now make two counterclaims.

One is that Aristotle is in no way as naive about the influence of situations, upon thought and action, as Situationism requires him to be (for its own rhetoric). And the second claim we make is that a feature of the Aristotelian

model of Ethics allows us to anticipate practically and theoretically the disruptions caused by situation-factors. We start then with *Aristotle and the Situation* before moving on to *Aristotle and Contemplation*.

ARISTOTLE AND THE SITUATION

The highest ethical good for Aristotle, as is well known, rests on and is constituted by “flourishing” or “happiness”, the two favoured translations of ‘eudaimonia’.¹⁶¹ Contrary to what is supposed by the Situationist Maria Merritt’s analysis,¹⁶² there is no good fit between a doctrine that Merritt calls MSC and the Aristotelian conception of the ethically flourishing, or happy, character.

The glaring deficiency — one could say inaccuracy — at the heart of Merritt’s attack on Aristotle can be seen by contrasting MSC (Motivationally Self-sufficient Character) with a clear statement from Aristotle on the in-

sufficiency of MSC. (MSC is a doctrine he denies.) Having juxtaposed two opposed statements, on point, we will look more closely at the situational dependencies at the centre of Aristotle's ethics. These are such that for Aristotle Character on its own side must be, somewhat surprisingly perhaps, insufficient for the task and goal that is ethical flourishing. This goes against the Merrittian claim that for Aristotle Character is or should be on its own side (if Aristotle is right) quite sufficient for the moral tasks ahead of us. Yet despite what Merritt says, both external resources and certain rather specific sets of external environmental conditions are required for the propagation of the virtues. Unless you have sufficient wealth, you cannot be magnanimous.¹⁶³ And then, on the other hand, to be brave means — first — putting yourself in fear-inducing situations.

But am I being unfair here, or likely to be unfair to Merritt by ignoring a distinction, available from Aristo-

tle just as it is available from everyday language (rightly or wrongly) between inner psychological motivation, on the one hand, and external (“instrumental”) resources on the other? If this distinction is to be had then it could safeguard MSC as a possible description of Aristotelian Character in the following way. Perhaps what motivates and what finally produces the effects of the virtuous Character (in say behaviour) can be broken down into stages.

The capping stone provided by external resources (friends, wealth and so on) is conceivably to be laid upon the solid foundation qua motivation that is the stable inner life of the ‘phronimos’, the perfectly virtuous agent. And, if this is the correct picture, then we can allow Merritt her description of Aristotelian Character as equating to MSC.

There exist on the one side, so it can be argued, friends and family and other features of the external situation;

on the other side there exist inner motivations, the ‘motivational structure of virtue’, in Merritt’s phrase.¹⁶⁴ This “motivational structure” is then distinct and may be to some extent conceptually insulated from those external resources (wealth and so on), which are to be employed as mere “instruments” (*organa* as Aristotle terms them).

This reading however is not easily available as we now will see and yet we will aim to take it seriously. What gives us immediate pause is that, as we are about to unfold, Aristotle’s Ethics are founded on the fact that our inner motivations are enmeshed in external factors, and are in an important sense produced by such factors — factors the modern Situationist (or ethicist generally) would call ‘situational’.

There are two kinds of situationality in Aristotle’s Ethics. One is the importance of the situation for the person who is on their way to becoming virtuous. Meanwhile the other kind concerns the person who has already

achieved full virtue. If the surrounding situation protects both kinds of person in a way that has to be carefully calibrated (on Aristotle's story) then we say (1) situationality is fundamental to Ethics in Aristotle (2) MSC fails as a description of Aristotelian Character.

According to the Aristotelian view, of the situationality of learning to be virtuous, the Character virtues are impossible — they cannot even be developed — without attending to and making practical use of the surrounding situation. No virtue then can be developed in a vacuum, away from the situations which produce it. (This is true of virtues or excellences of Character even if it is not true of the excellences of the Intellect.) This axiom of Aristotle's Ethics needs however some further exploration. As we provide it we will come to see that, even when it comes to the Intellect, there are elements of subjectivity which can be seen in a light that is friendly to the deepest concerns of the Situationist. But it is with Character

that we begin.

We begin with the person who is learning to be virtuous and then we consider full virtue. Both these kinds of persons — the learner and the *phronimos* — must rely on a certain kind of situationality on Aristotle's account. Learning to be fully virtuous is, as we have already implied, quite impossible without situational factors playing their part. But let us start with the learner as absolute beginner.

Unless they have abandoned the moral quest, in some catastrophic way, a way for which they must then be held responsible,¹⁶⁵ the individuals that remain on the ethical path — a path which has to be consciously chosen¹⁶⁶ — are (A) on their way to the fullest condition of the virtues — or else (B) they have already arrived there. So two questions arise. (1) Is the environment, within which the virtuous person necessarily operates, something irrelevant under condition (B)? (2) Is it irrelevant under

condition (A)?

Because the perfectly virtuous person has a complete and independent character, insulated from the vagaries of the environment in the midst of which they (must) operate, therefore (says Merritt) Aristotle fails to take seriously (as seriously as for instance Hume) the influence of situational features on the moral life.¹⁶⁷

We must disagree. For, as we now will show, “features of the situation” are not only taken into account by Aristotle but also they are considered fundamental. And this (which should reassure us) is true under both conditions A and B. Ergo: whatever stage you have reached on the moral life (and perhaps if one were entirely vicious as well, assuming for the sake of argument the possibility of that) you simply cannot be moral unless you reckon with and adapt yourself to the governing role that the situation must play (and continue to play).

This becomes apparent, right towards the start¹⁶⁸ of

the EN:

And here it does not matter whether he is young in years or immature in character since the deficiency does not depend on age, but results from being guided in his life and in each of his pursuits by his feelings; for an immature person, like an incontinent person, gets no benefit from his knowledge.

Then if, as Aristotle suggests in more than one place, political science is intimately bound up with ethics and the human flourishing to which it leads,¹⁶⁹ we should also say that the background situation (maturity rather than immaturity, whether of years or person) is fundamental not only to political but also to ethical goods.

Nevertheless these general observations of Aristotle's are not going to be sufficient to convince the Situationist that the detail of the problem Situationism raises have been planned for. Can we find anything by way of the necessary greater detail in Aristotle? In the matter of bravery we can. To speak gnominically, for a moment, habituation means situational exposure. This Aristotelian

axiom surely needs unpacking. And when we unpack it, we begin to see how close to the Situationist — and how distant from Merritt’s idea of MSC, which she lays at the door of Aristotle — is the Aristotelian view.

So then, for instance, finding oneself in, or else deliberately placing oneself in, a situation where fear arises is required for the virtue of courage. Courage or bravery will never develop without the constructive opportunity that is fear. As Aristotle says, ‘actions in terrifying situations and the acquired habit of fear or confidence make some brave and others cowardly.’¹⁷⁰ How else then can we acquire the right habit of bravery other than by being in ‘terrifying situations’?

Extrapolating further we can say that any Character virtue or Character excellence X (exempting for the moment the so-called Intellectual excellences) is going to involve two things. First is the normative pressure to minimally do the acts of, or more deeply (and maxi-

mally) to be in the appropriate frame of mind for doing all that is concerned with, Virtue X. It does not matter what Character Virtue we read for X. Even though Aristotle does not spell it out for every Character virtue, still we can say that a crucial point for Aristotle is that exposure to the countervailers of X qua features of the surrounding situation is strictly required for the correct habituation of X.

It is a bit rich then, is it not, to suggest that Aristotle adopts MSC in preference to taking seriously Situationality.¹⁷¹ For whatever we might include within the abstract term ‘Situationality’ we think that we ought to include within it (on Aristotelian grounds) the dynamism of the situation — its power to make or break an individual virtue.

As we have seen this power needs to be taken seriously (so Aristotle informs us). In the case of the Character virtues this power is always there. Developing the

virtues of Character must coopt this power in the right way. Aristotle then explicitly allows the situational — allows Situationality — a key role, in both hindering or preventing virtues and in causing or stabilising them.

And he goes further. For in the case of no virtue like courage and, as we now claim indeed, no virtue of Character requiring (by very dint of being a Character virtue) habituation, can there be the arising of that virtue unless certain kinds of Situationality are in place. Here as elsewhere in Aristotle (so we will see in due course) Situationality is a *sine qua non*. But perhaps we can resurrect Merrittian MSC and say that once a virtue has been fully developed then the point has already been reached where virtue X has become (Merritt style) an insular monolith, adamantine on its own side and insulated from any feature of the surrounding situation.

On this possible extension of Merritt, whatever its merits, virtue-learners may well require Situationality,

situations of various kinds, in order to get themselves going ethically. But once they have reached peak virtue, the end of the ethical path, where one and all of the virtues have been perfectly stabilised, then at such a point of completion Situationality itself falls away as a requirement. It no longer pertains; the complete freedom of Motivationally Self-sufficient Character (MSC) has been reached.

At this point then, on the strength of Merritt's model, the situation is no longer required as a virtue-inducing factor. Indeed, as Merritt's model might be taken to hold, the fully virtuous agent goes on being virtuous whatever the condition of the situation all around. Situationality no longer touches the inner moral core of the virtuous agent. Undoubtedly Aristotle accepts, on this very point, that the fully virtuous person (as John Doris quotes) 'can never do the acts that are hateful or mean'.¹⁷²

Does this betoken a perfect insularity, incorruptible by whatever else is going on, on the outside? There is a danger of misconception here. For if it is supposed that the *phronimos* has no need of particular externalities to be in place then this would certainly be a mistake. There is a whole class of Aristotelian virtues that do in fact require, on Aristotle's account, certain supporting "instruments" to be in place in day to day life.

These instruments are absolutely required for the manifestation of particular virtues (in this given class of virtues). So even though the *phronimos* has the correct (so to say) mindset, and even though this mindset is stable and no longer liable to change, still its expression — its flourishing — can be imperilled by the absence of the instruments in question. We can note a number of examples.

The virtue that T. Irwin translates as 'magnificence' (*megaloprepeia*) is earned if and only if the agent 'spends' a 'worthy amount on a large purpose, not on a trivial or

an ordinary purpose . . . for the magnificent person is generous, but generosity does not imply magnificence.’¹⁷³ The distance here between ancient and modern ethics is notable and has been noted so widely as to be a commonplace. We find it difficult, in a postChristian phase, to conceive of the virtues as depending on the size of wallet that can be recruited to their exercise. Aristotle has no such worry, as the passage cited indicates. Indeed he is happy to dismiss as trivial something that has become the very archetype of virtuous action: giving to travellers.

Such smallscale pecuniary generosity is no match for Aristotelian magnificence! But this worry need not detain us for our point is not about the difference between ancient and modern lists of virtues, or between Buddhist, say, and Christian, or Greek and Roman (and so on). Rather we must fasten here on the fact that the surrounding environment, however arrived at, is supposed

(on Aristotle's account) to deliver situational supports for virtuous acts and dispositions.

If there is not a proper balance here between the *phronimos*'s motivations on the inside and his resources on the outside then the full implementation of the virtues is impossible. The point is emphasised here: there would also seem to be a virtue concerned with honour whose relation to magnanimity seems similar to the relation of generosity to magnificence. For it abstains, just as generosity does, from anything great, but forms the right attitude in us on medium and small matters.¹⁷⁴

So Aristotle is in no way against small-scale giving or preserving honour in small matters as in great. Indeed, as he just implied, the habits of mind that are thereby developed are in the same family as those which can lay hold of larger means to greater effect. But for all that, you cannot have all the virtues in this family — you cannot have magnificence as well as generosity if you do not

have (and spend) the resources required for magnificence.

This is certainly not the doctrine of the widow's mite but it does pay homage (in the passage quoted) to the inner integrity of generous and honour-relevant motivations. Simply we have to remember that these motivations are ideally, for Aristotle, then deployed on a larger stage with the grand resource-laden gesture in full view of the wider community. Lack the resources for such gestures and you cannot exhibit the full complement of virtues.

The virtues you would lack are those of the special class of virtues we have been discussing: those that require instruments (of wealth and so on) to support, and in a sense to even produce them at all. There remain, nevertheless, two important questions about all that has just been said. Certainly it seems as if Situationality of this particular kind or that, is absolutely required not only for the development but also for the continuing pos-

session of the virtues, speaking only for the moment of the virtues of Character. (We will consider the Intellectual virtues below.) Moreover if we were to invest heavily, as Aristotle himself invests in some Unity doctrine — so that it can be said for instance (in one form of the doctrine) that any given virtue's being in place is required for the possession of all the virtues and vice versa¹⁷⁵ — then it would seem that at no point can the life of the phronimos be distanced from key conditions of Situationality.

We — or rather Aristotle — must insist that the situational factors required for the virtues be in place in order for phronesis to arise. For if there were missing even one of the instrument-depending class of virtues, which we have been discussing, then none of the virtues would be possible. But, as we say, there are some further worries about this account which we have just given. Perhaps Merritt's MSC model can have its bite strengthened.

For example, what if we said the following? There seems to be upon our previous account a fundamental difference between the situational help that our virtue-learner requires and that the *phronimos* requires. We have alluded to the difference in at least a couple of places. What finally is this difference? On the one hand the mindset of the virtue-learner is a work in progress.

He, or she, has not stabilised that mindset all the way for full virtue(s) to result. That is why the work of habituation must continue. And, as we have seen, the continuation of that work requires continued exposure to the right kind of instructive (virtue-developing) Situationality. The person who is not quite yet fully brave will presumably then need to continue to encounter fear-inducing conditions and so on (for the other virtues of Character). But then again once the fullness of bravery has arrived and once all the other virtues have clicked into place perhaps no further situational training will be

required. Indeed how could it be expected to be necessary?

The phronimos, much like the Buddhist arahant has no further inclinations to do the wrong thing. And so if the only problem arising from the situation — the only difficulty which can impede the virtues — is now some deficiency of instrumental resources (a lack of wealth for instance) then we ought to register this fundamental difference between the various kinds of Situationality which prove severally and differentially necessary at each of the stages on the ethical path, on Aristotle's story.

The different kinds of Situationality are, on our view and on the view we ascribe to Aristotle, necessary in distinguishable ways. Some are needed by the phronimos as well as by the virtue-learner (wealth, friends and so on); others are, as we have seen, needed by the virtue-learner alone (fearinducing conditions in battle). So although we do not find that Merritt pushes such a distinction, still

she certainly might. For it has the capacity in principle to rehabilitate MSC as the correct account of Aristotelian virtue.

How might Merritt secure this rehabilitation? The mentality of the phronimos — the mental resources they can draw on to maintain the right set of behavioral dispositions just is different from the mental resources or mentality of the virtue-learner. No further engagement with the habituating force of certain situations is necessary for the former; the phronimos has already, indeed, left that particular school of instruction well behind. Then the fact that the phronimos still requires a certain complement of resources of an instrumental type (in order to maintain a select group of virtues) is an important but a distinct matter. But does the distinction so drawn exhaust all that we should say about Situationality in the life of the phronimos? We do not think so, for various reasons.

Although we will not be going deeply into the Aristotelian corpus at this stage — and some will no doubt think this is a shame, even a wilful bit of avoidance — hanging back from the textual minutiae will allow us to gain a wider perspective on some key issues.¹⁷⁶

These issues, if we are right, can be used to clarify the shape of Aristotelian ethics and its most relevant features regarding the present enquiry. But since we do not wish to be accused of a certain naivety concerning what Aristotle is saying, we put down this wager now. Over the course of time as experts (and that must include expert linguists) begin to look closely at the language Aristotle uses to discuss (what he calls) ‘contemplation’ we think that we will begin to see duly borne out the shape of what we now have to say.

Any philosophical argument in the analytic tradition (if we may use a contentious phrase) must have its target. Ours now will be Rorty who would beguile us into

saying something about Aristotle that we ought not to say. Putting this right will clarify that part of Aristotle's model which we would wish to clarify.

Remembering that Richard Rorty is profoundly, and intriguingly exercised by (what his hero Dewey called) "a brood and nest of dualisms"¹⁷⁷ we will resist Rorty when he seems to lay at the door of Aristotle and other foundational figures a view which Aristotle, for one, certainly did not hold.

Consider this from Rorty (1999) who speaks of:

the traditional philosophical project of finding something stable which will serve as a criterion for judging the transitory products of our transitory needs and interests.¹⁷⁸

And again, this:

We have to give up on the idea that there are unconditional, transcultural moral obligations, obligations rooted in an unchanging, ahistorical human nature. This attempt to put aside both Plato and Kant is the bond which links the post-Nietzschean tradition

in European philosophy with the pragmatic tradition in American philosophy.¹⁷⁹

Clearly a certain picture of what it is rational to believe, concerning morals and no doubt other things besides, is in the offing here — from Rorty's side just as it ought to be available from the side of those he is attacking. But we should go no further without declaring how Aristotle, pace Rorty, distances himself heavily from what is being attacked.

So then either Aristotle uses his own crucial term 'contemplation' — *theōria* in the Greek — to mean something like the fixed and stable contemplation of eternal verities *in the manner criticised by Rorty* or he means something else. We will argue the latter. For us now there is something irreducibly contingent at the heart of *theōria*. We consider one impressive account of this contingency but will feel the need to enlarge upon that account, if not to replace it entirely.

We speak of the account of Andrea Nightingale (2004). In due course we will offer an alternative model to Nightingale, but one which nevertheless starts out from a point of fundamental agreement with her. For just as Nightingale holds that the contemplator enters into the ethical picture that Aristotle (and other Greeks) build, so too do we need to consider what the contemplator brings with them. And this can be summed up in one word: *perspective*. In more than one word: perspective that shifts, contingently, for the better.

Rather than claiming, then, that the correct ethical perspective is determined by a rigidly defined and engendered contemplation of verities — Aristotle says something different. He goes instead for the sort of contemplation which does indeed rely, contingently, on the difference *between* individual contemplators. As such (we now hold) Aristotle says quite the reverse of Rorty's disapproving formulation.

So far our presentation has been devoid of technical linguistic arguments but now we feel able to offer one. It does not directly defend the contemplative model we have outlined. What it does do is argue for the heightened relevance to our own ethics of that model which we have just sketched.

When we go to see a play then, after settling down in our seat, can we be said to be *studying* it? To ‘study’ a play suggests something different. One hand trailing in the babbling brook by our side, we lower our other hand to turn the page. Then, reclining, we consider the words of Shakespeare, Goethe, Aeschylus . . . whomever.

But if the ancient philosophers were right, these two activities are not so different; it may even be that they are in essence the same. Following the critic Andrea Nightingale we may well need a single verb to cover both attending a play and our private thinking or studying time.

For Aristotle that word is, to use one of the best available versions (but still really no more than a stopgap) *contemplation*.

Usually however, before Nightingale, Aristotle's translators got all this wrong; *since* Nightingale (2004) the translators of Aristotle have rather less excuse. Ultimately and instead of "contemplation" we need a verb — not 'study' or something equally dry — that can cover everything from being spellbound at the theatre, or at the great religious festivals of ancient Athens, to the act of philosophical contemplation.¹⁸⁰

Such a verb is not easy to find in English. When we do find it or when we do not even need to rely on the correct translation — so well will we understand what Aristotle is saying that, at that point, we will understand what Aristotle means at a deep level when he promotes 'contemplation' to the state of the highest happiness.

In Books VI and X of the Nicomachean Ethics Aris-

totle establishes the importance of ‘contemplation’ — of what Aristotle calls *theōria*. These books do not however establish what it is that we should best think of *theōria* as being. Why for instance should we not (with Aristotle’s excellent translator and interpreter Terence Irwin) think of *theōria* as referencing the “life of study”¹⁸¹ or some such scholarly sounding or academic construction?

It is here, on this point, that Nightingale offers some wise and eloquent words of warning. She explains how to the ancients *theōria* was much more than study. In fact, in ancient Greece the act of *contemplation* had a whole history backed up by cultural expressions and the living out of a worldview. It went something like this.

If you made a pilgrimage to one of the great festivals then the expectation was that you would set out with fresh eyes to take in the sights you were about to experience. But preparation was involved before the journey, so that you would experience it to the full. In

the course of your travels, the further expectation was that your own understanding would shift, in response to what you had witnessed. Then on returning home you would be expected to digest this shift, perhaps recording it for others to benefit from — you would have to, or you would best benefit if you were able to absorb the impressions, experiences, and life lessons coming out of what you had witnessed; and, most importantly, if you could now transmute them into your ongoing everyday life.¹⁸²

Something of the flavour and shape of this dynamic may be related to, and so appreciated by means of the act of going on a mediaeval pilgrimage. But while it has crosscultural resonances, there is another aspect to the Greek setting which Nightingale keenly attends to. This is that contemplation, whether on pilgrimage or in another context, is akin to a philosophical exercise.

The *philosophical* version of “the contemplative” takes

the model just described — the historical model just given — and makes use of it as just that; as a model. It is an important model but a model nonetheless. This it is imperative to understand. For where Nightingale gives us a powerful evocation of historical facts — vignettes of Greek processions and the like — Greek philosophy gives us the *metaphor* of a journey.

We do not say that the two accounts are unrelated; on this we are more than happy to take Andrea Nightingale's evocative points. We do think it is reasonable to surmise that the Greek philosophers had religious processions and the kind of spectating that they did there at the back of their imagination — in speaking about “contemplation”. At the same time, however, the philosophers move beyond the historical details of this model.

Socrates himself, for example, evokes the setting of the great processions in Plato's Dialogues¹⁸³ but we would do well to notice, on a linguistic point, that to ‘contemplate’

— as our poor and restricted translation of *theōrein* has it — is to do a lot more than ‘spectate’, at processions or otherwise.

Theōrein is to ‘see’ or ‘view’ but in a whole host of ways. Some of them will be formal, or relatively so (as in attending ritualized processions) but meanwhile other uses of the verb will point in the direction of action/experience that is entirely freeform. So we should think of a gamut here, extending from ritualized viewing to open ended contemplation without programmatic design or purpose. And in between, dare we imagine, there exists the range of practices we might call *contemplative* or *meditative*. These, on our view of the matter, occupy a space on the contemplative spectrum — the spectatorial continuum that is covered by the word *theōria*.

This gets us somewhere for we remember that quite often Aristotle deliberately avoids tying down his metaphors and restricting his philosophical models to particular con-

crete details. More than once in his Ethics, across the various texts that make it up, he says that he is going to avoid going into details.¹⁸⁴ And we can carry over this feature into our discussion of the *contemplative* or *meditative*.

A wager then: if Aristotle were going to assume that contemplative practices of a formal kind could be related to his use of the blanket term — and concept — which is *theōria* then he would be the very last author to state concretely how this could or should be done. But by implicitly permitting a space, by deliberately carving out a conceptual space, a space that might contain specific meditation practices — all under the umbrella of *theōria* — Aristotle invites us to do the following.

To supply, where appropriate, different modes of seeing or viewing. And these may include the practically contemplative, in say *manualised forms* just as they may include other forms ranging from the spectator's viewing

of historical processions to a whole vast assortment of all the other things that we may see or view.

The point is that all this rich range of viewings, to coin a phrase, may be grouped under the philosophical conception of what it is to engage in *theōria* and this concept is, as we now see, best understood through the metaphor of a journey. We can say this because Plato says it, in his Myth of the Cave.¹⁸⁵

In this Myth (or Allegory) Plato presents a version of moral education's effect on our otherwise deep intellectual and moral benightment. As such the Myth contrasts where we would most of us be found with where we need to be, and to get to, morally and intellectually.

Although it is easy for anyone to claim, in thinly stated form, that such a contrast exists *yet instead* Plato gives the contrast a richer shape. The facts are almost too well known to be restated. But if we restate them here it is in order to draw explicit parallel with the shape

of the theoretical or contemplative journey we have been describing. When we tell Plato's story in our own words, this parallel should very easily emerge.

A crowd of benighted individuals watch a screen as if it were reality. On that screen shadows as if from puppets pass to and fro. But, as we say, the crowd think these puppets are the real deal — figures worth attending to. It is of course otherwise. For where the shadowy figures come from is a series of puppets behind whom is a moderate light. This light shines past the puppets to produce the shadow play, that shadow play on the screen with which the denizens of the cave are obsessed. It is unsurprising they are obsessed for there is nothing else to spectate. Not that is until one of their number makes a philosophical journey.

Passing past the fake sun — the moderate light — and seeing how the whole thing is rigged up, at the back of the Cave, our hero presses on. Finally he comes to

and goes out through the mouth of the Cave. He finds himself in brilliant sunshine. But of course he is here blinded by the light of the real sun. Pausing to adjust his vision, he is able finally to make some sense of the world around him — the real world.

But this is only half his journey. Descending back into the Cave, our hero finds himself among his own folk once again. Do they believe his story about the outer world, and how it relates to the one in which they are stuck? Of course they do not.

Though a famous allegory, the Myth of the Cave has a feature not often commented upon. For it shares the shape of the journey of the *theoros* that person who (in Andrea Nightingale's vivid description) leaves behind their old world to go on a real, physical journey, to a new one. It is (often) their civic duty, as we heard, to document what they have seen. Not only so that they can internalise its relevance to their own life but also so that

they may share it with others. Is then this not precisely what the philosophical journey of the Cave is directly a version of?

We say ‘philosophical’ journey because we now ought to stress the way in which the “theoros” is not simply a traveller but an allegorical figure of fundamental significance for the philosophical tradition. Each in their own way Aristotle and Plato accounted for this significance. Both used metaphors, as Nightingale has somewhat brilliantly argued, that are drawn from vision. And that is why it is a simple step for us to borrow images of sight (insight) when describing a well-turned philosophical perspective or breakthrough.

Notice something else about the shape of the Myth of the Cave. For it involves a very modern notion, a *psychological* notion. We may call it Priming.¹⁸⁶ Under conditions that prime us we end up coming out of them subtly changed. And we probably cannot — rationally

— put our finger on what precisely had caused the change or in what it consists. In some cases we may not even be aware of having changed.

There is a symmetry here between the Myth of the Cave and the disruption caused by “situational factors”. In the Cave the agent has an experience which changes them forever. But if asked to tie down what it is then what would they say? Stepping from the Cave out into the wider world they realise that things in that world, and their place within the wider world are very different. But if asked to report on those changes — as they end up reporting to the befuddled community back in the Cave — what would our hero say? The changes are *en gros* quite elementary and, so it would seem, relatively simple to record and then pass on. There is a bigger sun far greater than the paltry fire at the back of the Cave. There is a greater world; the Cave is not it — not, that is to say, its full extent.

Now that they have returned, our traveller from the surface tells the story of their journey. The world is thus and so but none of us *ever realised it before*. And notice then a feature of how the new story goes; it is a matter of externals, albeit externals *duly corrected* and far different from the account of externals which the Cave-dwellers previously held to (and seem minded to continue to believe in.)

And this matters how? We want to know about the external world of course — so that we are not in some fundamental way confused about the structure and type of that world. Then it follows that a good account of any world involves getting clear about the matter of the type of the world, about how the world is and all the relevant things that make our world, any world. Thinking like this was what led the liberated Cave-dweller to return with a new story. For such is the duty of the theoros, the journeyer returned — to say it how it is, how things

are and what they mean, to look out into the world and parse it.

Yes but not entirely and exhaustively. For there is one thing that the liberated Cave-dweller fails to notice, in the course of their journey *as we have described it*. This is that the changes they have to report *must ideally include* the new facts concerning their own person.

Coming back from the upper reaches of a newly perceived world and returning back down to into the lower reaches is, as Andrea Nightingale well describes, a journey of the self — as well as the more obvious physical one. The liberated Cave-dweller must have been changed and changed forever. But does that person whose scales have fallen from their own eyes have any awareness that things have changed, forever internally *as well as externally*?

In the Platonic account the answer seems to be *not a lot*. The excited report of the traveller returned is not a

full account of what they have themselves become and so — we must notice that — in this respect above all even the liberated Cave-dweller has much in common with that situational dupe (to coin a phrase) who is the subject of a social psychology experiment.

In version after version of such an experiment the poor unwitting subject gives a false accounting, or would give if personally pressed, of why they chose this option rather than that, of why they acted thus and so.¹⁸⁷ Only the experimenter with their data analysis and their understanding of the intentional design of the world in which their subjects dwell, *can even begin* to give an adequate account of the choices of people in that world.

Notice however that we say *begin* to give. Physician heal thyself! Does a Daniel Kahneman or a Daniel Batson or any other psychologist understand how they themselves have been changed by whatever they have been through personally? Any one of these psychologists and

indeed anyone in the world, arguably, you and I included, are less clued up with knowledge and rather more the sum total of all the individuals — both the benighted and the newly liberated — in the Myth of the Cave.

So in general we excitedly report the new information we just gleaned from the radio, we read the works of the great philosophers and think that now we understand at least a little more about how our world is structured, of what type God's green Earth is, and so on. But we have missed from these stories their cardinal point. How does our new understanding, correct or otherwise, not only have a bearing on us as those who are living out a personal story, *but also change us?*

This question speaks to the contemplative. In a sense they are no different from anybody else. But in another sense they have come to understand that very thing which even the liberated Cave-dweller has omitted to notice — the contemplative has realised that a major part

of what they now have to undertake, if they are really to feel secure, is the *study of the self*.

In the nitty-gritty of this story the ethical part of contemplation is, we suggest, a little different, more than a little different from other parts of what the contemplative “studies” (Aristotle would of course say *views*) and it is worth going into the difference. It is a difference that takes us back to Priming.

The contemplative is of course, en gros, much like the rest of us. He has ethical and moral norms he has to abide by. Or she structures her life in a deliberate way, more or less consciously around these norms, or this at least is the story she tells herself on wintry nights.

After Situationism we cannot now pretend that this story goes entirely as we thought it went before and obviously this must be ethically significant. We have complained enough about those philosophers who mean to ignore, to all *practical* intents and purposes the new

story that the Situationist philosopher wants to tell to the rest of the community as they step back, below, into the Cave. But (we say) our frustration would be misplaced — if we leave ourselves out of the story. But putting ourselves back into this story *means what precisely?*

When asked about whether keeping the company of wise and moral friends was part — perhaps even half of the “holy life” — the Buddha retorted that it was the whole.¹⁸⁸ Right from the get go, then, the contemplative understands something about situationality. But of course the case has been made¹⁸⁹ that this insight is nondifferent from something Hume says. You have to create the right environment around you in order to be a moral person. But it is where the contemplative, and their tradition, extends this basic narrative — moving it beyond the insights of a Hume or a Mill or a Kant — that has occupied us through these pages. The contemplative

ethicist assumes — what seems so new and strange to the Situationist philosopher — that our direct experience of the world around affects our chances of acting morally in that world. But — new insight! — ‘direct experience of the world’ does not refer only to the externalities.

In this regard the liberated Cave-dweller had but a limited view, even after their liberation from gross mistake — at least as Plato presents the matter. But of course part of their *theoric* task — to borrow the phrase from Greek pilgrimage — was to make sense of how the new information they had received might and should be fitted into their own self-narrative and to understand further how that narrative changes the self and vice versa. These changes are the subject of contemplative theory.

We think and have made a necessarily vague argument about how such a topic crosses its path, and ends up being central, to Aristotelian Ethics. Why ‘necessarily vague’? We say this because of what Aristotle himself

tells us:

Since these, then, are the sorts of things we argue from and about, it will be satisfactory if we can indicate the truth roughly and in outline . . . Each of our claims, then, ought to be accepted in the same way, since the educated person seeks exactness in each area to the extent that the nature of the subject allows; for apparently it is just as mistaken to demand demonstrations from a rhetorician as to accept merely persuasive arguments from a mathematician.¹⁹⁰

What then can the ethical theorist demand, appropriately from the contemplative? We think that Aristotle was wise enough to see that there was little point in going into the detail of contemplative practices that were all around him in antiquity.¹⁹¹ This was not his point, nor should it have been. But it does not then follow that such practices are irrelevant to the model Aristotle sets out in his *Ethics*.

We have described some of the relevant practices, including those Indian ones that Aristotle is somewhat unlikely to have known about — though it is not impossi-

ble.¹⁹²

Taking our cue from the direct association made between mindfulness and Nirvana, we were able to observe that Nirvana is held (by Buddhists) to perfect the ethical personality. It does more than that but the other metaphysical significances of the category need not detain us. So then, with the perfect ethical personality, comes the assumption that this personality will act well, or skilfully as Buddhists like to say. And that means of course that they will know when to stoop to pick up papers, to walk out of an electric shock experiment.

We say *will know* because we are of course talking about the nibbānic *ideal*, as found in the Pali Canon. As with most ideals there is not much evidence, not of an empirical and experimental kind, that it has ever been attained. But if on the other hand we think, as we have tried to think above, for a moment, about the *path* to this ideal — then we find that this path is assumed to

be produced, concretely, by the practice of Mindfulness. The Satipaṭṭhāna sutta said as much. And it also added that the path could be realised very quickly indeed, if one practises mindfulness of various things.

The direct association between mindfulness which is implied here, and in the Canon generally, is one which may help modern philosophers. We do not need to be suspicious about Mindfulness in its modern form as somehow lacking an ethicality. The ancient texts put paid to this suspicion. So assuming that modern practitioners of mindfulness (including the Eight-Week programme) are not inherently vicious, and perhaps even if they are, then we may expect to see some results.

One of these results has already been tested. In Condon's experiments increased prosocial behaviour — helping in a minor emergency — was noted by Condon et al. This result has a formal significance for the Situationist claim, as we tried to set out above. For if it turned out

that many situational effects may be systematically offset or deflected by contemplative practice (or indeed by anything else) then by that fact alone the evidence base of the Situationist begins to disappear. The attack on Character thereby gets defanged.

But this is all for the future of course. We do not have the stable evidence base that we yet need to defeat Situationism. As Aristotle said one swallow — one experimental result — does not a summer make.

CONCLUSIONS

Ethics in the real world, we might now say, cannot be done — or done well — unless in a contemplative setting and using contemplative practices and principles. ‘Contemplative’, throughout the present work, has been intended as, primarily, a non-religious term. We need real-

world, practical, non-religious but also religious methods of contemplation to become more widely available, if we are to live ethically in society. For only then can certain scientific complications facing ethics be resolved. But on the other hand, it is not clear that what we need here is something we can easily get.

One leading candidate for the sort of contemplative practice we need is ‘Mindfulness’; we have reviewed its practical strengths and drawbacks as well as theoretical challenges which it raises. We have not however sought to draw a hard and fast line between theory and ethical practice because ultimately no such line is possible.¹⁹³

Nor have we we sought to offer unqualified support to the modern Mindfulness movement. Mindfulness indeed remains a loaded and sometimes confused term.¹⁹⁴ Freightened as it is with metaphysical objectives and possessing as it does certain *raison d’être* which prove on analysis to be arguably far from secular, we need to

go carefully with Mindfulness. Nevertheless Mindfulness may be, for present purposes, the best thing we have.

Now contemplation, as we assess it in general, has its supporters and its detractors up to the present day. We have met some of them on the field of ethical enquiry. The conclusion, against the detractors, has been that without contemplation we have paltry ethical options. We have few options that are both practicable and, at the same time, deeply grounded in all-the-way-down-through-our-minds-and-lives reason. Therefore we must now make much more space for the contemplative, in our lives and in ethics — including, as a particular challenge, in secular ethics.

When it comes to reason there is a secular but contemplative kind of reason which — we will argue — we now need. Unfortunately it is hard to know what many of the available options are for connecting this kind of reason to the practices that may express it and express

it to a full degree of secularity. Then again we do have some relevant theoretical understandings from the time of Aristotle on, understandings which appear in both the East and in the West. Whether these understandings can help save the day, practically speaking, it remains to be seen. More empirical research is necessary. But in spite of this lacuna we have still done our best to uncover some kind of answer.

It might seem that all the ethical theoretician has to work with is, by definition, a set of thoughts that can appear on paper. We resist this conclusion from a contemplative standpoint. We contend that practical ethics requires something else and this ‘something else’ needs, accordingly, to be written into any viable theory of ethics. The naturally insightful, or just plain lucky, or else the well-prepared reader will already have realised, perhaps a long time ago, that the ‘something else’ we need is contemplation. Following Aristotle we have sought to

demystify this word. It is a word which we have, by a succession of translations, from something Aristotle says and what he says has nothing to do directly with mystical or religious tradition.

What Aristotle offers us is a distinctive set of insights which the accounts of our contemporaries, and indeed those who went before them, have not always well explained. These insights align with a particular difference between Aristotle and religion, in his own day and ours — as we continue to interpret him. It is a difference which our culture has struggled to express. But these same insights just spoken of can now, and we think that they should, lead us to reframe our secular ethics in such a way as to adequately meet a pressing challenge from psychology. This psychological challenge goes by the name of Situationism.

Our first two chapters considered the challenge of Situationism, attempting to get it straight for the task of

then going on to criticise it. Thereafter, in the second part of this work, we offered a practical solution but one which is suitably theory-laden. In the second part we also took stock of where our solution leaves ethics in general and it is here that we discovered how the solution we prefer cannot be easily and simply inserted into certain standard secularised conceptions of ethics.

Perhaps, indeed, the solution we offer must fit so awkwardly into ethics, in its current state, as to require a reordering of our ethical concepts. (Yet fit it must.) If that is so then we turn out to be at the beginning, rather than the end of our difficulties.

We reach an interesting stage in Ethics these days. After Savulescu and Bostrom (2009) especially, it is challenging for us to wonder (as wonder now we must) if — before we can even think of becoming virtuous, or of stabilising the virtues that we already have in fledgling form — we might not need to lay our hands upon, or be

improved through, artificial forms of “human enhancement”.

This need not alarm as a possibility. When you pick up a pencil, do you feel that you have an artificial instrument in your hand or do you write as if it were a very natural-feeling extension of your arm and digits? It is not, when we write with a pencil, at all (usually) like manipulating some complicated piece of machinery, outside our body. And what this example has suggested — for example to Andy Clark¹⁹⁵ — is that we need not fear the addition to ourselves of artificial human-enhancement technology simply on the grounds that it is artificial.

This does not mean we lack other reasons to be fearful of moral-enhancement strategies and hardware, however. The assumption of James Hughes, whom we discussed, seems now to be that meditation practitioners will naturally end up aligning their practice with artificial forms

of enhancement — or at least that it would be natural, in something like a Clarkian sense, for them to do so.

We would like now to present or re-present, at the very end of this enquiry of ours, an alternative. For in the sometimes dispiriting landscape of inaction it would be perfectly reasonable for the moral technologists to step into the breach. And therefore the expectation of a Hughes seems perfectly reasonable. But we are minded to ask this sharp question. Before we start bolting on artificial technologies to get us out of our situational impasse — the impasse revealed by the problem of situational disruption — what if we attempted, as an alternative, the following solution?

Our contemplative traditions offer practical solutions which, if empirically confirmed, will have demonstrated that the Situationist is both right and somewhat wrong about situational factors.

What the Situationist is (1) right about is that situ-

ational factors, need to be taken seriously — as *moral disrupters*. But on the other hand (2) these disrupters, which we have been discussing, have what it takes (subject to empirical confirmation) to be neutralised via meditation or contemplative practice. (3) To the extent that these disrupters are the only thing that ground the Situationist's distrust of Character Ethics our argument has the capacity, at the very least, to eventually restore this trust.

This will be particularly for the reason that (adding now some further points) (4) Mindfulness, our selected contemplative practice is somewhat easy to learn. And this means that even if (5) Mindfulness has its own complications *nevertheless* there will be other contemplative practices that are out there and which in some cases, just like mindfulness, sit within traditions that have given a lot of thought — as well as other forms of application — to the need to head off situational disruption, moral and

otherwise.

Before we throw up our hands in horror at the impotence of those virtues we have learned to love, and before we are tempted to assume that sans artificial engagement human creatures are not fit for moral purposes we may wish to uncover further contemplative accounts. And test them of course. But before that is done, almost everything we have argued may be crystallised through a *thought experiment* . . .

EPILOGUE

Imagine a Cold War between two seafaring nations.

Our two civilisations could not be more different. When the denizens of the “Land Of Character” stare out through the mists, over the water, what then do they see? The looming brooding mass of their foe — “Situation-Land”.

Now Situation-Land is a place where, unlike the Land of Character, situations are taken seriously; where as a result big data and brain implants rule the show by telegraphing messages straight into the brain — in response to the surrounding situation and especially in response to certain scientifically specifiable ‘situation factors’ that, as Situation-Land technology reveals, are often in play.

Moral agents in Situation-Land are primed for action by these constant and constantly varying technologically controlled messages. But meanwhile over in the Land

of Character the inhabitants are fearful where all of this will end. For on their side they — the “Characterish” as they are known — are clear that they themselves must prefer the old ways to more modern moral inventions. And this means that the Characterish go on favouring, even venerating as the Situationists do not, some classic accounts of virtues and character. The Characterish do not favour brain implants.

Now, in the old maps showing these two fighting lands, some wit has crossed out the legends “Here Be Dragons” and has written in their place, all over the sea, *Here Be Situation Factors!* (We will return to these defacements.) For the moment consider, first, some other cartographic features of our imaginary world. For three zones in particular are of interest to the modern ethicist. These are: the shore-regions of each of our two warring mainlands; as well as the sea between them; and then, most especially, a small group of islands off to one side

of the map. For imagine you were brought up in one of these island communities.

Though formally each island bears allegiance to one or other of our two nations — the “Land of Character” or else to “Situation-Land” — yet on each individual island, and in the island-group generally, the two communities live perfectly happily side by side: the Characterish and their Situationist counterparts. At any rate on the islands they live more happily together than do their mainland counterparts who are separated by a (cross-hatched) demilitarized zone or DMZ.

fig. 1



Life is different on these islands than on the mainland. For though there are Situationist islands and Characterish islands, the formal line of control that divides them is (as we have already suggested) only half the story. The two national groups are not at all far apart from each other, in this island setting, either in terms of geography or of culture and associated values.

Given the constant interchanges of maritime life the communities in the islands are, as said, well mixed between Characterish islanders and Situationist islanders. On any one island all live cheek by jowl. In the pub no one will ask you whether you think the Empire of Character will live forever — or if it's Situations Forever in your house.

This matters because on the mainland it's a different story. There the populations are much more likely to have monochromatic views: either purely Situationist or

purely Characterological to the exclusion of the other. If you are a mainlander and your views diverge from this (monochromatic) background then you are likely to get a lot of unwelcome attention from the rest of your community. Which is why the bonhomie of island life and also its practicalities are not only interesting but instructive.

For to travel anywhere in this world, if you have business (say) on the shores of the opposite Empire then that means taking to the perils of the situation-factor-infested seas. *Here be dragons!* Unlike their mainland counterparts, however, all our islanders regularly make use of both Situationist and Characterological strategies of seafaring.

Let's be honest: these seas are uncrossable without a mixture of both. But though they also need ships that are both Characterological and Situationist (we'll leave aside for the moment the precise details) yet the landlub-

bers of each warring Empire either do not know this or they do not care. If they are going to talk about means of transport at all then it is usually to emphasise why (for the Characterish) traditional craft are better or, amongst the Situation-Landers, technological wizardry comes out on top.

We have defended, in this work, the island mentality — we are interested in getting across the sea safely. But that is not the main reason why we introduce the story at this juncture. For we are interested now in what happens when theorists from each of our warring nations meet at moral philosophy conferences.

If you are from an island community you will be used to the idea of navigating around with a hybrid practical strategy but if you grew up on a litoral somewhere — in the Land of Character or in Situation-Land — then a variegated strategy for seagoing navigation will be unfamiliar. You might not even see the need for such a

strategy.

And this is why the litoral provinces of the Characterish mainland have monochromatic if exclamatory names: “The Virtues Are Rare But So What?” . . . “Rarity Might Matter But It’s Never Been Proved Round Here” . . . or even “The Virtues Exist for Sure” (though which of the two empires owns this last province continues to be disputed.) For example while the Land of Character flies anti-Situationist banners, so too on the litoral facing the Characterish provinces we find, across the sea in Situation-Land, a region which prides itself on being called the place of “Situation First Character Last”. So given this equal and opposite intransigence what are the special virtues of our islanders which, we now may hope, offer an antidote to it?

If you grew up in one of the communities in the islands then you have options which broadly speaking have not occurred to the mainlanders on both sides. We all

need reliable ways of powering across that ocean where, instead of dragons, are equally striking or vexatious or occasionally dangerous situation-factors. The islanders know about these beastlings and they have solutions on offer.

What are some of these ways which the islanders have been working on, throughout their history? The answer can be boiled down to several things chief among which are: their practical approach to sea-navigation and their determination that the relevant practicalities should sit on a solid empirical basis. Unlike their mainland counterparts the islanders do not want bald slogans such as “Character bad, situations good” or its opposite.

Instead they start from the premise: we’ll use whatever works. But the last two words contain not only aspiration but a limitation. The limitation places an empirical constraint. If evidence goes against then it must be taken seriously. And along with this constraint, in-

deed as part and parcel of that aspiration with which the constraint co-occurs, comes the intention to actively test a range of solutions to situation-factors.

All these islander approaches (both in our story and in the real world) have shown benefits. For example it turns out that, in one experiment, a known situation-factor (bystander apathy) is mitigated by following a course of meditation. But none of this would have come to light had not the islanders proactively set about exploring, scientifically, their own world.

If, by contrast, they had rested on the slogans that their nations tried to make them stick with then no new insights would have arisen. Unfortunately (we cannot avoid mentioning) this impasse is where we have broadly arrived at within the Situationism debates. Therefore we now ask: does any of the philosophers who have contributed to such debate, which we've introduced, offer anything as constructive as our islanders?

Notes

¹With thanks to my many teachers over the years. No man is an island.

²See e.g. Milgram (1963). Recent responses to the classic experiments by Milgram — which experiments he presented in his now notorious study published over several years (Milgram 1963, 1964, 1965ab, 1974) of so called *obedience* and related matters — have questioned whether such obedience was really as vicious on the part of the experimental subjects as the conventional narrative describes; see e.g. Darley (1995) with Griggs (2017) 32. Although the recent criticism of Milgram is often philosophically interesting yet much of it, especially concerning Milgram’s methodology and its supposed shortcomings, is overstated or misleading: see e.g. Perry (2017) whose particular overstatement we discuss in detail below.

³In discussing Milgram we follow especially, albeit with disagreements, the commentary of Perry (2017): on this particular environmental point see especially her comments at pp. 351-357.

⁴Perry (2017) 357.

⁵Here we are talking just about the apparent victims. There needs of course to be considered the possible trauma to the volunteer subjects of the Milgram experiments on which Perry (2017, 261-283) is particularly vocal.

⁶See Perry (2017) 357 with Doris (2002).

⁷Perry (2017) 352-3.

⁸Perry (2017) 357.

⁹For a helpful inventory of the early variations, before Milgram's experiments were widely replicated by others, see Perry (2017) 351-7.

¹⁰The series is well surveyed by Doris (2002).

¹¹AN 5.162 (PTS: A iii 186ff.) translated Thanissaro (2013a).

¹²Luke 10:25–37.

¹³A iii 186ff. For all Pali texts the standard abbreviations of the Pali Text Society (PTS) are used. The current reference, for example, cites pages 186ff. of the third volume of the *aṅguttara-nikāya* (this text being denoted by the letter A, in PTS publications, or by AN elsewhere; cf. n11, above).

¹⁴The *Good Samaritan* experiment by Darley and Batson (1973) is discussed by the Situationists Gilbert Harman (1999) *sec.* V.2, pp. 323ff. and Doris (2002) 2-3, 32-34, 37-38, 59, 99, 135, 138. In our presentation, for the sake of vividness or additional colour we have introduced the friendship between two individuals who experience the same scenario differently but this detail, be it noted, forms no part of the original.

¹⁵Darley and Batson (1973) 104-105.

¹⁶Darley and Batson (1973) 105.

¹⁷As has been suggested to me; the late Lance Cousins, *pers. comm.*

¹⁸Darley and Batson (1973) 104-105.

¹⁹Isen and Levin 1972.

²⁰See esp. Doris (2002) 30-36.

²¹Adapted from Kahneman (2012) 156-65.

²²Kahneman (2012) 156-65.

²³Kahneman (2012) 158.

²⁴See e.g. Kahneman (2012) 5-12.

²⁵For the supposedly recent advent of ethical and other forms of ‘naturalism’ in Philosophy and the scientific discoveries that philosophers have in consequence only recently latched on to, see e.g. Prinz (2009).

²⁶Frances Burney, *Camilla Or A Picture Of Youth* (2009, orig. published 1796) 452.

²⁷For the specific error made by Mrs. Arlberry here — a *base-rate* error — see Kahneman (2012) 146ff.

²⁸Especially good on this is Harman (1999).

²⁹Harman (1999, 2000), Doris (1998, 2002, 2015).

³⁰Mackie (1990) chapter 1.

³¹See e.g. Crisp and Slote (1997) *Introduction*.

³²This problem vexes e.g. Doris (2002) 18-19.

³³On Aristotle’s doctrine of habituating oneself in line with, and so as to *generate* the virtues see his discussions especially in Book III of the Nicomachean

Ethics. There the point is made that exposure to particular kinds of environment (such as fear-inducing battlefields) is going to be necessary in order to achieve bravery or courage.

³⁴The term is usually attributed to Elizabeth Anscombe (1958).

³⁵See e.g. Book X of the Nicomachean Ethics, where the account of Pleasure necessarily differs from that of the Benthamite and later strands of Utilitarianism. For Bentham's own view see Bentham 1996 (which reproduces, in edited form, Bentham 1789); cf. Mill (2000) (orig. published 1863).

³⁶The worry is resisted somewhat by Burch-Brown (2014).

³⁷See esp. Nussbaum (1999).

³⁸Most famously of all Williams (1997).

³⁹Such problems, though not entirely new at the time, were introduced to modern philosophical discussion of Ethics by Foot (1967).

⁴⁰See the discussion in Singer (2005).

⁴¹See on the Plato quotation Williams (2006, orig. published 1985) chapter 1 with (1997).

⁴²For however a contrasting view see the nice arguments of Hurka (2006).

⁴³On this *unity* thesis about the virtues, see esp. Vlastos (1972).

⁴⁴Miller (2007) 107 (emphasis added).

⁴⁵As e.g. at Sreenivasan (2002) 56.

⁴⁶Sreenivasan (2002) 54.

⁴⁷Sreenivasan (2002) 48.

⁴⁸C. Miller (2009) 249, emphasis added.

⁴⁹Kupperman (2001) 240.

⁵⁰Alzola (2008), Arjoon (2008).

⁵¹Reed (2016) 345.

⁵²ibid. (emphasis added).

⁵³In a paper published the following year Tucker notes how ‘Harman thinks he offers empirical evidence that *character traits actually do not exist*.’ (Tucker (2005) 137, emphasis added).

⁵⁴Harman (2009) 238.

⁵⁵Harman (2009) 241.

⁵⁶Doris (2005) 667.

⁵⁷Doris, personal communication with the author.

⁵⁸Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (entry revision, 2017) s.v. ‘Moral Psychology: Empirical Approaches’. Thanks to John Doris (pers. comm.) for this reference (Doris, Stich et al. 2017).

⁵⁹Webber (2006c) sec. 1.

⁶⁰Webber (2006c).

⁶¹‘Virtuous states and virtuous traits: How the empirical evidence regarding the existence of broad traits saves virtue ethics from the situationist critique’.

⁶² Jayawickreme et al. (2014) 1.

⁶³ Jayawickreme et al. 2014, 6.

⁶⁴ Doris, personal communication with the author.

⁶⁵ Goldie (2004) 184.

⁶⁶ Kamtekar (2004) 465.

⁶⁷ Sabini and Silver (2005) 538.

⁶⁸ Sreenivasan (2002) 47.

⁶⁹ Of the writers that are not mentioned in the previous paragraph but whom Webber cites with a view to arriving at the eliminativism-based reading of Situationism he (along with others) promotes, we may add into the mix Michael DePaul whose conference paper is titled ‘Character Traits, Virtues, and Vices: Are There None?’ (published eventually in conference proceedings as DePaul (2000).) But as we now know, answering this particular question is unlikely to get us very far towards determining the truth of Situationism — unless of course it should turn out that the answer is that there aren’t. And in that case more will need to be said against Virtue Ethics than even the Situationist has ventured to say. In any case however DePaul reveals himself as firmly in the Eliminativist camp regarding Situationism: in his opening pages he attributes to Situationism the view that, on the basis of social psychology, there are not the right kind of character traits in existence for Virtue Ethics to function adequately. Meanwhile the case of Maria Merritt, whom Webber also cites, will

be reserved in judgment for the moment; we return to this author extensively below. Notice simply for the moment that, as with all the other philosophical commentators on Situationism whom Webber cites, Merritt also takes an eliminativist view of Situationism *quite incorrectly*.

⁷⁰ Webber (2006c) sec. 1.

⁷¹ Harman (1999).

⁷² Confirming this ‘psychologically precise’ claim is the burden of justification that all the Situationists (listed by Doris, Merritt and Harman (2013) 355) keep in view throughout the vast majority of their writings.

⁷³ See e.g. Doris 1998.

⁷⁴ See esp. Hughes (2013).

⁷⁵ *ibid*.

⁷⁶ See e.g. Doris 1998, 509, where he comments that ‘Personality and social psychologists ... standardly treat personality traits as dispositions productive of behavior, and philosophers have typically understood virtues along the same lines.’

⁷⁷ See esp. Mumford and Anjum 2014.

⁷⁸ Adams (2008).

⁷⁹ Kupperman (2001).

⁸⁰ Merritt (2000).

⁸¹Adams (2008).

⁸²Kupperman (2001).

⁸³Kupperman (2001).

⁸⁴Mumford and Anjum (2014).

⁸⁵Adams (2008).

⁸⁶Principally we follow here MacIntyre (1966) *initium*.

⁸⁷See esp. Alfano (2013).

⁸⁸See e.g. Athanassoulis (2000).

⁸⁹For an early version of this style of response see Athanassoulis's engaging (2000) response to Gilbert Harman's own (1999) paper, one of the most eloquent statements of Situationism on record.

⁹⁰See Hughes (2013).

⁹¹See esp. Slingerland (2011ab). Cf. Hutton (2006) and Mower (2013).

⁹²Showing this is the burden of Doris (2002) especially.

⁹³Cf. Said (1978).

⁹⁴See esp. Ross and Nisbett (2011).

⁹⁵See Hurka (2006).

⁹⁶The criticism is repeated by e.g. Farias and Wikholm (2015).

⁹⁷Our warrant for this success is not a neutral one: see Kabat-Zinn (2013) who both authored the most widely used modern Mindfulness programme.

⁹⁸See e.g. Segal, Williams and Teasdale (2018).

⁹⁹For this position as explained see principally Harman (1999), Doris (2002) and esp. Doris, Merritt and Harman (2013) with the Situationist bibliography that these three authors give (p. 355).

¹⁰⁰*ibidd.*

¹⁰¹See principally Doris (2015) 45ff.

¹⁰²The bulk of our criticisms here stem from Doris (2015) 45ff.

¹⁰³Doris (2002) 180.

¹⁰⁴Doris (2002) 45.

¹⁰⁵But see for criticisms of the fact that Milgram presented the two-thirds figure as his baseline, Perry (2017).

¹⁰⁶Although see for the evidence that some replication has been achieved, Doris (2002) 180.

¹⁰⁷*Analysis*, The Replication Crisis.

¹⁰⁸Doris (2015, 45ff.) discusses the relevant admissions on the part of experimental psychologists and their confession that they have *p-hacked* themselves. He discusses (*ibid.*) the phenomenon of p-hacking at length in the context of his other criticisms of scientific method as that method seems to be being practised at the present time.

¹⁰⁹See Doris (2015) 45ff.

¹¹⁰Miller (2017) does address the thought that the experiments in question may fail to demonstrate what the Situationists claim has been demonstrated, and therefore there may be no case to answer. If true, this criticism certainly has bite (as we discuss elsewhere in the case of Joel Kupperman's critique. Nevertheless the bibliography that Miller gives falls short of the searching details brought to bear against the experimental tradition in Psychology by Doris (2015, 45ff.) himself .

¹¹¹Condon's experiment, which we discuss here, is presented by Condon et al. (2013), but see also Condon et al. (2015).

¹¹²See esp. Segal, Williams and Teasdale (2018).

¹¹³Kabat-Zinn (2013).

¹¹⁴See Condon et al. (2013, 2015).

¹¹⁵Lindahl et al. (2017) 1.

¹¹⁶ibid. (emphasis added).

¹¹⁷ibid. 29.

¹¹⁸ibid.

¹¹⁹ibid.

¹²⁰ibid.

¹²¹ibid. 1.

¹²²Cf. Farias and Wikholm (2015).

¹²³See now Segal, Williams and Teasdale (2018)

¹²⁴Jon Kabat-Zinn contributing to Williams and Penman (2012) ix, 10.

¹²⁵At (2011) 2.

¹²⁶See Flanagan (2011) *passim*.

¹²⁷Their solution to this task is presented by the most recent edition of their work explaining that solution: Segal, Williams and Teasdale (2018).

¹²⁸This is the clinical problem addressed by *ibid*.

¹²⁹Segal, Williams and Teasdale (2018), 399-400.

¹³⁰Stated by e.g. Williams and Penman (2012).

¹³¹Willem Kuyken, *pers. comm.* with author.

¹³²I quote (from a personal communication with) Kuyken who urges cautious optimism. (Cf. Segal, Williams and Teasdale (2018).) In general about these difficult issues the criticism I am making may sound harsh, but are designed to contribute something constructive to the increasingly vigorous and ongoing debates about these important matters: see e.g. Farias and Wikholm (2015) for further reflections.

¹³³See for this quotation, and further discussion of the limits of what can be concluded about MBCT, Segal, Williams and Teasdale (2018) 51, 69.

¹³⁴See e.g. Doris (2002) 121ff.

¹³⁵Doris (2002) 127.

¹³⁶See e.g. Cullen (2011).

¹³⁷Williams and Penman (2012) 2.

¹³⁸Kuyken and Baer (2016).

¹³⁹ibid.

¹⁴⁰ibid.

¹⁴¹Farias and Wikholm (2015) 150-51.

¹⁴²Farias and Wikholm (2015) 129.

¹⁴³See Farias and Wikholm (2015) 121, 124, 129.

¹⁴⁴Farias and Wikholm (2015) 124.

¹⁴⁵System 1 and System 2 were not invented by Daniel Kahneman as he himself points out. Nevertheless they form the basis of his (2012) analysis from which we are drawing here and which makes plain his debt to other psychologists: see esp. Kahneman (2012) 1, 13, 14, 19-31, 39-49, 103-105, 408, 413-418.

¹⁴⁶For perhaps the most extensive discussion by a Situationist see Doris (2002) 31ff.

¹⁴⁷Lambert and Dennett (2018).

¹⁴⁸For the difference between *meditatio* and *contemplatio* and much else besides, see Boland (2014).

¹⁴⁹See e.g. Doris (2002) 13, 26, 85.

¹⁵⁰Doris (2002) 85.

¹⁵¹Tenzin Gyatso (XIV Dalai Lama) discusses the different understandings, from India to the West, of what it takes for a society to be operating on a *secular* basis (see esp. ch. 1 of Gyatso 2012). In this discussion he appears to be following some strands developed by Amartya Sen across a large body of work: see for example Sen (1993, 2004); with Giri (2000).

¹⁵²I take my focus on the North-west from Taylor (2007). The views of the Dalai Lama have been reported in a number of publications and in his speeches too numerous to mention: see e.g. Tenzin Gyatso, XIV Dalai Lama (2012).

¹⁵³Finnis (2018).

¹⁵⁴I was briefed in this by my Pali teacher, Lance Cousins.

¹⁵⁵M i 55.

¹⁵⁶Thanissaro (2013b),

¹⁵⁷See esp. the late great Steven Collins (1998).

¹⁵⁸We avoid the diacritics for this (Sanskrit) word which has passed into everyday English. The Pali equivalent is *nibbāna*.

¹⁵⁹On this kind of mind *as metaphor* rather than a hardwired reality of the brain (a common criticism) see Kahneman (2012) 29.

¹⁶⁰See e.g. Doris (2002) 4, 6, 15, 174.

¹⁶¹See the translations of R. Crisp (2002) 206; T. Irwin (1988) 399.

¹⁶²Merritt (2000).

¹⁶³The virtue of *magnanimity* is mainly discussed by Aristotle in Book IV of his Nicomachean Ethics.

¹⁶⁴Merritt (2000) 365.

¹⁶⁵1114a31ff.

¹⁶⁶The possibility of choosing to be a good citizen rather than an ethically good man — a possibility to which we will return — is raised e.g. at 1276b36-1277a4, esp. at 1277a1.

¹⁶⁷Merritt (2000) 375-81.

¹⁶⁸1095a2-12.

¹⁶⁹See e.g. 1095a14-21.

¹⁷⁰1103b14-18

¹⁷¹Merritt (2000).

¹⁷²Doris (2002) 17 citing 1100b32-4.

¹⁷³1122a27-30.

¹⁷⁴1125b1-9.

¹⁷⁵The most famous study of such Unity theses — there are several which can conceivably be attributed to Aristotle — is by Vlastos (1972).

¹⁷⁶In this entire passage on Aristotle I have followed closely and owe a serious debt to the inspiration had therefrom, and the views set out in Anna Marmodoro's comments on Aristotelian powers (*pers. comm.*) as well as in her (2011) contribution to our debate. What mainly distinguishes my own position from Marmodoro, however, is the philosophical objective that both of us have up to this point taken as the path to refuting Situationism. Having had many discussions with her, I can say that (though she tends to agree with me now about Eliminativism and the Situationist's avoidance of it) such avoidance is not clear from her earlier contributions (e.g. 2011). We do both agree that, on this fundamental point, concerning Eliminativism, the Situationists themselves could have been a lot clearer from the outset, in staking their several claims. Elsewhere our accounts of the *situationality* of Aristotle's account of the virtue certainly overlap, even though I have added (to my discussion) some passages of Aristotle's that do not appear in Marmodoro's seminal (2011) discussion.

¹⁷⁷The phrase, whether we consider it evocative, inflammatory, or neither, appears to come from Dewey (1948) xxxi. However it is most frequently cited by, or in discussion of, Rorty (see e.g. Johnson (2011) 19n29).

¹⁷⁸See *Introduction: Relativism Finding and Making* at Rorty (1999), viii.

¹⁷⁹*ibid.*

¹⁸⁰Following e.g. Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie's lexicon on *theōria*; *s.v.*

¹⁸¹See the translation of e.g. Terence Irwin (published by Hackett).

¹⁸²All from Nightingale (2004).

¹⁸³See e.g. Euthyphro (5b7–6c3) on the *peplos*, or robe given to Athena in the

context of the grandest Athenian procession.

¹⁸⁴See e.g. 1094b20ff.

¹⁸⁵*Rep.* 514a–520a.

¹⁸⁶For this widely used term in social psychology see Molden (2014). As he comments, two features of so-called priming are relevant to ongoing enquiry (and we ourselves must find them expressly relevant to the matter of Situationism): ‘1) insufficient appreciation for the range of phenomena that involve priming, and 2) insufficient appreciation for the mechanisms through which priming occurs’ (Molden (2014) 1).

¹⁸⁷Ross and Nisbett (2011) *passim*, Kahneman (2012) *passim*.

¹⁸⁸Upaddha Sutta: (PTS) S v 2.

¹⁸⁹Merritt (2000).

¹⁹⁰1094b19–27.

¹⁹¹For this broad tradition see in particular Nussbaum (2009).

¹⁹²See the Aristotelian epigraph to Keown (1992).

¹⁹³MacIntyre (1966) ch. 1: ‘since to possess a concept involves behaving or being able to behave in certain ways in certain circumstances,’ therefore ‘to alter concepts, whether by modifying existing concepts or by making new concepts available or by destroying old ones, is to alter behavior.’

¹⁹⁴Goleman and Davidson (2017) ch. 4.

¹⁹⁵See Clark (2003) from whom I borrow this elegant example.

References

- Adams, Robert Merrihew. 2008. *A Theory Of Virtue: Excellence In Being For The Good*. Oxford University Press.
- Alfano, Mark. 2013. *Character As Moral Fiction*. Cambridge University Press.
- Alzola, Miguel. 2008. Character and environment: The status of virtues in organizations. *Journal Of Business Ethics*, **78**(3), 343–357.
- Anscombe, Gertrude Elizabeth Margaret. 1958. Modern moral philosophy. *Philosophy*, **33**(124), 1–19.
- Arjoon, Surendra. 2008. Reconciling situational social psychology with virtue ethics. *International Journal Of Management Reviews*, **10**(3), 221–243.
- Athanassoulis, Nafsika. 2000. A response to Harman:

- Virtue ethics and character traits. *Proceedings Of The Aristotelian Society*, **100**, 215–221.
- Basu, Kaushik (ed). 2004. *India's Emerging Economy: Performance And Prospects In The 1990s And Beyond*. MIT Press.
- Bentham, Jeremy. 1996 (orig. published 1789). *An Introduction To The Principles Of Morals And Legislation*. Clarendon.
- Boland, Vivian. 2014. *St Thomas Aquinas*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Burch-Brown, Joanna M. 2014. Clues for Consequentialists. *Utilitas*, **26**(1), 105–119.
- Burney, Frances. 2009 (orig. published 1796). *Camilla Or A Picture Of Youth*. Oxford University Press (World's Classics).
- Clark, Andy. 2003. *Natural-Born Cyborgs: Minds, Tech-*

- nologies, And The Future Of Human Intelligence.* Oxford University Press.
- Collins, Steven. 1998. *Nirvana And other Buddhist Felicities: Utopias Of The Pali Imaginaire.* Cambridge University Press.
- Condon, Paul, Desbordes, Gaëlle, Miller, Willa B., & DeSteno, David. 2013. Meditation increases compassionate responses to suffering. *Psychological Science*, **24**(10), 2125–2127.
- Crisp, Roger. 2002. *Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics.* Cambridge University Press.
- Crisp, Roger, & Slote, Michael. 1997. *Virtue Ethics.* Oxford University Press.
- Cullen, Margaret. 2011. Mindfulness-based interventions: An emerging phenomenon. *Mindfulness*, **2**(3), 186–193.
- Darley, John M. 1995. Constructive and destructive obe-

- dience: A taxonomy. *Journal Of Social Issues*, **51**, 125–154.
- Darley, John M., & Batson, C. Daniel. 1973. “From Jerusalem to Jericho”: A study of situational and dispositional variables in helping behavior. *Journal Of Personality And Social Psychology*, **27**(1), 100.
- DePaul, Michael. 2000. Character Traits, Virtues, and Vices: Are There None? *Pages 141–157 of: The Proceedings Of The Twentieth World Congress Of Philosophy*, vol. 9.
- Dewey, John. 1948. *Reconstruction In Philosophy (Enlarged Edition)*. Beacon Press.
- Doris, John M. 1998. Persons, Situations, and Virtue Ethics. *Noûs*, **32**(4), 504–530.
- Doris, John M. 2002. *Lack Of Character: Personality And Moral Behavior*. Cambridge University Press.
- Doris, John M. 2005. Replies: Evidence and sensibil-

ity. *Philosophy And Phenomenological Research*, **71**(3), 656–677.

Doris, John M. 2015. *Talking To Our Selves*. Oxford University Press.

Doris, John M., & Stich, Stephen. 2005. As a matter of fact: Empirical perspectives on ethics. *Pages 114–152 of*: Jackson, Frank, & Smith, Michael (eds), *The Oxford Handbook Of Contemporary Philosophy*. Oxford University Press.

Doris, John M., & the Moral Psychology Research Group (eds). 2013. *The Moral Psychology Handbook*. Oxford University Press.

Doris, John M., Merritt, Maria, & Harman, Gilbert. 2013. Character. *Pages 355–401 of*: Doris, John M., & the Moral Psychology Research Group (eds), *The Moral Psychology Handbook*. Oxford University Press.

Doris, John M., Stich, Stephen, Phillips, Jonathan, &

- Walmsley, Lachlan. 2017. Moral Psychology: Empirical Approaches. *In*: Zalta, Edward N. (ed), *The Stanford Encyclopedia Of Philosophy*, winter 2017 edn. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University.
- Farias, Miguel, & Wikholm, Catherine. 2015. *The Buddha Pill: Can Meditation Actually Change You?* Watkins.
- Finnis, John. 2018. *The Church Could Teach That Capital Punishment Is Inherently Wrong*. <https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2018/08/39401/>. Accessed: 2019-06-27.
- Flanagan, Owen. 2011. *The Bodhisattva's Brain: Buddhism Naturalized*. MIT Press.
- Foot, Philippa. 1967. The problem of abortion and the doctrine of double effect. *Oxford Review*, **52**, 5–15.
- Giri, Ananta Kumar. 2000. Rethinking human well-being: a dialogue with Amartya Sen. *Journal Of In-*

- ternational Development: The Journal Of The Development Studies Association*, **12**(7), 1003–1018.
- Goldie, Peter. 2004. *On Personality*. Routledge.
- Goleman, Daniel, & Davidson, Richard. 2017. *The Science Of Meditation*. Penguin.
- Griggs, Richard A. 2017. Milgram’s obedience study: a contentious classic reinterpreted. *Teaching Of Psychology*, **44**(1), 32–37.
- Gyatso, Tenzin (XIV Dalai Lama). 2012. *Beyond Religion: Ethics For A Whole World*. Random House.
- Harman, Gilbert. 1999. Moral philosophy meets social psychology: Virtue ethics and the fundamental attribution error. *Proceedings Of The Aristotelian Society*, **99**, 315–331.
- Harman, Gilbert. 2000. The nonexistence of character traits. *Proceedings Of The Aristotelian Society*, **100**, 223–226.

- Harman, Gilbert. 2003. No character or personality. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, **13**(1), 87–94.
- Harman, Gilbert. 2009. Skepticism about character traits. *The Journal Of Ethics*, **13**(2-3), 235–242.
- Hughes, James. 2013. Using neurotechnologies to develop virtues: a Buddhist approach to cognitive enhancement. *Accountability In Research*, **20**(1), 27–41.
- Hurka, Thomas. 2006. Virtuous act, virtuous dispositions. *Analysis*, **66**(289), 69–76.
- Hutton, Eric L. 2006. Character, situationism, and early Confucian thought. *Philosophical Studies*, **127**(1), 37–58.
- Irwin, Terence. 1988. *Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics*. Hackett.
- Isen, Alice M., & Levin, Paula F. 1972. Effect of feeling good on helping: cookies and kindness. *Journal Of Personality And Social Psychology*, **21**(3), 384.

Jackson, Frank, & Smith, Michael. 2005. *The Oxford Handbook Of Contemporary Philosophy*. Oxford University Press.

Jayawickreme, Eranda, Meindl, Peter, Helzer, Erik G, Furr, R. Michael, & Fleeson, William. 2014. Virtuous states and virtuous traits: How the empirical evidence regarding the existence of broad traits saves virtue ethics from the situationist critique. *Theory And Research In Education*, **12**(3), 283–308.

Johnson, James. 2011. Between Political Inquiry and Democratic Faith. A Pragmatist Approach to Visualizing Publics. *European Journal Of Pragmatism And American Philosophy*, **3**(III-2).

Kabat-Zinn, Jon. 2013. *Full Catastrophe Living. Revised Edition*. Piatkus.

Kahneman, Daniel. 2012. *Thinking, Fast And Slow*. Penguin.

- Kamtekar, Rachana. 2004. Situationism and virtue ethics on the content of our character. *Ethics*, **114**(3), 458–491.
- Keown, Damien. 1992. *The Nature Of Buddhist Ethics*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kupperman, Joel J. 2001. The indispensability of character. *Philosophy*, **76**(2), 239–250.
- Kuyken, Willem, & Baer, Ruth. 2016. *Is mindfulness safe?* <http://oxfordmindfulness.org/news/is-mindfulness-safe/>. Accessed: 2019-06-27.
- Lambert, Enoch, & Dennett, Daniel C. 2018. Getting by with a little help from our friends. *Behavioral And Brain Sciences*, **41**, e48.
- Lindahl, Jared R., Fisher, Nathan E., Cooper, David J., Rosen, Rochelle K., & Britton, Willoughby B. 2017. The varieties of contemplative experience: A mixed-

- methods study of meditation-related challenges in Western Buddhists. *PLOS ONE*, **12**(5), e0176239.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair. 1966. *A Short History Of Ethics*. Macmillan.
- Mackie, J. L. 1990. *Ethics: Inventing Right And Wrong*. Penguin.
- Marmodoro, Anna. 2011. Moral Character versus Situations: an Aristotelian contribution to the debate. *Journal Of Ancient Philosophy*, **5**(2), 1–24.
- Merritt, Maria. 2000. Virtue ethics and situationist personality psychology. *Ethical Theory And Moral Practice*, **3**(4), 365–383.
- Milgram, Stanley. 1963. Behavioral study of obedience. *Journal Of Abnormal And Social Psychology*, **67**, 371–378.
- Milgram, Stanley. 1964. Group pressure and action

- against a person. *Journal Of Abnormal And Social Psychology*, **69**, 137–143.
- Milgram, Stanley. 1965a. Liberating effects of group pressure. *Journal Of Personality And Social Psychology*, **1**, 127–134.
- Milgram, Stanley. 1965b. Some conditions of obedience and disobedience to authority. *Human Relations*, **18**, 57–76.
- Milgram, Stanley. 1974. *Obedience To Authority*. Harper and Row.
- Mill, John Stuart. 2000 (orig. published in one volume 1863). *Utilitarianism*. Broadview.
- Miller, Christian B. 2009. Empathy, social psychology, and global helping traits. *Philosophical Studies*, **142**(2), 247–275.
- Miller, Christian B. 2017. Empirical Approaches to Moral Character. *In*: Zalta, Edward N. (ed), *The*

- Stanford Encyclopedia Of Philosophy*, winter 2017 edn.
Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University.
- Miller, Geoffrey F. 2007. Sexual selection for moral virtues. *The Quarterly Review Of Biology*, **82**(2), 97–125.
- Molden, Daniel C. 2014. Understanding priming effects in social psychology: What is “social priming” and how does it occur? *Social Cognition*, **32**(Supplement), 1–11.
- Mower, Deborah S. 2013. Situationism and Confucian virtue ethics. *Ethical Theory And Moral Practice*, **16**(1), 113–137.
- Mumford, Stephen, & Anjum, Rani Lill. 2014. *Getting Causes From Powers*. Oxford University Press.
- Nightingale, Andrea Wilson. 2004. *Spectacles Of Truth In Classical Greek Philosophy: Theoria In Its Cultural Context*. Cambridge University Press.

Nussbaum, Martha. 2009. *The Therapy Of Desire: Theory And Practice In Hellenistic Ethics*. Princeton University Press.

Nussbaum, Martha C. 1999. Virtue ethics: a misleading category? *The Journal Of Ethics*, **3**(3), 163–201.

Perry, Gina. 2017. *Behind The Shock Machine: The Untold Story Of The Notorious Milgram Psychology Experiments*. Scribe.

Prinz, Jesse. 2009. The normativity challenge: Cultural psychology provides the real threat to virtue ethics. *The Journal Of Ethics*, **13**(2-3), 117–144.

Reed, Philip A. 2016. Empirical Adequacy and Virtue Ethics. *Ethical Theory And Moral Practice*, **19**(2), 343–357.

Rorty, Richard. 1999. *Philosophy And Social Hope*. Penguin.

Ross, Lee, & Nisbett, Richard E. 2011. *The Person And*

- The Situation: Perspectives Of Social Psychology*. Pinter and Martin.
- Sabini, John, & Silver, Maury. 2005. Lack of character? Situationism critiqued. *Ethics*, **115**(3), 535–562.
- Said, Edward. 1978. *Orientalism*. Pantheon.
- Savulescu, Julian, & Bostrom, Nick. 2009. *Human Enhancement*. Oxford University Press.
- Segal, Zindel, Williams, Mark, & Teasdale, John. 2018. *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy For Depression. Second Edition*. Guilford.
- Sen, Amartya. 1993. The threats to secular India. *Social Scientist*, 5–23.
- Sen, Amartya. 2004. Democracy and secularism in India. *Pages 35–47 of: Basu, Kaushik (ed), India's Emerging Economy: Performance And Prospects In The 1990s And Beyond*. MIT Press.

- Singer, Peter. 2005. Ethics and intuitions. *The Journal Of Ethics*, **9**(3-4), 331–352.
- Slingerland, Edward. 2011a. “Of What Use Are The Odes?” Cognitive science, virtue ethics, and early Confucian ethics. *Philosophy East And West*, 80–109.
- Slingerland, Edward. 2011b. The situationist critique and early Confucian virtue ethics. *Ethics*, **121**(2), 390–419.
- Sreenivasan, Gopal. 2002. Errors about errors: Virtue theory and trait attribution. *Mind*, **111**(441), 47–68.
- Sreenivasan, Gopal. 2008. Character and consistency: Still more errors. *Mind*, **117**(467), 603–612.
- Taylor, Charles. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Harvard University Press.
- Thanissaro. 2013a. *Aghatavinaya Sutta: Subduing Hatred (2) (AN 5.162), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. Access to In-*

sight (BCBS Edition), 30 November 2013.

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an05/an05.162.than.html>.

Accessed: 2019-06-27.

Thanissaro. 2013b. *Satipatthana Sutta: Frames of Reference (MN 10), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 30 November 2013.*

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.010.than.html>.

Accessed: 2019-06-27.

Tucker, Chris. 2005. Harman vs. Virtue Theory: Do Character Traits Explain Behavior? *Southwest Philosophy Review*, **21**(1), 137–145.

Vlastos, Gregory. 1972. The Unity of the Virtues in the "Protagoras". *Review Of Metaphysics*, **25**(3), 415–458.

Vranas, Peter B.M. 2005. The indeterminacy paradox: Character evaluations and human psychology. *Noûs*, **39**(1), 1–42.

- Webber, Jonathan. 2006a. Character, consistency, and classification. *Mind*, **115**(459), 651–658.
- Webber, Jonathan. 2006b. Sartre’s theory of character. *European Journal Of Philosophy*, **14**(1), 94–116.
- Webber, Jonathan. 2006c. Virtue, character and situation. *Journal Of Moral Philosophy*, **3**(2), 193–213.
- Webber, Jonathan. 2007. Character, common-sense, and expertise. *Ethical Theory And Moral Practice*, **10**(1), 89–104.
- Webber, Jonathan. 2015. Character, attitude and disposition. *European Journal Of Philosophy*, **23**(4), 1082–1096.
- Williams, Bernard. 1997. Morality, the peculiar institution. *Pages 45–65 of: Crisp, Roger, & Slote, Michael (eds), Virtue Ethics*. Oxford University Press.
- Williams, Bernard. 2006 (orig. published 1985). *Ethics And The Limits Of Philosophy*. Routledge.

Williams, Mark, & Penman, Danny. 2011. *Mindfulness: A Practical Guide To Finding Peace In A Frantic World*. Piatkus.