Moral Progress, Judgments, and Genealogy

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Die Zusammenfassung

Im Laufe der Menschheitsgeschichte haben sich viele moralische Normen, moralische Einstellungen, Verhaltensmuster und soziale Institutionen drastisch verändert. Unter diesen Veränderungen betrachten viele – wir, die zeitgenössischen Liberalen – als Fälle von moralischem Fortschritt. Einige mutmaßliche Fälle werden sogar so stark von unseren moralischen Ansichten unterstützt, dass sie uns als progressive moralische Revolutionen erscheinen, obwohl viele unserer Vorgänger und Zeitgenossen anderer Meinung sind.

Die meisten von uns sehen die Befreiung der schwarzen Menschen aus der Leibeigenschaft heute als eindeutigen Fall von moralischem Fortschritt. Wenn das kein moralischer Fortschritt ist, was dann? Jedoch behauptete John C. Calhoun: „Nie zuvor hat die schwarze Rasse Zentralafrikas, von der Morgendämmerung der Geschichte bis zum heutigen Tag, einen so zivilisierten und so verbesserten Zustand erreicht, nicht nur physisch, sondern auch moralisch." Für ihn war die Versklavung anstelle der Abschaffung ein beispielloser moralischer Fortschritt. Viele Menschen mit ähnlicher Einstellung schlossen sich der mächtigen Armee der Konföderierten an, gegen die der Sieg der Union vielleicht nur eine historische Zufälligkeit war.

Die letzten zweihundert Jahre boten viele Chancen, die einst ausschließlich Männern vorbehalten waren, auch Frauen. Frauen haben nun das Recht, außerhalb des häuslichen Bereichs zu arbeiten, Eigentum zu besitzen und autonom über ihre zivilen Partner zu entscheiden - Dinge, von denen die Mütter und Schwestern unserer

Vorfahren nur träumen konnten. Kein Mann in einer zeitgenössischen liberalen Demokratie würde es wagen, die moralische Überlegenheit der Ausweitung gleicher Rechte auf seine weiblichen Mitbürgerinnen in Frage zu stellen. Jedoch wurde das Frauenministerium in Kabul, das nach der amerikanischen Invasion daran arbeitete, die Situation der Frauen in Afghanistan zu verbessern, kürzlich von den Taliban aus dem Gebäude vertrieben, in dem es einst untergebracht war. Nun hat das Ministerium für Einladung, Führung und Förderung von Tugend und Verhinderung von Laster – sein Name weist unverblümt auf die Mission hin, moralischen Fortschritt zu fördern – den Platz des Frauenministeriums eingenommen. Mit einem so ehrenhaften Namen scheint das Ministerium jedoch lediglich ein leicht umbenannter Vollstrecker der Taliban-Standards zu sein, der dafür bekannt ist, Frauen zu schlagen oder auszupeitschen, die ihr Zuhause ohne vollständige Körperbedeckung oder männliche Begleitung verlassen. Das berüchtigte Ministerium verbot auch Mädchen die Bildung nach der Grundschule und untersagte Frauen die Arbeit. Der Name des furchterregenden Ministeriums zeigt recht ironisch die Kluft zwischen der moralischen Sicht der Taliban und unserer.

Im Jahr 2017 wurde Taiwan das erste Regime in Asien, das durch das Urteil des Obersten Gerichtshofs (des Judicial Yuan) die gleichgeschlechtliche Ehe legal anerkannte. Der Durchbruch der Heiratsinstitution Taiwans in Ostasien, einer Region, die traditionellen Familienwerten so große Bedeutung beimisst, wird von vielen liberal gesinnten Menschen weltweit als ein großer Fall von moralischem Fortschritt gefeiert. Allerdings ist die konservative Opposition gegen die gleichgeschlechtliche

Ehe immer noch so stark, dass pro-LGBTQ-Initiativen in den Referenden 2018 katastrophal verloren haben. Folglich musste die taiwanesische Regierung ein Sondergesetz erlassen, anstatt das Bürgerliche Gesetzbuch zu ändern, um die gleichgeschlechtliche Ehe zu berücksichtigen. Das Ergebnis enttäuschte die LGBTQ-Unterstützer, weil die Aufnahme der gleichgeschlechtlichen Ehe in die Artikel des Bürgerlichen Gesetzbuches ihr höchstes Ziel im Kampf gegen Diskriminierung war. Leider teilen immer noch viele Taiwanesen ähnliche moralische Ansichten wie Andrew Chang, der berüchtigt behauptete, dass die gleichgeschlechtliche Ehe die traditionellsten und wichtigsten Werte der chinesischen Kultur schädigen und die kindliche Frömmigkeit, Höflichkeit, Gerechtigkeit, Integrität und Schamhaftigkeit auslöschen würde. Für diese Konservativen hat ein Sondergesetz, das die gleichgeschlechtliche Ehe "toleriert", bereits das moralische Klima herabgesetzt, ein beunruhigender Fall von moralischem Rückschritt.

Durch einen groben Überblick über die prominentesten Fälle von sogenanntem moralischem Fortschritt beabsichtige ich, die Kontroversen um Urteile über den moralischen Fortschritt aufzuzeigen. Viele unserer Vorfahren und Zeitgenossen haben recht unterschiedliche moralische Ansichten als wir und deshalb sind viele von dem, was wir fest als moralischen Fortschritt sehen, in ihren Augen bloße Veränderungen oder sogar eindeutige moralische Rückschritte. Aus unserer zeitgenössisch liberalen moralischen Sicht sind natürlich unsere Urteile über den moralischen Fortschritt wahr, während ihre falsch sind. Aber genau aufgrund unserer eigenen moralischen Ansichten, die sie von Anfang an weitgehend ablehnen, treffen wir entsprechende

Urteile über den moralischen Fortschritt. Diese Urteile auf der Grundlage unserer

moralischen Ansichten gegenüber Nicht-Liberalen zu rechtfertigen, scheint daher die

Frage zu betteln, da es eine umstrittene Prämisse - unsere eigene moralische

Perspektive - als gegeben voraussetzt. Gibt es also einen anderen Weg für uns, unsere

Urteile über den moralischen Fortschritt zu rechtfertigen, außer unsere eingefahrene

moralische Haltung immer wieder zu bekräftigen?

Ich widme dieses Dissertation der Beantwortung der oben gestellten Frage.

Genauer gesagt, entwickle ich eine Methode der Genealogie, um die Glaubwürdigkeit

von Urteilen über den moralischen Fortschritt zu untersuchen.

Diese Dissertation ist in zwei Teile gegliedert. Der erste Teil, der sich an

Philosophen richtet, konzentriert sich auf die Entwicklung und Begründung einer

genealogischen Methode zur Untersuchung von MPJs (Urteile über moralischen

Fortschritt). Diese Methode kann von den Lesern verwendet werden, um die

Glaubwürdigkeit von MPJs zu bewerten. Im zweiten Teil, der für Genealogen oder

Historiker gedacht ist, stelle ich spezifische Materialien vor, die in eine Genealogie

der MPJs aufgenommen werden sollten, damit sie nützlich bei der Beurteilung der

Glaubwürdigkeit ist.

Teil I besteht aus fünf Kapiteln. Im ersten Kapitel versuche ich, einige

konzeptionelle Komplexität zu klären, damit die Leser verstehen, was ich als

moralischen Fortschritt und Urteile über moralischen Fortschritt bezeichne.

Im zweiten Kapitel plädiere ich für die Entwicklung einer genealogischen

Methode. Ich argumentiere, dass es pro tanto ungerechtfertigt ist, eine Theorie des

moralischen Fortschritts selektiv auf der Grundlage liberaler MPJs zu konstruieren, da diese MPJs selbst pro tanto ungerechtfertigt sind. Um den Status der MPJs als gerechtfertigt wiederherzustellen, argumentiere ich, sollten Philosophen eine genealogische Studie durchführen, wie unsere liberalen MPJs und die nicht-liberalen MPJs unserer Gegner jeweils hergestellt oder akzeptiert werden, in einer Weise, die es uns ermöglicht, ihre relative Glaubwürdigkeit zu beurteilen.

Eine Genealogie, die für die Bewertung der Glaubwürdigkeit von MPJs ausreichend ist, sollte nach meiner Argumentation in Kapitel 3 einen Fallstudienansatz verfolgen, der einen spezifischen moralischen Glauben berücksichtigt, der von Menschen zu einer bestimmten Zeit und an einem bestimmten Ort akzeptiert wird. In der existierenden Literatur nehmen jedoch die prominentesten Versuche, eine Genealogie der MPJs zu geben, einen Grand-Narrative-Ansatz ein. Ein solcher Ansatz sucht nach kausalen Verallgemeinerungen, die erklären, wie gleichzeitig ein Satz von verschiedenen moralischen Überzeugungen entstanden ist. In Kapitel 3 argumentiere ich, dass ihre Versuche scheitern. Ich erkläre auch, warum ein Fallstudienansatz methodisch überlegen ist, was die Bewertung der Glaubwürdigkeit betrifft.

In Kapitel 4 entwickle ich einen konkreten Analyserahmen für meine genealogische Methode, basierend auf Elizabeth Andersons hervorragender Fallstudie der amerikanischen Abschaffungsbewegung. Dieser Analyserahmen lenkt die Aufmerksamkeit auf die Materialien, wie zum Beispiel das konzeptuelle Gerüst und faktische und normative Überzeugungen, die der Herstellung oder Akzeptanz von

MPJs zugrunde liegen. Dort analysiere ich auch die Grenzen meiner genealogischen Methode und gebe einige Vorschläge, wie man ihr folgen kann.

Kapitel 5 besteht aus einer Zusammenfassung der vorangegangenen Kapitel und einer Einführung in Teil II. In Teil II illustriere ich zwei Arten von Materialien - konzeptuelle Rahmenwerke und Erzählungen aus spezifischen Perspektiven - und Überzeugungsstrategien, die der Entstehung von MPJs zugrunde liegen, in den Kapiteln 6, 7 und 8. Die drei Kapitel erklären nicht nur, was die Materialien oder Überzeugungsstrategien sind, sondern begründen auch die Notwendigkeit, sie in einer Genealogie zur Bewertung der Glaubwürdigkeit von MPJs festzuhalten. Kapitel 5 erklärt daher auch, warum ich diese empirisch orientierten Kapitel (6, 7 und 8) in ein Buch über genealogische Methodik aufnehmen sollte.

Die gesamte Dissertation folgt einem wissenschaftlichen Geist, der darauf besteht, Urteile über moralischen Fortschritt und moralische Überzeugungen im Allgemeinen auf der Grundlage empirischer Beweise zu studieren. Dieser Geist findet sich in vielen aktuellen Arbeiten zur Evolution, Geschichtsschreibung und Psychologie der Moral wieder, die ich unter dem allgemeinen Begriff "moralische Wissenschaft" zusammenfasse. Im abschließenden Kapitel dieses Buches diskutiere ich den möglichen Einfluss, den die Entwicklung der moralischen Wissenschaft auf das Projekt haben könnte, eine autoritative Moral zu finden, der die Menschen aus bedingungslosen Gründen folgen sollten. Schließlich gehe ich darauf ein, wie man den moralischen Fortschritt verstehen kann, wenn wir eines Tages desillusioniert von dem Projekt werden.

Acknowledgement

The journey I embarked upon in pursuit of my dissertation was a challenging yet fulfilling experience. Throughout my PhD program, I am indebted to numerous mentors, friends, and fellow students.

Monika Betzler provided me with a nurturing, lenient, and inspiring environment for conducting research, enabling me to engage in interdisciplinary studies. Her expertise in practical philosophy greatly benefited my work. As someone who had not formally studied philosophy before my doctoral program, I consider myself a slow learner. However, she granted me time and patiently guided me, ultimately helping me complete this dissertation.

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Introduction

i. Theory Construction, Selective Adoption, and Coherence

In the early modern period, long before Japan underwent its first wave of modernisation, Shintoism was the only way for people to make sense of their surroundings. With its strong belief in the existence of supernatural beings like Kami, Oni, and Yōkai, many monks were inspired by this mythology to study how these beings manipulated the world. They had a wealth of supports from local folklore to draw from, and at the time, virtually no Japanese person could avoid being deeply invested in these stories, which ranged from Kami punishing warring armies to Yōkai decorating trees with cherry blossoms in the spring. People also bore witness to the ways in which supernatural beings exerted causal influence on both the natural world and human society.

Against this backdrop, brilliant monks synthesized the vast folklore into a coherent understanding of the world as a whole, which centred on the intentions and actions of supernatural beings. However, the Dutch arrived and, due to their lack of knowledge about Shinto mythology, failed to see what the locals could see. When a volcano erupted, many Japanese claimed to have seen the Kami of Pyro venting his wrath, but the Dutch saw nothing. Similarly, when a flood destroyed farmland, the Japanese testified that the Yōkai of Hydro were playing with each other by the coastline, but the Dutch witnessed nothing. Over time, the monks, with their unshakeable faith in Shinto mythology and folktales, came to believe that the Dutch were simply barbarians who lacked the ability to perceive what was really

happening. Thus, the inconsistent testimony provided by the Dutch could not be taken as evidence against the mystical explanations of the world. By ignoring conflicting accounts, Japan remained enchanted with its mystical understanding of the world until the Perry Expedition arrived with modern science.

I must admit that the history I presented earlier is fabricated, but the lesson it conveys is crystal clear: basing a theory on selective adoption often leads to a flawed theory. Selective adoption refers to the practice of using only testimony or evidence that is closely aligned with one's existing beliefs and ignoring any contradictory information. While the centrality and coherence of beliefs in our existing network can sometimes lend them credibility, this fable illustrates that their coherence within a smaller set of beliefs does not necessarily imply coherence with a larger web of beliefs. Further investigation may reveal the unreliability of the smaller set of beliefs. The Shinto mythology and folklore of Japan gradually dissolved after being tested against a larger structure of beliefs, such as the laws of nature and demystified observations, following the country's modernisation. However, if Japanese had taken the Dutch testimony seriously, they might have abandoned their mystic worldview sooner. Although this fable is fictitious, the danger of selective adoption hindering epistemic progress is a recurring theme in human history. This danger may be present in current efforts by liberal philosophers to account for moral progress based selectively on liberal moral progress judgments (MPJs).

In the last century, the topic of progress once disappeared from philosophical academia after horrendous events such as the two World Wars, the Holocaust, and the use of

nuclear weaponry (Meek Lange 2022). However, the past decades have witnessed a

resurgence of the study on moral progress (Blunden et al. 2021). Although there are a lot of

controversies around which moral changes are morally progressive, moral philosophers who

work on moral progress tend to take for granted those MPJs made by us contemporary

liberals as veridical indicators of moral progress. The abolition of chattel slavery is

consistently cited by them as an indubitable case of moral progress (Anderson 2014b; Appiah

2011; Jamieson 2002, 2017; Kitcher 2021; Moody-Adams 1999). The other examples, which

at least achieve agreement among a subclass of moral philosophers, are the expansion of

opportunities for women, the recognition of loving relationships between homosexual people,

and the worldwide spreading of liberal democracy (Evans 2017; Kitcher 2021; Lachs 2001;

Luco 2019).[1] The MPJs they adopt, undoubtedly, lie centrally in the web of beliefs of us –

liberals – and cohere perfectly with other core beliefs we have the utmost confidence in. For

example, our beliefs that black people are human beings, that no human beings should be

enslaved, that the abolition of chattel slavery was a case of moral progress, on one hand,

occupy a central place in our beliefs system, and on the other hand, cohere well with each

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[1] The favourite cases of moral progress from the perspective of liberal-minded philosophers seem to go along the same avenue, that is, they all consist in expanding the moral norms that once governed only some subgroups of human beings – slave-owners, males, heterosexuals and nobilities – to a larger population. At least in principle, former slaves now have the same rights as those who were once their masters, women now enjoy equal opportunity to work and possess property as their male counterparts, people of same sex are now endowed with the same entitlements to love and marry as heterosexuals were, and civilians are guaranteed with access to politics and policy-making that were once the privileges of princes and lords. Even in societies where such rights and entitlements are withdrawn from the disadvantaged in practice, it is still generally believed – sometimes even by the residents in those places – that the disadvantaged should have those rights. Some philosophers, therefore, summarise from these cases that moral progress consists in the expansion of moral concern, in the blooming of inclusivist moralities (Godlovitch 1998; Singer 2011). For them, human beings make moral progress when we expand the category of beings who are recognized as having moral standing or equal basic moral status.

other. By contrast, the philosophers simply ignore the MPJs that express the opposite moral

views of racists, religious fundamentalists, homophobias, those who lived in the past, and

many others.

On the basis of the selective adoption of the MPJs, which are coherent with the liberal

moral views lying deeply and centrally in our web of beliefs, as indicating genuine cases of

moral progress, the philosophers attempt to make sense of the nature of moral progress, to

analyse how it happens, to give a formula for its predication, or even to propose a method for

moral inquiry so as to make it more systematic and sure-footed (Anderson 2014b; Appiah

2011; Buchanan 2020; Buchanan and Powell 2018; Kitcher 2021; Kumar and Campbell 2022;

Moody-Adams 1999).[2]

There is a clear parallel between the case of the Japanese monks and that of the

liberal-minded philosophers. The monks were constructing a theory of how the world works,

while the philosophers are developing a theory of moral progress. The Shinto mythology and

folklore lied centrally and deeply in the monks' web of beliefs, while the liberal moral views

and MPJs are also the strongest part of the philosophers' doxastic network. Furthermore, the

Shinto mythology cohered perfectly with Japanese folklore, while the liberal beliefs cohere

perfectly with the liberal MPJs. When developing their theories, respectively, the monks

adopted the folklore as evidence, while the philosophers endorse the liberal MPJs as evidence.

On the other hand, the monks simply turned their back on the testimony the Dutch gave,

while the philosophers simply ignored MPJs made by non-liberal opponents.

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[2] These philosophers all start their theorising with one or several cases of what they take to be moral progress.

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The parallel between the two cases raises the worry that the philosophers' selective adoption may easily result in a flawed theory of moral progress, as the monks' selective adoption led to a pseudoscientific understanding of how the world works. For sure, here I am not arguing that moral philosophers should not pay sole attention to MPJs made by contemporary liberals. The claim that the philosophers' practice *may* lead to a flaw theory does not amount to the claim that their practice is not justified. Nonetheless, the centrality and incorrigibility of liberal moral views in our mind tend to obscure the suspicion that the philosophers' selective adoption of liberal MPJs could be epistemically fishy. By invoking the striking similarity between the philosophers' selectivity and the monks' I just try to encourage my liberal-minded readers to treat the issue seriously. In Chapter 2, I will eventually argue that the philosophers' practice is indeed (*pro tanto*) unjustified.

Some people may object that the hypothetical scenario of the Japanese monks is too contrived, designed to cast doubt on the credibility of a coherent set of beliefs that are central and deeply entrenched in one's doxastic network. They argue that in real life, such beliefs are typically considered credible. In response to these objections, I believe that the fact that a coherent set of core beliefs can be incredible applies to real-life situations as well.

We may see this point through a set of incorrigible beliefs held by many Germans after the First World War. Many Germans believed they did pretty well in the war thanks to the flattering distortions of official propaganda. They believed they had decisively defeated the Russians, who surrendered on terms that were extremely favourable to Germany. They also believed their army had produced an even draw against the combined rest of the world

on the western front. However, they had to be faced with the reality that "they had lost the Great War, that the Kaiser was abdicating, and that they were being stripped of conquered lands and forced to pay ruinously large reparations" (Baumeister 1996, p. 54). And they had to accept that their victory in the east was being nullified, and they were being treated as losers there, too, having to give back all the new territory that had been surrendered to them in the 1917 victory treaty with Russia. Most significantly, the war's failure also forced them to see that their money had become worthless, and the social order was collapsing. The gap between two sets of beliefs – one in the German army's mightiness while the other in the fact that they had lost – gave rise to conspiracy theories, such as that Jews had stabbed Germans in the back, which "were not only plausible; they were almost the only way such a stunning turnabout could be understood" (ibid.). Because of the conspiracy theories, the Germans also came to believe that they had suffered substantial injustices and that the exploitation and humiliation by the vicious Versailles treaty and post-war settlements should be repaid one day. This whole set of beliefs lied centrally in the heart of the post-war Germans and achieved a high degree of coherence among themselves, which was, unfortunately, a fuss of the subsequent War and the Holocaust. From our vantage point, we know that the Germans could have realised that their images of the mighty German army were manufactured by state propaganda. Putting the coherent set of beliefs they held into a larger web of beliefs, which they could have after a further investigation into Imperial Germany's propaganda, would have rendered many beliefs in that set incredible.

The southerners' beliefs concerning black people in the Antebellum U.S. give us

another example.[3] At the time, the southerners were fascinated by the worldview that human groups were different from and unequal to each other in the most fundamental ways. With this idea in mind, they also believed that hierarchy is a feature of human nature and hence an unavoidable fact of social life. Therefore, to ensure the flourishing of fundamentally different groups, the southerners thought, fundamentally different means were required.[4] Driven by such a worldview, they also believed that the Mosaic prohibition on enslaving fellow Jews was not a rejection of the hierarchy of the master-slave relationship but rather an affirmation of hierarchy along racial and ethnic lines.

Furthermore, this worldview warranted the stereotypes the southerners held of black people: they were less intelligent and prudent, lazier, and deficient in moral character. Laziness and imprudence would make blacks unable to relieve their material want, they thought, while the deficiency in personality would put social order on the verge of collapse once black people are freed from slavery. The stereotypes, nonetheless, were supported by their empirical observations of blacks' behaviours – which were, from our historical vantage point again, the consequences of the paralysing institution of slavery. These beliefs cohered perfectly with the moral beliefs that chattel slavery was a morally laudable institution and that the wrong was on the part of the abolitionists. This whole set of beliefs lied so centrally and deeply in the South's mindset that the Confederates were not just motivated to battle with the Union but fought with a sense of moral calling. If the southerners had stepped out of the coherent but narrow set of beliefs and put them under the lens of other beliefs, e.g., those

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[3] I am greatly indebted to Dan Lowe's doctoral dissertation for this example.

[4] See (Finkelman 2003).

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about the debilitating effect of slavery, they could have recognised the incredibility of their stereotypes and pro-slavery moral convictions.

The two examples above show us that the centrality and coherence of a coherent set of beliefs do not guarantee credibility. The worry that philosophers' selective adoption may lead to an absurd theory of moral progress could not just be denounced as nonsense. To ensure the philosophers' evidence, viz., the liberal MPJs are credible, they should put them into a more extensive web of beliefs for examination. In this dissertation, I will develop a method for acquiring a sort of beliefs that help evaluate the credibility of MPJs – beliefs about how the MPJs originate.

ii. Universality and Common Ground

Contrary to the philosophers' exclusive reliance on the liberal MPJs, there are initially two good reasons for philosophers to consider MPJs uncongenial to their own (again, see chapter 2 for further reasons).

When the philosophers account for moral progress selectively on the basis of MPJs made by contemporary liberals, what they have in mind is not what counts moral progress from a liberal perspective but moral progress *per se*. That is, they are not to clarify what contemporary liberals refer to when they apply the concept of moral progress but analyse the nature of moral progress as such. They attempt to figure out what had propelled moral progress in general in human history and how to do that in the future, but not the driving force of the moral changes that liberals praise as cases of moral progress. To give a universal account of moral progress, however, implies that the philosophers should take into

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consideration those MPJs uncongenial to their own. Although it is not impossible that only those moral changes liberals extol are genuine cases of moral progress, they have to offer sound reasons why uncongenial MPJs do not indicate real moral progress.

Furthermore, as the epitaph of Karl Marx notes, "the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to change it." If a liberal theory of moral progress is of value at all, to my mind, it should be able to convince and nudge societies that have not yet experienced some liberal moral progress. That means philosophers should try to look for common ground with their non-liberal opponents. They have to explain to the opponents, on the basis that both parties can accept, why a theory of moral progress is not to be built on the latter's MPJs

From what I said above, it is clear that to account for moral progress selectively on the liberal MPJs is not always unjustified, but just unjustified to the extent that the selectivity appears arbitrary. However, philosophers should scrutinise their opponents' MPJs to justify their selectivity. An option, for them, is to reveal, after a thorough investigation, the comparative credibility between the MPJs of liberals' and non-liberals'.[5] Then, our philosophers can proudly address racists, religious fundamentalists, homophobias, and those who lived in the past: "See? It is for this and that reason that we decide not to account for moral progress based on the cases of 'moral progress' you so cherish!"

Before exploring more substantial reasons against philosophers' selective adoption in Chapter 2, please keep in mind two caveats. Firstly, I do not intend to argue for non-liberal

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[5] A strong argument for the need to compare credibility will be given in chapter 2.

MPJs. As a liberal myself, I am sympathetic to the philosophers' selective adoption. The problem is that we need to give good reasons for such selectivity before we can justifiably develop a theory of moral progress selectively based on liberal MPJs. Therefore, I propose a method from which good reasons against non-liberal MPJs can emerge. Secondly, I do not just argue from the mere fact that non-liberal opponents disagree with us on MPJs to the conclusion that the philosophers' selective adoption is unjustified. More importantly, I attempt to give my readers the reasons why we should take the disagreement seriously in theorising moral progress.

As philosophers' selective adoption is justified insofar as our liberal MPJs are more credible than our opponents', the problem, then, is how to reveal the comparative credibility of different MPJs. My dissertation, hence, attempts to solve the problem by providing a genealogical method for studying MPJs that enables readers to evaluate the credibility of the judgments by themselves. A successful genealogy of a MPJ, according to this method, should reveal the conceptual framework, narratives from a specific perspective, and other materials, based on which the MPJ is formed. The genealogy may also disclose the modes of persuasion by which people accept those materials. By reading the genealogy, readers can evaluate the credibility of the materials underlying the MPJ through their own epistemic and moral intuitions and hence see through eventually the credibility of the MPJ. However, the method I propose is not limited to the evaluation of MPJs but applies to other normative beliefs that lie at the heart of our doxastic system. Readers rely on their intuitions to evaluate MPJs, but at the end of the day, these intuitions should be put under the lens of genealogical study (in

Chapter 4, I will elaborate on this point).

iii. The Structure of the Book

This dissertation is divided into two parts. The first part, which is intended for fellow philosophers, focuses on developing and justifying a genealogical method for studying MPJs. This method can be used by readers to evaluate the credibility of MPJs. In the second part, which is intended for genealogists or historians, I present specific materials that should be included in a genealogy of MPJs for it to be useful in assessing credibility.

Part I consists of five chapters. In the first chapter, I set out to tackle some conceptual complexity for readers to comprehend what I refer to as moral progress and moral progress judgments.

In the second chapter, I offer an argument for developing a genealogical method. I argue that it is *pro tanto* unjustified to construct a theory of moral progress selectively based on liberal MPJs, because these MPJs are themselves *pro tanto* unjustified. To restore MPJs' status as justified, I argue, philosophers should conduct a genealogical study of how our liberal MPJs and our opponents' non-liberal MPJs are made or accepted, respectively, in a way that allows us to assess their relative credibility.

A genealogy adequate for evaluating MPJs' credibility, I argue in chapter 3, should take a case study approach, which accounts for a specific moral belief accepted by people at a particular time and place. In the extant literature, however, the most prominent attempts to give a genealogy of the MPJs take a grand narrative approach. Such an approach seeks causal generalisations explaining simultaneously how a set of different moral beliefs emerged. In

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chapter 3, I argue that their attempts fail. I also explain why a case study approach is methodologically superior in terms of credibility evaluation.

In chapter 4, I develop a concrete analysis framework for my genealogical method based on Elizabeth Anderson's excellent case study of the American abolition movement. This analysis framework encourages attention to the materials, such as conceptual framework and factual and normative beliefs, underlying the making or acceptance of MPJs. There I also analyse the limitations of my genealogical method and offer some suggestions about how to follow it.

Chapter 5 consists of a synopsis of the preceding chapters and an introduction to Part II. In Part II, I illustrate two sorts of materials – conceptual frameworks and narratives from specific perspectives – and modes of persuasion underlying the making of MPJs, respectively, in chapters 6, 7, and 8. The three chapters not only explain what the materials or modes of persuasion are, but also justify the need to record them in a genealogy for the assessment of MPJs' credibility. Chapter 5, hence, also explains why I should include these empirically oriented chapters (6, 7, and 8) in a book on genealogical methodology.

Following the whole dissertation is a scientific spirit that insists on studying moral progress judgments and moral beliefs in general on the basis of empirical evidence. This spirit echoes many recent works on the evolution, historiography, and psychology of moralities, which I give a generic term "moral science." In the concluding chapter of this book, I discuss the possible effect the development of moral science may have on the Project of looking for an authoritative morality that people have unconditional reason to obey.

Eventually, I touch on how to make sense of moral progress if we become disenchanted with

the Project one day.

That said, let us now step into the journey of seeking a solid foundation for a theory of

moral progress.

PART ONE

Chapter I: Moral Progress and Moral Progress Judgments

In the course of human history, many moral norms, moral attitudes, behavioural patterns, and social institutions have changed dramatically. Among these changes, many are taken by contemporary liberals – by us – as cases of moral progress. Some alleged cases are even so championed by our moral views that they appear to be progressive moral revolutions from our perspective, even though many of our predecessors and contemporaries think otherwise.

Most of us, nowadays, see the liberation of black people from chattel slavery as an unambiguous case of moral progress. If this is not moral progress, what else can be? However, John C. Calhoun claimed, "never before has the black race of Central Africa, from the dawn of history to the present day, attained a condition so civilized and so improved, not only physically, but morally …" (Calhoun 1837). For him, enslavement instead of abolition was unprecedented moral progress. Many people with similar minds joined the mighty army of the Confederacy, against which the victory of the Union might just be a historical contingency.

The past two hundred years witnessed a lot of opportunities once exclusive to men got expanded to women. Women now have the rights to work outside the domestic sphere, to possess property, and to choose civil partners autonomously, of which the mothers and sisters of our ancestors could only dream. No man in a contemporary liberal democracy would dare to question the moral superiority of expanding equal rights to his female fellow citizens.

However, the women's ministry in Kabul, which worked after the American invasion to improve women's conditions in Afghanistan, was recently kicked out by the Taliban from the building where it was once located. Now, the Ministry of Invitation, Guidance and Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice – its name indicates point-blank the mission to promote moral progress – has taken the place of the women's ministry. With such a honourable name, however, the Ministry "seems to be just a slightly rebranded name for the notorious enforcer of Taliban standards of behaviours …" that were known for beating or lashing females who left their homes with no full body covering or a male escort (Huylebroek, Arian, and Gladstone 2021). The infamous ministry also banned girls from education after primary school and prohibited female employment. The name of the frightening Ministry rather ironically demonstrates the gap between the Taliban's moral view and ours.

In 2017, Taiwan became the first regime in Asia to legally acknowledge same-sex marriage through the ruling of the Supreme Court (the Judicial Yuan). The breakthrough of Taiwan's marriage institution in Eastern Asia, an area that puts so much emphasis on traditional family values, is championed by many liberal-minded people worldwide as a great case of moral progress. However, the conservative opposition to same-sex marriage is still so strong that pro-LGBTQ initiatives lost disastrously in the 2018 referendums. Consequently, the Taiwan government had to issue a special law rather than amend the Civil Code to accommodate same-sex marriage (張雅淨 2021). The result disappointed LGBTQ supporters because putting same-sex marriage into the articles of the Civil Code was their paramount pursuit against discrimination. Unfortunately, many Taiwanese still share similar moral views

with Andrew Chang（张守一）, who notoriously claimed that same-sex marriage would damage the most traditional and most important values of Chinese culture, and extinguish filial piety, courtesy, righteousness, probity and sense of shame (消灭孝道与礼义廉耻 – the most cherished moral values in traditional China)（黄克先 2018）. For these conservatives, a special law that "tolerates" same-sex marriage has already discounted the moral climate, a disquieting case of a moral regress.

Through a rough overview of the most prominent cases of so-called moral progress, I intend to reveal the controversies around moral progress judgments (MPJs hereafter). Many of our ancestors and contemporaries hold rather different moral views from ours, and thereby, many of what we see firmly as moral progress are, in their eyes, mere changes or even straightforward moral regress. From our contemporary liberal moral views, of course, our moral progress judgments are true, while theirs are false. However, it is exactly because of our own moral views, which they largely reject from the very beginning, that we make corresponding judgments about moral progress. To justify these judgments to non-liberals based on our moral views, hence, seems to be begging the question,[6] as it takes a controversial premise – our own moral perspective – for granted. Then, is there any other way for us to vindicate our moral progress judgments, except repeatedly affirming our entrenched moral standpoint?

I devote this book to working out an answer to the question above. For this task, the overriding aim of this work is to propose a genealogical method for studying moral progress

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[6] Cf. (Anderson 2014b, 2015). pp. 2, 23/ p. 40

judgments, which may help us decide whose judgments are more credible even if we suspend faith in our own moral views for the moment.

The first obstacle I may encounter when persuading people to adopt this method is that the term "moral progress" is not commonly used in everyday language, even though many of our judgments are implicitly moral progress judgments. As a result, people may have different interpretations of what moral progress means, which could lead to confusion when I refer to it later in my work. To prevent this, I will clarify the concept of moral progress at the beginning. Additionally, the fact that we do not use the term "moral progress" directly in everyday language means that moral progress judgments can take on many different forms. To ensure that the method has well-defined research objects, I will also describe the typical features of MPJs. Finally, I will demonstrate how background attitudes play a role in making an MPJ, as the method suggests that we can determine the credibility of an MPJ by evaluating the mental states upon which it is based. These three tasks will be the main focus of the first chapter, after which I will move on to the second chapter, where I will explain why developing a genealogical method for studying moral progress judgments is important.

1.1. Moral Progress

In this section, I will clarify the concept of moral progress as something's changing for the better from a moral point of view. Nonetheless, not all improvements from a moral point of view are moral progress, so I will continue to clarify their distinction through some paradigmatic cases of mere moral improvement and moral progress, concluding that moral progress must involve certain moral properties.

If there is any difficulty in comprehending the conjunctive concept of moral progress, it should not come from the concept of progress, which clearly means something changes for the better. Confusions, if any, can only result from the modifier, namely, "moral."

Some people may think that "moral" signifies "morality's." As a consequence, they regard moral progress mistakenly as morality's changing for the better. The concept of morality, in everyday use, has two different senses. In the descriptive sense, it refers to a certain code of conduct that guides the behaviours, attitudes, and character traits of people in a society,[7] a culture, or a group, that is, morals.[8] Moral norms in the descriptive sense have a fuzzy boundary with social norms, conventions, and customs (Anderson 2014b; Tam 2020). We may easily confuse cases where morals make progress with those in which social norms improve. For example, Kwame Anthony Appiah identifies the end of the duel in aristocratic England as a case in which the honour code as social norms changed for the better from a moral point of view, while Kumar and Campbell argue that the honour code is itself a set of moral norms (Appiah 2011; Kumar and Campbell 2016). There are, however, several characteristic features to distinguish morals from other social norms. Firstly, moral norms "purport to carry the force of authoritative command, and are typically expressed in the form of demands or orders to comply, as opposed to weaker sorts of claims such as requests, supplications, and expectations" (Anderson 2014b)p. 4. Secondly, they are backed up by "coercion, condemnation, blame and punishment," above and over other social sanctions such

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[7] But not all codes of conduct with such a function are morality. An honour code also guides people's behaviours, attitudes and character traits in a society.

[8] Here I do not distinguish morality from ethics. The former is supposed to be related to what to do, while the latter to how to live. However, the distinction is not important here.

as disapproval or nonmoral penalties (ibid.). Thirdly, moral norms tend to be accompanied by shared emotions. In a society where a moral norm is accepted, members are angry at violators, resent the violation if harmed by it, and feel shame or guilt for transgressing the norm themselves. Fourthly, "moral norms, when internalised, are felt to have their moral authority by necessity" (Kumar and Campbell 2016, p. 152). That is, people who accept a moral norm tend to believe (or feel) that it has an authority unconditional on any contingent matter. Finally, moral norms tend to have a priority for those who have internalised them that at least normally outweighs other non-moral demands, and a characteristic motivation to obey a moral norm is that it is worth doing for its own sake (ibid.).

The concept of morality also has a normative sense, which refers to some moral ideal of what to do and how to live that would be accepted by anyone who meets certain intellectual and volitional conditions (Gert and Gert 2020).[9] It makes no sense to say that morality in the normative sense, if any, changes for the better because it is itself the standard against which any moral change is to be gauged. Therefore, for those who mistake moral progress as morality's progress, the concept refers to the change of morality in the descriptive sense for the better. However, when we speak of moral progress, we do not always refer to morals' changing for the better.[10]

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[9] We may understand the two senses of morality in terms of a distinction made by Herbert Hart between positive morality – "morals accepted by the society" — and critical morality – objectively valid rules or normative principles. See (Hart 1963). cf. (Brennan et al. 2013).

[10] Although many philosophers believe that there is an analogy between moral progress and scientific progress, there is a significant difference in the way we understand each concept. The modifier 'scientific' in the concept of scientific progress unequivocally stands for 'science's', in which "science" refers to a comprehensive enterprise that attempts to acquire ever-expanding knowledge in the form of testable explanations and predictions about the world through

On the one hand, many things that are not components of morality, such as political institutions and laws at the societal level, as well as habits, characters, and motivations at the individual level, may be the subjects of moral progress.[11] Rather than thinking of, say, moral progress in a society's political institutions as morality changing for the better, we would say that the politics in the society improves from a moral point of view.

On the other hand, there are various ways in which morality in the descriptive sense may progress. It may, for example, improve from an economic perspective. A set of morals permitting the slave trade might be conducive to Britain's economic self-interest in the early 19th century (Drescher 1977), but we definitely would not have categorised the enactment of such norms as moral progress even if it had actually happened. We apply the concept of moral progress to the progress of morals only if the morals in question change for the better from a moral point of view. Therefore, moral progress has to be something's changing for the better or improvement from a moral point of view.

Even though moral progress is necessarily something's changing for the better from a moral point of view, not every improvement from a moral viewpoint is moral progress (Buchanan and Powell 2018) p. 45(Kumar and Campbell 2022). For example, our life that has become longer, healthier, and more colourful thanks to the development of technology, of course, has changed for the better from a moral point of view. However, we do not regard the

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various academic activities and cultivation of practitioners. However, moral progress does not always have morality's subject matter. To see the analogy made between scientific progress and moral progress, please refer to (Pleasants 2018a; Rorty 2007; Roth 2012; Wilson 2010).

[11] For detailed analyses of where moral progress may occur, please see (Musschenga and Meynen 2017) and (Kitcher 2021).

transition in question as a case of moral progress. Some may think that the distinction

between moral progress and improvement from a moral point of view lies in the fact that the

former must involve the exercise of or the improvements in human moral powers, such as

"their capacities for having moral concepts, making and appreciating moral arguments, being

committed to moral consistency, and having moral motivations" (ibid., p. 50). However, the

involvement of moral powers, to my mind, is not a necessary condition for an improvement

from a moral point of view to be a case of moral progress. For example, even if

industrialisation alone, which involved no exercise or improvement of human moral powers,

had made women allowed to enter workplace that was previously exclusive to men for the

sake of economic interest, the transition would still be seen as a case of moral progress by us.

So, what else distinguishes something's changing for the better from a moral point of view

from moral progress?

We may understand the distinction by comparing the paradigmatic cases of

improvement from a moral point of view that are also moral progress and those that are not.

On a societal level, when a system of morals, a society, or a political institution becomes

more just or fair, we tend to regard such a change as moral progress. On the contrary, we

withhold our attribution of moral progress when the average level of happiness increases in a

society merely because of technological development, even though it is still a good state of

affairs to reach from a moral point of view. On an individual level, likewise, we see an agent

as making moral progress, when she acquires some virtues, such as courage, continence and

benevolence, when she strengthens her motivations to do the right thing, or when she forms a

habit of complying valid moral norms. By contrast, if she simply comes to live a happier life, which from a moral point of view is good,[12] through the cultivation of prudence, we certainly hesitate to regard her achievement as moral progress. From the comparison above, it seems to me that moral progress is conceptually connected to some distinctive moral properties, such as rightness, justness, fairness, courage, and so forth. An improvement from a moral point of view can be a case of moral progress only if it involves one or some of these properties in one way or another.

Moral progress can occur either at a societal level or at an individual level. When a society experiences a moral improvement, e.g., when it becomes more just or fairer, societal moral progress happens. On the other hand, when an individual improves her behaviours, habits, or character traits from a moral point of view, such as being more motivated to do the right things, more used to keeping promises, or more virtuous, she achieves individual moral progress. Moreover, moral progress can be either global or local. A case of moral change is global moral progress, when all things considered it is still an improvement from a moral point of view. On the contrary, it is local moral progress when it achieves moral improvement in one or some aspects but encounters degeneration in other aspects. For example, a state may establish an equalitarian welfare system, which on the one hand equalises the living conditions of citizens in all walks of life but on the other hand incentivise more people to be free riders.[13]

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[12] Note that I do not make a distinction between the moral and the ethical. Two words are interchangeable in the current context.

[13] Cf. (Kitcher 2021; Moody-Adams 2017).

Moral progress is something's changing for the better from a moral point of view that

involves one or some typical moral properties in one way or another. By now, the linguistic

intuitions around the concept of moral progress have been exhausted to reconstruct its basic

meaning. However, to reach a full-fledged conception of moral progress still requires some

normative theorising. For something's changing for the better from a moral point of view

presupposes the existence of an evaluative standard that is, at least, constant over the

transition period,[14] a theory of moral progress needs to consider what the standard in question

is. Let us first consider the simple cases of moral progress in which morality in the

descriptive sense does not change.[15] It seems that the requirement for the concept of moral

progress to be appropriately applied is not that the subject of change complies better with

morals in a society. For example, it does not strike us as appropriate to say that China made

moral progress when there were more suttees in China during the *Yuan* dynasty than during

the *Ming* dynasty（宋濂 1976; 张廷玉 1974）, although suttees were praised by the norm of

chastity across both epochs. This is because the norm in question was itself one we find

lacking authority. Therefore, the standard for evaluating whether some entity has changed for

the better from a moral point of view should be authoritative.[16] Since the authoritative

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[14] According to Stan Godlovich, "There has been Improvement progress in X at time t2 only if X at t2 is better than X at t1 (where t2 is more recent than t1) when gauged against standards of goodness (norms) relating to X common to both times. This presupposes a norm constancy over present and past times." See (Godlovitch 1998).

[15] In fact, what I mean is the cases in which we find it appropriate to apply the concept of moral progress. This expression is tedious but it allows the possibility that there is in fact no moral progress: what we think as appropriate may not be correct. For avoiding pedantry, I make use of the shorter expression "the simple cases of moral progress".

[16] Although some think that the authority of morality is categorical, that is, not depending on the contingent circumstances, I doubt whether categoricity is essential to the standard of moral progress. For people who deny that morality has categorical authority, they can still intelligibly make judgements about moral progress. For the debate

standard is put to the evaluation of moral change, morality in the normative sense, I suspect, is what most people take the criteria in their mind to be when they are gauging moral progress. According to this widely-held view of moral progress, something makes moral progress insofar as it becomes more compliant with the moral ideal that would be accepted by everyone under ideal circumstances. A political institution or a legal system becomes more morally progressive, for instance, if it gets closer to a valid conception of justice. Likewise, an individual makes moral progress if she changes her behavioural habits to better satisfy the moral ideal's requirements, improves her motivations to be more sensitive to the requirements, or things like that. Under this conception, it is also not hard to understand how morality in the descriptive sense makes moral progress. Morals prevailing in a society, such as the norm of chastity in ancient China and the norm permitting slave trade in the British Empire, do not always correspond to morality in the normative sense.[17] When a society improves these morals in a way that reduces the gap between morality in the normative sense and that in the descriptive sense, the society makes moral progress.[18]

A moral ideal is usually the basis on which a subject makes judgments about moral progress. However, different agents may hold distinct moral views, so the widely-held conception of moral progress can be fleshed out differently, depending on the authoritative

between categoricity and contingency, please see (Darwall 2009; Foot 1972; Korsgaard 1996; Street 2012).

[17] For moral realists, morality in the normative sense does not change because they are facts independent of human mind. For others, a code of conduct that would be accepted by anyone in ideal conditions can still change, because people in different historical periods may agree to different sets of rules and principles under ideal circumstances.

[18] This view of moral progress is in principle compatible with meta-ethical relativism, which claims that moral truths are always relative to a certain society, culture or population. It does not claim that a moral prevailing in a society as a matter of fact necessarily conforms to the moral truths relative to that society. The possibility of a gap allows some relativists to adopt this view of moral progress.

moral norms in one's mind. Once supplied with a fine-grained account of normative ethics, a conception of *moral progress as a change towards morality in the normative sense* comes to be a *substantial* conception in the sense that it offers substantial moral principles or ideals of self for gauging moral progress.[19]

Alternatively, one may entertain a *procedural* conception of moral progress, according to which a moral change is a case of moral progress if and only if it satisfies certain procedural requirements instead of some substantial principles.[20] Many scholars have recently accepted a *procedural* conception of moral progress as problem-solving. Despite nuances in details, their various conceptions typically provide formal procedures for determining a moral problem or a morally problematic situation and what counts as a resolution (Anderson 2014b; Kitcher 2021; Roth 2012; Sorrell 2013; Wilson 2010).[21] According to them, then, a society makes moral progress, if and only if its moral practice

[19] For a substantial account of moral progress, one may see (Jamieson 2002; Macklin 1977). Although Michele Moody-Adams doubts whether human beings may ever comprehend the whole truth of morality, it seems to me that she has to take the deepened understanding of some concept as approximate to moral truths when she gauges moral progress. Therefore, Moody-Adam's conception of moral progress as the deepening understanding of moral concepts is still a variation of the substantial conception. See (Moody-Adams 1999).

[20] According to Amanda Roth's typology of conceptions of moral progress, one involves an unchanging standard of evaluation while another sees moral progress as problem-resolving. However, a substantial conception does not necessarily take moral truths as unchangeable (for instance, a view of moral progress coupled with some constructivist theory of moral truths). And there may be other procedural conceptions of moral progress. Therefore, it is more appropriate to typify views of moral progress into substantial ones and procedural ones. See (Roth 2012).

[21] In *The Ethical Project*, Philip Kitcher proposes a functionalist account of morality, according to which morality's basic function is to remedy altruism failures. Then, moral progress, in this view, consists in the refinement of the basic function. In other words, morals progress occurs through better fulfilling this basic function (although Kitcher concedes that many other functions emerge during the development of morality). Whether a functionalist view of moral progress should be classified as a substantial conception or a procedural one depends much on two points. Firstly, is the function seen as constitutive of morality, or is the fulfilment of the function an external requirement? Secondly, how may we decide whether the functioning of morality gets better, by a substantial standard or a formal procedure? See (Kitcher 2011). cf. (Klenk and Sauer 2021, pp. 9-10).

changes in a way that resolves the moral problem caused or sustained by the previously

dominant practice. Slavery counted as a morally problematic situation for the U.S. in 18th

century, to use an over-simplified example, because all affected parties would have agreed

that it was a morally problematic situation if they had been in some ideal conditions. The

chattel slavery was sustained by the contemporary morals that permitted the enslavement of

black people, so the abolition of slavery appeared to be a solution to this moral problem.

However, could the abolition have been a case of moral progress only if all affected parties

would have agreed to this solution in ideal conditions.

In this dissertation, I shy away from engaging in the intricate debate on the

conceptions of moral progress but devote my work to developing a method for studying the

credibility of moral progress judgments. Nonetheless, the study of the credibility of MPJs, in

fact, contributes to the attempt to conceptualise moral progress. When someone employs the

concept of moral progress, she means that an entity has changed for the better from a moral

point of view in the light of a certain evaluative standard. But the consensus on the

conception of moral progress breaks up when it comes to specifying the standard in question.

As linguistic consensus gives us no verdict of which standard is the right one, we have to

look into genuine cases of moral progress to see whether they exhibit a common pattern of

improvement that satisfies a certain evaluative standard. For instance, the principle of utility

would likely be a standard involved in a correct account of moral progress if a set of genuine

cases of moral progress increased the average level of happiness in a society. Likewise, the

Kantian categorical imperative would likely be the proper standard if all genuine cases of

moral progress exhibited a shared pattern of increasingly respecting rational agents as ends in themselves. However, there is no guarantee that what we now take as moral progress are genuine cases of moral progress. Thus, we have to double-check the credibility of our moral progress judgments, before we rely on them to enrich our conception of moral progress with the right evaluative standard. It is through assessing credibility that my method could be a contribution to the account of moral progress.

1.2. Judgments about Moral Progress

This section continues to clarify what moral progress judgments are. In what follows, I demonstrate the typical features of MPJs through both Biden's and Trump's inaugural speeches so that those interested in the method of studying MPJs can have a well-defined research object in mind.

In Joseph Biden's inaugural address, he claimed effusively, "This is democracy's day … Today, we celebrate the triumph not of a candidate, but of a cause, the cause of democracy … We have learned again that democracy is precious" (Biden 2021). His speech sounds like the one delivered by Donald Trump four years ago, in which the former President said, "Today's ceremony, however, has very special meaning. Because … we are transferring power from Washington, D.C. and giving it back to you, the American People … That all changes -- starting right here, and right now, because this moment is your moment: it belongs to you" (Trump 2017). Both President Biden and President Trump did not mention the term 'moral progress' at all, but obviously each of their statements was an attempt to give its respective audience the impression that the inauguration was a mark of moral progress.

Each President succeeded in delivering a judgment about moral progress because he shared and knew that he shared a moral ideal of democracy, as well as a set of presumed facts, with his audience. Biden said later in his inaugural address, "And here we stand, just days after a riotous mob thought they could use violence to silence the will of the people, to stop the work of our democracy, and to drive us from this sacred ground" (Biden 2021). Against the assumption that populism had ravaged the U.S. for four years, Biden's claim that democracy triumphed amounts to the statement that the state of affairs had made progress in light of the democratic ideal. Likewise, Trump's statement was also made against the background ideal of democracy, although his presumption of facts differs from Biden's. For him and his supporters, "For too long, a small group in our nation's Capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost. Washington flourished -- but the people did not share in its wealth. Politicians prospered -- but the jobs left, and the factories closed" (Trump 2017). Therefore, Trump also made a moral progress judgment to the effect that his election made America great again in terms of democracy.

In everyday life, we seldom make use of the term 'moral progress.' Nonetheless, moral progress judgments penetrate every corner of our daily conversions. The concept of moral progress, imprecisely speaking, refers to an entity's changing for the better from a moral point of view, as I have analysed, so a MPJ is, by definition, a comparative evaluative judgment.[22] The lesson from both Biden's and Trump's inaugural speeches teaches us that the

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[22] According to Ruth Macklin, a judgement about moral progress always expresses a moral judgement. His view may raise disagreement from those who adopt a procedural conception, so I employ the more neutral concept of an evaluative judgement. cf. (Macklin 1977).

states of affairs being compared and the standard by which the comparison is conducted

normally remain implicitly in the shared context between the addresser of a MPJ and his

addressees. Against such a background, an addresser needs only expressions such as

something "triumphs," "prevails," or "is a mark" to make the judgment that moral progress

occurs.[23] Sometimes, an addresser makes a claim of moral progress by simply saying what in

the past was bad, with a presumption that his addressees share the belief to the effect that

things in the future will be different in a good way.

My research aims to provide a method for studying MPJs to determine which among

them are credible, while the analysis above tells us where to locate a research object for the

method to apply. People seldom explicitly make judgments in the form of "X is a case of

moral progress," "moral progress has occurred with regard to X," or "X is morally

progressive," but many statements made in daily life are implicit moral progress judgments.

A MPJ is, in nature, an evaluative comparison. Therefore, a certain standard – such as a

democratic ideal – and a presumed change in the world are invoked explicitly or implicitly in

the statement's context. And the statement generally involves some hint of a state of affair

being better (or worse) than another, such as "triumph," "prevail," or "is a mark." To sum up,

to look for a MPJ, we should heed to the following three features of a statement:

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[23] In Biden's address, he said the following, "Our history has been a constant struggle between the American ideal that we are all created equal and the harsh, ugly reality that racism, nativism, fear, and demonization have long torn us apart ⋯ Through the Civil War, the Great Depression, World War, 9/11, through struggle, sacrifice, and setbacks, our 'better angels' have always prevailed" and "Here we stand, where 108 years ago at another inaugural, thousands of protestors tried to block brave women from marching for the right to vote. Today, we mark the swearing-in of the first woman in American history elected to national office – Vice President Kamala Harris." See (Biden 2021).

1. Whether it is against some evaluative standard that the statement at issue is made?
2. Whether the statement presupposes that some state of affairs has changed in the world?
3. Whether the statement involves, or at least implies, a sign of getting better?

For sure, the features above fall short of the definitional features of a MPJ because they are unable to separate MPJs from other kinds of progress judgments in their own right. For instance, a judgment about scientific progress also involves a sign of something in science getting better against a certain evaluative standard.[24] However, it is infeasible to substitute 'evaluative' with 'moral' in the first clause for two reasons. Firstly, what some people take as a moral standard may be regarded as a non-moral or even immoral one, such as the one encouraging suttee, by others. When someone looks for MPJs under what he regards as a moral standard, he is likely to filter out those MPJs that are not coherent with his own standard. Furthermore, the standard against which a MPJ is made may not be a moral standard at all. For example, someone with a functional conception of morality may take the function of morality as promoting interpersonal coordination and cooperation. Thus, a change that makes morality better fulfil such a function is regarded by her as moral progress. In daily life, we tend to evaluate something's performance against its functional goal, e.g., whether a fridge is good is judged by its refrigerating capacity, but we certainly do not take the functional goal of refrigerator as a moral standard. Similarly, the functional goal of morality, even though it is about morality, is not a moral standard.

Besides giving us a guideline to seek out moral progress judgments, the speeches

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[24] There are competing accounts of the standard against which scientific progress is gauged. For an overview, see (Dellsén, Lawler, and Norton 2021).

from Biden and Trump also demonstrate what mental states are involved in the formation of a MPJ. Then next section then turns to the attitudes implicated in MPJs, and how they relate to the study of MPJs' credibility.

1.3. Mental States Involved in MPJs

The election of Donald Trump was a moment of "moral progress" because "the political elites in Washington had usurped for so long the power that was supposed to belong to people," while the political practice made "moral progress" through the election of Joe Biden in that populism had brought a great trauma to democracy. The supporters of each President adopted the judgments made by their leaders respectively because they were respectively immersed in the factual beliefs similar to the Presidents'. Moreover, the respective acceptance of the MPJs depends on a consensus on a normative belief, that is, the ideal of democracy – with different interpretations, for sure.[25] Since factual and normative beliefs determine in tandem the formation of a moral progress judgment, we should enquire whether each of them is credible when investigating the credibility of a MPJ. We need to button down how those who make a MPJ come to hold a certain set of factual beliefs about a moral change and a specific cluster of normative beliefs against which the change is gauged. Then, we can figure out why they come to see a case of moral change as moral progress and

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[25] I say that normative beliefs are implicated in MPJs instead of speaking of moral beliefs, because non-moral normative beliefs are often at work in MPJs, such as beliefs about the function of morality and those about rationality. For example, one might hold the belief that it is rational to organise government in a way that emphasises check and balance, and thereby, judge the establishment of the U.S. government as a case of moral progress against the background moral belief that a government should be foundered in a rational way.

whether the MPJ is credible.[26]

Even though many people take the normative beliefs involved in their MPJs as authoritative, many of the beliefs are the internalisation of the morals prevailing in their society. If people make a MPJ on the basis of such moral beliefs, they are in fact rejecting the previously dominant morals in favour of the current ones. Given that people once internalised the old morals as they internalise the new ones now, how can they be so sure that the current morals may not be seen as unauthoritative one day? For sure, we may invoke other normative beliefs to check whether the beliefs in the morals are coherent with them – the method of moral reasoning. But it is also a good idea to examine the process through which people in a society come to accept the current morals, in virtue of which we may check whether the internalised morals and the MPJ based on them are credible. For example, it depends on the credibility of the moral norms against sexism whether the judgment is credible that it is morally progressive for the Norwegian female beach handball team to decide not to "wear bikini bottoms … with a close fit and cut on an upward angle toward the top of the leg" in the Tokyo Olympics (Burgess 2021).

The most significant morals in the contemporary world, such as the morals against sexism, are not merely accepted by us. Their acceptance also leads us to see their prevalence as major cases of moral progress. The beliefs in these morals and the beliefs in their moral progressiveness seem to be a reinforcing spiral that makes them incorrigible in our minds. That a belief and other beliefs formed on the ground of it make up a reinforcing spiral is not

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[26] Sometimes, a state of affairs does not change at all while some people believe that it has changed.

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unfamiliar in our daily life. For example, Susan believes that Jack likes her, and on the basis

of this belief, she interprets Jack's smiling at her as an act of flirting. The belief that Jack is

flirting with her, in turn, reaffirms and hence strengthens the original belief that Jack has a

crush on her. Likewise, a MPJ about certain morals that is made on the ground of the

internalisation of these morals plays the role of reaffirming these morals, and thereby forms a

mutually reinforcing relationship with them. To give an example: for we deeply believe that

slavery is morally unacceptable, we certainly treat as morally regressive the past when chattel

slavery was prevalent; the faith in our current labour regime's being better, in turn,

consolidates our belief in the wrongness of slavery.

The moral norms, about which we make MPJs, tend to enjoy the most important

status in our reservoir of moral beliefs as the cornerstones of our moral reasoning and socio-

political arrangements, which gives us a good reason to re-examine the credibility of these

MPJs. Another reason I have given for the reassessment of MPJs is that a theory of moral

progress requires the MPJs it treats as theoretical foundations to be credible. Nonetheless, the

reasons for now still seem not motivating enough. Hence the following chapter will stress

further the need to re-examine the credibility of MPJs with a critique of the current practice

of theorising moral progress by moral philosophers.

Chapter II: Unjustified Selective Adoption

During the recent revitalization of the topic of moral progress, many philosophers

attempt to make sense of the nature of moral progress, to analyze how it happens, to give a

formula for its prediction, or to propose a method for its facilitation (Anderson 2014b; Appiah 2011; Buchanan 2020; Buchanan and Powell 2018; Kitcher 2021; Kumar and Campbell 2022; Moody‑Adams 1999).[27] They understandably tend to build the theory of moral progress on the cases judged by contemporary liberals as instances of moral progress. They consistently utilise the abolition of chattel slavery as an indubitable starting point to account for moral progress (Anderson 2014b; Appiah 2011; Jamieson 2002, 2017; Kitcher 2021; Moody‑Adams 1999). To a less but still substantial extent, many theorists of moral progress also take as building blocks the expansion of opportunities for women, the recognition of loving relationships between homosexual people, and the worldwide spread of liberal democracy (Evans 2017; Kitcher 2021; Lachs 2001; Luco 2019). Here are four MPJs philosophers appeal to over and over:

> *the slavery MPJ*: The abolition of chattel slavery is a case of moral progress;
> *the gender MPJ*: The equalization of women's rights is a case of moral progress;
> *the sexual orientation MPJ*: The recognition of same-sex love is a case of moral progress;
> *the democracy MPJ*: The spread of liberal democracy is a case of moral progress.

However, there is widespread disagreement, both in the contemporary world and history, especially among people living outside of the West, over liberal MPJs. Many philosophers simply ignore or even suggest that we discount the disagreement:

> This diversity in the marks of progress is evident in the most commonly cited
> exemplars: the abolition of slavery, the expansion of opportunities for women, and
> the acceptance of loving relationships between people of the same sex. (Kitcher 2021,
> p. 13)

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[27] These philosophers all start their theorising with one or several cases of what they take to be moral progress.

Whatever exactly moral progress consists in … it is plausible (for reasons I will explain later) to suppose that it involves at least the following: the abolition of war and slavery, the reduction of poverty and class privilege, the extension of liberty, the empowerment of marginalized groups … it is hard to imagine a plausible theory of value that does not acknowledge the importance of abolishing war, slavery, reducing poverty and so on. (Jamieson 2002, pp. 321, 328)

The examples of moral progress I discuss are widely accepted as improvements … So I won't try to argue, for example, that chattel slavery is morally abhorrent and that consequently abolishing it was morally progressive. I'm not inclined to spend my time arguing with people who think abolition was a mistake … I'm also not going to waste my time … in arguing that it is wrong to prevent women from getting an education … pressing charges when their husbands beat the hell out of them. (Buchanan 2020, p. xiii)

With these MPJs as evidence, Kitcher develops an account of what it is for a moral change to be a case of moral progress, Jamieson proposes a criterion of moral progress, and Buchanan illustrates how to facilitate future moral progress despite human psychology. The exclusive reliance on liberal MPJs as evidence in the face of widespread disagreement is what I call selective adoption in developing a theory of moral progress. Selective adoption can not only be found in the works of Kitcher, Jamieson, and Buchanan, but is commonplace in the extant literature.[28]

2.1. An Argument against Selective Adoption

In this section, I will first argue that liberal MPJs are of utmost practical significance because of their central place in our belief systems and life. I then argue that liberal MPJs' practical stakes increase the level of confidence we must have in them for them to be justified.

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[28] cf. (Hermann 2019, p. 301; Huemer 2016, pp. 1990-3; Lowe 2019; Luco 2019, p. 429; Roth 2012, p. 398; Sauer 2019, p. 162; Singer 2011; Stokes 2017, p. 1829; Summers 2016, p. 100; Tam 2020, p. 94)

However, we should not be highly confident due to the widespread disagreement over these MPJs. Hence, our liberal MPJs are pro tanto unjustified. Consequently, selective adoption in the theory of moral progress is also unjustified. Take note that I do not argue for global moral skepticism. Most moral beliefs are not as practically crucial as MPJs or are not subject to widespread reasonable disagreement, so we are perfectly justified in accepting them. In short, the argument to come is this:

> **P1**: If (a) the practical stakes of accepting *p* are high and (b) one should not be highly confident in *p*, then one is *pro tanto* unjustified in believing *p*.
> **P2**: The practical stakes of accepting liberal MPJs are high.
> **P3**: One should not be highly confident in *p* if there is widespread reasonable disagreement about *p*.
> **P4**: There is widespread reasonable disagreement about liberal MPJs.
> **C1**: Therefore, one is *pro tanto* unjustified in believing liberal MPJs.
> **P5**: A theory is *pro tanto* unjustified if it is built selectively on *pro tanto* unjustified beliefs.
> **C2**: Therefore, a theory of moral progress built selectively on liberal MPJs (selective adoption) is *pro tanto* unjustified.

In what follows, I will explain and defend these premises and conclusions.

2.1.1 Practical Stakes Impact the Justificatory Threshold

The purist view of knowledge states that epistemic concepts (such as knowledge) are independent of practical concerns. By contrast, proponents of pragmatic encroachment believe that practical considerations should be taken into account in determining what counts as knowledge (Kim 2017). The followings are three ways in which the practical can encroach on the epistemic:

> *Belief encroachment*: practical factors can determine whether a person believes in a proposition (Ganson 2019; Nagel 2008, 2010a, b; Ross and Schroeder 2014;

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Thomason 2007, 2014; Weatherson 2005).

Justification encroachment: practical factors can affect the strength of a person's epistemic state, influencing whether it is strong enough to meet the justificatory standards required for knowledge (Fantl and McGrath 2002, 2009; Hawthorne 2004; Stanley 2005; Weatherson 2011, 2012).

Contextualist encroachment: practical factors can determine the meaning of "knows" in a conversational context (Adler 2012; cf. Blome-Tillmann 2009; Cohen 1988; DeRose 2009)

From a version of justification encroachment, according to which the level of practical stakes involved in accepting a belief that p affects the justificatory standard for believing p, I draw a fairly intuitive principle. The principle (*PE* hereafter) is that one is *pro tanto* unjustified in believing that p if (a) one should not be highly confident in that p and (b) the practical stakes of believing that p are high. *PE* does not entail that every justified belief requires high confidence. In ordinary life, it is entirely justified for us to have some beliefs even at moderate levels of appropriate confidence. For instance, although my campus bus is sometimes delayed, I should be somewhat confident and am thus justified in believing it will take me to class on time. But I would be *pro tanto* unjustified if I am taking the bus to a vital exam rather than a regular class. Only in cases where believing p involves significant practical consequences does *PE* require a subject to be highly confident in p. As many moral beliefs involve far fewer practical stakes than liberal MPJs, the confidence we can have in them warrants our holding these beliefs. Therefore, *PE* does not imply global moral skepticism.

Provided that *PE* is attractive, I still need to show that (a) we should not be highly confident in liberal MPJs and (b) the practical stakes of holding liberal MPJs are high for the

claim that the selective adoption of liberal MPJs in the theory of moral progress is *pro tanto* unjustified.

2.1.2 The High Practical Stakes of Liberal MPJs

As previously noted, liberal MPJs have significant practical implications.

First, MPJs have a strong motivational force that facilitates mass mobilization with dramatic consequences. During the Civil War, for instance, many heroic soldiers from the North engaged in one of the bloodiest wars in human history for *the slavery MPJ*. In the same vein, the ideal of communism as the best society drove generation after generation of Marxists to join in revolutions in Russia, Spain, China, and many other countries.

Second, MPJs always serve to justify certain socio-political events or institutions. Liberal MPJs are always invoked to justify, e.g., democracy, the international human rights regime, and the same-sex marriage bills. But the justificatory force of MPJs can be observed even more strikingly in cases where they are utilised in bad faith. When the Taliban established an institution to suppress women, it ironically named it "the Ministry of Invitation, Guidance and Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice." By designating the ministry this way, the Taliban could justify it by the MPJ that it is a case of moral progress to design society in a fundamentalist fashion. On the international scene, President Bush, when he sent troops to invade Iraq, claimed they were to help "Iraqis achieve a united, stable and free country" (Bush 2003). In the same vein, President Putin claimed that the invasion of Ukraine was just a special military operation to protect people "facing humiliation and genocide perpetrated by the Kiev regime," to denazify Ukraine, as well as bring to trial those who

perpetrated numerous bloody crimes against civilians (Putin 2022).

Third, liberal MPJs occupy the center of our belief systems and reinforce other core moral beliefs we hold. For example, *the slavery, gender, and sexual orientation MPJs* listed in section 2 are coherent with the beliefs that all persons have equal moral status and that no one should be discriminated against on the basis of their skin color, gender, and sexual orientation. These core moral beliefs govern our moral reasoning, influence how we treat others in our lives, and dramatically shape the world we inhabit.

2.1.3 Why We Should Not Be Highly Confident in Liberal MPJs

I argue that we should not be highly confident in liberal MPJs because one should not be highly confident in p if there is widespread reasonable disagreement about p. This premise is a much-weakened version of the Equal Weight View about peer disagreement. According to the Equal Weight View, a person who believes that p in the face of reasonable disagreement from peers is required to "split the difference."[29] That is, if your degree of belief is 0.8 before knowing the fact your peer adopts a 0.2 degree of belief, you should now adopt a 0.5 degree of belief that p. While the Equal Weight View focuses on peer disagreement, I pay attention to the reasonableness of disagreement. But compared with the Equal Weight View, the premise I invoke still imposes much weaker requirements on a subject in the face of reasonable disagreement. First, my premise requires reasonable disagreement to be widespread. Secondly, it does not ask the subject to "split the difference"

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[29] For various defences of the Equal Weight View, see (Bogardus 2009; Christensen 2007; Elga 2007; Feldman 2006; Matheson 2015).

but merely not to be highly confident in the belief in dispute. [30] Given such leniency, the

premise is fairly uncontroversial. However, the claim that the disagreement over liberal MPJs

is widespread and reasonable is, I expect, more controversial. Hence, I will spend much ink

on this claim.

The disagreement over liberal MPJs is widespread outside of the West. The world's

most authoritative survey of people's moral attitudes, the World Values Survey, testifies to

this claim. A vast number of respondents in Albania, China, Ethiopia, Iraq, South Korea,

Nigeria, and Egypt believed that homosexuality is never justifiable, or at least to a large

extent, not justifiable. This suggests that most people in these countries probably consider the

recognition of same-sex love as a moral regress. These countries represent different religions,

continents, cultures, and development stages, but readers can find similar patterns in other

not-fully-liberal societies.

Question: please tell me whether you think homosexuality can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between		
	Never Justifiable	Always justifiable
Albania	77.4%	5.0%
China	67.5%	3.8%
Ethiopia	77.6%	5.0%
Iraq	39.5%	0.7%

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[30] There are several alternative views to the Equal Weight View with regard to peer disagreement, though EWV is the most prominently discussed view. I should not step into the muddy debates around the correct attitudes towards peer disagreement, which requires a book-length treatment. It suffices to say that those with a Steadfast View would probably agree to lower their confidence in that p if there is widespread reasonable disagreement over it. For the steadfast view's arguments against EWV, see (Enoch 2010; Foley 2001; Pasnau 2015; Schafer 2015; Wedgwood 2010; Zagzebski 2012).

| South Korea | 23.9% | 0.3% |
| Nigeria | 80.3% | 3.0% |

Figure 1: This chart simplifies the data provided by (Inglehart et al. 2021). Please refer to the original database for complete data.

Likewise, a large number of respondents in these countries believe that men have more right to a job than women when jobs are scarce. It indicates that many people in these countries would probably not endorse *the gender MPJ*.[31]

Question: do you agree, disagree or neither agree nor disagree with the following statements: when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women?			
	Total Number	Agree	Disagree
Albania	1,454	438	742
China	3,036	1,382	1,445
Ethiopia	1,230	595	609
Iraq	1,200	937	152
South Korea	1,245	659	246
Nigeria	1,237	800	295
Egypt	1,200	1,073	69

Figure 2: This chart simplifies the data provided by (Inglehart et al. 2021). Please refer to the original database for complete data.

Empirical data also suggests that *the democracy MPJ* is widely controversial.[32] Even

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[31] Within contemporary liberal democracies, we may expect a considerable degree of agreement – but far from unanimity – on liberal MPJs. But a westerner may just voice support for liberal MPJs out of peer pressure or social-desirability bias. He may just pay lip service to liberal MPJs without expressing such beliefs through deeds. We need to consider these unsavoury factors when trying to establish the confidence that there is no widespread disagreement over liberal MPJs in the West.

[32] Please refer to databases, such as Afrobarometer, Asian Barometer, Eurobarometer, and Latinobarómetro, for various surveys on the attitudes towards democracy. Asia, especially, is a continent haunted by the nostalgia for authoritarianism. See (Chang, Chu, and Park 2007).

though *the slavery MPJ* is almost a contemporary consensus, over this MPJ there was a widespread disagreement in history. For example, John C. Calhoun claimed, "never before has the black race of Central Africa, from the dawn of history to the present day, attained a condition so civilized and so improved, not only physically, but morally …" (Calhoun 1837). Some may wonder why we should bother ourselves with the MPJs made by those who lived in the past. The reason is that the moral philosophers, who selectively adopt contemporary liberal MPJs as theoretical cornerstones, do not intend to theorise the nature and the dynamics of what we now take to be moral progress but to theorize what moral progress as such is and how to promote it. Which cases of moral change count as moral progress is supposed to remain constant diachronically. Therefore, our ancestors' disagreement still matters as long as there exists no independent reason from the disagreement *per se* to discount it.[33]

It is probably uncontroversial that there is widespread disagreement over liberal MPJs, especially when one considers non-western societies and the history of the West. But this rarely causes doubt among contemporary Westerners, since they tend to see such disagreement as unreasonable. I now have to defend the more contentious point that such disagreement is reasonable. Here I respond to the most *prima facie* convincing arguments that the disagreement is unreasonable.

One argument is that liberal MPJs can be vindicated by our current best moral theory, rendering the disagreement over the judgments unreasonable. But which theory is the best moral theory – Kantian deontology, consequentialism, contractarianism, or virtue ethics – is

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[33] See (McGrath 2008).

greatly controversial. It is an unconvincing move to argue for a contentious thesis from a no

less controversial premise. In addition, conflicting moral theories possess a stock of

arguments against each other. When one attempts to vindicate liberal MPJs by any moral

theory deemed as the best, others can employ the stock arguments against the theory to rebut

the argument.

Some may reply that which theory is the best is irrelevant, for all candidates of the

best moral theory converge on liberal MPJs. According to this argument, it does not matter

which moral theory is precisely the best one, for all plausible moral theories are "climbing the

same mountain on different sides" (Parfit 2011, p. 385). As all of them can vindicate liberal

MPJs, the disagreement over these judgments is unreasonable.

The problem with this argument is that whether a moral theory provides support to a

particular moral judgment depends on the interpreter's conceptual framework and beliefs. By

conceptual framework I refer to a network of concepts through which we categorise and

represent the world. And *beliefs* include ordinary beliefs, assumptions, hypotheses, and

complicated narratives. Contemporary liberals can interpret any candidate moral theory in a

way that supports liberal MPJs because they have already acquired specific conceptual

frameworks and beliefs. For instance, contemporary utilitarians accept liberal MPJs because

they have already held that the abolition of slavery, the equalisation of genders, the

recognition of same-sex love, and the spread of liberal democracy brought more utility to the

world. And they must also see as moral patients whose welfare counts equally the enslaved

people, women, gays, and common people. However, some utilitarian in the past held

inequalitarian concept of moral patients. For instance, Hastings Rashdall said that "the lower Well-being … of countless Chinaman or Negroes must be sacrificed that a higher life may be possible for a much smaller number of white men" (Rashdall 1924, pp. 237-8).

In the same vein, whether the second formulation of Kant's Categorical Imperative – to "act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same as an end" – can lend support to liberal MPJs depends on an interpreter's concept of a person (Kant 2012). According to contemporary liberals' conceptual frameworks, black people, women, gay men, and all subjects in a state are all full humans with equal moral standing. But for an Antebellum southerner whose conception of a person denies that black people are moral equals, the Categorical Imperative would not vindicate *the slavery MPJ*. In history, when required by abolitionists with the Golden Rule to emancipate slaves, proslavery preacher James Henley Thornwell simply replied that the unequal moral standings were ordained by God: "The rule then simply requires, in the case of slavery, that we should treat our slaves as we should feel that we have a right to be treated if we were slaves ourselves" (Thornwell 1850, p. 43).

Many non-liberals may not accept the dominant moral theories as liberals do. But even if non-liberals did accept such theories, they would probably apply them in a way that goes against liberal MPJs, for their conceptual frameworks and beliefs differ from the liberals'. For example, Thomas Cooper, a proslavery utilitarian, insisted that "southern slaveholding easily passed the test of utility – the greatest good for the greatest number – by

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providing for the best interests of blacks and whites alike" (Kilbride 1993, pp. 769-70). Some proslavery thinkers claimed that enslavement fitted black people's nature and thus enabled them to flourish.[34] Indeed Kant himself "defended the view that there is a sexual and racial hierarchy that justifies the subjection of women to men and of non-whites to whites" (Kleingeld 2022, p. 4).

From our vantage point, we are confident that Cooper's empirical belief is untrue. Nevertheless, the argument for discounting the disagreement over liberal MPJs is that all candidates of the best moral theory vindicate these MPJs. The argument fails if any candidate theory fails to support the MPJs. For it to be sound, therefore, all the concepts and beliefs, based on which various candidate theories can be interpreted in favor of liberal MPJs, should be more credible than those of non-liberals. But in many cases, this is not clear.

First, contemporary liberals often dismiss non-liberal MPJs as a matter of course without a clear understanding of which conceptual frameworks and beliefs underlie the judgments. For instance, the arguments of proslavery thinkers, which depend on their specific concepts and beliefs, are unknown to many of us unless someone is an expert on the history of slavery. Likewise, we liberals rarely make any effort to investigate the reasons the Taliban gives for enacting the current institutions in Afghanistan. To be sure, I believe we will rightly find their arguments unpersuasive when they are explicitly displayed. But it is premature to label the concepts and beliefs grounding non-liberal MPJs as unreliable before even ascertaining what they are.

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[34] See Cobb, *What Is Slavery?*, in (Finkelman 2019).

Second, the beliefs based on which people apply moral theory usually comprise assumptions, hypotheses, and complicated narratives. For instance, the hypothesis, roughly speaking, that liberal democracy can make better decisions than other regimes may underlie contemporary utilitarianism's acceptance of *the democracy MPJ*. But this hypothesis is controversial (Bai 2019; Bell 2016; Brennan 2017).

More significantly, it is difficult to determine whose conceptual frameworks are more appropriate. The contrast between a secular conception and a religious conception of happiness, for example, may explain the disagreement about *the gender and the sexual orientation MPJs* between liberals, on the one hand, and some Muslims, on the other hand.[35] For us as contemporary liberals, happiness consists entirely in doing well in our earthly life, while doing well requires achieving career success, being with the person one truly loves, and satisfying authentic desires. The restrictions imposed on women and gays are, hence, a hindrance to their happiness. For some fundamentalist Muslims, happiness is a condition that can only be achieved in the afterlife. To acquire heavenly well-being, however, demands strict conformance to their understanding of the Islamic precepts, which prohibit women from receiving education and working and also forbidding homosexuality. The conflicting conceptions of happiness, thus, result in their disagreement over *the gender and the sexual orientation MPJs*. However, which conception is appropriate for the time being is still an unsettled matter. By dissecting the other concepts and beliefs underlying the religious conception of happiness, I expect we may eventually discover some misinformation and

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[35] See (Joshanloo 2013) for a comparison between contemporary Western and Islamic conceptions of happiness

bigotry behind it. A meticulous inquiry is a hard job, but without it rejecting the conception is too hasty.

Worse still, the controversies around conceptual frameworks are compounded by the way concepts and beliefs interlock. We categorise the world by concepts based on beliefs about the conditions or the typical properties of the concepts' memberships. But only by relying on other concepts can we form these beliefs. Besides, we also need to hold some beliefs about the entities being categorised. James Henley Thornwell did not see black people as moral equals due to his religious conception of moral standing, according to which God ordains unequal stations for different groups of people. This conception was sustained by his peculiar beliefs about (and interpretations of) the Bible, and these beliefs depended on further concepts and beliefs. Other supporters of slavery might endorse rationality as a criterion of moral standing.[36] And such a conception was informed by their beliefs about what it is for a creature to have rationality – maybe a certain level of intelligence and prudence are required. Equipped with such a conception, they represented slaves as beings with lower moral standings in that they believed slaves lacked intelligence and prudence.

The interlocking set of concepts and beliefs needed for grasping and applying any concept extends *ad infinitum*. The controversies around a concept often trace back to the conflicts between underlying beliefs, whereas those around beliefs to concepts. As a result, the three difficulties mentioned above occur not about a single belief or concept but an interlocking set of concepts and beliefs. The complicated set of concepts and beliefs beneath

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[36] See (Kant 2012, p. 37) for using rationality as the criterion.

non-liberal MPJs are not yet visible to us (even those beneath liberal MPJs are, to some extent, indiscernible). The credibility of many interrelated beliefs is indeterminate, and the appropriateness of many correlated concepts is hard to fix. To resolve the dispute on one necessitates resolving the disputes on many others. As we are far from tackling the complexities, whose – liberals' or non-liberals' – conceptual frameworks and beliefs are more credible is largely unclear.

In short, we are not yet in a position to claim that all candidates of the best moral theory vindicate liberal MPJs. To be able to do that, a careful investigation and comparison between the conceptual frameworks and beliefs of liberals and non-liberals is a desideratum.

The second argument that the disagreement over liberal MPJs is unreasonable holds that non-liberals are mostly people with vested interests. Their moral reasoning about moral progress tends to be distorted by those interests. One way in which people with vested interests might distort moral reasoning is by affected ignorance: "choosing not to be informed of what they can and should know" (Moody-Adams 1994, p. 301). For example, although abolitionists used the abuses suffered by slaves to argue against slavery, many were reluctant to carry the argument based on abuses to women's emancipation in order to reserve a patriarchal society (Anderson 2015, p. 30). Another way for people with vested interests to distort moral reasoning is by confusing "their own desires with the right" (Anderson 2014b, p. 8). Many authoritarian rulers, for instance, believed, if we take their words at face value, that they implement dictatorship for the sake of people. The disagreement over liberal MPJs is the result of affected ignorance or confusion between desires and the right.

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I have two objections to this argument. First, the premise that non-liberals tend to be people with vested interests is empirically untenable. The 7th World Value Survey (see Figures 1 and 2) shows that a vast number of respondents disagree about *the gender and sexual orientation* MPJs. As the survey employed the random sampling method, a large part of dissenters were women and gay men who could not benefit from suppressing themselves.

Second, it is unjustified to infer that a subject distorts his reasoning based solely on the fact that he can benefit from doing so. Suppose that a judge can get a promotion by sending more suspects to prison. In this case, the incentives for the judge to distort reasoning, to some extent, increases our credence in the belief that he indeed did so. But the credence is still insufficient for the belief to be justified. We still need to know whether the judge misapplied the articles of law, ignored certain evidence, and so on. In the case of non-liberals with vested interests, although their incentives increase our credence in believing they distort moral reasoning. To be justified in holding this belief, however, we must have further evidence: whether they misinterpret moral principles, ignore evidence, refuse to extend arguments (as was the case of abolitionists), and so forth.

Mere disagreement does not count against liberal MPJs, because these beliefs already lie deeply in our doxastic networks and sustain many important social arrangements. However, the disagreement over liberal MPJs is widespread and reasonable. Given the premise that one should not be highly confident in p if there is widespread reasonable disagreement about p, we can conclude that we should not be highly confident in liberal MPJs. The premise I appeal to is particularly weak, for it requires disagreement to be not only

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reasonable but also widespread. And it only demands that we should not be highly confident in *p* rather than suspend *p*.

2.1.4 Selective Adoption Is Unjustified

The basic argument so far has been this. If (a) the practical stakes of accepting *p* are high and (b) one should not be highly confident in *p*, then one is *pro tanto* unjustified in believing *p*. Liberal MPJs have high practical stakes. And because of widespread reasonable disagreement over liberal MPJs, we should not be highly confident in liberal MPJs. Accordingly, we are *pro tanto* unjustified in holding liberal MPJs.

As I noted in Section 1, contemporary theories of moral progress are built one-sidedly on liberal MPJs. But a theory is *pro tanto* unjustified if it is built one-sidedly on *pro tanto* unjustified beliefs. And so, contemporary theories of moral progress are likewise unjustified. In other words, the selective adoption of liberal MPJs in the theory of moral progress is *pro tanto* unjustified.

Although I argue against philosophers' unjustified reliance on liberal MPJs, I am no apologist of non-liberal MPJs. In fact, my argument can be squarely used against non-liberal MPJs as well, since the disagreement over non-liberal MPJs is also widespread and reasonable, and the stakes involved in accepting these MPJs are also extremely high. No one, liberals or not, should be highly confident in their own MPJs – at least for right now.

2.2. Genealogy as A Way to Gain a High Confidence

To restore the propriety of selective adoption of liberal MPJs, I argue, requires

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genealogy as a way to build up our high confidence in these judgments.

Recently, more and more philosophers, such as Anthony Kwame Appiah, Dan Lowe, Elizabeth Anderson, and Nicolas Smyth start to use genealogy to study moral changes and moral revolutions (Anderson 2015, 2016; Appiah 2011; Baker 2019; Lowe 2019; Smyth 2020). A genealogy of a specific MPJ is a case study of the historical processes through which people come to accept the MPJ. The historical account should disclose the arguments or evidence based on which the MPJ is accepted. It may also reveal the cognitive biases, if any, implicated in the MPJ's formative processes. Special attention should be paid to the conceptual frameworks and beliefs underlying the arguments or evidence. When the credibility of the conceptual frameworks and beliefs is ambiguous, the account should iterate the genealogical process by investigating how people come to endorse the concepts and beliefs. In addition to the content of the concepts and beliefs, the genealogy may explore the ways in which they are spread. For instance, knowing that a set of beliefs are adopted by people as a result of conflicting beliefs being silenced would dramatically decrease our confidence in the adopted beliefs.

In daily life, examples of the confidence-raising ability of genealogies are plentiful. Scientists have long since reached the consensus that the earth is approximately a sphere but there are still people who believe our planet to be flat. Creationism has not been extinguished, even though the evolution theory has spread into nearly every corner of the world. By comparing the scientific processes that led to the development of the theories of round earth and evolution with an explanation of how epistemic defects, including insensitivity to

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evidence, prejudice, and wishful thinking, contribute to the acceptance of the flat earth theory as well as creationism, we can boost our confidence in the scientific theories.

Genealogy has the ability to increase our confidence in a belief that *p*, for it shows us that the right sort of facts leads to the belief that *p* in an appropriate way. It is hard to specify in advance what sort of facts are the right sort or which way is an appropriate way. However, in most cases, we are able to apprehend intuitively whether the genealogical explanation lends credence to the belief when given an account of how the belief that *p* is produced. Take how Americans came to accept *the slavery MPJ* as an example. A vindicatory genealogy would reveal that abolitionists employed accurate information about the misery of black people and cogent moral arguments to persuade people. It would also show us the effort of formerly enslaved people to provide first-hand accounts of their sufferings and talents. On the other hand, the genealogy could disclose that the advocates of slavery took pains to ban abolitionists' works in the South, and provide abundant evidence of how self-interest motivated slaveowners to distort their moral reasoning (instead of simply assuming so). By doing such a genealogy, we can apprehend the credibility of *the slavery MPJ* vis-à-vis proslavery moral beliefs intuitively, hence heightening our confidence.

Why use genealogy to increase confidence in liberal MPJs, as opposed to another method? Some may immediately wonder why we cannot simply rely on moral reasoning – a common practice of moral philosophy – to justify the MPJs. As I have argued in section 3.3, liberals and non-liberals hold different conceptual frameworks and beliefs, while which of them is credible is disputed. They hold conflicting conceptions of moral standing, utility,

happiness, and so on. They adopt competing hypotheses and assumptions. And they internalize different moral norms, which results in opposing moral intuitions. As moral reasoning cannot but depend on conceptual frameworks and beliefs, to justify liberal MPJs based on moral arguments only begs the question. As Bernard Williams says:

> the answer to the question whether there is a history of our conceptions that is vindicatory … makes a difference to what we are doing in saying … that the earlier conceptions were wrong. In the absence of vindicatory explanations, while you can of course say that they were wrong … the content of this is likely to be pretty thin: it conveys only the message that the earlier outlook fails by arguments the point of which is that such outlooks should fail by them. It is a good question whether a tune as thin as this is worth whistling at all (Williams 2000a, p. 191).

In other words, of course, our moral reasoning would support liberal MPJs, because these MPJs lie centrally in our doxastic webs, well-connected with other core beliefs. Succeeding in showing these well-connected beliefs are coherent is, as Williams says, not worth whistling at all. Indeed, non-liberals would probably find non-liberal MPJs coherent with their core beliefs as well. What matters, however, is whose belief sets can survive the examination by a *larger* web of beliefs, a web shared by both liberals and non-liberals. Well-conducted genealogical research on the historical processes through which MPJs come into existence can provide such a web of beliefs for both liberals and non-liberals to evaluate each other's concepts, beliefs, and MPJs. We will regain high confidence and thereby be justified in accepting liberal MPJs if they survive the examination, restoring the propriety of selective adoption in the theory of moral progress.

2.3 Recap

I have argued that the selective adoption in the theory of moral progress is *pro tanto* unjustified and that justifying liberal MPJs requires a research program of genealogy. Through investigating the historical processes underlying liberal and non-liberal MPJs, we may eventually find out that the liberal MPJs are much more credible than the opposite, hence increasing our trust in the former to a high level. By then, we will be justified in building a theory of moral progress selectively on liberal MPJs. However, until the evaluation is done, the current theory of moral progress is a lofty tower built on a shaky foundation. The higher we construct the theoretical tower, the more tragic the catastrophe could be if the tower eventually collapses: armed with a flawed theory of moral progress, we may recklessly push society towards a misguided destination. This was the historic lesson taught to us by the horrendous events of the 20th century. I deeply believe liberal MPJs will triumph at the end of the day. But let us first slow down and reflect on them through the lens of history.

In the following chapters, I will further expound the method of genealogy, which starts by a chapter on what kind of genealogy is needed.

Chapter III: Grand Narrative and Case Study Genealogies

As the previous chapter illustrated, many philosophers have recently begun a research programme to study MPJs through the method of genealogy (Anderson 2014b, pp. 1-2; Williams 2000a, p. 191). A genealogy reveals the historical processes through which people come to accept particular moral attitudes.[37] The most prominent attempts to give a genealogy of the moral beliefs we take as morally progressive are from Peter Railton, Michael Huemer, and Nicholas Smyth. Railton claims that his genealogy provides a "means for criticizing certain moral practices and intuitions by asking about their historical genesis" (Railton 1986, p. 199), while Smyth wants his genealogy to provide epistemic justification for our commitment to emancipatory values (Smyth 2020, p. 2). Huemer argues that the best explanation of the global trend toward liberalisation is that our liberal moral beliefs are objectively correct (Huemer 2016) pp. 2007-8.

In this chapter, I argue that such genealogies are inadequate for assessing MPJs' credibility. They either give no unambiguous value to the credibility of MPJs, fail to specify the causal stories leading up to the moral beliefs at issue, or cannot withstand the scrutiny of historical evidence. Moreover, these failures reflect an underlying methodological flaw: specifically, they provide *grand narratives*, genealogies that seek causal generalisations

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[37] See (Anderson 1991, 2014a, b, 2015, 2016; Baker 2019; Buchanan 2020; Buchanan and Powell 2016; Gibbard 1990; Hauser 2006; Huemer 2016; Joyce 2000; Kitcher 2011; Kumar and Campbell 2022; Lowe 2019; Singer 2011; Smyth 2020; Street 2006; Wright 1995). Some philosophers, however, consider how certain moral attitudes or dispositions might have developed in idealized and game-theoretical scenarios rather than in actual history. See (Pettit 2018; Williams 2004).

explaining simultaneously how a set of different moral beliefs emerged. For instance, a grand narrative genealogy may identify modernisation as the common cause of our liberal values.[38]

Railton, Smyth, and Huemer is right that genealogies can provide further justification for our moral beliefs, afford us with a means to criticise our current moral practices and intuitions, and even prove that our moral orientations are objectively correct. However, they opt for a methodologically inadequate approach. Contrary to a grand narrative approach, I argue instead that philosophers should adopt a *case study* genealogy of a specific moral belief accepted by people at a particular time and place, such as Elizabeth Anderson's marvellous accounts of the abolition of slavery in the United States and Haiti (Anderson 2015, 2016).

The up-to-date turn to genealogy in moral philosophy is valuable for assessing credibility by revealing the historical origins and evolutionary processes of moral beliefs. However, genealogies can follow two distinct approaches, one of which is more adept in evaluating credibility. By comparing the case study and the grand narrative methods in genealogy, this chapter provides methodological insights on how we can effectively establish a robust foundation for our MPJs.

3.1. An Adequate Genealogy: Three Criteria

A genealogy of a belief that *p* is an account of the processes through which *p* is formed or accepted. It helps us assess the credibility of *p* to the extent that it shows whether the right sort of facts causes the formation of *p* in an appropriate way. Of course, without

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[38] Many authors think that modernisation in a broad sense is an important factor contributing to the change of our moral beliefs and moral characters. e.g., see (Anomaly 2017; Heath 2004; Hopster et al. 2022; Pinker 2011; Sauer 2019).

context, it is hard to specify what facts are the right sort or which way is appropriate.

However, in most cases, we can intuitively apprehend whether *p* is credible when given an account of how *p* is formed. Consider a pair of genealogies of how a police officer *O* comes to believe a suspect *S* is guilty. According to one genealogy, *O* carefully reviewed all the clues he could access, and the clues all pointed to *S* as a criminal. *O* thus concluded that *S* was guilty through rigorous abductive reasoning. Provided with such a genealogy, we can immediately comprehend it was the right sort of facts (in this case, clues) that led to *O*'s conclusion in an appropriate way (abductive reasoning). This genealogy increases the credibility of *O*'s conclusion. On the contrary, a genealogy may show that *O* manipulated clues out of a personal grudge, which decreases the credibility of *O*'s conclusion.

There are three criteria a genealogy of *p* has to meet to be adequate for assessing *p*'s credibility. Firstly, it should enable us to intuitively apprehend whether *p* is credible – *the requirement of credibility unambiguousness*. An account of how *O* formed the belief that *S* was a criminal, for instance, may use neuroscientific language to explain how light wave stimulated *O*'s optic nerve and triggered complex neural activity wounding up with the belief. However, while this explanation may provide a thorough genealogy of how *O*'s belief was formed, it does not speak to the belief's credibility. A credibility-unambiguous genealogy should instead focus on the observations *O* made, the possible clues he sorted out, and the reasoning process that led to his conclusion.

Secondly, an adequate genealogy should detail the causal story through which *p* is formed – what I call *the requirement of meticulousness*. This requirement is two-fold. On the

one hand, a genealogy should specify the relata in the causal story leading up to *p*. On the

other hand, it should elaborate on the causal pathway. The elaboration should be fine-grained

enough to make the causal story plausible, depending on the intricacy of the particular case

being analysed. For instance, against our background knowledge we can explain the origin of

our perceptual belief that a tree exists by simply stating that the tree reflects light that is

detected by the observer's eyes. However, when explaining how one comes to believe he has

seen a ghost, we need to provide a highly detailed account of the causal pathway that led to

this belief. For clarity, see the graph below:

Components of a causal story
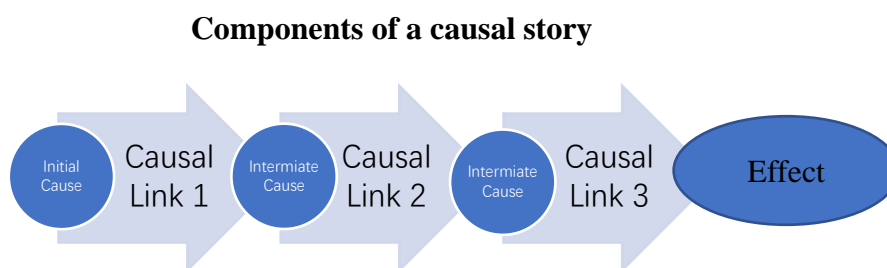
Fig 1: The totality of the initial cause, the intermediate causes$_{1-n}$, and the effect are the relata in a causal story. The totality of the causal links$_{1-n}$ is the causal pathway.

Besides meticulousness, an adequate genealogy must also meet what I call *the*

requirement of evidentiary rigour. In other words, the causal story it provides should be

supported by our current best evidence. For instance, if our evidence showed that *O* did not

make certain observations, a causal story citing these observations to explain his conclusion

would not strike us as believable.

In short, an adequate genealogy of an MPJ should specify the relata and the pathways

linking the relata (Anderson 2016, p. 78); the level of specification should be able to make

the genealogy plausible; and it must withstand the test of evidence (Harman 1986, p. 63).

Ultimately, it must ultimately enable us to intuitively apprehend the MPJs' credibility.

3.2. Three Extant Grand Narrative Genealogies and Their Problems

Contemporary philosophers have paid increasing attention to the genealogy of moral attitudes. Among the works on genealogy, many efforts are given to the evolutionary history of morality,[39] which are becoming more and more empirically informed (cf. Darwall, Gibbard, and Railton 1992; Machery and Mallon 2010). Nevertheless, they are largely irrelevant to the credibility of our MPJs that emerged only in much later historical periods (Smyth 2020, pp. 4-5). Still, some genealogies are directly relevant to our MPJs. Despite some overly sketchy ones,[40] there are still three grand narrative genealogies provided by Peter Railton, Michael Huemer, and Nicholas Smyth of the moral beliefs we take as morally progressive. These genealogies explicitly aim at the epistemic assessment of these beliefs, and their accounts provide profound insights into how our MPJs might have emerged. However, I argue that their genealogies fail to be adequate in light of the criteria given in the last section. Railton's account fails to be meticulous, while Huemer's is empirically unsupported. Although Smyth's genealogy is somewhat meticulous and evidentiarily rigorous, it ascribes no unambiguous values to the credibility of the MPJs it explains.

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[39] Some philosophers believe that the evolutionary origin of morality justify specific moral norms. See (Casebeer 2003; Richards 1986, 1989; Rottschaefer and Martinsen 1990). But others use the evolution of morality as a premise for moral scepticism. See (Joyce 2000, 2007; Ruse 1998; Street 2006, 2008; Woolcock 2000). And see (Copp 2008; Sober 1994) for critical reviews on moral scepticism based on evolutionary ethics.

[40] e.g., see (Sturgeon 1988, 1992).

3.2.1. Railton: The Departure from Moral Rightness Drives Moral Progress

Throughout history, the disregard for the interests of certain groups has been the driving force behind many social movements that have ultimately led to significant societal changes. For example, practices such as chattel slavery, racial segregation, and the exclusion of women and same-sex couples from certain civil rights have severely discounted what some groups perceived as their interests, leaving them feeling aggrieved. This sense of grievance has led to mass mobilisation, contentious political action, and ultimately, major socio-political revolutions (Klandermans 2004; McAdam 1999). As I shall show, Peter Railton's genealogy of MPJs somewhat aligns with this perspective on societal changes.

Railton equates moral rightness with social rationality, that is, "what would be rationally approved of were the interests of all potentially affected individuals counted equally under circumstances of full and vivid information" (Railton 1986, p. 190). He also defines interests as what an idealised agent A+, who "has complete and vivid knowledge of himself and his environment, and whose instrumental rationality is in no way defective … would want his non-idealised self A to want – or, more generally, to seek – were he to find himself in the actual condition and circumstances of A" (ibid., p. 174). Relative moral rightness, Railton argues, is "a matter of relative degree of approximation to" social rationality (ibid., p. 191). In other words, morally right institutions, briefly speaking, are ones that treat equally the interests of all potentially affected individuals.

Based on this notion of moral rightness, Railton conceives of a mechanism that influences the evolution of social institutions. Social institutions – for instance, a form of

production, social or political hierarchy, and so on – that departs from moral rightness or

social rationality, greatly discount the interests of some particular group. The discounting of

interests has a potential for dissatisfaction and unrest. Sometimes the circumstances facing a

discounted group are favourable:

> a) The members of a group whose interests are excluded acquire experiences
> that help them develop *interests-congruent wants*;
> b) Existing repressive apparatus becomes weak;
> c) The excluded group possesses the capacity of mobilisation.

Under such favourable circumstances, the potential for unrest can be expected to manifest

itself "in various ways – in alienation, loss of morale, decline in the effectiveness of authority,

and so on" (ibid., p. 192). The potential for unrest resulting from the fact that interests of a

group are discounted is "potential for pressure from that group – and its allies – to accord to

fuller recognition to their interests in social-decision-making and in the socially-instilled

norms that govern individual decision-making" (ibid., p. 193). When the potential is realised,

Railton argues, the pressure will promote the development of social institutions that better

approximate moral rightness, namely, institutions that treat more equally the interests of all

potentially affected individuals.

     According to Railton, the mechanism he describes operated in, to various degree,

many dramatic social changes, such as the expansion of moral circle, the abolition of

slavery,[41] the rise of democracy, and the equalisation of women (ibid., pp. 197-9). In these

cases, the interests of outgroups, blacks, non-elites, and females were once discounted by

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[41] Joshua Cohen gives a similar but more detailed explanation of the demise of slavery by the injustice of the
institution. See (Cohen 1997).

some social institutions, which bred the potentials for dissatisfaction and unrest. Under

favourable circumstances – especially when these groups' wants were congruent with their

interests – these potentials manifested themselves, forging new institutions that better

approximate moral rightness.

The implication of Railton's genealogy, first, is that moral facts – in this case, moral

rightness – are part of the best explanations of non-moral facts – certain revolutions – we

have reason to believe in. Then, moral realism would be a more plausible meta-ethical theory

than otherwise. Second, if the abolition of slavery, the rise of democracy, and the equalisation

of women indeed make society better approximate moral rightness, then the MPJs about them

are credible.

Railton's genealogy aligns, to some extent, with real history. However, what truly

motivated certain groups to participate in social movements and change the *status quo* were

their wants or subjective interests being discounted. As Railton himself acknowledges, only

when a group's interests are aligned with their wants can the discounting of their interests by

social institutions lead to social mobilisation. However, in many cases treating everyone's

interests equally may require discounting the wants of certain groups, as satisfying their

wants would result in privileging them instead of treating everyone equally. For example, the

French Revolution dismantled many privileges enjoyed by the old nobility, such as

exemption from taxes and military service, the right to wear certain clothing and own certain

types of property, and the access to positions of power in the church, government, and

military (Smith 2006). These sinister wants were exactly what an equal weighing of all individuals' interests would demands constraining.

Discounting certain wants may have driven social movements and led to the creation of new social institutions. However, this does not necessarily mean that these new institutions are better at approximating moral rightness. After the French Revolution, for instance, the nobility launched various restoration movements to regain their discounted wants. If the nobility had succeeded, the socio-political institutions in France would have taken into account their interests disproportionately and moved further away from moral rightness.

In summary, discounting the wants of certain groups tends to incite social movements and lead to the establishment of new social institutions. However, the wants of a group may not align with the interests that a morally right institution should respect, as accounting for these wants (e.g., the old nobility's privileges) may result in unequal treatment of all affected parties. Therefore, only when the discounted wants are aligned with the interests that a morally right institution should respect are the social institutions driven by such wants closer to moral rightness.

To determine whether the abolition of slavery, the rise of democracy, and the equalisation of women made society more morally right, therefore, we must examine whether the wants discounted by chattel slavery, despotism, and gender oppression, respectively, were those that morally right institutions should respect. If not, then the causal story that the discounting of these wants motivated the emergence of certain MPJs is not a story in which the departure of social institutions from moral rightness was the driving force. Consequently,

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the causal story does not increase the credibility of the MPJs. For the mechanism Railton describes to be adequate for assessing our MPJs regarding these institutional changes, he has to specify in each case the wants whose discounting brought about new social institutions. And he must specify the relationship between the wants discounted and the interests morally right institutions should promote. For example, in the case of chattel slavery, he may spell out that the slaves wanted freedom, dignify, and a decent life. And he should also clarify why social institutions that treat the interests of all equally should promote these wants. Lacking these specifications, his genealogy fails to meet *the requirement of meticulousness*.

Some may argue that the wants discounted in the cases above were clearly aligned with the interests that morally right institutions should respect, so specifications are redundant. However, to meet the requirement of evidentiary rigour, a genealogy must stand up to the scrutiny of historical evidence rather than relying on mere impressions. If Railton does not specify the discounted wants in these cases, we cannot examine whether his thoughts match with historical evidence.

More importantly, we expect a genealogy to enable not only us but also sceptics to apprehend the credibility of MPJs regarding the abolition of slavery, democracy, and gender equality. But sceptics are precisely those who doubt whether the discounted wants of slaves, the masses, and women were in line with the interests that morally right institutions should uphold. Thus, a genealogy should specify the discounted wants and their connection to the interests that morally right institutions should respect to address these doubts.

Some may argue that Railton's genealogy does not fail because he may supply his account with specifications of the wants disregarded by social institutions that drove the emergence of each MPJ. However, grand narratives are defined as causal generalisations that cut across the emergence of different moral beliefs. The discounted wants that drove each MPJ were unique to each particular case. For example, prior to abolition, slaves wanted to be free from the abuses and exploitation of their masters, as well as to be reunited with family members who had been sold or separated from them. On the contrary, the masses before the democratisation of society wanted greater political power and representation in the government, along with greater access to land, resources, and economic opportunities. By specifying the different sets of wants held by slaves and the masses that drove abolition and democratisation, respectively, Railton's genealogy would become more of a case study approach than a grand narrative.

3.2.2. Huemer: The Trend towards Liberalisation

Michael Huemer argues that there is a global trend of human moral attitudes and social practices towards liberalism. Liberalism, in his usage, is a broad ethical orientation that "(i) recognises the moral equality of persons, (ii) promotes respect for the dignity of the individual, and (iii) opposes gratuitous coercion and violence."[42] Liberalism, he argues, is a coherent ethical perspective, because "[t]he idea that individuals should be treated with dignity fits together with the idea that individuals are moral equals, and that one should

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[42] See (Huemer 2016, p. 1987). Whether the moral attitudes (i) - (iii) constitute a coherent ethical orientation, I think, depends much on the way in which these vague attitudes are elaborated. I cannot see, e.g., why and how (i) and (iii) are closely related.

eschew violence and coercion against the individual" (ibid.).

According to his description of world history, people's moral attitudes are according more and more with the liberal ethical orientation on multiple different issues, including the decrease of violence, the abolishment of torture and slavery, the lessening of execution, the shifting attitudes towards sexism and racism, democratisation as well as decolonisation. These social changes, from Huemer's perspective, are not "a series of unrelated changes; they are all changes in line with a certain coherent ethical perspective."[43] Moreover, the social changes do not just happen in a few regions but almost across the world. Thus, a unified explanation of the trend towards liberalism, he argues, is required.

Explanations short of assuming the actual existence of liberal moral facts that guide our moral beliefs, Huemer argues, fail to provide a unified account of the global trend towards liberalism. For example, the explanations of the abolition of slavery and the expansion of women's suffrage in terms of industrialisation cannot in the meantime account for why democracy spreads across the world and why war seems less glorious. Therefore, he offers an explanatory model that posits the existence of moral facts with a liberal flavour, and expect this model to explain all the social changes in a systematic way. Moral facts are similar to mathematic facts, according to this model, in that both of them can be comprehended through the cognitive capacity of human beings for *a priori* knowledge.

However, human beings tend to hold false moral beliefs due to evolutionary and

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[43] ibid., p. 1999. Whether the three values of what Huemer calls liberalism really fit with one another, and whether the cases of moral progress Huemer cites are in line with these values, I think, are a matter of interpretation. However, for now I will just take as granted Huemer's view that they are coherent for the sake of argument.

cultural biases, such as the beliefs favouring in-group members or discriminating against homosexuality. There are some people endowed with superior capacity for moral knowledge throughout history, who succeed each other in pushing our world closer to what is prescribed by the liberal moral facts. Although any of them are unable to overcome evolutionary and cultural biases once and for all, they are less susceptible to non-rational influence in belief-formation than the ordinary people are. These moral prophets are often effective in reforming society, because they are better than their opponents at rational persuasion in debates due to their superior rationality and immunity from biases. Also, the capacity to see more clearly what morality requires is positively "correlated with one's degree of intelligence and reflectiveness, which itself is correlated with belonging to relatively socially influential professions" (ibid., p. 2005). Against this backdrop, every generation of morally intelligent people successfully push the world a bit closer to the one prescribed by moral facts, and later generations make social reforms based on what has been achieved by their pioneers. As a result, the world gradually experiences a series of moral changes in a univocal direction towards liberation. The coherence of moral facts captured by liberalism – a coherent ethical standpoint – ensures this univocal direction.

Huemer's genealogy presents a compelling argument for the indispensability of *sui generis* moral facts in explaining societal changes. This argument, if sound, provides a robust defence of moral realism against the sceptical argument from moral facts' explanatory incompetency (Harman 1986). Furthermore, if we accept that moral facts are the driving force behind the emergence of our liberal values and MPJs, we have strong grounds for

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placing our faith in these values.

Huemer's genealogy meets *the requirement of meticulousness* by detailing the causal mechanism through which we might have come to accept liberal values. Nonetheless, it fails to meet *the requirement of evidentiary rigor*. He provides no historical evidence in support of the explanatory model he proposes (cf. Smyth 2020, footnote 6). On the contrary, I doubt there is such evidence. For example, liberal-leaning people, according to his model, are more intelligent and reflective and less vulnerable to evolutionary and cultural biases, but there is hardly any evidence that can vindicate this claim. For example, John Locke, who Huemer thinks was more liberal-minded than his contemporaries because of his partial approval of religious toleration (Huemer 2016, pp. 2004-5), is supposed to be more intelligent than Louis XIV, Thomas Long (Long 1662), and Jonas Proast (Proast 1691), who opposed toleration. However, historical records does not provide evidence, such as an IQ test, to demonstrate this point. And there is no evidence showing that Locke is more sensitive to moral facts, unless we assume his moral views reflected moral facts – which would beg the question. Huemer's paper intends to establish that there are liberal moral facts by arguing that the existence of such facts would provide the best explanation of certain societal changes. By assuming (Locke's) liberal views reflected moral facts, Huemer would simply presume the conclusion he argues for that liberal moral facts exist.

The fact that Locke's ideas are still widely discussed in academia while those of the illiberal thinkers have been largely forgotten, Huemer may argue, suggests that Locke was more intelligent and reflective than his contemporaries. However, this argument overlooks

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the existence of contemporary illiberal figures whose ideas are still prominent, such as

Giambattista Vico, who argued that complete equality of rights would lead to the collapse of

society (Vico 2015, Book IV). Although Locke is more widely studied than Vico, Robert

Baker's study of moral revolutions reveals that when a society adopts a new morality, it

always erases traces of the old morality "from cultural memory" (Baker 2019, p. 43).

Therefore, when our society adopts liberal values for whatever reasons, it erases the thoughts

supporting illiberalism from our collective memory. As such, the fact that Locke's ideas have

been more persistent gives no evidence that he was more intelligent or reflective than his

illiberal contemporaries, only that his ideas are now dominant.

While some may argue that the higher education level of contemporary liberals

compared to illiberals is indicative of greater intelligence and reflectiveness, it's important to

note that throughout history, the most educated groups were often the illiberal nobility and

clergy. Therefore, one cannot conclude that liberal-leaning individuals are inherently more

intelligent and reflective based solely on their educational background.

On the other hand, it is easy to find counterevidence against Huemer's model. For

instance, he argues that liberals are more likely to occupy socially influential professions than

non-liberals. However, throughout world history there have been many more people with

illiberal moral views than those with a liberal orientation that held influential professions,

since what he regards as the liberal moral attitudes did not sprout, with some sporadic

exceptions, until the Enlightenment.

Even the social changes Huemer cites to demonstrate a univocal trend of the world

toward liberalism contradict his explanatory model. The shifting of the attitude toward

sexism, the abolition of slavery, democratisation, decolonisation and so on, Huemer himself

also admits, suddenly exploded about a few hundred years ago in an abrupt fashion. But his

model implies that the world would have experienced a series of piecemeal changes.

> Thus, when society has incorrect values, there is a systematic tendency for
> forces to arise that push society in the direction of more correct values. Once
> society has **moved some distance** in the right direction, a new generation of
> reformers may arise, realizing that society's values still are not correct, and
> hence working to push society further along … **Over the long term**,
> beneficial change can **accumulate** so that, perhaps **after several centuries**, a
> society has moved from horrific values to quite decent ones (Huemer 2016, p.
> 2005, emphases added).

Huemer may reply that there was also a sudden explosion of scientific knowledge

after the Renaissance, so there is nothing unbelievable about the abrupt increase of moral

knowledge. However, we can explain the unprecedented increase of scientific knowledge in

terms of the replacement of speculation by experimental methods and the creation of precise

instruments that allowed scientists to observe previously invisible phenomena. There was no

counterpart in morality. A few hundred years ago, human beings did not develop some new

observational techniques or instruments for morality. And there is no evidence that human

beings received some improvement in their capacity for *a priori* knowledge.[44]

A possible response from Huemer is that the proliferation of moral knowledge was

brought about by the widespread use of the printing press. Nonetheless, despite the invention

and employment of the Gutenberg printing press in the 15th century, it was not until the

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[44] See (Cofnas 2019; Hopster 2020) for other critiques of Huemer's explanatory model.

Enlightenment era that liberal ideas gained widespread acceptance. Additionally, the printing

press also facilitated the dissemination of illiberal ideas, including those of Machiavelli,

Edmund Burke, and Joseph de Maistre.

3.2.3. Smyth: The Emergence of Emancipatory Values

Nicholas Smyth argues that certain developments from 18th century onwards enabled

emancipatory values to replace natural order values. He defines natural order values as "a

moral system which remains largely indifferent to domination or vulnerability, mainly

because it conceives of one's position at the bottom of a hierarchy as the result of one's

natural inferiority" (Smyth 2020, p. 21). By contrast, emancipatory values, in his hands, are

"values which call for the liberation of people from systems of dominance and tyranny" (ibid.,

p. 2). We may formulate the core of these values as the following:

> Human beings ought to be free from exploitation and domination, and particularly
> vulnerable populations ought to be protected from the worst dangers associated with
> their vulnerability (ibid., p. 5).

Our MPJs concerning the abolition of slavery, the expansion of women's rights, and so on are

expressions of such values.

According to Smyth, natural order values once dominated human societies but many

people in West have come to accept emancipatory values. There were three enabling

conditions and one triggering cause, he argues, underlying the replacement of natural order

values by emancipatory values. The first enabling condition was that by the early 1700s

people started to become more aware of and pay more attention to their own feelings,

thoughts, or subjective states. This trend was driven by Luther's *Justification by Faith* and the emergence of novels (Hunt 2007; Taylor 1992). People who have undergone this transition, Smyth argues, prioritised "inner experience as a source of moral value" (Smyth 2020, p. 14). They also came to see the infliction of suffering as a fundamental evil. The second condition was the increase of *action resources* (Welzel 2013), which "are the social and material resources that allow agents to more effectively pursue their individual and collective goals" (Smyth 2020, p. 15). Action resources can be intellectual, including knowledge, skills, and information. They can also be material, such as tools and income. The increase of action resources such as "food, shelter, clothing and tools" (ibid., p. 16), Smyth argues, make freedom and social dignity worth much more to people. This is because with expanding action resources they can do more with the freedoms they have. Furthermore, expanding action resources endow new moral ideas with a larger degree of intergenerational durability and stability. When populations start to experience long-term prosperity, connectivity, and an expanding base of knowledge, new moral ideas are less likely to be eradicated by war, oppression, or misfortune with the growth of these resources. The last condition was the development of mass transportation technologies and increased urbanisation. They promoted social connectedness and facilitated mass social movement. As an example, the 19th century expansion of railway infrastructure allowed women from across England to join the women's suffrage movement in London (Liddington 2006).

The enabling conditions created a social context in which, Smyth argues, intense and large-scale oppressions, as a trigger, led human beings to embrace and institutionalise emancipatory values as a defensive weapon.

> This slow institutionalization [of emancipatory values as a weapon against oppression and domination] … is only possible in a culture which has learned to prioritize subjective experience as a primary source of moral value, which has developed the level of social connectedness within which the demands of the oppressed can become properly contagious, and which provides ordinary persons with the action resources necessary to make rebellion both feasible and permanent (Smyth 2020, p.21).

Smyth argues that emancipatory values are credible *relative to* natural order values. Natural order values, Smyth argues, could only flourish in a social context where people lacked awareness of their inner experience, action resources, and social connectedness. But "most human beings in a society (without these conditions) cannot fully exercise their social, intellectual and emotional capacities."[45] In other words, the persistence of natural order values necessitates the suppression of these capacities.

> All human beings possess an inner emotional life, yet in societies dominated by natural order values, that life remains comparatively hidden, both to society in general and to the individual themselves. All human beings think and reason, transmitting new ideas along social networks, yet in this society, their ability to do so is radically limited by the absence of technology and resources. Hunger alone is a powerful limiting force here, as is the lack of connective technology and the scarcity of action resources. Virtually all human beings seek to interact and to forge social networks in order to engage in coordinated action. Indeed, morality itself is largely a process by which such networks are formed and maintained. Yet, strangely, a certain set of historically dominant values seems to require the suppression of our ability to do just that (ibid., p. 22).

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[45] ibid., p. 22. I add the content within the parenthesis.

In Smyth's opinion, "no other domain of putatively objective knowledge" can flourish when

our social, intellectual, and emotional capacities are suppressed,[46] For example, mathematical

knowledge, Smyth says, cannot advance under these conditions.[47] Likewise, widespread

poverty, hunger, psychological repression, and relative social isolation in no way facilitate

any beneficial advancements in understanding. Compared to natural order values,

emancipatory values, whose acceptance calls for awareness of inner experience, expansion of

action resources, and increased social connectivity, are therefore more credible.

Smyth's genealogy of emancipatory values satisfies *the requirement of meticulousness*,

for he has specified both the proximal causes (massive oppression) of these values and the

enabling conditions. And his genealogy somewhat meets *the requirement of evidentiary rigor*

by drawing from the rigorous works of prominent historians and social scientists such as

Christian Welzel, Jill Liddington, and Lynn Hunt.

However, natural order values, contrary to his argument, can still flourish in societies

where the three enabling conditions obtain. Fascism, totalitarian Communism, and pro-

colonial racism, for example, gained momentum after Europeans became highly aware of

their inner experience and acquired a considerable amount of action resources and mass

transportation. Smyth suggests that Fascism and totalitarian Communism was the result of

temporary dramatic reduction of action resources (ibid., pp. 16-7). But still, Germans and

Russians on the eve of Fascism and Communism, respectively, had much more action

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[46] ibid., p. 23. Action resources, according to Smyth, include knowledge. The claim that no objective knowledge can flourish when there is a lack of knowledge is a tautology.

[47] It is unclear to me why the awareness of inner experience matters for mathematics and other knowledge. Nonetheless, as this point is less relevant to my argument, I refrain from stressing this point.

resources than they had a few decades ago. According to Smyth, action resources enabled the

development of emancipatory values because (1) people with more resources could do more

with their freedom and (2) sufficient action resources provided new moral ideas with a certain

intergenerational durability and stability. If he is correct, then Europe on the brink of Fascism

and Communism remained still a fertile ground for emancipatory values. Even so, natural

order values flourished.

More importantly, the three conditions might have propelled the development of

certain natural order values. The massive emergence of pro-colonial ethos was highly

correlated in time with the expansion of the enabling conditions.[48] The growth of action

resources and the development of transportation systems enabled the West to effectively

conquer and colonise people in other continents. Some people in the suzerains benefited

materially from the colonial trade and commerce, which also improved their subjective

happiness. Therefore, they came to defend colonialism and imperialism in a social context

where inner experience was highly valued. Colonial ethos belongs to natural order values, for

it was largely indifferent to domination or vulnerability suffered by the colonised. And many

of them appealed to the natural inferiority of non-whites as a justification for colonialism and

imperialism.[49] The three enabling conditions not only facilitated emancipatory values that

protected people in colonial powers from oppressions but also bred some natural order ethos

that justified the domination of out-groups.

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[48] See, e.g., (Arneil 1996; Confer 1964; Margaret and O'Neill 2006; Varley 1953).

[49] e.g., see (Confer 1964; Varley 1953).

However, as emancipatory values are contradictory to natural order values, they cannot be credible at the same time. The conditions Smyth identifies, then, can enable both credible and incredible moral beliefs. Therefore, even if we know that the conditions can explain certain MPJs, their credibility is still unknown to us. In other words, a genealogy based on these conditions fails to meet the requirement of credibility unambiguousness, for it does not unambiguously increase or decrease the MPJs' credibility.

3.3. A Case Study Approach is Methodologically Superior

The last section shows that the three genealogies considered are inadequate for assessing the credibility of our MPJs. Railton does not specify the relatum of the causal story he describes – the wants that propelled the emergence of some MPJs, hence failing to meet the requirement of meticulousness. Huemer does spell out the relata and causal links in his genealogy. However, it is inadequate in terms of evidentiary rigour. The enabling conditions Smyth points out can lead to both credible and incredible MPJs. Therefore, his genealogy ascribes no unambiguous value to the credibility of the MPJs it explains. The common failures of these genealogies give us an inductive hint that a grand narrative is in general inadequate for credibility assessment. In what follows, I explain why this is the case. Drawing on the negative lessons of grand narratives, I propose a case study genealogy as a superior alternative to evaluate MPJs.

3.3.1. Grand Narratives Are Generally Inadequate

As a grand narrative consists in causal generalisations that explain simultaneously various moral beliefs that occurred at different time and locations, it must *abstract away from* the particulars specific to any individual case – the nature of being generalisations. For example, it identifies the common cause underlying the moral beliefs against discrimination based on race, gender, and sexual orientation, or the recurrent causal mechanisms involved in the emergence of these moral beliefs. However, a grand narrative overlooks the specific details involved in the unique process through which each moral belief emerges. For instance, the arguments and evidence supporting the abolition of slavery versus gender equality were distinct. The means by which abolitionists and feminists disseminated their moral ideas were also different. A grand narrative disregards these varying details and only highlights the causal structure shared by all cases.

We may illustrate this point by Smyth's grand narrative. Socioeconomic development, that is, the increase of action resources and social connectivity, were the common cause (or an enabling condition, in Smyth's own words) shared by the emergence and persistence of all kinds of emancipatory values. He argues that with an increase in action resources, individuals are able to utilise their freedoms to a greater extent, thereby enhancing the value of freedom and autonomy. This results in the emergence of myriad moral ideals that promote these values. Additionally, as action resources continue to grow, the likelihood of new moral ideals being eradicated by war, oppression, or misfortune diminishes. Moreover, enhanced social connectivity enables the dissemination of these ideals to broader audiences. Nonetheless, as I

have demonstrated, the expansion of action resources also enabled colonisers to exploit other regions of the world to an unprecedented degree. This significantly increased the worth of colonialism, leading to the proliferation of pro-colonial ethos. The improvement in social connectivity also aided the dissemination of this ethos to a broad audience, to the point where even the colonised internalised them (Said 1979). The credibility difference between emancipatory values and natural order values, such as pro-colonial ethos, cannot be attributed to their shared causal structure.

While some emancipatory and natural order values shared a common cause, the supporters of emancipatory values – such as abolitionists, feminists, and LGBTQ groups – rely on different arguments and evidence compared to pro-colonialists. In order to assess the credibility of each moral ideal (thereby distinguishing between the credibility of emancipatory values and pro-colonial beliefs), it is essential to examine the quality of the supporting evidence and arguments. Furthermore, the process by which emancipatory values are accepted is also different from that of natural order values. Taking into account their distinct processes of acceptance is crucial for accurately evaluating credibility. For example, a genealogy that uncovers the persistent suppression of anti-colonial ideas by colonists can effectively discredit the credibility of the pro-colonial ethos.

However, arguments, evidence, and the processes of acceptance are details unique to each case of moral belief emergence. Grand narrative, built completely on causal

generalisations, fail to encompass these particular details.[50] Although we cannot conclude *a priori* that all causal generalisations are unable to give an unambiguous value for the credibility of moral beliefs, it is well-grounded to anticipate that, in general, grand narratives tend to be inadequate for credibility evaluation.

3.3.2. Case Study as a Superior Alternative

Drawing on the negative lessons from grand narrative genealogies, we see that particular details in the historical processes by which a group of people came to accept a MPJ are significant for the epistemic evaluation of the MPJ. A case study, as opposed to a grand narrative, focuses on particular details, making it more likely to be adequate for evaluating credibility.

However, there are always countless details in any given case, and no case study can cover them all. For the purpose of credibility evaluation, a case study examining a particular

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[50] Social scientists have provided us with an abundance of causal generalisations of why our moral beliefs experienced dramatic changes over the past few centuries. One sort of these works is *the modernisation theory*, which looks for the common causes driving the transformation of people's values. According to Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, for instance, socioeconomic development during the past centuries has driven the acceptance of emancipative values. Nonetheless, socioeconomic development periodically brings about moral attitudes inconsistent with emancipative values. Thus, we cannot intuitively apprehend a MPJ's credibility upon (merely) knowing it is causally attributed to socioeconomic development. The other sort of generalisations, *the contentious politics theory*, seeks a set of causal mechanisms recurrent in dissimilar cases of social changes. According to contentious politics scholars, certain causal mechanisms, including the attribution of opportunities and threats, the appropriation of organisational resources, the brokerage between different actors, the employment repertoires of contention, and so on, underlie all kinds of contentious politics. Nevertheless, these mechanisms also existed in reactionary contentious politics, such as the right-wing movements. Consequently, the fact that the emergence of a MPJ is causally explainable by these mechanisms ascribes no unambiguous value to the MPJ's credibility. Given that social scientists have devoted significant intellectual resources to the study of social changes, the prospect of discovering causal generalisations that provide an unambiguous value of credibility to the MPJs they explain seems bleak. See (Inglehart 2020; Inglehart and Welzel 2005; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001; Tilly 2001; Welzel 2013).

MPJ should concentrate on the most epistemically significant elements of the process through which it gains acceptance. There are four key types of details that a case study should encompass, as I illustrate below using as example the MPJ embraced by Americans in the late 19th century that the abolition of chattel slavery represented a case of moral progress (cf. Anderson 2015, 2016):

1. *Arguments or evidence*: This includes the arguments or evidence used by abolitionists to support their position on the MPJ. Examples consist of moral arguments, records of slaves' sufferings, biographies of black people,[51] and more. Many abolitionists, for instance, applied the Golden Rule to argue against slavery.[52] The case study should also present the arguments or evidence used by proponents of chattel slavery. Some pro-slavery thinkers argued that black people were naturally unfit for freedom (Sala-Molins 2006, p. 18). Pro-slavery arguments are relevant to a genealogy because people accepted the MPJ by overcoming these arguments.

2. *Conceptual frameworks and beliefs*: Arguments or evidence are always presented or accepted based on certain concepts and background beliefs. This kind of details showcase the underlying conceptual framework and beliefs behind the respective arguments or evidence. Abolitionists viewed black people as equal moral beings, while some slavery advocates rejected this notion. Abolitionists believed that black people could manage their lives after emancipation. However, many Southerners perceived black people as intellectually deficient, animal-like, lazy, and dangerous, and thought they were content under slavery (Zinn 1995, p. 189).

3. *Information channels*: This demonstrates how each party adopted their respective conceptual frameworks and beliefs. Abolitionists drew upon firsthand accounts and fugitive slaves' narratives to understand the suffering endured by black people. Influential figures like Frederick Douglass also showcased the capabilities of black individuals to abolitionists. In contrast, the genealogy shows that Southerners' observations of slaves' deficiencies resulted from the fact that slavery excluded them from education and profitable jobs. Slaves also feigned happiness due to fear of punishment.

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[51] e.g., see (Douglass 2009, 2014; Jacobs 2009).

[52] e.g., see (Hepburn 1715).

4. *Exclusion or distortion of information*: This section explains why many Southerners did not accept abolitionists' arguments or evidence. Several Southern states banned the circulation of abolitionist materials. The genealogy may also provide compelling evidence of how slaveholders distorted their observations and reasoning out of self-interest. For example, it could reveal that, even though a pro-slavery thinker witnessed much suffering under slavery, they still insisted on the benefits it brought to black people.

This case study of American abolition highlights that abolitionists used accurate information about the suffering of black people and persuasive moral arguments to sway public opinion. It also emphasises the efforts of formerly enslaved individuals to share their first-hand accounts of their experiences and capabilities. In contrast, the genealogy reveals that slavery advocates actively tried to suppress abolitionist materials in the South and presents ample evidence of slaveowners' self-interest-driven distortions in their moral reasoning. By reading this genealogy, we can intuitively grasp the credibility of the anti-slavery MPJ compared to pro-slavery moral beliefs,

The capacity of enabling us to apprehend a MPJ's credibility makes a case study approach to genealogy, especially one that emphasises these types of details, a superior alternative to a grand narrative for the purpose of evaluating MPJs' credibility.

I have argued that three grand narrative genealogies that show promise fall short of meeting the necessary criteria – meticulousness, evidentiary rigour, and credibility unambiguousness – for adequately evaluating the credibility of MPJs. These shortcomings, I contend, are not haphazard or unique, but instead stem from an inherent challenge.

My argument is not that the search for causal generalisations explaining the emergence of our MPJs is futile. In contrast, I believe that identifying such generalisations is

critical to achieving a profound understanding of our current moral values and facilitating

future moral progress. However, understanding the specifics of how a particular MPJ

emerged is crucial to evaluating its credibility. Causal generalisations that apply to dissimilar

cases are unable to accommodate specific details unique to each individual case. Therefore,

grand narratives that consist in causal generalisations are generally inadequate. On the

contrary, a case study, by focusing on a particular MPJ that was accepted by people in a

specific time and place, can provide us with essential details and hence enable us to uptake

the MPJ's credibility.

Our actions and socio-political institutions are often guided by our moral judgments.

Since many of these judgments originate from our most ingrained moral beliefs, such as our

MPJs, it is crucial to ensure their trustworthiness. Consequently, there is a growing trend

among philosophers to vindicate or debunk our MPJs and other crucial moral beliefs through

genealogy. Every unique task requires specific tools. A case study approach with a keen eye

for specifics presents a more practical and effective tool for this specific philosophical

concern than a grand narrative approach.

To highlight the advantages of a case study approach to genealogy, I have briefly

outlined the types of details it needs to encompass for evaluating the credibility of a MPJ. In

the following chapter, I will provide a more comprehensive case study by Elizabeth Anderson

to thoroughly demonstrate the analysis framework for the method I'm proposing – a

framework that guides the exploration for the necessary details within a case study.

Chapter IV: The Method

In earlier chapters, I suggested conducting a genealogy of MPJs through a case study approach to uncover the specific facts that lead to the emergence of a particular MPJ. However, my description of the method thus far has been too general and has not fully specified which facts, among the many circumstances in which a MPJ arises, we should focus on in our analysis. In other words, a concrete analytical framework has not been provided for the method to be effectively applied in the study.

To provide a more concrete framework for the method, I draw on insights from Elizabeth Anderson's account of the American abolition, which serves as an example of how to apply my method in practical research. The first section introduces Anderson's case study. In the second section, I develop a specific framework based on Anderson's insights for conducting genealogical study of MPJs. However, in the third section, I will also address the limitations of my proposed method, which will be discussed based on Anderson's case study. As I am aware of the limitations of the method, I will provide some suggestions in the final section on how researchers can adopt a more modest approach when studying MPJs.

4.1. A Case Study from Elizabeth Anderson

Elizabeth Anderson provides us with a marvellous case study of how Americans came to abolish chattel slavery in *Moral Bias and Corrective Practices*. As an empirical explanation of the American abolition movement, it is expectable that there will be subsequent genealogies with a better explanatory force. However, the purpose of introducing

Anderson's work is not to criticise its deficiency. Rather, I intend to, on the one hand,

illustrate on the basis of her case study what sort of things we should highlight in constructing

a genealogy of a MPJ for assessing its credibility, and on the other hand, demonstrate the

limitations of the method through this example.

According to Anderson, our moral reasoning is susceptible to certain moral biases,

which results in unreliable moral beliefs that sustain unjust moral norms. Hence, morality

makes progress when we manage to block, counteract, bypass, and correct the moral biases

involved in moral reasoning (Anderson 2014b, 2015, 2016).[53] One source of moral biases is

self-interest, for counteracting which philosophers have long exploited certain methods, such

as table-turning and the veil of ignorance. Nonetheless, moral biases may also arise from

socio-economic inequality: "power and privilege bias our thoughts" (Anderson 2015, p. 27).

Great philosophers in the past had noticed the moral biases brought about by unequal

social positions. As Adam Smith observed, people are prone to evaluate others in terms of

their social status rather than their morally relevant features. For example, an observer tends

to have "ten times more compassion," Smith claims, for the great than for the lowly when

they suffer equally (Smith 2010, 1.3.3.2). John Dewey and James Tufts also point out that the

powerful tend to confuse what they want with what is right because a powerful person "has

power to enforce his demand" and "… even with the best will in the world, he is likely to be

isolated from the real needs of others, and the perils of ignorance are added to those of

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[53] Anderson probably thinks that we should subsume a particular case of moral belief change under a general epistemological principle to check the moral belief's credibility, while I seem to show a preference for the particularistic epistemological intuitions we have when reading a specific case study. In fact, I have no objection to a principled assessment of credibility. To apprehend intuitively the belief to be credible can be due to one's epistemological principle.

selfishness" (Dewey and Tufts 1932, p. 226).

In accordance with the observation of Dewey and Tufts, in the Antebellum U.S., "[n]ot only slaveholders, but many other whites who identified with them, many of whom expected to own slaves, or at least to hold a superior position to those deemed eligible for slavery, held that slavery was a just institution" (Anderson 2015, p. 28). The kind of moral biases identified by Smith also penetrated the Antebellum U.S., where both advocates of slavery and abolitionists despised slaves and free blacks, who occupied an obviously lower social position in both the North and the South than whites (ibid.).

Anderson argues that the most serious moral biases came from the ideologies of the racial inferiority of blacks. Slaveholders held the delusional representation of themselves as benevolent paternalists toward their slaves, who were deemed as unable to take care of themselves without the support and guidance from their masters.

> As preposterous as it seems to us today, and to abolitionists then, letters and diaries of slaveholders and their wives testify to their apparently sincere self-image as dutifully providing for the welfare of their slaves, even at a burden to themselves. This led to further delusions that their slaves were happy and loyal, and would stand by them in the event of war against the North, and that their slaves didn't mind the deprivations of slavery — being denied personal liberty, rights to live with family members, education, even the honour associated with having recognised rights against rape and whipping (ibid., p. 31).

The advocates of slavery also noticed that free blacks in the North lived disproportionately in the lowest stratum of society and took this fact as the evidence of black inferiority. As the ideologies of black inferiority also seized the mind of the abolitionists, "they were reluctant to blame their own racist practices" for making blacks

"disproportionately represented in the prisons and among the destitute and unemployed" (ibid., p. 31-2).

For correcting the moral biases of whites, Anderson noted, practical contention was used by the abolitionists. Contention "refers to practices in which people make claims against others, on behalf of someone's interests" (ibid., p. 32). Contentious politics, such as petitioning, publicity campaigns, theatrical performances, candlelight vigils, litigation, political campaigns, street demonstrations, boycotts, teach-ins, sit-ins, picketing, strikes, building occupations, and even riots and wars, are coordinated contention by groups around a shared agenda. The moral norms permitting chattel slavery, like others, were "sustained by mutual expectations of conditional conformity — shared understandings of most people's disposition to conform to the rules on condition that others do, too" (Anderson 2014b, p. 3). Citizens in the Antebellum U.S. expected that others would conform to the morality of slavery and believed that others also expected them to conform to it. That is why citizens participated, or at least acquiesced, in the practice of slavery, regardless of whether their private conscience approved of it. The contentious politics in the Antebellum U.S. destabilised citizens' shared expectations of conditional conformity in that the contentions, as mass action in the public rejection of slavery, conveyed to citizens the factual belief that many fellow citizens were in fact opposed to the peculiar institution. By doing so, the contentions showed that there was no robust consensus around the morality of slavery. Through this, the social contentions gave courage to those who privately disapproved of slavery to speak out, and thus, reinforced the dissenting voices. Through signalling that

numerous citizens in the U.S. did not take the institution as legitimate, the contentious

politics also conveyed the idea to the advocates of slavery that they might lose moral

authority if they continued to uphold slavery

Various contentious activities functioned to reduce the motivations of American

citizens to follow the morality for slavery and, thus, forced them into serious moral

deliberation of how to go on. However, the public deliberation might have proceeded in a

wrong direction due to whites' moral biases. For instance, the Enlightenment abolitionists in

France, including Nicolas Condorcet, once preferred gradual emancipation, for they believed

only slaveholders could teach their incapable subordinates how to lead a free life (Anderson

2016, p. 79-84). Fortunately, black abolitionists also participated in the social contentions to

counteract whites' moral biases.

White abolitionists, obsessed with their own prejudice of black inferiority, tended to

represent slaves as objects of pity than as subjects of dignity entitled to command respect.

Hence, they documented exhaustively the material deprivations imposed on slaves and their

subjection to merciless tortures, that is, the harms that can be "suffered equally much by

animals" (Anderson 2015, p. 35). On the contrary, they notably neglected "slavery's manifold

assaults on slaves' specifically human, dignitary interests in their agency and recognition

from others: the deprivation of autonomy, legal rights, education, and opportunities for self-

advancement; the theft of the fruits of their labour; the dishonour inflicted on female slaves

through slaveholder rape; the indignity imposed on male slaves by denying them authority

over family life, powers to protect their wives and children, and access to avenues for

developing and exercising military virtues" (ibid.). As a result, the white abolitionists were reluctant to admit the damage of slavery to blacks' agency and dignity. They were, thus, feeble with regard to refuting slaveholders' arguments that blacks were not suitable for freedom as they lacked the capacities for self-governance, and hence "would be unable to compete with whites in a free labour market, but sink into destitution, vagrancy, and crime if they were freed" — the most important excuses for the slaveholders to continue the unjust institution (ibid.).

Contra the white abolitionists, their black counterparts worked hard to inform whites of their nobler needs and interests in dignity, honour, and access to distinctively human rights and achievements (ibid.). Harriet Jacobs, in her influential memoirist *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl Written by Herself,* emphasised the vulnerability of enslaved women to sexual harassment and rape at the hands of their masters. She claimed that slave woman "is not allowed to have any pride of character … [i]t is deemed a crime in her to wish to be virtuous" and rated this harm as far worse than the material deprivations of slaves (Jacobs 2009). She also showed by her own deeds the determination to resist the deprivation of self-esteem: "[s]he hid in a tiny, dark attic for almost seven years to avoid sexual assault, judging this fate better than slavery, even though she had never been whipped, beaten, or overworked as a slave" (ibid.).

Another authoritative black abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, agreed with Jacob's priorities. In his influential autobiography, he charged that slavery imposed on slaves ignorance and the incapacity to think for themselves. The most tremendous injury of material

deprivation and brutal physical punishment, his book conveyed to whites, "was to disable

slaves from aspiring to freedom, to the exercise of rational capacities, to any kind of

estimable activity" (ibid., p. 36).[54]

Black abolitionists realised that the core moral bias of slavery supporters was racist

contempt based on the prejudice that blacks were innately inferior, unsuitable for and not

even desiring freedom and equal dignity to whites. To resist such prejudice, blacks chose to

demonstrate both in words and deeds the capacity of blacks to wield their rights and the

supreme importance of their doing so. Jacobs "resolved never to be conquered" and stood up

to the sexual advances of her master. She managed to fight back against racial discrimination

in hotel service when she was escaping to the North by persuading the black servants to resist.

Douglass recorded in his autobiography Nelly's heroic resistance to the beatings of her

overseer, which extricated Nelly from whipping permanently. This incident encouraged

Douglass to struggle against the slave-breaker Convey. David Walker, in his *Appeal,* called

for blacks to resist slavery, while their resistance indeed struck the prejudice of whites. Slaves

demonstrated their aspiration for rights and dignity by exploiting "the legal codes of the

South to extract recognition of rights through innumerable acts of resistance on the

plantations, including, in some cases (astonishingly!), the right to kill their masters in self-

defence" (ibid., p. 38). Likewise, the steady flow of running-away slaves to the North proved

to whites the desire of blacks for freedom and their repudiation of enslavement. Fugitive

slaves, during the Civil War, joined the Army of the Union and fought bravely on the

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[54] See (Douglass 2014).

battlefield, showing that blacks were not unfit for agency and military virtues. "While their

actions did not end racism, they did force a momentous retreat of this profound moral bias.

Slavery advocates were forced to concede that the case for slavery was spurious and that

blacks were fit at least for the autonomy that the emergent sharecropping economy conceded

to them" (ibid., p. 38).

We can immediately grasp the credibility of the moral belief against slavery after

reading Anderson's case study because the genealogy reveals the information underpinning

the transition from the moral acceptance of slavery to the moral rejection to be a correction of

biases. Bias correction, according to our intuitions, contributes to credibility.

Now let me sum up what sorts of information in the historical course of American

abolition, from Anderson's case study, contributed to the credibility of the moral belief

against slavery:

*(1)   The information about the misery of the enslaved as well as moral arguments
        against the unjust institution*

White abolitionists communicated factual information about the misery of the enslaved and

moral arguments against the unjust institution. At the same time, black abolitionists also

spoke out their sufferings under slavery. Such information corrected the slaveholders'

preposterous delusions that "their slaves were happy and loyal, and would stand by them in

the event of war against the North."

*(2)   The information correcting the misperception that the morality of slavery had
        legitimacy.*

The morality of slavery was sustained by people's shared beliefs that others would follow the

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morals on the condition that they also obey, and that others also expected them to conform.

Social contentions joined by the mass public already conveyed to those, who acquiesced in

the morality of slavery, the belief that these moral norms were not social consensus, and to

the supporters of slavery that they would lose legitimacy if they continued to uphold the

morals. The shattering of the mutual expectations of conditional conformity opened up public

deliberation about how to reform the moral system.

(3)   The information that blacks had the determination and the ability to wield the same rights as whites

After the public deliberation of moral reform began, there were severe moral biases in the

way of the moral deliberation. White abolitionists mistakenly represented material

deprivations and physical punishment as the greatest suffering of slaves, due to their own

racist prejudice that blacks lacked the capacities and aspirations for freedom, respect, and

autonomy. Black abolitionists made their voices heard and their deeds observable with the

help of social contentions. They conveyed their determination to gain the same rights as

whites, their capacities to wield these rights, and their respectful personalities. The

information provided by blacks smashed, to a certain extent, the racist prejudice of whites

and hence counteracted the moral biases existing at the time. The less biased public

deliberation eventually replaced the moral norms for slavery with those against it.

As the acceptance of the morality against slavery is grounded upon such information,

it appears credible. The acceptance of MPJs, similarly, is grounded on certain information.

Anderson's case study shows us that we can assess MPJs' credibility through the information

upon which they are made or accepted. This insight may motivate us to ask two follow-up

questions: what sorts of information matter (the most); besides the content of the information, what else about the information should we highlight? Upon reflection on the two questions, I now turn to develop an analysis framework for assessing MPJs' credibility.

4.2. An Analysis Framework

Based on the two questions at the end of the last section, I set out to sketch an analysis framework for studying the credibility of MPJs.

To assess the credibility of a MPJ, first of all, we have to check whether the grounds on which it is made or endorsed are credible. As I have indicated in earlier chapters, certain mental states are involved in making a MPJ. To make a certain MPJ, say, that the abolition of slavery is a case of moral progress, one may need to be able to conceptualise black people as human beings. Furthermore, one may need certain normative beliefs, such as the one that it is wrong to harm any innocent person. Still, some factual beliefs are necessary about the severe harm imposed on black people by chattel slavery. Sometimes, some normative belief is so abstract that a certain interpretation is requisite. For example, the belief that any human being should be respected works for the MPJ, only if slavery is interpreted as an institution with systematic disrespect for blacks. Conceptual frameworks, factual and normative beliefs, modes of interpretation, and many other materials – I think "materials" is a better term than "information" here because it is a bit strained to call things such as conceptual frameworks information – are the grounds on which MPJs can be made or accepted. Therefore, we need to examine whether the underpinning materials are trustworthy. For example, to examine the recent right-wing aversion to Muslims, we may notice the influence of the highly

inflammatory style in which tabloid newspapers write about Muslims, and these newspapers'

inclination to focus on terrorist attacks, religious extremism and a small number of high-

profile Muslim "villains" (Baker 2010a). Compared to broadsheet newspapers'

comprehensive coverage in a mild style, the tabloids' selective and inflammatory reporting

tends to cast on the mind of their readers the prejudice that Muslims are mostly fanatics. As a

result, the judgment about Muslims on the basis of the information provided by the tabloids is

not credible.

Secondly, how the materials underpinning MPJs get spread and acquired also matters.

For example, factual beliefs acquired through brainwashing, *ceteris paribus*, go against the

credibility of the resultant MPJ. By contrast, opinions achieved as a result of rational

argumentation are conducive to credibility.[55]

Lastly, we may also pay attention to why certain materials are circulated or accepted.

Is the circulation or acceptance, we may ask, caused by truth-seeking desires, political

pressures, colonisation, or something else? The reasons underlying the circulation or

endorsement of certain materials may also be relevant for an evaluation of their credibility

because some materials are so ambiguous that no verdict of credibility is available by looking

at them alone. For example, it is hard to assess the credibility of a conceptual framework, in

which naturalised citizens are categorised into outgroup members, unless we ascertain the

underlying reasons for the responsible parties to circulate it: does it, say, seek market shares

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[55] I will return to the idea of rational argumentation in 8.1.

through stirring the already existing hostilities between citizens of different backgrounds?[56]

So far, I have introduced an analysis framework with a focus on materials underlying the acceptance of a MPJ, through which its credibility can be studied. However, some may doubt that the analysis framework underestimates the power of reason because it pays so much attention to various materials as if they are able to determine our moral attitudes all by themselves. The objectors claim that we are able to recognise through reasoning that a moral change is morally progressive, as the participants in the transformation were able to bring about moral progress by virtue of reason (Singer 2011). From my viewpoint, although reasoning is conducive to making correct MPJs by exposing latent inconsistencies between our various attitudes and modifying some subset of them to achieve consistency or even coherence among them (cf. Campbell and Kumar 2012, 2013), the functioning of reasoning itself depends on inputs from other sources, such as someone's own senses and testimony. Moreover, the functioning of reason presupposes a conceptual framework through which the reasoner represents in mind what is there in the world. However, the grasp of concepts, viz., of how to put things into different categories owes much to socialisation. Finally, reasoning seeks both consistency between beliefs and between beliefs and affective attitudes, including emotions, desires, feelings, etc. The acquirement of affective attitudes is primarily not the function of reason. The materials my analysis framework emphasises are exactly the desiderata for reasoning to reach a MPJ.

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[56] For the left-wing, to instigate antagonism between different groups of citizens is already a sign of unreliability. However, to strike a wider agreement on unreliability among audience with different affiliations, even with those in the right, a genealogy needs to unravel the underlying cause of advertising the discriminatory conceptual framework.

The insight from Anderson's case study has helped me develop an analysis framework in this section. Still, her case study can also serve as an example of the limitations inherent in my proposed method, which I now turn to discuss.

4.3. Limitations of the Method

It is premier for a researcher, who follows a certain method, to understand the restrictions of that method, lest he draws overambitious conclusions by it. In the last section, I introduced Anderson's genealogical account of American abolition, which enables me to demonstrate my proposed method's limitations by a concrete example.

Recall, first, that the method takes a case study approach. Anderson's case study above shows how the members of a particular moral community, the Antebellum U.S., eventually came to accept the moral norms against slavery. The MPJ, whose credibility the account vindicates, was the judgment that it is morally progressive to abolish slavery. It is not legitimate for us to extrapolate the credibility conclusion to other MPJs without further investigation, for that the MPJ at issue here is credible does not imply the credibility of the judgment, say, that the expansion of women's rights is a case of moral progress.

Secondly, a single case study is incompatible with quantitative research in that quantitative research presupposes a sufficient number of samples that are expected to exhibit a common causal pattern.[57] Through quantitative research, we are able to filter out causal hypotheses that are intuitively plausible but statistically insignificant. On the contrary, a

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[57] To be rigorous, I should talk of a correlation pattern instead of a causal pattern. However, to make my expressions more understandable, "causal" seems to be a better word.

single case study only allows us to formulate conclusions on the basis of the exhaustive details in a specific case, conclusions that are untested – sometimes even untestable – causal hypotheses in the eyes of quantitative researchers.. For instance, how are we supposed to test quantitatively whether black abolitionists' deeds reduced whites' prejudice? Therefore, the credibility we attribute to a MPJ upon its genealogy is based on, at best, a fine-grained but quantitatively untested hypothesis.

Thirdly, a genealogy constructed under my method necessarily contains built-in assumptions that are themselves fallible. Built-in assumptions are "statements about the nature of things that we cannot observe or do not empirically evaluate" in a theory (Neuman 2011, p. 61). An empirical study cannot start from scratch but has to rely on some premises or beliefs for which it cannot or has no space to argue. For example, microeconomic models make no sense, absent the assumption that marketing agents are rational (Mankiw 2014). However, that a theory must rely on some untested assumptions does not imply that the latter are infallible. Despite the great explanatory power of microeconomic models, the rationality assumption is severely challenged because people do not merely consider monetary gains and costs in their marketing activities.

Built-in assumptions are crucial to a genealogy of MPJs from two different aspects. Firstly, an assumption may be vital with regard to the causal explanation the study purports to establish. For example, when Anderson explains the transformation of moral beliefs regarding slavery through black abolitionists' deeds and words, she has to assume that the formation of moral beliefs is sensitive to the effect of new information. Secondly, an

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assumption may be crucial to the credibility the study purports to attribute to a certain MPJ.

Take Anderson's study as an example again. Even if the information provided by black

abolitionists to whites about their capacities and desires for freedom and recognition from

others did, in effect, transform the latter's moral beliefs, it did not imply that the

transformation is a case of improvement unless she also assumes that the correction of

prejudice – in this case, the whites' conception of blacks as unsuitable for and not desiring

autonomy and respect – is able to improve the quality of moral reasoning – surely, it is a

fairly secure assumption. That we can intuitively uptake the credibility of the MPJ, made by

those who lived slightly after the Civil War, that the abolition of slavery was a case of moral

progress through Anderson's genealogy, in fact, depends much on the fact that we also share

this assumption of hers.

Like Anderson's case study, a genealogy of a certain MPJ necessarily contains fallible

assumptions unexamined by itself. Nonetheless, the assumptions are crucial to the

conclusions of the study. Therefore, the credibility it attributes to the MPJ is merely tentative.

Fourthly, a genealogy offers only a partial explanation of a MPJ. A social

phenomenon, such as the change of moral norms, seldom results from a single factor. In

general, there is a variety of contributing factors, but the prospect is dim of giving a

comprehensive account of how all of them interact to usher in a moral change, not to mention

the existence of unnoticed variables that remain to be discovered by later researchers.

Therefore, at best, a genealogy of a MPJ takes up only some of the many plausible

explanations. For example, Americans in the 1860s might have accepted new norms against

slavery partly on economic grounds, no matter whether Anderson's account is right that they also accepted the norms by correcting moral biases.

Since a genealogy of a specific MPJ is no more than a partial explanation, a vindicatory genealogy, at best, lends credence to the MPJ. It cannot prove once and for all that the MPJ is credible because other plausible explanations may undermine its credibility. For example, if the capitalists in the North had also accepted moral norms against slavery in part for blacks to provide cheap wage slaves, then their MPJ would have seemed to us spurious. Provided that the multiple explanations of the same MPJ have opposite impacts on its credibility, it depends on our balancing to decide its overall reliability. By implication, a vindicatory genealogy, given the possibility that other explanations may drag our conclusion to the opposite side, only reveals a MPJ as *pro tanto* credible.

Empirical explanations are always contestable, which is my proposed method's fifth and most important limitation. On the one hand, the evidence invoked to support an explanation is subject to objective reinspection. Where does the evidence come? Is it drawn from a reliable source? Has the author used the evidence in a truthful way, or has he distorted what is said in the original source? Is there any conflicting evidence from other authoritative sources? Take Anderson's genealogy as an example. People are able to reinspect the veracity of the historical data she cites in a more or less objective way because there is a significant degree of consensus between different inspectors on what sources are authoritative and what counts as a distortion of historical data.[58]

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[58] I think that this is the fundamental difference between empirical studies and philosophy. Philosophy relies heavily on

On the other hand, the relationship between the independent and dependent variables in an empirical genealogy is always liable to empirical re-examination for avoiding spurious correlation and insufficiency of evidence. Let me elaborate on this point through Anderson's genealogy. The moral norms against slavery, she argues, partly resulted from the fact that black abolitionists corrected the moral biases of whites through their deeds and words. Then, we may read through relevant historical data to double check whether whites had indeed corrected their biases, such as whether the upholders of slavery who thought of blacks as not suitable for freedom had modified the belief. If so, we need to check whether they self-proclaimed the effect of black abolitionists' endeavour on the bias correction, and whether they actually accepted anti-slavery moral norms due to less biased moral thinking or for other reasons, economic, social or whatever. Once we recognise some important evidence against Anderson's genealogy, the validity of her explanation appears dubious to us. That an empirical genealogy is sensitive to counterevidence does not mean that the explanation is necessarily untenable. It implies only that we should be careful of the fallibility of the explanation, no matter to what extent it caters to our common sense.

To make a stage summary. As the method takes a case study approach, the conclusions drawn by a genealogy are not quantitively examined. Nor is the credibility it reveals to us of the MPJ in question extrapolatable to another MPJ unless we are able to identify relevant similarities between the formations of both MPJs. On the other hand,

our intuitions that vary significantly from one culture to another – even from one person to another. It seems to me that there is no non-arbitrary distinction between intuitions that count and those not. An agreement on what intuitions matter for philosophical theorising can be reached only by excluding dissenters from discussion in advance.

studying a MPJ through a genealogy necessarily takes fallible assumptions unexaminable by

empirical research or unexamined by the study itself as a starting point. Besides, the

conclusion reached by the study is often in competition with alternative but equally plausible

explanations. Taking into account all the plausible explanations may undermine the

credibility of the MPJ a genealogy purports to defend. Lastly, the explanation given by a

genealogy is always contestable because everyone shares access to relevant historical data

from which the genealogy's possible distortion, lack of evidence, or counterevidence may be

discovered. Such a genealogy, as other valid explanations in social sciences, is no more than a

(well-)confirmed hypothesis.

The limitations of the method thwart the aspiration to know for sure whether a certain

MPJ is true through a case study genealogy because the genealogy itself even falls short of

knowledge. Instead, a tenable genealogy only increases or decreases the credibility of the

MPJ at issue. And the degree of confidence in the genealogy itself decreases as we cast doubt

on its assumptions, validity, and centrality among alternative explanations.

The rationale of the method – to assess the credibility of a belief that p, we should

construct a genealogy of the belief that p, through which we are able to uptake intuitively

whether the belief that p is resulted in by appropriate facts in an appropriate way – also brings

about the limitation of relying on our intuitions. A genealogy of some MPJ can make readers

intuitively apprehend the MPJ's credibility only if the readers have already entertained some

necessary intuitions. For example, a precondition for the readers of Anderson's genealogy to

find the moral beliefs against slavery credible is that they hold the epistemic intuition that the

correction of biases is able to improve moral reasoning.

The example above shows us that readers' intuitive acceptance of some built-in assumptions – not all, because some may be examinable by further research – of a genealogy is the first kind of dependence on intuition. The second kind of dependence is that readers rely on their semantic and moral intuitions for the assessment of the grounds on which a MPJ builds. Recall that the analysis framework I propose pays attention to what materials contributed to the emergence of a certain MPJ. If the materials at issue are factual information, of course, readers are, to a large extent, able to assess its veracity from a historical vantage point. However, the materials may, instead, be a conceptual framework or moral beliefs. For assessing materials of these sorts, it seems that readers eventually have to count on their intuitions.

The second sort of dependence seems to be a paradox: my proposed method purports to examine the most important internalised moral norms – MPJs – but it depends on examiners' moral intuitions. There is no reason not to also regard these moral intuitions as internalised moral norms, given the naturalistic view held by my method. In my opinion, we cannot but put a belief into a network constituted by other beliefs to assess its credibility. To assess the credibility of a certain MPJ, then, a necessary step is to put them into a belief network, in which our moral intuitions play an important part. However, this does not entail that we must take for granted the moral intuitions of our own, against which a MPJ IS examined. On the contrary, those moral intuitions are no more than temporarily fixed points, the credibility of which is subject to a further investigation once we throw doubt upon them. I

will return to the topic of moral intuitions in the next section.

The third sort of intuition dependence shows up when readers come to judge whether the way in which some materials are promulgated and accepted is appropriate. There are some ways of distributing materials that we see in virtue of our past experience as apparently appropriate or inappropriate. For example, when we reflect on the beliefs we achieved in the past due to rational discourse, we will see the materials provided through rational argumentation as credible, *ceteris paribus*. However, some ways of circulating materials are more subtle that we can only assess their appropriateness against our epistemological intuitions. For instance, advertising tends to exploit human beings' ability to associate in a way such that it hints at the attractiveness of some products without exaggerated boasts. If I watch an advertisement in which the sunshine burns the tropical landscape in Hawaii and come up with the idea that it is good to drink a bottle of the advertised beer, do I receive the belief in an appropriate way? In this case, epistemological intuitions at least partly shape my judgment of appropriateness.

Whether a genealogy of a specific MPJ done in virtue of my proposed method is able to have readers intuitively uptake the credibility of the MPJ depends much on the intuitions the readers already have. The intuitions determine whether they accept some built-in assumptions of the genealogy and help them assess the credibility of the materials distributed and the appropriateness of the ways of distribution. The reliance on intuitions is the last limitation of my proposed method.

Nonetheless, this limitation is shared by any genealogy that intends to vindicate or

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undermine the credibility of certain beliefs because the rationale behind any such genealogy

is the same – to tell a story through which readers are enabled to uptake intuitively their

credibility or incredibility. For example, only if we embrace the intuitively appealing premise

that it is nearly impossible for our moral sensibilities that evolved simply for the sake of

reproductive success to cognise mind-independent moral facts, can Sharon Street's debunking

account of moral beliefs reduce our confidence in robust moral realism (Street 2006).

Despite my proposed method being better than a grand narrative genealogy at

assessing the credibility of MPJs, it still has certain limitations. With these limitations in mind,

a researcher, who follows the method, should keep the virtue of modesty in the course of

study. In the next section, I will illustrate how researchers should study MPJs in a modest way.

4.4. A Modest Enterprise

Since the method of studying MPJs through a case study genealogy has the limitations

revealed above, what should a researcher do when she follows its guidance?

Given that a case study genealogy only studies a specific MPJ made in particular

historical circumstances, the researcher should be careful of extrapolating the credibility

attributed to the MPJ by the genealogy to other MPJs. A case study genealogy concludes in,

at best, fine-grained but quantitatively unexamined hypotheses, so the researcher should

refrain from claiming anything more than tenability for her conclusions.

The researcher should also be aware that the assumptions her genealogy relies on are

fallible, and the explanation she offers is both partial and always contestable. In virtue of the

awareness, she should be open-minded in the sense that she regards what she is offering as

merely a small step in the long journey of human beings making sense of ourselves and of

our activities.[59] She should be prepared to have her tentative explanation replaced or

overridden by future explanations, ones with more exhaustive details, more solid assumptions,

previously unnoticed evidence, or a more comprehensive perspective.

To sum up what has been said above, the researcher ought to realise that the

genealogy in her hands does nothing more than lend some credence to a particular MPJ. The

modesty is in sharp contrast to the overambition to debunk morality as a whole or to justify a

bunch of moral norms on the basis of at best tentative genealogies.[60] The method encourages

the researcher to avoid building a castle in the air on the premises that are themselves

controversial. On the contrary, it seeks to merely deepen our understanding of our current

internalised moral norms, our MPJs based on them, and their credibility. A genealogy in this

spirit may shed some positive light on a related set of internalised moral norms, but it

depends on readers themselves to attribute credibility to the morals in question – the

researcher herself should recognise the possibility that later and better explanations may have

the readers withdraw their attribution. A genealogy may, instead, cast doubts on some

internalised moral norms. Nonetheless, it does not end up as scepticism because of the

caution that future explanations may lift our confidence in the moral norms.

The researcher also needs to tackle the limitation that a genealogy conducted in terms

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[59] I follow Bernard Williams in taking humanities at a whole, philosophy in particular, as an enterprise of human self-understanding. See (Williams 2000b).

[60] For such overambitious genealogies, one may refer to (Casebeer 2003; Joyce 2000, 2007; Richards 1986, 1989; Rottschaefer and Martinsen 1991; Rottschaefer and Martinsen 1990; Rottschaefer and Andrew 1998; Ruse 1986; Spencer 1893; Street 2006, 2008; Woolcock 2000).

of my proposed method depends on readers' intuitions for the assessment of its targeted

MPJ's credibility. An intuitively appealing belief is not necessarily true. For instance, it was

"common sense" before Galileo's rumoured experiment in the Leaning Tower of Pisa that a

heavier object would have fallen faster than a less heavy one if there had been no air friction.

Therefore, the researcher should be mindful that the intuitions based on which readers come

to read off the credibility of a certain MPJ from his genealogy may turn out to be false.

Some intuitively convincing ideas are, in fact, empirically testable. For example, the

assumption that the formation of moral beliefs is sensitive to the influence of new

information is apparently a testable hypothesis in psychology. Psychologists can design an

experiment to investigate whether experimental subjects adjust their moral judgments by

virtue of new information. With regard to empirically testable intuitions, the researcher

should resort to sciences for verification. For sure, modern scientific research is a coordinated

enterprise that requires specialised knowledge and skills. Hence, the examination of these

intuitions is often beyond the researcher's own capacity. But at least she should acknowledge

the fallibility of the background intuitions, and advert to the forefront of scientific

proceedings with an eye to the still untested intuitions.

Some intuitions, however, are not empirically testable. The moral intuitions, in virtue

of which the readers of a genealogy assess the materials underpinning a MPJ, comprise a

special category of empirically untestable intuitions. They are special, for my proposed

method aims at examining moral progress judgment but ironically relies on examiners' moral

intuitions. As I have claimed in the first chapter, the moral beliefs based on which people

form a certain MPJ are reflections of the moral norms in their moral community.[61] For

example, the residents in the Antebellum U.S. might have judged the abolition of slavery as

morally progressive, partly because of the shared moral norms that accorded freedom and

respect to every suitable individual. If what I said is correct, there seems no reason to think of

the moral intuitions held by the readers of a genealogy as something in nature different from

internalised moral norms. Then, it appears to flatter readers that my method relies on the

moral norms of their time and culture for the assessment of the moral norms of others. Since

the readers of a genealogy conducted in light of the method tend to be contemporary liberals,

the method sounds like a self-compliment of liberal moral views – the very thing to evaluate

which I put forward the research method.

The resolution to this seeming complacency is for the researcher to see any single job

done in accordance with the method as merely a small step along the endless journey of re-

examining our incorrigibly internalised moral norms, viz., moral intuitions. It is unavoidable

that a genealogy has to appeal to readers' moral intuitions for them to judge whether a certain

MPJ is credible or incredible. However, the need to rely on some moral intuitions does not

entail that they are unimpeachable. The researcher should stick to the modest standpoint that

the moral intuitions are no more than temporarily fixed points whose credibility is also in

need of reassessment.

Imagine that we are sailing on a boundless ocean by Neurath's boat (Neurath 1973;

Quine 2013). The ship is made up of timbers gathered from distinct habitats in different

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[61] Please refer back to the second section of the first chapter.

periods. To sail safely, we have to check whether the timbers are solid enough and replace those that are not. However, it is not possible for us to dismantle the whole ship and check all the timbers at once because the timbers, solid or not, provide us with a somehow waterproof stance on the ominous ocean. When we dismantle any timber for a safety inspection, the remaining ones afford us footholds in which the checking is able to be carried out. Thereby, we inspect the timbers one by one, until we ensure that every single one is trustworthy. Analogously, when we attempt to re-evaluate a single piece of internalised moral norms, other moral intuitions provide us with footholds in which the job gets to be done.[62]

We have to carefully check the timbers during our sailing on a surfy ocean because we put our lives as the stakes on the voyage. Likewise, the stakes we have on the ever-lasting project of moral theorising are also enormous in that the economic, political, and social arrangements – that is, our well-being – largely depend on the outcome of moral discourse. However, the dominant methods of contemporary moral theorising rely heavily on moral intuitions, as the ship by which we survive on the ocean builds on the timbers. On the one hand, the method of the ascent to the *a priori*, advocated mainly by G. A. Cohen, advises us to begin with an intuitively appealing moral principle that depends on a fact (Cohen 2003). Then, we ask what makes the fact in question morally relevant, by which we derive a moral principle that does not depend on that fact. Through the iteration of the process of abstraction from facts, we eventually ascend to a fundamental moral principle that is true regardless of any fact.

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[62] For a similar thought, see (Singer 2011) pp. 69-70.

On the other hand, the most popular method of moral theorising, reflective equilibrium, asks us to adjust intuitively appealing moral principles and intuitions about particular cases in light of each other. We modify the general against the particular, and vice versa until the set of moral principles we achieve and the moral judgments we make in particular cases are in a coherent state (Rawls 1999).

The dominant methods intend ambitiously to derive some moral principles true in all possible worlds from our moral intuitions, as we intend to survive the fury of the ocean, in the imagined case, on the basis of the timbers constitutive of a ship. Since the stakes on moral theorising are enormous, we have no reason not to carefully re-evaluate the moral intuitions underlying its contemporary methodology.

Such being the case, the researcher, who studies MPJs in virtue of the proposed method, should realise that choosing MPJs as the subject matter is simply an expediency. The internalised moral norms underlying our MPJs, such as those against the ownership of human beings, against sexism, and for the freedom of sexual orientations, tend to influence our social life greatly. Hence, MPJs are natural candidates in our first attempt to reinspect the credibility of internalised moral norms. Besides, a case study genealogy of a certain internalised moral norm requires the existence of sufficient historical data on the basis of which a meticulous story can be told. Otherwise, how are readers supposed to uptake the credibility of the moral through it? Compared to many moral intuitions whose origins have been forgotten in the course of history, the emergence of the moral norms underlying MPJs is often well-recorded. The records afford the data needed for informative narratives by virtue

of which we may get to apprehend the morals' credibility.

For the sake of expediency, the researcher is advised to take MPJs as the objects of study. However, it does not mean that other moral intuitions are less important. The moral norm that we should not do harm to an innocent individual, and the more abstract one that every human being deserves equal respect, to just list two significant examples, even underpin the whole project of contemporary morality. Although the histories of how these moral norms came into being are opaque to us to the extent that my proposed method fails to apply, the toolkit of natural as well as social sciences may still have something to offer that helps us outline their "descent with modifications" (Buchanan 2020). The turn to evolutionary psychology in the past two decades, I think, instantiates such a possibility. We may not be able to evaluate the credibility of these moral norms through the outlines of their evolutions in the way we assess the credibility of a MPJ in virtue of a genealogy following my proposed method. Nonetheless, the sketches can still improve the self-understanding of the moral intuitions we happen to have. The researcher, all in all, ought to regard the method as a continuation of the modest enterprise it aspires to undertake of deepening our understanding of internalised moral norms.

In conclusion, it is sensible for the researcher to maintain the virtue of modesty in the face of the method's innate limitations. On the one hand, she should keep in mind that a genealogy under the guidance of the method provides no knowledge with certainty. Such a genealogy only tentatively increases or decreases the credibility of a particular MPJ. On the other hand, she is supposed to treat the method as simply one of the available instruments in

the modest project of understanding the morals engraved deeply on our minds. Many other disciplines in natural and social sciences may also take part in the moral self-understanding of human beings, regarding which the method is only suitable for a small but significant segment – those influential morals whose traces have sufficient historical records.

PART TWO

Chapter V: Taking Stocks

So far, the method I recommend for studying moral progress judgements has been introduced and justified, which is the theme of Part I. At the beginning of Part II, where I discuss the concrete objects that should be studied when we assess the credibility of MPJs, I had better retrospect the lengthy Part I compactly for the connection between the two parts to become clear. I will also conclude this chapter with a brief introduction to the bulk of Part II.

In contemporary liberal culture, many moral changes, such as the abolition of slavery, the equalisation of women, the recognition of same-sex love, and the spread of democracy, are championed as paradigmatic cases of moral progress. Steeped in such a culture, many philosophers try to account for moral progress selectively based on our contemporary liberal judgements about moral progress. They try to understand the nature of moral progress, analyse how it happens, give a formula for its prediction, or even propose a method for moral inquiry to make it more systematic and sure-footed. However, our MPJs are far from uncontroversial. Conflicting MPJs were and are held by both our ancestors and contemporaries in other cultures. The controversial status of our MPJs gives us some reason to double-check their credibility lest we build our theory of moral progress on moonshine. Therefore, throughout this book, I aim to propose a method for examining the credibility of MPJs.

In Chapter I, I attempted to introduce some significant concepts for readers to be on the same page as me when the concepts appear in later chapters. (1.1.) Moral progress, according to my analysis, refers to something's changing for the better from a moral point of

view that involves one or some typical moral properties – such as rightness,[63] justice, and equality, in one way or another. To have a full-fledged account of moral progress, nevertheless, one still needs to come up with the standard for gauging improvement from a moral view. A substantial conception provides some substantial moral principles for evaluating moral improvement. On the contrary, a procedural conception offers a set of procedures for determining whether a moral change is progressive.

(1.2.) Then, our attention was drawn to judgements about moral progress. A MPJ is a statement to the effect that *x* is a case of moral progress. Through Biden's and Trump's inaugural speeches, I revealed three indexes that a statement is probably a MPJ: 1) it is against some evaluative standard that the statement at issue is made; 2) it presupposes that some state of affairs has changed in the world; 3) it involves, or at least implies, a sign of getting better. As I intend to propose a method for studying MPJs, the indexes provide us with a shortcut for locating the research objects.

Section 1.3. explains what mental states are involved in accepting a MPJ: factual as well as normative beliefs. By studying the credibility of these beliefs underlying a MPJ, we can evaluate its credibility. We tend to make MPJs based on our internalised moral norms, and the MPJs, in turn, deepen our faith in those norms. Internalised moral norms and MPJs about them co-build a reinforcing spiral that makes them influential in our moral reasoning and essential social and political arrangements. Therefore, it is of most importance to study the credibility of MPJs about moral norms.

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[63] Rightness is not a property that can vary in degree. But when a state of affairs changes from wrong to right, we would certainly call the transition moral progress.

Chapter II illustrated further the reasons for examining the credibility of our MPJs. As said above, each case of moral progress well-recognised by contemporary liberals is controversial, but influential philosophers tend to base their account of moral progress selectively on our liberal MPJs, which might go awry from the very beginning. In 2.1., I argue that our liberal MPJs are *pro tanto* unjustified. I adopt a pragmatic encroachment principle, according to which the practical stakes a belief involves impact the justificatory threshold for holding it. As the practical significance of holding liberal MPJs is enormous, we should be highly confident in them for them to be justified. However, I argue, we should not be highly confident in liberal MPJs because of the widespread and reasonable disagreement over them. There are two potential arguments that the disagreement over liberal MPJs is unreasonable. One argument holds that liberal MPJs can be vindicated by the best moral theory. In response, I argue that whether the candidates of the best moral theory can be interpreted in favour of liberal MPJs depends on the interpreters' conceptual frameworks and beliefs. However, it is obscure whose, liberals' or non-liberals' conceptual frameworks and beliefs are more credible. Thus, it simply begs the question to claim that the best moral theory can vindicate liberal MPJs. The other argument for discounting the disagreement over liberal MPJs holds that non-liberals are mostly people with vested interests and their moral reasoning about moral progress tends to be distorted by their interests. Nonetheless, I argue, this argument is empirically untenable: many non-liberals do not benefit from enforcing non-liberal MPJs. And it is unjustified to infer that a subject distorts his reasoning based solely on the fact that he can benefit from doing so. More evidence is necessary.

Liberal MPJs are *pro tanto* unjustified. So are selective adoption of these MPJs in the theory of moral progress. Moral reasoning cannot help us restore the propriety of selective adoption of liberal MPJs, because moral reasoning itself depends on conceptual frameworks and beliefs, which are exactly matters in widespread and reasonable dispute. Therefore, I argue in 2.2. that philosophers should offer genealogies of how our MPJs and our opponents' are formed respectively. Investigating their genealogical processes help us assess MPJs' credibility. And the comparison between the genealogical processes, I argue, will boost our confidence in liberal MPJs, hence rendering selective adoption in the theory of moral progress justified.

The method I propose for examining the credibility of MPJs takes a case study approach. However, some philosophers prefer to vindicate the credibility of our MPJs through grand narrative genealogies. In Chapter III, I critique the grand narrative approach used by philosophers like Peter Railton, Michael Huemer, and Nicholas Smyth. (3.1.) I first introduce three criteria a genealogy has to meet to be adequate for evaluating MPJs' credibility – *credibility unambiguousness*, *meticulousness*, and *evidentiarily rigorous*. (3.2.) Then, I argue that Railton's genealogy lacks specificity regarding the relatum of the causal story he presents, Huemer's fails to withstand the scrutiny of historical evidence, and Smyth's ascribes no unambiguous value to the credibility of the moral progress judgments it explains. (3.3.) These failures, I argue, stem from the grand narratives' neglect of the particularities in each case of moral belief emergence. This disregard for details renders grand narratives generally inadequate for credibility evaluation. Instead, I propose a case study approach that

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takes into account four types of particulars in each case. I argue that this approach is more

methodologically adequate in evaluating the credibility of moral progress judgments since

these case-specific details are essential in determining the credibility of a moral belief.

Given that I had sketched a research method, I continued to introduce a concrete

analysis framework that focuses on the materials, such as conceptual framework and factual

and normative beliefs underlying the making or acceptance of MPJs in Chapter IV. To give

my research method a concrete example, I introduced Elizabeth Anderson's prominent case

study of the American abolition movement in 4.1. (4.2.) From her insights, I argued that a

genealogy of a MPJ should pay attention to the conceptual framework, factual and normative

beliefs, modes of interpretation, and many other materials underneath the MPJ. It should also

investigate how and why the materials underpinning the MPJ get spread and acquired.

(4.3.) Anderson's case study also exemplifies the limitations of a case study genealogy.

Firstly, the credibility of a specific MPJ established by it is not extrapolatable to other MPJs.

Moreover, a single case study does not allow quantitative re-examination. Hence the

credibility we attribute to a specific category of MPJs based on a case study genealogy is just

a quantitatively untested hypothesis. Thirdly, a genealogy contains, by necessity, fallible

built-in assumptions that are unexamined by the genealogy itself. Thus, the credibility it

attributes to a MPJ is, at best, tentative. Furthermore, a genealogy of a MPJ is just a partial

explanation: there are many other contributing factors it cannot touch upon. Hence, it cannot

prove (but just increase our confidence) that the MPJ is credible, for other plausible

explanations might undermine its credibility. In addition, evidence-based explanations are

always susceptible to contest on the basis of empirical evidence. As with other valid explanations in social sciences, a case study genealogy is merely a confirmed hypothesis. Finally, the research method is haunted by the dependence on the epistemological and moral intuitions the readers currently hold for assessing MPJs' credibility.

Since my proposed method has the limitations mentioned above, in 4.4, I give some advice to those who are to follow the method. Special emphasis is given to the method's reliance on moral intuitions, for the method is supposed to examine MPJs that are made based on internalised moral norms but, in the end, relies ironically on other internalised moral norms, viz., moral intuitions, for credibility evaluation. I propose that to solve this issue, we should evaluate each internalised moral norm, including MPJs, one at a time, using other internalised moral norms as temporarily fixed points. We can then re-evaluate them in a sequence later on. In short, researchers should see any individual genealogy done by the method as merely a small step along the endless journey of re-examining and understanding our internalised moral norms, our contingent morality.

Part One of this book, as we see from the summary above, depicts and defends a general method for assessing MPJs' credibility and a recommended analysis framework. To study the credibility of a certain moral progress judgment, I propose, we should develop a genealogy with a focus on the materials underlying the making or acceptance of MPJ. Nonetheless, I have no intention or specialist training to develop such a genealogy by myself. What Max Weber said in this *Science as a Vocation*, in my view, applies to every academic division in general:

At the present time, the inward situation regarding the practice of [scholarship] as a vocation is determined by the fact that [scholarship] has entered a phase of specialisation that has never been known before, and this will not change for the indefinite future … the situation is that the individual can only really achieve complete success in the sphere of [scholarship] under conditions of the most rigorous specialisation. Whenever we do work that crosses over into neighbouring field (and we often do such work— sociologists, for example, do it constantly), we are painfully aware that at best we are introducing experts in the field to useful problem areas that they might easily have overlooked, and are resigned to the fact that our own work must inevitably remain imperfect in the extreme (Weber 2008, pp. 30-1, I replace "science" with "scholarship" inside the square brackets).

As a philosophy student, I have been painfully aware that I can, at best, introduce experts, that is, historians, to the important problem of writing the history of our current MPJs. My familiarity with MPJs, however, prompts me to sketch the types of materials to which historians may pay attention for the genealogy they write about a MPJ to be useful in readers' evaluation of the MPJ's credibility. There are various kinds of materials underlying the making or acceptance of a MPJ that are relevant to the assessment of its credibility. However, the limited space in my dissertation allows me to introduce but only two most significant types of materials that underlie endorsing a MPJ: conceptual frameworks and narratives.

Besides a demonstration of what the two kinds of materials are, I should also make clear the following points: *firstly, conceptual frameworks and narratives can really make a difference to our moral perspectives; secondly, information sources tend to spread these types of materials so as to affect our moral views.* The significance of the first point is obvious – if conceptual frameworks or narratives make no difference to our moral judgements, it makes no sense for historians to record the genesis of a MPJ by focusing on them. The second point is also crucial, as long as we accept the reasonable assumption that no one can change their

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moral view all by themselves. A naturalistic observation is that the change of moral outlooks as well as the genesis of a MPJ is only possible through the uptake of information from various sources. If there is no tendency for information sources to circulate certain materials, looking for such materials in accounting for a MPJ is probably heading toward a sterile direction, no matter how highly they are relevant to our moral viewpoints once adopted.

To shore up the claim that information sources tend to circulate conceptual frameworks and narratives to affect people's moral outlooks is to occupy my attention in Part Two. The way I will implement this task is to use vivid real-life examples and historical records to illustrate the two points italicised in the last paragraph – which is enough for my purpose – as with other philosophers employing counterfactual examples to support their arguments. Nevertheless, the two points are empirical hypotheses, which allow in-depth exploration by empirical disciplines. I will respect the distinction between philosophy and social sciences, leaving empirical researchers to do more important work.

The ways in which information sources circulate information also matter. Some modes of communication that an information source might employ to persuade its followers of certain information are more trustworthy than others. Rational argumentation, for instance, is far more conducive to the reliability of a piece of information than brainwashing, all other things being equal. Therefore, it is worthwhile to investigate the modes of persuasion an information source appeals to for information circulation, especially when the credibility of the information *per se* is ambiguous. Part Two, thus, will also contain a chapter that attempts to turn historians' eyes to three usual modes of persuasive communication that information

sources might employ. Since the modes of communication through which some information is circulated are auxiliary for evaluating the information's reliability, I will also discuss their respective relations to the information's reliability.

Part Two consists of four chapters. In chapter VI and Chapter VII, I will discuss, respectively, conceptual frameworks and narratives framed from a certain perspective. Next, I will turn to different modes of persuasion in Chapter VIII. Ultimately, I will conclude this dissertation with some discursive thoughts on the development of a scientific understanding of moralities and its implications for moral progress.

Chapter VI: Conceptual Frameworks

From early on in life, we start to learn how to distinguish one thing from another under our kins' instructions. They teach us which things are eatable and which are not. Also, we are told that some things are toys we are allowed to play with, while others are so valuable that we are prohibited from touching them. With regard to morality, although it is said that babies as young as six months can distinguish between good and bad people due to their innate moral sense (Bloom 2013), at least we learn from parents to use the word 'good' and 'evil' to denote the two categories and the most basic action types with ethical implications.

Then, we go to schools where teachers replace parents as the primary instructors of our conceptual frameworks. In the beginning, we learn simple concepts, such as those representing the number categories from one to ten. As we move to higher grades, categories of physics, chemistry, biology and the like come into our mind through education. In the process of learning concepts of numbers and natural sciences alike, we do not just grasp the names or words attached to each category. Instead, we are expected to comprehend the properties of the members of those categories, which are learned through propositions made up of concepts. For example, we are encouraged to remember that the net force F_{net} acting on an object equals the mass m of that object multiplied by its acceleration. Likewise, we comprehend water = H_2O in chemistry class. In other words, we seldom, if any, learn and possess a single concept but the role of that concept in a knowledge network consisting of many other concepts, namely, in a conceptual framework (in this chapter, I use the term

"knowledge" not in a standard philosophical way: the term in my hand does not refer to the

mental states that are necessarily true and justified. Nor does it necessarily pick up explicit

propositional states. Instead, I use the term as psychologists do, referring to any mental states

that can take part in cognitive processes).[64]

Schooling is also an important period of moral socialisation. In this period, our moral

conceptions are influenced by teachers and peers (Brody and Shaffer 1982). We learn from

others' explicit directives, facial expressions, bodily movements and so on to connect

ordinary categories, such as wiping one's nose with bare hands, lying and stealing, to

normative categories – disgustingness, badness, unjustness, etc. Others' emotions and

behaviours toward different moral categories also provide us with guides on how to respond

to various moral situations.

When we are growing up, other sources may also shape our conceptual frameworks.

Some of us may go to a conservative Catholic church, where priests preach that marriage is a

union between couples that belong to the opposite sexes, while homosexual intercourse is a

kind of blasphemy. Some of us may attend political gatherings in which opinion leaders

instigate disadvantaged whites to see economic globalisation and immigration as new sorts of

exploitation. Once inculcated into the attendees' minds, the right-wing way of

conceptualisation may lead to their resentment of the establishment and incite radical protests.

Furthermore, some may acquire or modify their conceptual networks by consuming some

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[64] I follow Edouard Machery in using the term "knowledge" in a psychological way, because this chapter aims at an empirical analysis of how concepts or conceptual frameworks influence our normative judgements, instead of explaining the possession conditions of concepts, a standard philosophical topic. See (Machery 2009)p. 8. For overviews of the study of concept in philosophy, see (Laurence and Margolis 1999; Margolis and Laurence 2004; Peacocke 2004).

media. For example, one may listen to *Rush Limbaugh*, where the host classifies Democrats as cultural elites – a name that easily arouses the hatred of Christian conservatives (Jamieson and Cappella 2008).

The paragraphs above are meant to expose the familiar but often neglected phenomena that multifarious sources in our surroundings throughout our life attempt to build, shape and transform the way in which we represent our experience. We learn from them how to classify the totality of experience into different categories of beings, connect one category with another, and make proper responses to them, moral responses included.

As I have claimed in the last chapter, the first two chapters of Part Two are devoted to introducing those interested in writing a genealogy of MPJs to two sorts of materials that significantly affect the MPJs' credibility. For this purpose, I should also defend the claims that these materials, firstly, indeed have a great impact on our moral perspectives, and secondly, some information sources really take pain to promulgate these materials for affecting our normative judgments. This chapter is specific to conceptual frameworks. For conceptual clarity, I will first introduce the psychological concept of a *concept* in the coming section. Then, I will resort to real-life examples to show in the following sections that conceptual frameworks have the capacity to influence people's normative outlooks and that many information sources utilise this capacity in various ways.

6.1. The Concept of Concept

I must distinguish two senses of concept in the beginning because, for many who are

familiar with the literature on concepts in philosophy, the concept of a *concept* refers to the building blocks of thoughts (Margolis and Laurence 2004, 2021, p. 190),[65] while I use this concept in the psychological sense. In this sense, "a concept of *x* is a body of knowledge about *x* that is stored in long-term memory and that is used by default in the processes underlying most, if not all, higher cognitive competences when these processes result in judgements about *x*" (Machery 2009, p. 12). Although *concept*'s philosophical sense is compatible with its psychological sense, the purpose of this chapter is to show how conceptual frameworks shape people's normative judgments. The psychological definition obviously highlights the capacities of concepts to influence our moral judgment – they are involved in all higher cognitive competences.

According to psychologists, concepts in this sense are the mental representations or default knowledge of classes of things,[66] corresponding to categories that are the classes themselves (Markman and Ross 2003; Murphy 2004, pp. 5, 593; Murphy and Medin 1985; Solomon, Medin, and Lynch 1999). As concepts are mental representations of categories, they are undoubtedly of use in our classification of experience into different kinds of beings. However, just classifying items "has no utility by itself" (Markman and Ross 2003, p. 595). It is essential to know the category membership of the items in our experience because category representations support more complex cognitive processes "about an item than could be done without knowing the category to which it belongs" (ibid.). By knowing what category an item

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[65] In philosophy of mind, having a concept of *x* is seen by many as having the capacity to have propositional attitudes about *x* as *x*. Theories of concepts in this field attempt to specify the possession conditions of a concept. For example, see (Peacocke 1992, 1996).

[66] Recall that I use the term "knowledge" in a psychological rather than a philosophical sense.

belongs to, people can quickly understand, reason about, explain, and solve problems related to it (Solomon, Medin, and Lynch 1999, p. 99). This is due to the fact that we have a network of concepts in our mind and when we know what category an item belongs to, we can use that information to make connections and infer things about the item.

> Following psychological theories, we assume that a concept, roughly speaking, is knowledge about a particular category (e.g. birds, eating, happiness). Thus knowledge about birds represents the bodies, behaviours and origins of the respective entities. Knowledge plays a central role throughout the spectrum of cognitive activities. In on-line processing of the environment, knowledge guides perception, categorization and inference. In off-line processing of non-present situations, knowledge reconstructs memories, underlies the meanings of linguistic expressions, and provides the representations manipulated in thought (Barsalou et al. 2003, p. 84).

To understand the importance of concepts, we may imagine a world without concepts as Edward Smith and Douglas Medin do (Smith and Medin 2013, p. 1). In such a world, each entity would be so unique for us that "we would be overwhelmed by the sheer diversity of what we experience and unable to remember more than a minute fraction of what we encounter." As our language had to assign any individual entity a distinct name, it would be so insurmountably complicated that thinking and communication are literally impossible. When entering a supermarket, for example, every item on sale would be totally new to us. We would not be able to think about or respond to the stuff in the way we have mastered as to the categories they belong to if we had no concepts. Furthermore, it would be impossible for us to infer an individual item's unperceived properties from its perceived ones on the basis of the general knowledge we have of its category.

In a world without concepts, making normative judgments, of course, would also be

impossible.[67] In daily life, we classify motivations, behaviours and linguistic expressions into different categories we have already grasped, such as *deliberate killing*, *stealing*, *adultery*, and things like that, and subsume them further under the special categories represented by our normative concepts. The intention to kill a person for usurping his belongings is malicious, stealing is wrong, and adultery is shameful. That is normally how we generate a normative judgment. However, the function of concepts is more diverse than this. Motivations behind actions are generally imperceptible. A person's overall personality is not detainable through the few life episodes we know about her, and the real consequences some actions might have not yet come out. For all of these, we tend to put the actions or agents into certain categories and make corresponding inferences in order to draw normative conclusions. For instance, research on stereotypes shows that people predict the behaviours and motives of a new agent they encounter based on social categories, including race and profession,[68] while such predications may well lead to discriminatory judgments. Sometimes, our normative attitude towards an agent or behaviour is so tightly tied to the category we place it onto that we are unable to change the judgment "despite more reliable information directly observed about the person" (Murphy 2004, p. 2). Most importantly, whether our concepts represent a certain being as belonging to the category of moral agents determines the sort of normative responses we take towards it. On the dark pages of human history, blacks were once conceptualised as disposable property rather than human beings, which sustained the inhumane view that blacks

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[67] In this chapter, my emphasis is on moral progress judgements, nonetheless, conceptual frameworks are also vital to the action we can perform in an ethical situation. As David Velleman (Velleman 2013) says, "Which actions we can make depends on which descriptions or concepts are available for us to enact."

[68] One may refer to (Hirschfeld 1998; Kunda 1999; Sherman et al. 1998) for examples.

did not deserve the rights and dignity whites possessed. On the contrary, more and more people see animals in the contemporary world as, to some extent, moral agents. This results in the shift of normative perspectives towards them from at best compassion to respect.

Although concepts are of great use in human life, the function of concepts is seldom, if ever, fulfilled by any single concept. To classify an item in the world into a particular category represented by a specific concept and thereby execute more complex cognitive processes about it, we generally require help from other closely-related concepts. For example, to see the creature in front of me as a bird, I should also grasp and apply the concepts of an animal, wings, feathers, and a beak. Human beings are able to cognise a diversity of stuff in the world, not merely because we are endowed with many discrete concepts but because we have acquired *a network of interrelated concepts, namely, a conceptual framework*. Except for very fundamental concepts, such as colours and shapes, it is always by our understanding of a concept's role in our conceptual framework that we know how to put it into use. A conceptual framework, or the place of a concept in such a framework, thus, is what we actually grasp or modify when learning a concept.[69]

As I have argued, a moral progress judgment is essentially a normative judgement. As the change in one's conceptual framework could shift her normative standpoint, it might drive her to see the change of the moral *status quo* as morally progressive. Take the abolition of slavery as an example. For those in whose mind slaves are inborn property, chattel slavery

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[69] Although the paragraph here easily calls forth to readers' mind inferentialism in the philosophy of language, here I am not talking about what constitute the meaning of a linguistic expression or a concept but about some empirical observations: what enables people to use a concept is their understanding of the concept's role in a conceptual framework. For inferentialism, one may see (Brandom 1994, 2001).

was no more than a "natural, necessary and inevitable status and practice" (Pleasants 2018b, p. 93), as rearing horses and cattle for agricultural use was an incontrovertibly legitimate business. However, chattel slavery would have completely lost moral legitimacy in some people's eyes had they come to perceive slaves as fellow humans. As the conceptual framework has greatly changed, the abolition of the once natural and necessary institution, namely, slavery, is seen by us and many born before us as a case of moral progress.

In summary, the conceptual framework a cognitive agent holds shapes her general judgments, including her normative judgments. Since MPJs are a particular sort of normative judgments, changes in one's conceptual framework have the potential to result in a MPJ. In the following sections, I will show through real-life examples and historical records that conceptual frameworks indeed affect normative perspectives and that some information sources do try to capitalise on followers' ways of conceptualisation.

6.2. Concepts and the Normative Perspective

As a concept *x* is the knowledge of *x* that is used by default in nearly every higher cognitive competences, such as inference and reasoning, to sincerely describe one's experience by virtue of a specific set of concepts brings certain conceptual knowledge to bear on the responses she has towards the experience. Normative stance, as one kind of reaction to a situation, is also shaped by the knowledge stored in the conceptual framework she possesses. I will demonstrate how concepts interact with people's normative perspectives in this section through two historical examples. The first shows that the coinage of new concepts helps to objectify ethically significant but elusive episodes, while the second

illustrates that framing a situation by different concepts can radically alter one's normative perspective.

6.2.1. Objectification

Not long ago, there was a time it was habitual for a wife to have unconsented sex with or to be beaten by her husband, for a female employee to experience distressing sexual advances from her male colleagues, and for a female speaker to be neglected in meetings by male participants. As the feminist Gloria Steinem says, "Now, we have terms like sexual harassment and battered women. A few years ago, they were just called life" (Steinem 1995, p. 161). Although sexism, sexual harassment, marital rage and many other wrongs done to women are still happening frequently, delightfully, they are no longer trivial everyday routines that are unexamined and hence beyond reproach. To date, they have become the objects of reflection and criticism, wrongful attitudes and acts to be rectified.

The increasing adoption of the feminist perspective partly resulted from the introduction of consciousness-raising groups into women's liberation movements in 1969 by a group called the Redstocking (Keane 2017, p. 189). The consciousness-raising sessions used the tactics and networks established previously by the civil rights movement in the 1960s, bringing young women to share their personal experiences of oppression in groups. The group provided these women with "a place where the members see their experiences mirrored in each other, where they are able to check and reaffirm their perceptions" (O'Connor 1969). Before spoken to women with similar experiences, each woman's distress was apparently disparate and trivial details of her ordinary life. She had no conceptual

resources to describe the personal sufferings in a concise way, not to mention in a way that

had ethical significance. The bitter experiences probably caused her to feel anger and

resentment. However, as sexism, sexual harassment, and the like were so habitual that they

hid in the flow of ordinary trivialities, she was unable to describe the objects of her feelings

properly. As a result, she might treat her anger as something unjustifiable as road rage and

hysteria, especially when she was reassured by people around that there was nothing to be

angry about.

> She became gradually more aware of those times when she felt depressed, or
> pressured and harried, as though her time were not her own. However, she didn't
> believe her time ought to be her own, so in addition she felt guilty … She didn't think
> she had any reason to feel this way; she never took the bad feelings as justified or
> reasonable; she didn't identify with them; they came over her and needed to be
> overcome (Scheman 1980, pp. 176-7).

She might turn the focus of blame on herself because, in her knowledge reserve, no

other agents were supposed to take responsibility for her personal feelings. For example, a

woman recounted what she felt when men in a political meeting ignored her suggestions:

> everything she had to say was stupid and trite, and furthermore because she was too
> ugly and unpopular to be noticed. She found it hard to tell her story to the group
> because she believed it reflected and revealed some horrible private personality
> characteristics—stupidity, ugliness, sickness, and dependency on other's approval
> which she interpreted as emotional flabbiness (O'Connor 1969).

The consciousness-raising groups provided the oppressed women with a

communication platform where they spoke out their individual sufferings, found common

patterns among these ostensibly idiosyncratic events, and relocated the responsibility to

blame away from themselves. When self-blame was discharged, women in the groups started

to look for what was accountable for their misery in their unexamined day-to-day lives.

> One woman alone who complains of her oppression can be told she is distorting reality. When it happens enough she learns to doubt her own observations … But when a group of women perceive again and again the same patterns of oppression derived from concrete stories of their day-to-day lives, it is impossible to sweep away their words as distortions. The first stage ends with a collective recognition that their tales of failures and feelings of inferiority are not functions of inferior people, but of some unnameable force that has acted upon them all to make them feel inadequate (O'Connor 1969).

The recognition of shared distressful experiences that were non-self-incurred misfortune urged the women to name the hitherto "unnameable force." To name the "unnameable force" – the problems kept under cover in women's day-to-day lives – was, in fact, "a radical action in itself" (Sarachild 1978), because it was "a process of rendering the habitual and taken-for-granted available for inspection and critique" (Keane 2017, p. 193). After communicative activities in consciousness-raising groups helped the oppressed women establish a shared sense of reality – made them realise their personal sufferings had various properties in common – the naming process ultimately carved out certain aspects of life experiences as distinct categories, such as *marital rape*, *sexual harassment* and *male chauvinist pigs*.[70] To pick up a category of bitter experiences, once concealed by the taken-for-granted flows of life, by a specific name objectified these experiences. In other words, these experiences, once represented by a concept, became thinkable objects.[71] To think about these objects enabled the oppressed women to explain why they had the awful feelings –

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[70] See also (Fricker 2007), where she condemns the lack of such conceptual resources as hermeneutical injustice.

[71] According to Keane, this is what Hilary Putnam called a "baptismal effect" – giving a name to something so that it can be identified. See (Putnam 1975).

anger, self-doubt, self-belittlement, and the like – hence helped them distinguish the justified feelings (e.g., anger and resentment) from those that were not (e.g., self-doubt and self-belittlement). Furthermore, the everyday habits objectified by the invented concepts were no longer able to escape close examination. Now, sexism, for example, stuck out from the background of daily triviality, lost the status of how things naturally were, and became the object of strict criticism (Pleasants 2008, 2010, 2018b). Most importantly, when a named category – a concept – flew into people's ordinary language, the concept drew the public attention to a once unnoticed but pervasive aspect of life, redescribed people's habitual experiences as something in need of inspection, and afforded the public with terse linguistic expressions to discuss and criticise those experiences. For instance, a humiliated secretary no longer had to embarrassingly and tediously recount how her boss brushed against her body. She simply needed to point out she was sexually harassed. Public discourse and criticism might expose a certain form of oppression to have so great a scope and severity that the public was moved to reflect on the social conditions which bred such an oppressive practice. As Webb Keane says,

> people living under similar material conditions will have similar subjective experiences, but they do not initially realize this. Lacking the concepts that would reveal their similarities to one another, women think that their difficulties are the result of personal failures and inadequacies. It is only once individuals compare experiences that they will discover what they have in common. Generalizing from this, they will then be able to create more abstract categories, such as patriarchy or sexism, which will enable them to connect individual sources of unhappiness to social conditions of oppression. Thus the general categories that emerge from particular experiences are brought to bear back onto experience, allowing one to see particular events as instances of general types (Keane 2017, p. 191).

Concepts are resources people can invoke to objectify otherwise indistinguishable experiences into recognisable objects for reasoning, inspection, discourse, and criticism. The change of conceptual frameworks, hence, may lead to the discovery of the ethical meaning of some aspects of life that were previously indiscernible.[72] However, sometimes an episode is given ethical weight not through the creation of a new concept but by putting it under a familiar ethical category. We may see this distinction between a professor who committed inappropriate sexual advances before the feminist movement in the 1970s and a coach who, after every game and training, brushed against his female team members before #MeToo. In the first case, the professor in question did not possess the concept of sexual harassment, not only because he never heard of the term, but also because he lacked the knowledge about sexual harassment that is used by default in the processes underlying higher cognitive competences when these processes result in judgments about sexual harassment, such as knowledge about the typical properties of this type of acts and the ethical implications. Such knowledge developed during the 1970s, to which the professor at that time lacked access. After he achieved the body of knowledge about sexual harassment during the feminist movement, he could have eventually conceptualised his past misbehaviours as sexual harassment if he had sincerely reflected. In the second case, we cannot but recognise that the team coach possessed the concept of sexual harassment, for he, like most of us today, must have the default knowledge about this type of acts. However, his problem was that he never

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[72] See (Calhoun 1989; Isaacs 1997) for similar ideas. On the contrary, Michele Moody-Adams seems to believe that any ignorance of the moral is necessarily affected. See (Moody-Adams 1994). Nigel Pleasants believes that conceptual changes are vital to moral revolutions (Pleasants 2018a).

treated touching his team members' body as an instance of sexual harassment. Instead, he sincerely believed that his act was just to comfort and encourage his worn-out players after games and training. Nonetheless, he eventually got to know the true feelings of women whose body was touched by well-intentioned men in higher power hierarchies: they did not appreciate the alleged "comfort" but felt humiliated and downtrodden! Therefore, he consulted his team members' opinions and realised they were too afraid of his authority to speak out their objection to his "consolation." Knowing this, the coach could not help connecting it with the default knowledge about sexual harassment as a category of acts. Therefore, he applied the concept he had previously acquired to this case.

The fictional cases above, I hope, have clearer the distinction between developing a new concept and using an acquired concept. For those who have an appetite for true stories, now we turn to a historical record where an existing ethical concept was brought to shape others' normative responses.

6.2.2. Invoking a familiar category

In our conceptual reserve, many concepts are saturated with ethical meaning. In daily life, we use thin ethical concepts – *good*, *bad*, *right*, and *wrong* – to make moral judgments.[73] But more often, we seek help from thick ethical concepts.[74] For example, we use *honest* to

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[73] I use italics to denote that what I talk of is a concept, rather than a category of items the concept refers to.

[74] As this chapter is not one on the nature of thick concepts, I settle with the broad characterisation of thick concepts as concepts that somehow combine evaluative and non-evaluative description (Väyrynen 2021). But the precise nature of thick ethical concepts is controversial. To know more about the debates around thick ethical concepts, one may see (Gibbard 1992; Heuer 2012; Jonathan 1995; Kyle 2020; Scanlon 2003; Williams 1995). For a critical discussion, see (Eklund 2011).

refer to someone who is prone to tell the truth, *lascivious* to those who are showing overly strong sexual desire, and *upright* to those who tend to follow his moral sense. Described by a certain term, an act may be seen as having specific moral valence. For instance, *Murder*, *stealing* and *telling a lie*, on the one hand, and *giving a hand* and *saving*, on the other, are not ethically neutral action types. Likewise, some descriptions of living creatures are ethically loaded. If someone is classified as *a human being*, an agent with normal moral sensibility immediately feels the force of what they owe to each other (Scanlon 2000). On the contrary, we tend to feel disgusted and even an impulse to get rid of someone who is perceived as *vermin*. When a new item, be it an act, an agent or a character, comes into our experience, the way in which we categorise it may effectively shape our affective and normative responses towards it. Such being the case, an act as simple as reframing a situation through an existing concept saturated with ethical meaning may make a tremendous normative difference. Here is an example from the historical records of the Holocaust:

During the second world war, when some Polish villagers said, of a Jewish girl – four- or five-year-old Renée Lindenberg, 'throw her into the well', a peasant woman overheard. She "replied: 'She's not a dog after all', and Renée was saved" (Gilbert 2004, pp. xvi–ii). The peasant woman succeeded in rescuing the Jewish girl's life, in that she plugged into the mind of other villagers the idea that the girl was a fellow human being instead of something casually disposable. The villagers were not cruel beasts with no moral sense but probably just took the Jewish girl to be some vermin (Keane 2017, p. 13), due to Europe's long anti-Semitism history. As Jews were "social rats" in the villagers' eyes, the latter were morally

disengaged with the former (Bandura 2002), which made the villagers able to treat Jews "in ways that are inconsistent with their humanity and which would otherwise trigger moral inhibitions" (Buchanan and Powell 2018, p. 229). However, the peasant woman's comment that the Jewish girl was "not a dog after all" radically recast the situation, forced the other villagers to see the girl in a new light. Once so, they seemed to experience some kind of irreversible gestalt shift: they could no longer fail to see the girl as someone to whom they owed the moral obligations they owed to humanity.[75]

To represent a creature before one's eyes as *a fellow human*, as a moral being, can put certain moral constraints on his behaviours towards the creature because the concept is a node in a conceptual framework. Once categorised as a human being, certain concepts all of a sudden come to bear on the creature, while the application of other concepts is found not acceptable anymore. She is not to be *purged*, *cleansed* or *killed for fun* anymore. On the contrary, it is *a moral obligation* to not only *spare* but positively *save her life*.[76] In other words, putting the creature into the category of human beings invokes the whole bundle of default knowledge about humanity, moral knowledge included, hence gives an agent a brake against doing harm to her (Smith 2011).

Since the application of ethically loaded concepts has such an influence on people's normative reactions that a simple act of reframing a situation could save the life of a Jewish

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[75] For the idea of gestalt shift, see (Kuhn 2012).

[76] According to Kate Manne, however, it was not the failure to treat the oppressed groups that caused atrocities against them. Rather, the perpetrators recognised the persecuted as full human beings but delusively saw the latter as unjustly infringing on their entitlements (to privileges). As Manne is offering a descriptive moral psychology, I think that it is not impossible that some atrocities were caused by not seeing some people as human beings, while others by delusive moral resentment. They are not either-or options. See (Manne 2017)

girl, redescribing the status quo by virtue of different concepts, under favourable conditions, has the potential to make people judge the overthrowal of it as morally progressive.

By far, I have shown two dimensions in which conceptual frameworks influence normative stance. On the one hand, newly created concepts may capture the ethical significance of taken-for-granted habits. On the other hand, categorising a piece of experience by an alternative acquired concept may also shed new light on people's normative standpoint. A conceptual framework, for sure, has many other ethical implications. However, the limited space here leaves me no room to explore this topic anymore. Future research will hopefully reveal more interactions between concepts and normative judgments.

6.3. Spreading Conceptual Frameworks

In this section, I will also rely on real-life examples to show that information sources indeed try to shape people's normative stance by operating conceptual frameworks. We will see in the following that information sources mould the normative judgments of their followers by creating new concepts (3.1.), using concepts with ethical meaning or connotations (3.2.), or forging certain conceptual connections (3.3.).

6.3.1. The creation of new categories

As I have shown in sub-section 2.1., the emergence of new concepts that lump together previously disparate experiences is able to shape people's normative outlooks. Hence, an information source that intends to intervene in their followers' normative perspectives may attempt to add new categories into their conceptual frameworks for inducing certain

normative judgments. The conservative media establishment in the U.S., including the

political talk radio of Rush Limbaugh, Fox News, and the editorial pages of *the Wall Street

Journal*, is, in fact, a genius at creating new categories, which reveals how media giants – a

significant kind of information sources – use new concepts to manipulate their subscribers'

normative outlook.[77]

The conservative media establishment in the U.S. caters to both the economic

conservatives, such as the economic elites from the Wall Street, and the social conservatives

consisting mainly of churchgoers and southerners. The Wall Street business class prefers the

preaching of laissez-faire economic policies, but such policies may be perceived as harming

the interest of the social conservatives, who mostly belong to the middle-upper class. On the

other hand, pro-life advisement may run counter to the liberal life attitudes of the economic

elites. Democrats and the liberal media establishment are used to exploiting the potential

conflict between the two types of conservative media viewers by attacking GOP's tax policies

for disproportionately benefiting wealthy business elites. By contrast, Democrats position

themselves as the party of the middle class, which includes most social conservatives. If this

tactic succeeded, the social conservatives might turn to liberal media outlets, at least for

information regarding economic policies, which would result in a partial collapse of the

conservative echo chamber.

Against this background, the conservative media establishment must portray the

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[77] To be precise, the influence of the conservative media establishment is not simply one‑directional. Rather, the selective exposure of conservative readers to these media outlets and the media effect on the readers constitute a reinforcing spiral that sets up an echo chamber. See (Slater 2007) on the reinforcing spiral.

liberal media outlets, and Democrats in general, as the common enemy confronting

conservatives of all stripes in order to keep a good grip on its subscribers. Creatively, Fox

News, Rush Limbaugh and the opinion pages of *the Wall Street Journal* choose to

overshadow the concept of *economic elites*, while playing up that of *cultural elites*, who are

described as Democrats that embrace liberal values and despise Christian conservatives and

southerners with a patronising sense of moral superiority (Jamieson and Cappella 2008).

> "These [the discussion includes Democratic contenders] are the people that run
> around ridiculing conservative Christians, make fun of them," notes Limbaugh. "You
> people drive the pickup trucks. You live in Mississippi, wear the plaid shirts. You got
> a bottle of Old Crow sitting next to you. You're going to go bomb an abortion clinic
> in a couple of days. You watch NASCAR. You don't have your two front teeth. That's
> what they think of you, and you know it" (June 5, 2007) (ibid., p. 65).

Negative concepts, such as *double standards* and *liberal media bias*, are also attached

to a large amount of coverage the liberal media outlets provide in a different tone from the

conservative media establishment. Fox News, Rush Limbaugh and the editorial part of the

Wall Street Wall Journal have mounted accusations of liberal media bias over years, and

hence strengthened the conservative viewers' perception that the liberal media are biased

towards conservatism and the Republican Party: it is the common enemy of right wings.

After social conservatives, to whom GOD's economic policies may be detrimental,

are primed with these concepts to think of the liberal media outlets as controlled by *cultural*

elites who despise their religious or southern ethical values, and of the discrepancies between

the liberal and the conservative coverage as *liberal media bias*, they are prepared to judge

that the conservative media establishment is more trustworthy than its liberal counterpart. On

top of social conservatives' trusting attitudes, Republicans' laissez-faire economic policies are recast by the conservative media establishment as profitable for the middle class but not for "giant corporations" and "agribusiness." On the contrary, the policies of Democrats, such as the increase of minimum wages and the estate tax, are respectively described as hurting small businesses and denying family farmers and owners of small businesses the ability to hand down their means of livelihood to their children (ibid.). Through the technique of priming subscribers with a specific conceptual framework, the conservative media establishment thus induces favourable epistemological judgements – about who is to be trusted and who is not – from the social conservatives and therefore reinforces the grip on their information sources.

Besides driving a wedge between its subscribers and the liberal media outlets, the conservative media establishment also strives to prime the audience with a conceptual framework that naturally leads to negative attitudes towards liberal values and policies. An instance is that Fox News renamed the inherence tax as the "death tax". Although *inherence tax* and *death tax*, semantically speaking, have the same extension, the former is an ethically neural concept, while the latter is saturated with negative ethical meaning. When the subscribers of Fox News are induced to redescribe *inherence tax* as *death tax*, they are ready to form negative moral judgments against it. Likewise, Rush Limbaugh coined the concept of *feminazis* to represent feminists. If his followers have been primed to conceptualise those who support female rights as *feminazis*, they are likely to infer immediately – recall that concepts are knowledge that are used by default in almost all higher cognitive activities – along Limbaugh's purpose that feminists "hate men," are "dogmatic, inflexible, and

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intolerant," and constitute "an extremist, power-hungry minority" (Moi 2006), hence

adopting a negative moral attitude.[78]

6.3.2. Employing concepts with ethical meaning or connotations

The peasant woman in Poland reminded her fellow villagers that the Jewish girl was

"not a dog after all" and thus saved the girl's life. Many information authorities in Nazi

Germany, however, tried hard to propagate the opposite in political speeches, textbooks, and

cartoons: they strived to manipulate the ordinary people's conceptual frameworks so that the

latter could see Jews "as a deadly bacillus infecting society and as plague-carrying rats"

(Buchanan and Powell 2018, p. 226). The strategy of Nazis to dehumanise Jews by putting

them into the category of infectious beasts, according to Allen Buchanan and Russell Powell,

killed two birds with one stone:

> they activate the parasite threat response that triggers disgust, fear, and other
> negatively valenced emotions that modulate out-group antipathy, while at the same
> time removing the impediment to harsh treatment of the other that the recognition of
> the other's humanity erects (ibid., p. 227).

A human being is an emotionally and ethically loaded concept, the application of

which into a certain being, generally, brings about a strong motivation and robust moral

beliefs against doing it harm. On the contrary, categorising a certain being as a social parasite

promotes apathy towards it (Sternberg 2003), and removes the moral constraints on the

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[78] The reason why I think of *death tax* and *feminazis* as two new concepts rather than two synonyms of the old terms is that the default knowledge involved in *death tax* and *feminazis* is different from that in *inherence tax* and *feminists*. For example, that feminazis "hate men", are "dogmatic, inflexible, and intolerant", and constitute "an extremist, power-hungry minority" is the default knowledge (knowledge in the psychological sense!) involved in the concept of feminazis, which the concept of feminists lack.

possible actions one may take against it. Nazi Germany shows us through the horrendous

Holocaust how information sources' villainous employment of ethically-loaded concepts to

manipulate people's normative outlooks can lead to dire consequences. The use of ethically-

loaded concepts to induce specific normative judgments is a common practice of information

authorities, as we often observe when consuming different sorts of media. However, an

information source may make use of ethically-neutral concepts with ethical connotations to

implicitly induce preferred normative judgments. An up-to-date example of this strategy can

be taken from the recent Sino-Australian conflict over a digitally-generated photo.

In November 2020, a credible report revealed that 25 Australian soldiers took part in

the murders of 39 Afghan civilians and prisoners from 2009 to 2013. Then, Chinese foreign

ministry spokesman Lijian Zhao posted an image on Tweet, in which an Australian soldier

stands next to a child with a bloody dagger, while the child is holding a sheep. This image

was drawn by a now-famous Chinese caricaturist, Wuheqilin. Mr Zhao commented on the

picture, "Shocked by murder of Afghan civilians & prisoners by Australian soldiers. We

strongly condemn such acts, and call for holding them accountable" (Khalil 2020). This

shortly evoked fury from Australia's Prime Minister Mr Scott Morrison. Mr Morrison

claimed, "The Chinese government should be totally ashamed of this post. It diminishes them

in the world's eyes. It is a false image and terrible slur on our defence forces." The response

from the Prime Minister soon raised verbal disputes between the West and China. The news

report I quoted from BBC echoed the Prime Minister, describing the picture in question as *a*

fake inflammatory image. At the end of the article, the reporter implicitly links Mr Zhao's

intention to China's anger that "Australia led calls for an investigation into the origins of the coronavirus pandemic." On the other hand, Global Times, a media outlet regarded as CCP's mouthpiece, used *satirical illustration* to refer to the picture tweeted by Mr Zhao (Reporter 2020). It quoted another spokesperson from the Chinese foreign ministry, claiming that "Morrison's accusation is groundless, as the circulating picture is not a photograph but a computer-generated illustration." "An illustration is different from a fake photograph," Ms Hua emphasised. In the end, the news report in Global Times alleged explicitly, by citing Ms Hua's words, that "Morrison's real purpose is clear, and that is to divert attention and shift pressure from Australian war crimes to criticism against China."[79]

-Don't be afraid, we are coming to bring you peace! -   @乌合麒麟

　　In the case of the Sino-Australian dispute, neither side picked up a concept with

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[79] In fact, being a satirical illustration is compatible with being a fake image. The problem, I think, is which concept the conflicting parties choose to foreground.

inherently ethical meaning, be it *a fake image* or *a satirical illustration*. To call a picture *a fake image*, at first glance, has merely to do with its truth value. But as we have been used to the association from false statements to bad intentions and consequential bad behaviours – conceptual connections stored in the concept of *a fake image* that allows us to make default and often automatic inferences – the attribution of falsehood tends to prompt the inference that the image was used as a lie for certain evil motives.[80] The reporter of BBC might be afraid that readers could not draw such an inference by themselves, so he mentioned at the end of his article that China's intention was to avenge Australia's leading "calls for an investigation into the origins of the coronavirus pandemic."[81] On the other hand, to say a picture is *satirical* is to hint at the absurdity of the thing portrayed, which emphasises the wrongness of killing innocent civilians and prisoners. Although the two ways of conceptualising the image at issue are both ethically-neutral at face value, their ethical connotations are able to shape the normative viewpoints of those who accept them.

6.3.3. Manipulating the inference competency

Concepts are knowledge in which many conceptual linkages are stored. These conceptual connections enable us to make default inferences when applying a certain concept

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[80] "Default inferences are defeasible inferences, that is, inferences that are normally drawn, except when some specific additional information is provided." See (Machery 2009)p.11

[81] Some may think that a fake image is a lie so the BBC reporter in fact touches on something inherently ethical. In my opinion, the concept of a lie does not necessarily lead to a negative ethical evaluation because a lie can be kind, e.g., it is kind to tell a dying patient that she is alright. Only when referring to something as a lie without mentioning any justifying information, does the concept of a lie easily evoke negative attitude. But to brush off justifying information is indeed to hint at the viciousness the lie involves. Therefore, it seems that the concept of a lie itself depends on association for its ethical function.

to an item of experience. The sub-section above shows us how information sources exploit

the conceptual association inherent in certain concepts – from *a fake image* through *a lie* to

certain evil intentions, and from *a satirical illustration* through *absurdity* to serious

wrongness – to sway people's normative judgements. Nonetheless, information sources need

not necessarily exploit the existing conceptual association or connections in their followers'

conceptual frameworks. Instead, they may build up certain connections in the followers'

minds so that the latter are primed to make inferences in the way preferred by the former.

      The rhetoric of mass media provides plenty of examples of how information sources

induce preferred ideas by inculcating certain conceptual linkages. For example, the repeated

juxtaposition of *illegal* and *migrant* primes the audience to think of illegality, even when they

hear the concept of *migrant* alone (Stubbs 1996). Absent relevant information, the audience

tends to infer by default that the migrant in question is an illegal one.[82] Or information

sources may cumulatively use some concept in a specific set of contexts, so an encounter

with the concept automatically conjures up certain kinds of contexts. The concept of *Muslims*,

for example, has been so frequently put in the context of terrorism by the American

conservative media since 9/11 that the use of *Muslims* is reminiscent of *terrorism* (Hoey

2012). Likewise, in Britain after 9/11, where media outlets largely tabloidize, tabloids (and

tabloidized broadsheets) might intend to build up a conceptual connection between *terrorism*

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[82] As these information sources have transformed the knowledge that is used by default in the processes underlying making judgements about migrants, some may wonder whether these sources create a new concept with an old name "migrant". To my mind, whether a new concept is created, depending on the extent to which the body of knowledge represented by the concept has been transformed by the new pieces of knowledge. For example, it is quite reasonable to say that we possess the same concept of water before and after we learn that water is H2O.

and *Muslims* by excessive reference to "Muslim terrorists, fanatics and hate preachers who are determined to brainwash young British male Muslims into carrying out terrorist acts" (Baker 2010a). The tabloids especially spent much ink on a minor group of "populist villains," like Osama Bin Laden, Abu Hamza and Omar Bakri, and represented Islam as "extremist" or "fanatical" in an emotive form of language. Moreover, tabloids also connected the concerns about religious terrorism to other issues that had long haunted British, such as the increasing rates of immigration and asylum-seeking (ibid.). After a complicated conceptual framework, viz., the linkages between certain concepts (terrorism, extremists, Muslims, Islam, and so on), is set up in the mind of subscribers, they "may encounter a term like terrorism and some sort of mental representation of a Muslim may appear in their minds (and vice versa), due to all their previous encounters with the terms" (Baker 2010b). Expectably, these subscribers are prone to form negative evaluations against a Muslim immigrant, at least when further information is unavailable.[83]

So far, I have introduced one sort of material, conceptual frameworks, for historians interested in writing a genealogy that helps readers assess the credibility of a MPJ. I have also defended the claim that information sources tend to utilise concepts or conceptual frameworks to exert influence on people's normative judgments. A historian may reveal in his writing how a specific MPJ is formed or accepted on the basis of some conceptual framework given by information sources. Upon the evaluation of the credibility of the conceptual

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[83] The limited space here requires me to only briefly describe the phenomena of exploiting words' connotations. Jason Stanley has given us a similar but more detailed analysis of this phenomena. For those interested, see (Stanley 2015) chap. 4.

framework, readers would have a better sense of the credibility of the resulting MPJ.

Now I turn to another sort of material information sources may employ to sway normative outlooks, that is, narratives organised or framed from a certain perspective.

Chapter VII: Narratives from Different Perspectives

Fallen into our eyes is the cotton plantation of Tara, where Scarlett, her family, and many of their slaves live. Lives in rural Georgia are so peaceful that nothing seems to happen except some trivia, such as parties, marriages and romantic jealousy. Tara hardly brings into our mind the image of a plantation that exploited slave labour. On the contrary, Scarlett and her family treat their black servants in such an amiable way as if the blacks are also part of their family. For example, the interactions between Mammy and Scarlett look like a mother's nagging at her wild daughter. Unfortunately, the idyllic pastoral is disrupted by the greedy Yankees after President Lincoln summons volunteers to fight the south. We then see many brave, although over-optimistic, Southern men rush into the defensive war of their beloved Confederacy. Sadly, many of them are killed in the war, and the scene of the sieged Atlanta unfolds before our eyes, in which the dead good southern boys, the wounded, and the ruined city tell us the great misery the Union Army brings to the South. Under Margaret Mitchell's writing, the slave-owning Confederacy is a pastoral civilisation *Gone with the Wind* (Mitchell 2020).

In Mitchell's novel, slaves are seldom mistreated. The harshest violence we can observe is when Scarlett slaps Prissy in her face. The violence is even justified in that the black girl crows dishonestly about her capacity to deliver a child, putting Melanie in a precarious condition. By contrast, freed slaves are depicted as lazy and aggressive. They conspire with "white trash" to harass innocent southerners, while the activity of the Ku Klux

Klan is portrayed as a heroic and tragic revenge at the cost of the life of Scarlett's ex-husband Frank Kennedy.

When I read *Gone with the Wind* as a high school student, I was displeased by the suffering Yankees gratuitously imposed on the idyllic life in the Antebellum South. I did not comprehend the intention of the Union at all until I came across Mrs Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Stowe 1999). The novel presents us with numerous scenes where black slaves are mercilessly beaten, whipped, raped, sold, torn apart from family and even put to death. The two novels are supposed to depict the American South during the same period under the same institutions, but one depicts a heaven while the other portrays a hell. If a reader, knowing little of American slavery, chooses only one of the two books to read, we can expect him to draw radically different evaluations of the Civil War. That is the magic of a narrative from a specific perspective.

A narrative or story is a temporally sequenced and context-sensitive account of a series of interrelated events, which generally unfolds through plots involving the interaction of characters with interests, motives and emotions (Bruner 1986; Zukier 1986);(Watson 2009)p. 429.[84] A narrative also includes many hypotheses besides factual statements, veridical or fabricated. Firstly, a narrative may make predictions based on the facts it claims obtained, e.g., about the potential consequence of a certain action. Furthermore, as many phenomena in experience have ambiguous meanings, interpretations of them are usually

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[84] See also (Baumeister and Newman 1994; Baumeister, Stillwell, and Wotman 1990; Harvey, Orbuch, and Weber 2012; Harvey, Weber, and Orbuch 1990; Kintsch and Van Dijk 1978; Mandler 2014; Ross and Conway 1986; Rummelhart 1977; Stillwell and Baumeister 1997; Trabasso and Van Den Broek 1985).

indispensable to a story. A narrative may also give explanations of what it says happened as a matter of fact. For example, an accident investigation report may attribute the collapse of a construct to a natural hazard rather than jerry-building. Finally, some assumptions also tend to be implicit in a narrative, which function to filter or organise the statements to be included in the account. For instance, depending on a historian's preconception of *revolution*, he either includes or omits in his account the origins of ideology that drives each side in the struggle for political power, for he may or may not see them as relevant to a history of revolutions (McCullagh 2000, p. 46).

Narratives are omnipresent in human life.[85] As the Gergens say,

> Through fairy tales, folk tales, legends, and myths we receive our first organized account of human action. Stories continue to absorb us as we read novels, biography, and history; they occupy us at the movies in the theatre, and before the television set (Gergen and Gergen 1988, p. 17).

Along with the omnipresence of stories, they also exert great influence on our normative evaluation.[86] We judge a person's personality and behaviours based on the gossips we hear about her. We assess our own character in autobiographic retrospect. We pass judgments on faraway or past events on the basis of news, novels, biography, and historiography. The contrast between Gone with the Wind and Uncle Tom's Cabin shows that when the events are depicted from different perspectives, the normative attitudes toward one and the same events we form may be radically discrepant.

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[85] Roy F. Baumeister and Leonard S. Newman claim that "the construction of narratives is central to how people think about their social worlds". See (Baumeister and Newman 1994) p. 679.

[86] cf. (Baumeister and Newman 1994; Jones and Pittman 1982; Pennington and Hastie 1986, 1988; Wicklund and Gollwitzer 2013).

Although a narrative consists mostly of factual statements as an argument do, we cannot reduce a narrative to a particular form of argument. Every factual statement included in an argument, as one among a series of premises, is accorded equal weight. Receivers of an argument reason from the premises, if they accept them, to the conclusion the persuader intends. By contrast, different factual statements in a narrative are given varying weight: some are emphasised, while some are downplayed. Furthermore, it is often not by reasoning upon the statements that readers of a narrative draw a conclusion but by having his hearted touched, metaphorically speaking, that a standpoint emerges. Introspection can testify how reading *Gone with the Wind* or *Uncle Tom's Cabin* shapes our normative stance towards the Civil War.

In this chapter, I introduce historians or genealogists, who intend to write on the formation or acceptance of a MPJ for readers to evaluate its credibility, to another sort of material underlying a MPJ, viz., narratives constructed from different perspectives. This chapter mirrors the structure of the last chapter: firstly, I explain what it is for a narrative to be constructed from a specific perspective in the first section. Then, I show how a narrative can be constructed from a specific perspective to sway people's normative stance in a certain direction. Finally, I show that information sources do manoeuvre narratives as a means to influence people's normative mind.

If what I say in this chapter is plausible, that is, if information sources indeed manoeuvre narratives constructed from certain perspectives to lead people's normative views towards specific directions, then the narratives provided by information sources are an

important type of material genealogists should relate so as to provide readers with a historical account for their assessment of a MPJ's credibility.

7.1. To Construct a Narrative from a Specific Perspective

The daily encounter with gossips, novels, movies, and much other story-telling has familiarised us with narratives. Despite knowing the notion of a narrative well, we may still want to understand what it is for a narrative to be constructed from a specific perspective. In what follows, I will elaborate on this point.

A narrative is constructed for a certain purpose (or purposes), be it conscious or unconscious (Baumeister and Newman 1994; Jones and Pittman 1982; Miller et al. 1990; Nelson 1993; Wicklund and Gollwitzer 2013). As Baumeister and Newman say (Baumeister and Newman 1994, p. 680),

> The story becomes a means, a tool, for achieving a particular effect on the listener. Undoubtedly variations in these interpersonal motives will alter the way stories are constructed and told. In addition to such motives, however, we assert that stories are shaped by people's needs to make sense of their experiences. These needs for meaning will guide story construction …

The purpose driving a narrative grounds the basic perspective of the story, and then three basic ways might be used to construct a story from this perspective:

> Firstly, a narrator can choose the things to be included or excluded;
> Secondly, he can emphasise or downplay certain things;
> Lastly, he is able to fabricate something that does not exist in reality at all.

The various techniques in which narratives from different perspectives are constructed, I explain in what follows, can be reduced, eventually, to one or another combination of the

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three ways.

In any event, there are always numerous details that can be included in a narrative. For whatever purpose a narrative serves, there is always a plethora of details in the events to be described. Moreover, it is impossible for the human mind to process a story that covers all the details *in extenso*. Lastly, no observer of any event is omniscient, hence a narrator herself is necessarily blind to many dimensions of a given event. Therefore, constructing a narrative cannot but involve the inclusion of some details as well as the omission of others.

A narrative from a certain perspective not only comprises details of events selectively but also emphasises some details while downplaying others. That is because, firstly, some details conduce to the purpose of a narrative, whereas others undermine it. And secondly, details in events may, to different extents, be salient to the author of a narrative because of the specific role she plays in the events (Anderson and Pichert 1978). Some syntactic structures, such as "yes but …," "on the other hand …," and "although …" are often used in narratives so as to emphasise or downplay certain details. For instance, the refutational structure "yes but …," according to Sandra Murray and John Holmes (Murray and Holmes 1993, 1994), frequently appears in intimates' accounts of their close relationships so as to downplay the implications of the negativity they see in their partners for the sake of continuous confidence in the romantic relationships.

The techniques of inclusion, omission, emphasis, and downplaying in constructing narratives from discrepant perspectives can be clearly demonstrated by the experiment Baumeister et al. performed on the contrast between victim and perpetrator perspectives

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(Baumeister, Stillwell, and Wotman 1990; Kearns and Fincham 2005). Baumeister's team

asked participants in the experiment to write about both an incident in which someone else

angered them and one in which they angered someone else. In the narratives written about the

former situation, the participants as victims tended to omit external or mitigating

circumstances that might excuse or even justify the transgressions. Nor were they willing to

mention the perpetrator's regret or apologies. On the contrary, they were more likely to

emphasise the negative consequences of the transgressions as well as the lasting anger or hurt

they still experienced. Expectably, what participants taking the role of victims tended to

exclude or downplay was what they were likely to include and emphasise as perpetrators.

Putting their feet into the shoes of perpetrators, the participants tended to offer narratives that

attributed the transgressions to external or mitigating conditions. They were also more likely

to provide closure to the incidents by "featuring apologies and happy ending" (ibid., p. 999).

By contrast, negative consequences were at least downplayed in the perpetrator narrators'

accounts, where the negativity was not completely denied.

No matter whether the participants include or exclude, emphasise or downplay certain

details in the incidents to be narrated, that is still within the confines of reporting facts.

However, people often overtly fabricate what has happened in their accounts of events. In an

experiment on victim and perpetrator perspectives following (Baumeister, Stillwell, and

Wotman 1990), Stillwell and Baumeister provided experiment participants with a story

(Stillwell and Baumeister 1997), in which a student offered to help another study but refused

to honour the commitment and therefore causes a bad consequence. The experiementers

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asked the participants to recall the story either from the victim or the perpetrator perspective after an interval of a few days. Comparing the accounts furnished by the participants with the original story, the researchers found that when constructed from the victim perspective, the participants were more likely to add new information or alter the original information in a way that exacerbated the severity of the transgression. For example, "victims" tended to "change the perpetrators' offer of help to a promise to help, thereby making the offence worse instead of better." Expectably, the distortions of the perpetrator perspective were the other way around: "perpetrators" tended to add or embellish details that justified the offence or minimised its severity.

The technique of conceptualisation or wording also takes part in the construction of a narrative from a specific perspective. To narrate a series of events necessarily involves the choice of concepts to represent what has happened in the world as it is. As I have painstakingly argued in the last chapter, such choice can have a great impact on the normative stance of people who receive the narrative.

As I have said above, a narrative consists not only of factual statements but also of hypotheses, such as assumptions, predictions, interpretations, and explanations. Differences in hypotheses can also result in a difference in perspectives.[87]

Assumptions are strongly held but rarely discussed beliefs implicit in a narrative (Ross 1989, p. 342). Such beliefs "can affect the kind of information retrieved from memory,

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[87] The difference predications can make to the perspective of a narrative is obvious. When two biographical accounts of one and the same prisoner, e.g., make predications based on his past records, with one predicating that he will not commit a crime again while the other predicating that he will, we can clearly see the difference of perspectives in the accounts. Therefore, I will leave the discussion of predications here.

as well as the individual's understanding of it" when a narrative is being constructed. This is

because, firstly, information consistent with assumptions tends to be more accessible than

information inconsistent with them. Secondly, ambiguous information retrieved from

memory may be interpreted as supportive of the assumptions (Anderson and Pichert 1978;

Bartlett 1995; Cantor and Mischel 1977; Hamilton 1981; Hastie 1981; Loftus 1981; Markus

1977; Mischel, Ebbesen, and Zeiss 1976; Rothbart 1981; Rothbart, Evans, and Fulero 1979;

Schank and Abelson 2013; Snyder and Uranowitz 1978; Spence 1984; Taylor and Crocker

1981). Hence, the assumptions of a narrative may function to filter and organise details of

events as a coherent structure of information that is consonant with the assumptions.

Moreover, when information supportive of the assumptions cannot be retrieved, the narrator

may "guess at the past and fill in gaps" to meet the assumptions (Bellezza and Bower 1981).

We may see the influence of assumptions on the construction of narratives from

Murray and Holmes's experiments on interpersonal narratives in close relationships (Murray

and Holmes 1993, 1994).[88] When a bogus psychology article was presented to experiment

participants, who self-reported that their partners were conflict-avoidant, and claimed that

mature intimacy depended "on partners' willingness to engage issues by initiating

disagreements over important sources of conflict," the participants tended to transform their

narratives to depict their partners as more prone to conflict engagement than the previous

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[88] Turning our eyes from microhistory to microhistory, we can still see the influence of assumptions. For example, a historian's preconception of a history subject, such as the notion of what war is, can determine what he includes or excludes in his account of the subject. A historian's assumption of whose perspectives matter also impacts how he writes. For instance, a historian occupied with white supremacy may only depict colonisers' activities when writes about the economy of a former colony. See (McCullagh 2000).

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accounts indicated. Likewise, when presented with a bogus article arguing that perceiving differences between intimates was the road to mature intimacy, participants who previously reported low awareness of differences modified their narratives to accommodate more perceived differences and less similarities.

Interpretations that disambiguate the meanings of phenomena in events can also make a difference to the perspective of a narrative. A simple eye contact, for instance, can either be interpreted as an impolite offence or a friendly greeting depending on other objective details and a narrator's subjective attitudes, hence transforming the colour of a narrative. What others see as the apparent inexpressiveness of a person might be construed as evidence of his "strong and silent" personality from his committed partner's perspective (Murray and Holmes 1993, p. 708). Similarly, "an individual might interpret occasional stubbornness in an intimate as a sign of integrity" (ibid.).

Different types of explanations embedded in a narrative also shape its perspective. Let me discuss two kinds of explanations briefly. One is the explanation of the nature of a set of events. For example, many historians tried to explain the English Civil War, with various explanations marking the difference of perspectives in their respective historical accounts of the same events:

> Lawrence Stone has listed many of them. Clarendon thought it to have been a 'Great Rebellion' by landed classes against an unpopular king. C. V. Wedgwood saw it as the natural consequence of a collapse of central government. S. R. Gardiner described it as a Puritan revolution against the established Church; whereas Lord Macaulay thought it a struggle for liberty against royal tyranny. As we have seen, R.H. Tawney and C. Hill presented it as a bourgeois revolution against feudal institutions, and H. R. Trevor-Roper said it was 'a revolution of despair' by the gentry, trying to re-establish

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their independence. Each interpretation, notice, both sums up what was happening and suggests a general explanation for the events involved (McCullagh 1997, pp. 114-5).

Different causal explanations might also be given to the same series of events, thereby casting different perspectives. A salient example of the difference in causal explanations is provided by A. D. Moses' discussion of explanations of the Holocaust (Moses 1998). He identifies two common types of perspectives from which the Holocaust are explained. One attributes the Holocaust to the anti-Semitic ideology that motivated Hitler and Germans at large, while the other holds accountable the patterns of obedience in any bureaucracy or army. The first perspective apparently "blames the Germans more than the second, which blames the system" (McCullagh 2000, p. 49).

The causal explanations of why the First World War outbroke also cast the discrepancy between the perspectives of historians of different persuasions. As Hugh Stretton points out, liberals tried to explain the war as a failure of diplomacy before the event. Marxists ascribed it to capitalism and competitive imperialism, whereas conservatives blamed the war upon innate human vices (Stretton 2013).

Now we summarise what it is for a narrative to be constructed from a specific perspective. A narrative is always driven by a certain purpose or a set of purposes that determine its basic angle. Based on this skeleton, factual statements are either included or omitted, emphasised or downplayed in the narrative to fill in its fresh. Moreover, depending on the difference in the purposes of narratives of the same series of events, discrepant hypotheses, such as predictions, interpretations, explanations, and so on, are given to

substantiate different perspectives. Having elaborated the idea of narratives from different perspectives, we now turn to how different narratives are constructed in real life that shape people's normative views.

7.2. Narratives and Normative Stances

It is beyond doubt that narratives have a great power to shape people's normative stances. As a narrative consists of many factual statements, it can furnish people with information or misinformation that features in their normative reasoning. On the other hand, a narrative may also drive listeners to adopt affectively a certain normative stance towards the person, event, or state of affairs narrated. Although narratives can impact normative viewpoints, we may still be curious about how a story is constructed from a specific perspective so that it shapes people's normative outlook in a certain direction. In this section, I will exemplify how this could be done through some real-life examples.

7.2.1. The perpetrator perspective

People tend to judge a transgression enacted by themselves or a member in their ingroup to be less objectionable than an identical transgression enacted by others (Valdesolo and DeSteno 2007, 2008). The discrepancy in the judgments partly results from the fact that people usually take up the perspective I briefly introduced above – the perpetrator perspective – when they themselves or their ingroup members commit a wrong. From the perpetrator perspective, a narrator is more likely to recall or recount details in a transgression that minimise his responsibility, while downplaying or even excluding details that maximise it

(Baumeister, Stillwell, and Wotman 1990; Stillwell and Baumeister 1997). According to the perpetrator perspective, the transgression might even be justifiable as the means to some valuable goal. More surprisingly, a perpetrator might take up the victim perspective to organise past events in such a way that the transgression appears to be a rightful reaction towards past injustices.

The Nazis perspective towards the Second World War and the Holocaust provides a vivid example of how the construction of narratives from the perpetrator perspective helped to "excuse" or even "justify" undoubted moral wrong. The Nazis "who carried out the worst acts did not believe they were doing evil, or at most they struggled between doubts and conflicting obligations" (Baumeister 1996, p. 51). The distorted moral belief had its root in the Nazis' account of their deeds.

A common narrative of the Nazis can be ironically observed in Hannah Arendt's depiction of Adolf Eichmann (Arendt 2006). Instead of blaming him for the atrocities, the Jewish philosopher deflected his moral responsibility by undermining Eichmann's control over his deeds: Eichmann, according to her narrative, suffered from a "lack of imagination" and an "inability to think." Eichmann, depicted by Arendt, "had consoled himself with the thoughts that he no longer 'was master of his own deeds,' that he was unable 'to change anything.'" The image of the war criminal, thus, became one in which a law-abiding man mindlessly followed the cruel orders of the totalitarian leadership, a helpless gear inside a violent state apparatus. Arendt's narrative transmitted Eichmann's responsibility and blame upward to the Nazis leadership by the emphasis that Eichmann was a "joiner" his entire life,

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who had to join organisations for self-definition and had difficulties thinking for himself

without joining a collectivity. His actions, then, were not driven by malice and anti-Semitism,

but rather the need of belonging and the blind dedication to the regime.

Many Nazis rank and file held such a mentality and, therefore, saw themselves as

excusable, or at least, as not that heinous. But in some other Nazi members' narratives, the

atrocities might even be somewhat justified.[89] From this perspective, the Nazis were building

the perfect society. Germany, in their narrative, was an overpopulated country for which to

develop into a Jeffersonian rural democracy, more land was required. Although there was

suitable land to the east, that land was already occupied by the Polish people. As the Polish

people were the major obstacle to their vision of a perfect society, from their perspective, the

reasonable plan was to relocate them somewhere else. Concentration camps were, in the

Nazis' eyes, meant for relocating people, not for genocide. However, alternative relocation

options soon proved unrealistic, so the Nazis (they believed) could not help but undertake

massive killings (Bauman 2000; Breitman 2002).

In this narrative, America – where compulsory sterilisation was performed and

euthanasia was highly debated, and the Indians who once preoccupied the good land had been

cruelly driven into reservations – provided them with a good example of creating an ideal

society based on modern science (Lifton 1986). The Nazis saw the U.S. as heading toward

historical and scientific progress, and if they hesitated to do the same, the result would be

being left behind as "a foolish, doddering, obsolete form of society" (Baumeister 1996, p. 52).

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[89] In the followings, I will rephase an account of the Nazis' perspective from (Baumeister 1996).

Hence, the Nazis inferred that they must hurry up in the march to get rid of poisonous

populations: Jews, Slavs, Gypsies, and other ethnic groups stayed in the way and spoiled the

perfection of German society by their mere presence. Cleansing all those people, the Nazis

thought, like weeding a garden, was a fairly unpleasant chore that must be done to achieve

the ultimate good for everyone who mattered (Darré 2021). Some elements of a rationalising

narrative even survived the war, leading some older Germans to withhold harsh moral

judgments on Adolf Hitler. For them, Hitler was, after all, not that bad because he brought

Germany back on its feet after the humiliating failure of the First World War and the Great

Depression. Although they regretted the mistreatment and mass murder of unfortunate

victims, the atrocities were rationalised by their narrative as a necessary but bad means

towards a desirable end.

Apart from the effects of exonerating and rationalising, The Nazis' narrative often

shifted from the perpetrator perspective to the victim perspective that claimed justifiability.

As Baumeister says,

> Many Nazis regarded their actions as getting even for past wrongs and injustices. In
> their view, they had been mistreated and they were setting things right. To be sure,
> they were overdoing things; the retaliation far exceeded the scale on which they
> thought they had been wronged, with a few possible individual exceptions (such as
> those who believed that their family members who had died in the First World War
> were victims of conspiracies, machinations, and betrayals perpetrated by the Jews)
> (Baumeister 1996, p. 53).

In the stories constructed by nationalist Germans, they were the victims of substantial

injustices rather than perpetrators. Germany, from their perspective, deserved a leading

position in the world. However, "it had been treated with disrespect; conspired against by the

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older powers; tricked into losing the war; and then utterly exploited, humiliated, emasculated, and looted by the outrageous Versailles treaty and post-war settlements" (ibid.). Thanks to the prolonged propaganda that embellished the military, economic, and political strength of their motherland, Germany was depicted from their perspective as doing extremely well in the first World War: they won the eastern war with Russians and produced an even draw with the combined West. For those fascinated by such a narrative, it was extremely unbelievable that their mighty country suddenly lost the war, with their brilliant Kaiser abdicating, conquered territory stripped, and a large number of reparations levied. Some conspiracy explanations, therefore, were given, according to which "the Jews had undermined the war effort and stabbed their country in the back (or so many Germans came to believe), and the Allied enemy powers, unable to win on the battlefield, had cheated and then exploited Germany" (ibid.). For those who held such a mentality, the waging of the Second World War and the Holocaust were justified as a rightful (maybe undue) revenge for past mistreatments and betrayals

From the narratives held by Nazis above, we can see the impact of a story from a specific perspective on normative judgment. The narratives from the Nazis' perspective enabled those who sincerely bought it to deflect moral responsibility to the regime, see their deeds as regrettable but necessary means towards a utopia, and justify the atrocities as rightful revenge for the past injustices imposed on them.

Not only can a narrative from a specific perspective intervene in other-regarding judgments about moral right and wrong, but also influence self-regarding evaluation. We now

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turn to this point.

7.2.2. The evaluation of self-worth

Unrequited love, that is, that a would-be lover chases his beloved but receives romantic rejection, is generally a serious blow to the would-be lover's self-esteem (Baumeister and Wotman 1994). Romantic rejection in unrequited love is humiliating because one-sided romantic love often involves a relatively unattractive person becoming infatuated with a more attractive person. The rejection conveys "the symbolic message that the would-be lover lacks sufficient desirable qualities to be a suitable partner for the rejector" (Baumeister, Wotman, and Stillwell 1993, p. 379). People also tend to hold implicit theories of equity and matching to explain coupling success and failure (Baumeister and Newman 1994). Therefore, it is highly possible for a would-be lover to stick in self-doubt as to self-worth, even if he is equally attractive to or even more attractive than the rejector from a third-person perspective. Given that a sense of self-worth is an important key to a happy life (cf. Miller Smedema, Catalano, and Ebener 2010), would-be lovers tend to resurrect a positive self-image, psychologists found out, through constructing a story of the past unrequited love from a specific perspective (Baumeister and Newman 1994; Baumeister and Wotman 1994; Baumeister, Wotman, and Stillwell 1993; cf. Gergen and Gergen 1988; Harvey, Weber, and Orbuch 1990)

In the comparison between narratives from the perspective of rejectors and from that of would-be lovers, Baumeister et al. found out, statistically speaking, would-be lovers were more likely than rejectors to claim that the former's romantic feelings had been reciprocated

by the latter at some point (Baumeister, Wotman, and Stillwell 1993). Also, would-be lovers tended to indicate that rejectors once led them on or encouraged their affections. On the other hand, the presence of an explicit, overt message of rejection was less often mentioned in the narratives from the pursuer perspective than those from the rejector perspective. The discrepancies might probably result from the unfortunate proverb that passion blinds:

> Would-be lovers may have been motivated to perceive more reciprocal affection and encouragement than actually existed and may have been guided by both motivated wishful thinking … in refusing to acknowledge a rejection as final (ibid., p. 384).

But the course of paying court to someone in vain is also a continuous humiliation of would-be lovers. Hence, they have to perceive and interpret events – that is, to construct a story of what is happening for themselves – in a way that bolsters their self-esteem. As a result, they tend to see faint, vague cues as indications that the partners reciprocate their love. In the aftermath of unrequited love, would-be lovers still need to embellish the romantic failures for themselves and others to believe that the losers are not that undesirable and unlikeable.

Except for interpreting or recalling commonly experienced events in a way different from rejectors, would-be lovers have other means through narratives to maintain self-esteem. "A favourite means of restoring self-worth damaged by romantic rejection is to affirm that a new highly desirable partner has been found to reciprocate one's affection" (Baumeister and Newman 1994, p. 687). One interviewee in Baumeister's experiment wrote after being rejected by a man called Peter, "I have a boyfriend whom I have been seeing for one year and he treats me so much better than Peter ever did, and he adores me to death" (ibid.). This

statement in her narrative squarely contradicted the proposition that the would-lover is a undesirable partner, which was obviously a way for her to alleviate the damage caused by the rejection to her self-image.

Another means of would-be lovers is to derogate the rivals who had defeated them. For example, a participant in Baumeister's experiment portrayed her rival as the following: "Every time I see them together I keep on asking myself what he sees in her … I am not even jealous of her because I know that I am much better than she is" (ibid.). As if her self-worth required further support, she said, "This is not just me being vain, but other people also didn't understand why he ended everything with me and started going out with her" (ibid.). To depict their rivals as inferior persons implied it was not because of their undesirability but of the rejectors' irrationality that the would-be lovers were jilted. Hence, doing so reassures would-be lovers themselves that they are competent and likeable. In contrast to depicting rivals in a negative light, relatively few would-lovers portrayed the rejectors as valueless, probably because a story in which one is jilted by an undesirable person is more harmful to one's self-image than a story in which the rejector is attractive.

In the paragraphs above, I use self-narratives from the would-be lover perspective to exemplify how a narrative from a specific perspective is constructed for positive self-regarding evaluation. Coupled with sub-section 2.1, we see how a narrative from a certain angle can be constructed to shape either people's self-regarding or other-regarding evaluations. By inference, narratives of the same events can be developed from discrepant perspectives in a way that drags people's normative stances towards different directions.

Having shown the efficacy of narrative construction, the next question relevant to my current concern is whether information sources take pains to construct and distribute narratives from preferred perspectives so as to sway people's normative stance. If not so, looking for narratives in the genealogy of a MPJ would be a vain effort.

7.3. Information Sources and Narratives

We can readily observe in daily life and historical records that information sources, viz., epistemically influential organisations and persons, usually offer narratives from specific perspectives to their followers. We have been taught national and international history since childhood. We are well acquainted with both fictional and non-fictional stories depicting chattel slavery emerging in the Antebellum U.S. (Smith 1998). We might happen to hear the legend of Regan's era from the American conservative media establishment (Jamieson and Cappella 2008). We turn on a TV or read a newspaper to acquire news covering recent happenings. We go to the cinema for a narrative film. As we see, there are countless narratives provided by information sources that might affect people's normative minds. Due to the limited space here, I select two representative media types to exemplify information sources' use of narratives in what follows.

7.3.1. Editorials

A piece of editorial in a newspaper or magazine is normally longer than ordinary news, which allows the former to construct a fuller description of the events at issue. As the newspaper editor tends to maintain oversight over and retain responsibility to editorials

(Crean 2011), these articles usually tell stories in a way consistent with the newspaper's

position. Therefore, editorials enable a newspaper or magazine to give detailed narratives

from its specific perspective and sway subscribers' normative views in a given direction.

Recently, a news report named *Jobs, Houses and Cows: China's Costly Drive to Erase

Extreme Poverty from *The New York Times* raised some discussion in China's cyber world

(Bradsher 2021). As already indicated in the title, this article holds a sceptical perspective

towards the poverty alleviation programme, which intended to eliminate national-wide

poverty by the end of 2020 and has been claimed to be successful. In the very beginning of

the article, the journalist Keith Bradsher says explicitly: "But the village … is also a

testament to the considerable cost of the ruling Communist Party's approach to poverty

alleviation. That approach has relied on massive, possibly unsustainable subsidies to create

jobs and build better housing." This grounds a critical tone throughout the whole text.

Although Mr Bradsher paid some tribute to this painstaking programme in the first few

paragraphs, he turned swiftly to remind readers of the problems that occurred in this state-

sponsored campaign. After telling us that many factories are subsided by the poverty

alleviation programme to hire impoverished villagers, he quickly casts doubt on the viability

of these factories, saying, "Until the subsidies arrived, the factory frequently had trouble

paying wages on time, Mr Lu said." The journalist then talks about the corruption problems

haunting this programme and criticises the rigid criteria for screening aid recipients.

While the poverty alleviation program has helped millions of poor people, critics

point to the campaign's rigid definitions. The program assists people classified as extremely

poor at some point from 2014 to 2016, without adding others who may have fallen on hard times since then. It also does very little to help poor people in big cities where wages are higher but workers must pay far more for food and rent (ibid.).

Afterwards, he mentions the failure of the programme "to tackle deep-seated problems that disproportionately hurt the poor, including the cost of health care and other gaping holes in China's emerging social safety net," as if spending more money on these could make the programme less unsustainable. Finally, the author links the poverty relief campaign to the Chinese Communist Party's political intention: "Despite the challenges, the poverty relief program may have a long-term political benefit that helps to ensure some of it survives. Gratitude for the program seems to be reinforcing the political power of the party in rural areas" (ibid.).

It is now obvious that Mr Bradsher gives us a narrative from a crooked perspective and attempts to induce a negative moral judgment on the poverty alleviation programme in readers' minds. However, the biased perspective from which the story was constructed had been seen through by some subscribers, as shown by two of the comments most recommended by readers. For instance, a reader, Jeff Sher, tells us:

> And it fails to actually explore that question. It does however, point out problems and inequities. Is this simply US-centric journalistic bias, or part of a media austerity initiative? Because here in the USA, anytime someone proposes spending to help the poor, all we hear is that it's unaffordable (while lavishing tax breaks and subsidies on the wealthy and the corporations they own).

Another reader, CM, seemingly points out the sustained perspective *The New York Times* holds, "it often ignores a large portion of government's effort that benefit Chinese people in order to not appear to be apologist for an authoritarian government."

A comparison between the editorial and the most-picked-by-readers comments also illustrates how Mr Bradsher uses the techniques of inclusion and exclusion, emphasis and downplaying to construct a story from *The New York Times* perspective:

> In December 2019 I was able to take a tour similar to the one mentioned by the journalist and I saw something different. China has distributed hundreds of thousands of young professionals to combat rural poverty. They are responsible for a rural sector and their work goes as far as helping children with their homework. There are no rigid schemes and the aim is to use local advantages. Not only factories arise but also tourist activities (tours, accommodation, shows staged from local traditions). For example, agricultural activity has been diversified seeking that the harvests are approximately consecutive in time, the work has been made more technical by associating peasants with agricultural companies, which pay them for the use of their lands, for their work as peasant and farmers for the profit sharing. All the forces of the country have been mobilized, rich regions help poor regions, cities sponsor towns, companies sponsor small local businesses. Numerous indicators and monitoring systems have been created. It is an enviable effort in pursuit of a higher goal. Long-term success will depend on maintaining professional support until a better education pays off (Jose Valenzuela).

> This rare reporting is actually quite incomplete about the scope of the program: nearly every government offices, every state-owned enterprises and many private companies are involved. Nearly every city resident in recent years has been called upon to purchase products from poorest area of the country. Young managers in government agencies, state-owned enterprises viewed going to the poorest part of country as anti-poverty leaders as their tickets for fast career advancement. These highly educated young people usually commit themselves for up to 5 years working with poor villagers to find local products that might have appeals to urban consumers. So, providing a cow to a farmer is indeed just a tip of an iceberg. A deeper reporting would show that an authoritarian system can mobilize a society in ways difficult to imagine in a democratic system for good as well as for bad (CM).

From the comparison, it is obvious that Mr Bradsher chose to include and emphasise only problems haunting the alleviation programme while neglecting or downplaying the efforts (pointed out by readers) to make it sustainable. Apart from the techniques of manipulating factual statements, Mr. Bradsher also shaped the perspective of the article by

giving certain hypotheses. For example, he interpreted the dependence on subsidies and concomitant corruption amidst the programme as signs of unsustainability and explained the poverty alleviation as motivated by the assumed political intention to reinforce dominance in rural areas.

The editorial provides us with a lens through which we see how an important information source for left-leaning Americans, *The New York Times*, utilises the techniques of narrative construction to offer a story from its preferred perspective. If the readers buy the article, expectably, they would be led to hold a sceptical attitude towards and an aversive normative judgment on China's poverty alleviation programme.

7.3.2. History Textbooks

History, as a written narrative of the past, is a human construction of the causes, course, as well as consequence of past events from a specific perspective (Cronon 1992; Holt 1990; Megill 1989).[90] As such, the historical narratives that form the foundation of history textbooks will differ as the perspectives of textbook authors over past events vary (Epstein 1994). The difference in historical narratives contained in textbooks is of utmost importance, for textbooks are "one of the main instruments for moulding the knowledge, attitudes and values of our young people" (McCluskey 1995). Most primary and secondary education students lack the knowledge or information of general readership to evaluate whether a specific perspective is veridical. Hence, they are more likely to accept what is being printed

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[90] In many historical accounts, the authors also tend to add in fabricated statements. As Timothy Lintner claims, "history is a delicate amalgam of fact and fiction". See (Lintner 2004).

in a history textbook. More importantly, narratives received from history textbooks in the early years of education tend to lie in the deep nodes of the knowledge network and, therefore, are used by people to assess and filter the historical accounts they encounter in later years.

Given the great potential of history textbooks to impact people's factual and normative beliefs, information sources would certainly not let go of this weaponry. We may get a glimpse of the utilisation of history textbooks by an information source through the varying descriptions of Japanese colonisation in Taiwan's textbooks.

After the Second World War, the Republic of China (ROC) took Taiwan back from Japan based on the Cairo Conference of 1943. However, after the nationalist party (KMT, Kuomintang) lost mainland China to the Chinese Communist Party, Taiwan became ROC's only remaining territory. To ensure ROC's legitimacy over Taiwan, KMT promulgated Chinese nationalism through a Sinification history curriculum that emphasised the horrors of Japan's military invasion of mainland China (林初梅 2010, p. 110). For instance, a version of a history textbook impressed students with a frightening image of a villainous Japanese solider holding a victim's beheaded head in the midst of the Nanjing Holocaust (國立編譯館主編 1974, p. 95). On the contrary, the textbooks, to a large extent, omitted descriptions of events in Taiwan during the Japanese occupation. Even when Taiwan was mentioned in the textbooks, the descriptions only featured anti-Japanese-rule activities and heroic resistors. For example, the 1986 version of the history textbook wrote the followings at the beginning of the section on Japanese rule:

> The socio-political activities fiercely and continually occurred during the fifty years

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when Taiwan was ceded to Japan. For example, Luo Fu-Xing, who joined both the Chinese Revolutionary League (Tong-meng-hui) and the Revolution of 1911, was seriously wounded. In the early era of the Republic, he was assigned back to Taiwan to organise and develop the association to revive Taiwan. This task, unfortunately, was known to the Japanese government; Luo was thus caught, sent to jail and sentenced to death. Thereafter, the anti-Japanese rule movement was led by local Taiwanese people, such as Jiang Wei-shui. […] Those activities revealed the determination of Taiwanese compatriots to revive Taiwan and return to their motherland (國立編譯館主編 1986, p. 112, translated by Yao 2019).

The resistance to Japanese occupation is the common experience of mainlanders and Taiwanese locals, so by emphasising heroic figures who symbolised the tie between mainlanders and Taiwanese, according to Yao Ming-Li, the history textbooks built up "the association between the people in these two places" (Yao 2019, p. 311).

From the above, we can see that the history of the Japanese occupation was written from a Sinification perspective in textbooks during KMT's pre-democratisation rule. The textbooks functioned to weaken the memory of Japanese colonisation while positively portraying Japan as the malicious "other" vis-à-vis China as "the self" (cf. Anderson 2006). The perspective on Japanese colonisation changed significantly after the first anti-China president, Lee Teng-Hui (Hughes 2013), came into power from 1988 to 2000 and during the subsequent rule of the pro-independence Democratic Development Party (DDP). History textbooks, then, were used as a means for de-Sinification (Corcuff 2002).

Under Lee Teng-Hui's presidency, the history curriculum started to separate the narrative of Taiwan history from the narrative of China history with the issue of *Knowing Taiwan [History]* (國立編譯館主編 1998), a textbook dedicated specifically to the history of Taiwan (許陳品 2020). The tendency to demarcate Taiwan history and China history was

further consolidated by the alterations of curriculum guidelines after 2001 that divided history

education into three parts – Taiwan history, China history, and world history[91] – suggesting

that Taiwan and mainland China as two national communities (Yao 2019).[92] Along with the

demarcation, the pro-Independence administrations also compressed, to a large extent, the

space for narrating China history (許陳品 2020; 林初梅 2010). By contrast, the space used

for Japan's governance in Taiwan was significantly expanded. Different from the textbooks

before Lee Teng-Hui's presidency, the new textbooks excluded or downplayed details of the

suffering Japanese invaders brought to both Taiwanese and mainlanders and the resistance

Taiwanese made, but included and indeed emphasised Japan's contribution to the

modernisation of Taiwan (Yao 2019; 林初梅 2010). In fact, one edition of the textbook even

chose to ridicule the Taiwanese resisters but glory Japanese invaders by the following

paragraph:

> After the Qing Empire lost the Sino-Japanese war and ceded Taiwan to Japan in the
> signed Treaty of Shimonoseki, the territory of Taiwan was ceded to Japan, and the
> page of the Japanese era began in 1895. At the time, a combination of ordinary
> Taiwanese people and members of the gentry organised the association 'Republic of
> Taiwan' led by Liu Yong-fu, which had as its aim to resist the rule of Japan. Several
> days later, when the Japanese military landed in Ao-di (Gong-liao Village, Taipei), the
> officers of the 'Republic of Taiwan' escaped. Taipei city was chaotic and disordered;
> some of the gentry welcomed the Japanese military entering the city for the purpose
> of maintaining social security. The military successfully entered Taipei and started the
> long-term governance of Taiwan (Kang-xuan 2005, p. 63, translated by Yao 2019).

Across editions of new textbooks, "the role of the Japanese in Taiwan was therefore

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[91] See (台灣教育部 2003).

[92] According to the latest curriculum guidelines, the textbook of China history has been replaced by that of Eastern Asia history. The process of de-Sinification is accelerated by the Tsai Ing-Wen administration.

recast from 'the other' invading the national territory to 'the self' embedded in the past of Taiwan" (Yao 2019, p. 312).

The techniques of wording or conceptualisation were also used in the new textbooks' construction of history from a de-Sinification perspective. *China*'s rule over Taiwan before the Treaty of Shimonoseki was reworded as *the Qing Empire*'s rule. "With this verbal change in the content, the connection between the Chinese nation and Taiwan became unapparent" (Yao 2019, p. 311), as the Qing Empire was itself established by the Manchu conquerors rather than the Han ethnic group. Also, the textbooks replaced the period of *Japanese occupation* with the period of *Japanese rule*, and Japan's *southwardly invasion* with *southwardly marching*, presenting an image of Imperial Japan as a legitimate ruler instead of an aggressive invader. The language changes seemed to suggest that the KMT regime was merely another coloniser no more legitimate than Imperial Japan.[93]

The variation of the perspectives from which history textbooks were written not only furnished students with discrepant 'knowledge,' but probably also shaped the national identity of students, who were the most vulnerable to alternation in perspectives due to the lack of background knowledge. From figure 1 below, we can clearly see that the percentage of respondents self-identifying as Taiwanese rocketed from 1992 to 2012, while the percentage of self-identified Chinese steadily went down. While the identity distribution trend, for sure, allows for various explanations, [94] it is plausible that the tendency was

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[93] The textbooks also replaced the ROC Era with the Common Era, further delegitimising the rule of KMT over Taiwan.

[94] There are already a large number of quantitative papers on explaining the trend, so I will simply leave readers who are interested in this topic to search for them by themselves, instead of mentioning them tediously here.

significantly correlated with the change of history education (cf. Harrison 2016; Korostelina 2008; Law 2002).
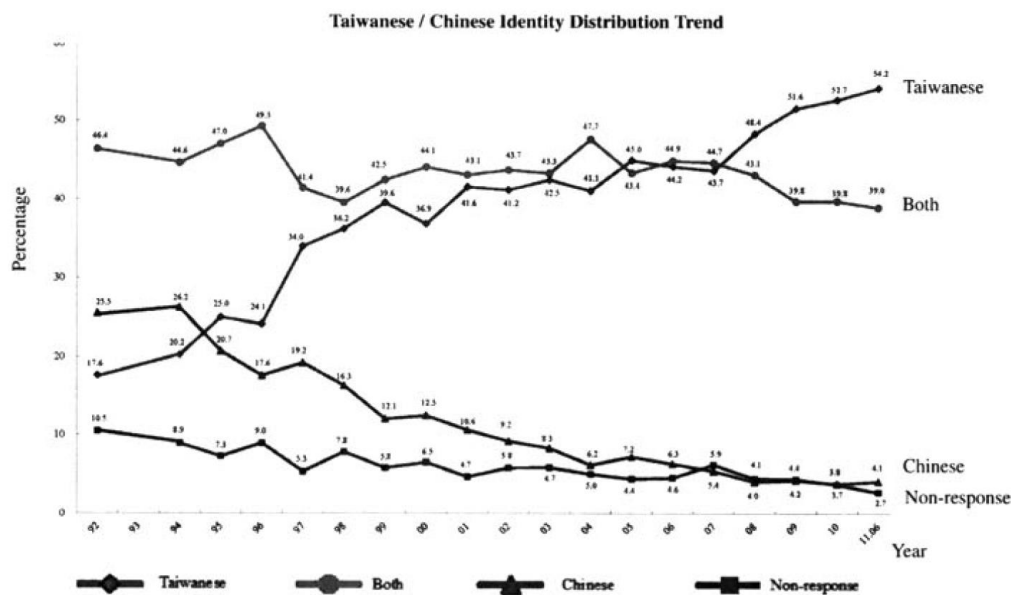

Fig. 1 Taiwanese/Chinese identity distribution trend.
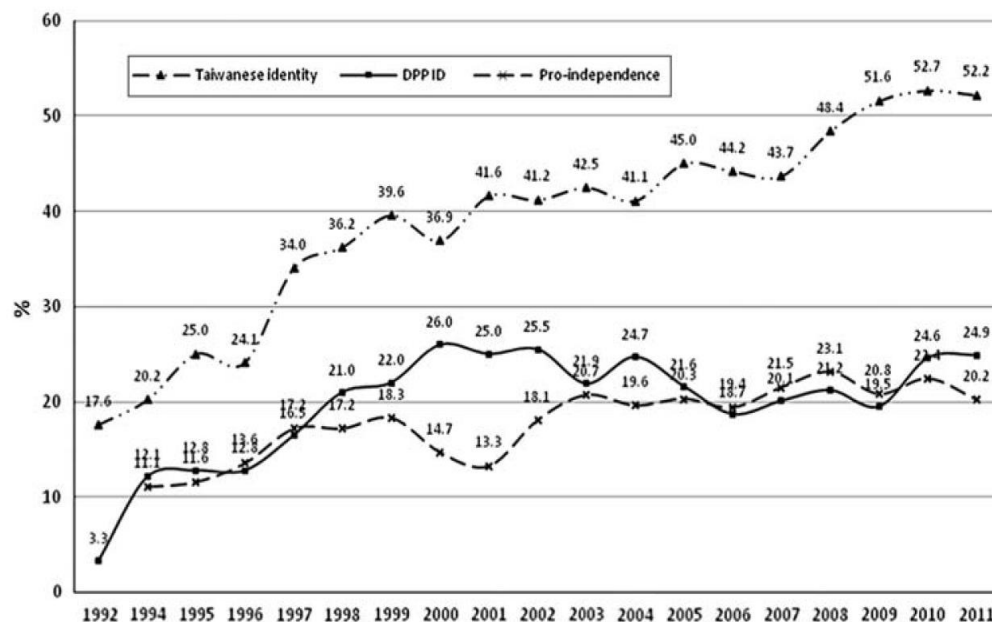Source: Election Study Centre, NCCU, important political attitude trend distribution.

Fig. 2 Development of Taiwanese identity, DDP ID and pro-independence attitude in Taiwan: 1992 – 2011.
Source: Election Study Centre, NCCU, important political attitude trend distribution.

National identity is correlated with many normative judgments, such as whether ROC or the People's Republic of China has a legitimate claim on Taiwan, whether Taiwan should reunite with mainland China, and whether mainlanders in Taiwan should be accorded the same national treatment as locals. For instance, figure 2 above shows that the percentage of pro-independence respondents was going upward gradually in tandem with the increasing percentage of self-identified Taiwanese.

History textbooks, as a "selective version of a shaping past and a pre-shaped present which is then powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural definition and identification" (Williams 1989, p. 58), have a function of legitimatising particular values, assumptions, and principles reflective of the interests of political powers (Apple 2004; Apple and Christian-Smith 2017; Taxel 1989). When written from different perspectives, citizens' normative stances are accordingly swayed in divergent directions. As shown by the case of Taiwan, the shadow of an important type of information sources, the central governments, is seldom absent in the construction of historical narratives in standardised textbooks.

7.4. A Short Conclusion

In this chapter, I have, firstly, explained what it is for a narrative to be constructed from a specific perspective. A narrator might include or omit certain facts. He might also emphasise or downplay the facts included in a story. Lastly, he can choose to fabricate certain things. Many techniques derivative from these three ways can be manoeuvred, as shown by examples in the second section, to construct narratives from different perspectives that

influence people's other-regarding and self-regarding normative judgments. Expectably, information sources certainly would not let go of narratives as a means to sway people's normative stances. I have exemplified in the last section that various information sources store narratives constructed from preferred perspectives in their arsenal for the purpose of normative disciplining.

As I have argued, a moral progress judgment is a specific kind of normative judgment, so it is also under the sway of narratives. Many MPJs were, in fact, made on the basis of narratives provided by information sources. For example, the biographies of influential figures, such as former slaves, slave owners, and slave traders, [95] served as unambiguous testimony to the misery and evil of slavery that encouraged ordinary people to reach credible MPJs and thereby supported the abolition movement. However, not all narratives are written from an objective and balanced perspective. The perspective of the narrative provided by a certain information source might be crooked, and a MPJ based on it might thus be incredible. To ascertain the credibility of a MPJ, we need to check whether it premises on a credible narrative. The evaluation of whether a narrative is credible, I believe, largely depends on the context in which it is circulated, for which I can give no general criteria. However, there are several aspects that we may pay attention to when evaluating a certain narrative, given the three ways in which narratives can be told from different perspectives: whether it involves fabrication, omits significant details, or contains inappropriate emphasis or understatement (cf. Bevir 1994; McCullagh 1987, 2000).

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[95] For example, see (Douglass 2009, 2014; Jacobs 2009; Newton 1788; Woolman 2016).

In the two chapters above, I have discussed two sorts of materials that information sources might provide in order to shape MPJs. There are many other relevant materials which historians should investigate for readers to have a better understanding of how a MPJ is formed or accepted, such as normative beliefs *per se*, propaganda about moral paragons, and cosmology. However, the limited space here urges me to leave the discussion them to future work. Apart from the materials provided, the ways in which information sources provide those materials may also affect the credibility of resulting MPJs. In the next chapter, I will introduce genealogists to the various ways information sources may influence people's belief systems.

Chapter VIII: Modes of Persuasion

In the preceding chapters, I have introduced two kinds of materials – conceptual frameworks and narrative perspectives – of which various information sources can make use to manufacture discrepant representations of the same series of events. People's moral progress judgment is contingent on the information they possess. For example, a person, who accepts the account of the Civil War written in *Gone with the Wind* in its entirety, is more likely to see the abolition in the U.S. as a case of moral regress. On the contrary, it is more likely for those who have faith in black abolitionists' memoirs to judge that the abolition is a clear-cut case of moral progress. The credibility of a MPJ largely depends on the credibility

of the information on the basis of which it is accepted.

Some representations of reality are clearly crooked. For instance, in hindsight, Margaret Mitchell's description of the Antebellum South clearly embellishes the humanity of southern whites while covering up the misery chattel slavery brought to blacks. Likewise, classifying Jews as social insects in Nazis Germany undoubtedly distorted the reality. However, it is, unfortunately, often difficult to differentiate accurate representations of the world from inaccurate ones. Here is an incomplete list of reasons for the difficulty:

1. we often lack historical records to evaluate whether a narrative is faithful to the events it claims to describe;
2. conceptualisation allows for considerable discretion and different ways of categorising a certain item may be compatible;
3. whether categorising an item or narrating an event in a specific way is reliable, on many occasions, depends on the describer's intention. For example, whether Mr Lijian Zhao's claim that the controversial picture was a *satirical illustration* is credible depends on what Mr Zhao expected from posting the picture. However, it is almost impossible to ascertain a describer's true purpose.

What to do, then, if the reliability of the information as the input of a MPJ is uncertain? Consider the following case where an agent *A* is made to believe that *p* by hypnosis. If the credibility of the belief that *p* is uncertain, should *A* find the belief trustworthy? Probably not, because *A*'s holding the belief that *p* is the outcome of hypnosis, a process that is, *ceteris paribus*, not a reliable approach to forming true beliefs. This case shows us that historians or genealogists should record the ways in which the information underlying a MPJ is communicated if they are to provide a genealogy by which readers can assess the credibility of the MPJ, especially when the credibility of the information *per se* is invisible to us.

The easiest way for an information source to propagate information is that subscribers simply accept whatever it asserts. However, this is not the case under most circumstances. In most cases, an information source has to persuade people of the information it intends to diffuse. A wide range of factors might affect the effectiveness of persuasive communication (Cialdini 2001; Eagly and Chaiken 1993; Maio, Haddock, and Verplanken 2018), and among the factors, the modes of persuasion have the most significant epistemological implications. For example, beliefs acquired through rational argumentation, according to our epistemological intuitions, tend to be credible. In contrast, those induced through brainwashing, hypnosis, and material rewarding are likely to be less reliable.[96]

In what follows, I draw aspirational genealogists' attention to some typical modes of persuasive communication, which have significant epistemological implications, information sources may employ: rational argumentation, silencing disliked information and ideas, and creating and maintaining an echo chamber. I first attempt to make sense of what they are, and then give vivid examples of their applications (except rational argumentation, because their applications are too obvious to put ink on – consider, say, numerous philosophical writings on animal welfare or abortion). These different modes of persuasion draw the credibility of a resulting MPJ towards opposite directions. Hence, genealogists may help readers better grasp its credibility by relating how the modes function in the formation of a specific MPJ.

8.1. Rational Argumentation

Argumentation is "a complex speech act in which a speaker presents a thesis to a

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[96] One may see (Foucault 2012) to understand how power utilises rewarding examination to discipline its subjects.

listener or audience, and defends this thesis with reasons or premises" (Goldman 1994, p. 27).

In short, argumentation is a speech act that defends one's claims with arguments. An

argumentation can be performed mono-logically by a single speaker, but more common is a

dialectical argumentation, "a series of speech acts in which two (or more) speakers

successively defend conflicting positions, each citing premises in support of their position"

(ibid., p. 27).[97]

We are familiar with various forms of argumentation in our daily life. Critical

discussion in philosophy symposiums and scientific research, presidential debates between

candidates from different parties, and drastic exchanges in court are all common types of

argumentation. It is for the function of argumentation to promote truth and avoid errors that

people practice it in all walks of life (Goldman 1994, p. 30), which in turn helps them steer a

successful course through the world. However, not all argumentations contribute to the

promotion of truth and the avoidance of error, but only do those that are rational. Like other

human behaviours, argumentation is rational when it is "good" relative to some standard

(Hahn and Oaksford 2012, p. 278).

To engage in argumentation is to offer arguments for one's claims. Hence the

rationality of an argumentation partly depends on the quality of the arguments it employs.

The quality of an argument is a function of the degree to which it satisfies logical norms and

avoids commonplace fallacies, such as circular argument (Walton 1985, 1991), the argument

from ignorance (Walton 1992a), the slippery slope argument (Walton 1992b), the *ad hominem*

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[97] See also (Van Eemeren et al. 2013, p. 5; Van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004; Walton 2005).

argument (Walton 1987, 1998b, 2000), and so forth.[98] Hence, for argumentation to qualify as a rational one its component arguments should by and large meet the requirements of logic.[99] In addition to logical norms, the requirements for an argument to be rational seem to be context-dependent: the constraints in some contexts are stricter than the constraints in others. For example, a good argument for the effect of a new medicine in scientific research requires evidence gathered from double-blind experiments in which neither researchers nor patients know whether it is the medicine or just some placebo that is taken. On the contrary, we might rationally argue for the effect of some medicine just by alluding to personal experience when we want a friend to take the same medicine as we do.

An argumentation that employs arguments with good quality, however, is not necessarily a rational one because, firstly, the speaker in an argumentation may attempt to deceive the audience by insincere statements. Secondly, the premises may be unacceptable to the audience or interlocutors (Goldman 1994). The norms of good argumentation are still under debate (Maier 1989), so here below I can only provide some proximate requirements for an argumentation to be rational.

To avoid insincerity, a rational argumentation requires a speaker assert a conclusion or a premise only if she believes it (ibid., p. 34). Furthermore, she should also assert a premise only if she believes she is justified in believing (ibid.). Moreover, she is allowed to affirm a conclusion on the basis of stated premises only if "(a) those premises, together with unstated premises justifiably believed by the speaker, strongly support the conclusion, (b) she believes

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[98] See (Woods et al. 2000) for a fuller list of various fallacies in argumentation.

[99] To simplify expressions, I count the avoidance of fallacies as requirements of logic.

that they strongly support it, and (c) she is justified in believing that they strongly support it" (ibid., p. 36). Finally, "a speaker is not allowed to assert any proposition with the primary intention of inducing her audience to infer a further proposition that she herself believes to be false" (ibid., p. 37).

Even if a speaker sincerely present arguments, she may employ premises or inferential connections that the audience finds not comprehensible or credible, viz., not acceptable. In such a case, the argumentation is still not rational to a sufficient extent. According to Alvin Goldman, the evaluation standard of argumentation concerning acceptability is the following:

> Ceteris paribus, the quality of a piece of argumentation presented by speaker *S* to audience *H* is higher to the extent that *H* (or a larger proportion of *H*) is more disposed to (a) find the asserted premises credible, (b) share any premises unasserted but presupposed by *S*, and (c) recognise (through *S*'s argumentation) that the premises provide strong support for the conclusion (ibid.).

The problem confronting Goldman's proposal is that some audiences might be so rigid or sceptical that they are disposed to reject even well-grounded premises or reasonable inferences. Were the rationality of argumentation determined by such an audience-relativised standard, then many intuitively good argumentation would fall short of rational argumentation (Siegel 1989). Therefore, some philosophers put forward more objective norms of acceptability. For instance, Anthony Blair and Ralph Johnson construct the notion of a "community of model interlocutors," endowed with certain ideal traits – knowledgeability, reflectiveness, open-mindedness, and dialectical acuteness – and suggest that "a premise in an argument is acceptable without defence just in case a person following

the methods and embodying the traits of the pertinent community. . . would fail to raise a question or doubt about it" (Blair and Johnson 1987, p. 53).

Here I am no judge of whose conception of the acceptability of arguments is better, but simply illustrate what rational argumentation might require. As argumentation is normally dialectical, that is, engaged in by multiple arguers who criticise each other's arguments, the arguers are also rationally required to respond "appropriately and effectively to as many criticisms of one's argumentation as possible" (Goldman 1994, p. 41). Responding to others' criticisms is not always to defend one's own standpoint against rebuttals. When others' objections are sound enough, a rational arguer is obligated to "retract some of their original premises when appropriate, withdraw original claims of support relations, and even concede that their original conclusion was mistaken" (ibid.).

A rational argumentation also needs to meet some procedural requirements. The most significant rule, I think, is that rational argumentation should set no arbitrary constraints on who can take part and voice in a discourse. It ideally takes place in such a context free of fear, intimidation, and ridicule that a wide variety of points of view can be expressed and heard. The rationale of this liberal ban on exclusion is best expressed in the following paragraph written by John Stuart Mill:

> The whole strength and value then of human judgment, depending on the one
> property, that it can be set right when it is wrong, reliance can be placed on it only,
> when the means of setting it right are kept constantly at hand. In the case of a person
> whose judgment is really deserving of confidence, how has it become so? Because he
> has kept his mind open to criticism on his opinions and conduct. Because it has been
> his practice to listen to all that could be said against him; to profit by as much of it as
> was just, and expound to himself, and upon occasion to others, the fallacy of what

was fallacious. Because he has felt that the only way in which a human being can make some approach to knowing the whole of a subject, is by hearing what can be said about it by persons of every variety of opinion, and studying all modes in which it can be looked at by every character of mind (Mill 2015).[100]

Inspired by the common law tradition, many argumentation theorists also believe that rational argumentation should follow the procedural rules of the burden of proof as with discourse in a courtroom (Hahn and Oaksford 2007; Walton 1988). These norms governing rational debate are captured primarily by so-called pragma-dialectical theories of argumentation (Van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004, 2010, 2016; Walton 1995, 1998a), and can be summarised as the following:

the discussant who has called the standpoint of the other discussant into question in the confrontation stage is always entitled to challenge the discussant to defend this standpoint … The discussant who is challenged by the other discussant to defend the standpoint that he has put forward in the confrontation stage is always obliged to accept this challenge, unless the other discussant is not prepared to accept any shared premises and discussion rules; the discussant remains obliged to defend the standpoint as long as he does not retract it and as long as he has not successfully defended it against the other discussant on the basis of the agreed premises and discussion rules (Van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004, pp. 137-9).

Now we may sum up what it is, generally, for argumentation to be rational. First and foremost, the arguments employed in argumentative communication should meet the norms of logic to a sufficient degree. Moreover, the arguers of rational argumentation should sincerely voice arguments that are acceptable – comprehensible and credible – to the audience. Besides, arguers should be appropriately responsive to each other's objections. Finally, there are some procedural rules: a rational debate allows a variety of opinions

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[100] See (Kitcher 1990) or an epistemic defence of diversity in scientific discussion.

without arbitrary constraints, and the holder of a specific claim is obligated to defend her standpoint by good reasons when challenged by other arguers.

What, then, is rational argumentation to do with the credibility of moral progress judgments? Presumably, a MPJ is more likely to be credible, *ceteris paribus*, if it is made based on the information provided by information sources through rational argumentation. The common use of rational argumentation in academic and political debates testifies to our faith in its ability to promote truth and avoid errors. The faith primarily comes from the core feature of argumentation that it employs arguments rather than, say, emotional instigation or subconscious hints to distribute information. Opposite to the latter, arguments are something that we can put under critical scrutiny to check whether they meet the requirements of rationality: logical norms, as well as requirements of sincerity and acceptability. Arguments' potential to be critically scrutinised is realisable when the argumentation that employs them follows the procedural rules of open discussion and the burden of proof. The process of rational argumentation serves "as a kind of filtering device" to undermine fallacious and superstitious forms of reasoning that may arise when an information source propagates information by monologue (Christiano 1997, pp. 247-51), for a diversity of dissenters are endowed with the opportunity to examine the arguments and offer counterinformation. When an information source is sufficiently responsive as rationality demands, it alters the premises, inferences, or even conclusions under the pressure of challenges brought about by opponents. Therefore, it probably makes the corrected information closer to truth.

Since information spread through rational argumentation is likely to be credible,

historians might investigate to what extent the ways, in which various information sources provide information underlying a MPJ, approximate strictly rational argumentation, especially when the reliability of the information content *per se* remains unclear.

Contra rational argumentation, however, information sources often distribute information through epistemically unfavourable modes of persuasion. In contrast to the norm of open discussion, information sources might try to impose the exclusion of conflicting opinions. In the next section, I turn to the phenomena of silencing and its potential bearings on the credibility of MPJs.

8.2. Silencing

Silencing, in my hands, refers to the act that suppresses the production (Langton 1993, p. 299), communication, or uptake of some information (Hornsby and Langton 1998). This technical definition implies that there are three forms of silencing: to curtail the production, to cut off the communication, and to hamper the understanding of certain information. Although the three forms of silencing are conceptually distinguishable, information sources tend to utilise a mix of them in reality. To enforce any form of silencing, information sources have to resort to certain means. In what follows, I briefly introduce four sorts of means before I analyse how these means facilitate some specific form of silencing in concrete examples.

The first and most overt means of silencing is to use physical force to interfere with the production or communication of certain information. The execution or imprisonment of dissenters is a typical example of this means,[101] but it can also be realised by the prohibition

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[101] A more benign way of enforcing this means is to talk over the dissenters, making them hard to have voices heard.

on publicising unwanted information. A less overt means of silencing is to increase the cost of communicating certain information, while the cost could be physical or psychological. To enact a law that sanctions unfavourable speech is to increase the physical cost of voicing certain opinions institutionally, while making the dissenters feel the peer pressure not to say certain things increases the psychological cost.[102] The more covert means of silencing is to sustain the stereotype that some groups are not credible as testifiers and perpetuate the practice of discounting their viewpoints (Dotson 2011). When this means operates on the part of the would-be voicers, it constantly frustrates their aspiration to put forward their opinions and reduces their self-confidence in their contribution's value. On the part of the would-be recipients, this means brings down their willingness and patience to take in and reciprocate the information given by the discounted group. The most covert means of silencing, which Miranda Fricker condemns as hermeneutical injustice (Fricker 2007), is to deprive people of the background knowledge and concepts necessary for certain views to be formed or uptaken. The confiscation of liberal and Marxist works in Communist and capitalist societies, respectively, is representative of this means (for sure, the confiscation is also the manifestation of the first means for the authors of these works).

Now I turn to exemplify how information sources utilise certain means to facilitate some forms of silencing in fictional or real-life situations. Although the examples below attempt to showcase the means of silencing one by one for clarity, please keep in mind that, in reality, information sources seldom rely exclusively on any single measure.

See (Emerick 2019) p. 36.

[102] See (Harvin 1996) for a plenty of examples.

George Orwell's novel *1984* gives us the most horrifying instance of how an authority could use physical force to suppress the production and communication of unwanted information (Orwell 2021). The novel depicts a fictive state called Oceania, one of the totalitarian super-powers that rule the world. The "Party" with the ideology of "Ingsoc" and its mysterious leader Big Brother, who has an intense cult of personality, rule the state tyrannically through the Thought Police and constant surveillance to eliminate dissent. A dissenter becomes an "unperson" with all evidence of his existence extinguished by the Ministry of Truth. The Ministry of Truth also constantly rewrites historical records to fit the Party's ever-changing words and deeds. For example, when Oceania changed its alliance from Eastasia to Eurasia, the Ministry makes up the "fact" that Eurasia has always been a loyal ally and Eastasia always an enemy. Also, almost all figures of production with regard to economics are grossly exaggerated or simply fabricated by the Ministry to display a flourishing economy, even though the reality is the opposite. Absent any other source of information, the general public tends to have a total and uncritical acceptance of what the Party wants them to believe. When a subject, such as the protagonist Winston Smith, does not accept the authority of the Party on epistemic matters, he is sent to the Ministry of Love, where he gets "re-educated" by brutal torture till his love for Big Brother and the Party gets reinstalled. Here we see that Oceania constantly limits the general public's access to opposite versions of information. It suppresses and brainwashes those who dare to voice and fabricates historical records to fit its practical needs.

1984 is but just fiction. However, the grand chronicle of silencing by physical force

from the burning of books in the East and the execution of Socrates in the West,[103] through

the Religious Inquisition in the Middle Ages and early modern period, to the mass

incarceration of political dissenters within both totalitarian and authoritarian regimes in our

recent history, shows that various powers always deem the suppression of information

production and communication by physical force as an effective way to establish epistemic

authority – that is, to make subjects believe what the powers want them to believe. This

history continues. Even though the past 20 years witnessed the thriving of cyberspace, which

was once expected to be a barrier-free public space for the exchange of different viewpoints,

the usage of silencing by physical force has not given up. Many states erect "national

cyberborders that limit citizens' access to information from abroad" (Deibert 2015). Within

their cyber borders, these states tend to eliminate the information they deem fake or

dangerous. Also, registration and identification are used to tie internet users to specific

accounts or devices. Sometimes, people's access to the Internet even requires government

permission. With people tied to specific accounts, these states then manipulate "various forms

of 'baked-in' surveillance, censorship, and 'backdoor' functionalities that governments,

wielding their licensing authority, require manufacturers and service providers to build into

their products" (ibid.). Occasionally, people circulating undesirable information are arrested

and prosecuted. It seems that the suppression of information production and communication

persists in the Digital Age.

Using physical force to silence unwanted voices is not the exclusive privilege of

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[103] For the burning of books and the killing of scholars in Qin Empire, see (Chan 1972).

governments. More instances of silencing by physical measures in democracy are carried out

by non-governmental organisations. Donald Trump gives us the most famous example by

being banned from a handful of social media and getting many of his posts labelled as false

or partly false by social media giants, such as Facebook, Twitter and Youtube (Dwoskin

2021). Ordinary people, instead of political power or organisations, also in many cases

enforce conformity with beliefs preferred by them through silencing by physical means. The

traditional way for them to perform this function is to form a mob that violently cuts off

unfavoured information. During the Antebellum U.S., for instance, many mobs were

organised to prevent or disrupt abolitionist meetings in Utica, New York, Boston, and

throughout the North, where antislavery speech was not outlawed straightforwardly. To take

an example:

> In October 1835, William Lloyd Garrison was captured by a mob that invaded an abolitionist
> meeting; the mob led him around the streets of Boston with a rope around his neck. In 1834, a
> mob broke into the home of Lewis Tappan, a leader and financial angel of the abolitionists,
> and destroyed his belongings. Tappan wrote that he would leave his despoiled house
> throughout the summer as a silent monument to the corrupting effect of slavery on the
> American Republic (Curtis 1994, p. 801).

The violent practices of mobs silencing the production or communication of dissent

persist in the contemporary world.[104] *The Coddling of the American Mind* records many

cases in the contemporary U.S. in which mobs prosecuted dissenters through various forms of

violence (Haidt and Lukianoff 2018). The most appalling case is the 2017 Berkeley Riot. On

Feb. 1st, 2007, a few days before Donald Trump's inauguration, thousands of protesters

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[104] I think the shocking case of silencing by mass movement is Cultural Revolution in China. See (Tsou 1986).

gathered on the campus of UC Berkeley in order to stop Milo Yiannopoulos, a gay Trump supporter, from giving a speech at UC Berkeley. Yiannopoulos was a skilled provocateur who mastered the art of incitation. He was good at using the outrage incited by his provocations to embarrass his opponents so as to advance his ends. Many of the protesters were members of "antifascists" or "Antifa." Some of them conducted during the protest vandalism and violence, including knocking down a light generator, shooting commercial-grade fireworks into constructures and at cops, destroying ATMs, setting fires, dismantling barricades for breaking windows, throwing stones at police officers, and even casting Molotov cocktails. Even worse, some people postulated as opponents were attacked physically by the mob with fists, pipes, sticks, and poles. Some protesters hit the face of a man who carried a sign saying "The First Amendment is for everyone," making him dipped in blood. Similarly, a young woman wearing a red MAKE BITCOIN GREAT AGAIN baseball cap was pepper-sprayed by a protester immediately after she told a reporter, "I'm looking to make a statement by just being here, and I think the protesters are doing the same. Props to the ones who are doing it non-violently, but I think that's a very rare thing indeed." Masked Antifa protesters in black outfits even used flagpoles to beat up a couple who were pinned against metal barriers, incapable of running away. The wife, Katrina Redelsheimer, was struck on the head, and her husband, John Jennings, was hit in the temple. Immediately afterwards, other protesters blinded the couple and three of their friends by spraying mace into their eyes. When the friends cried for help, protesters punched them and struck them in the head with sticks until bystanders helped the victims get over the barricades. In the meantime, a group of protesters

dragged Jennings a few feet away, where they kicked and beat him until onlookers pulled

attackers off him as he lost consciousness. People who tried to record the event were also

attacked. Pranav Jandhyala, a UC Berkeley student journalist and self-described "moderate

liberal," who used his mobile phone to shoot the riot, was attacked by the mob. When

Jandhyala attempted to run away, the protesters chased him, punching him in the head,

beating him with sticks, and calling him a "neo-Nazi." The ensuing cancellation of Milo

Yiannopoulos's speech came up to the protesters' expectations. An offending voice had been

silenced before it got a chance to speak out on campus. Consequently, the progressives'

resonant atmosphere remains intact.

However, the most efficient way of silencing in a society with a large population is

not to impose surveillance from the outside but to install self-surveillance inside people's

hearts. In other words, the most efficient way is to increase the cost of producing or

promulgating certain information. To monitor a countless number of people in order to

repress different voices by physical force requires a costly organisation of agents and

espionage. There is even a possibility that the agents themselves get "eroded" by the voices

they are supposed to silence. In *The Lives of Others*, Gerd Wiesler, an agent of the Stasi, is

transformed by the playwright Georg Dreyman he eavesdrops, as Winston Smith is "eroded"

by the historical records he is supposed to destroy. For reducing financial costs and avoiding

the mutability of human beings, a silencing authority tends to evoke self-criticism and self-

correcting in the people it intends to inculcate by the cost one may incur for giving

conflicting information. That is why all houses, apartments, workplaces and public spaces are

equipped with two-way televisions in *1984*, and why Big Brother encourages people to

whistle-blow deviant thoughts mutually. When men are fearful of *ex post* punishment for

their viewpoints, they have a tendency to *ex ante* self-eradicate dissenting opinions. A

panopticon, in which any prisoner has no idea of whether the one and only jailer is staring at

him, is the most efficient way of control (Bentham and Božovič 1995). Because it stimulates

every prisoner to conform to norms even when the jailer is in fact not monitoring him.

Likewise, to most efficiently silence other versions of information is to build a panopticon of

thought in which prisoners, in fear of the guaranteed cost of deviance, continually self-correct

deviant opinions.
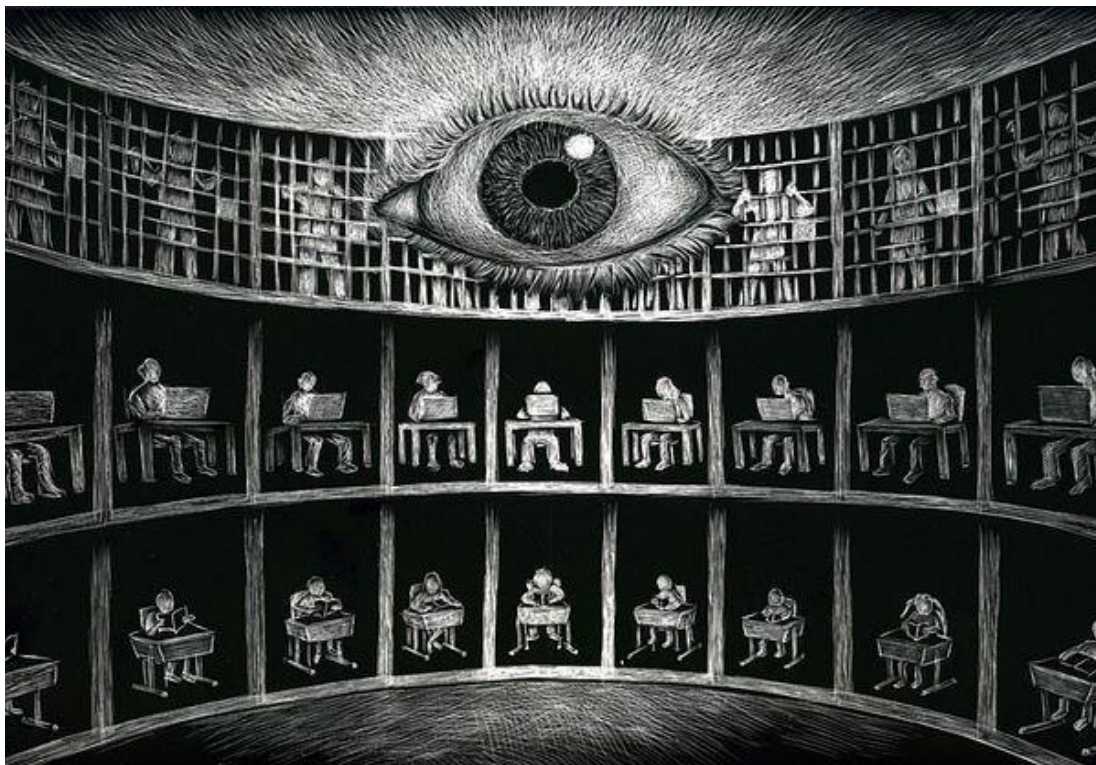
Surveillance and suppression alone may be unable to silence counterviews because

what is deeply in the heart still cannot be extracted and eliminated by the current technologies.

It is, therefore, better to discipline people to believe what is meant to be said than to punish them for not voicing what is desired by the information source. Thus, a silencing authority, more often than not, promises those who conform opportunities to secure a decent life. To check conformity, various examinations figure in all walks of life. The answers to be given in these examinations, packaged as knowledge, are instil into the educational system so that the examinees not only take the expected answers as beneficial but also as their acquired truths (Foucault 1975, pp. 184-7). By linking examinations and "knowledge" on the one hand and life prospects on the other, the authority imposes the costs on potential dissenters that incentivise them to learn what the authority requires. The anticipated costs of producing or communicating certain information can also be conveyed to potential dissenters through the enactment of laws. In the Antebellum U.S., for example, "Southern states passed laws suppressing antislavery speech and press" (Curtis 1994, p. 787).

Silencing unfavourable information through the increase of costs can also be done by non-governmental agents through psychological pressure, which could be imposed on the would-be dissenters by mailing intimidating letters or even death threats, signing open letters that ask a scholar to withdraw a discomforting paper (instead of writing a paper to argue with him), etc. (Haidt and Lukianoff 2018). The most representative form of such pressure in our time is cancel culture, a modern form of ostracism by which someone is thrown out of social circles after making statements or taking behaviours deemed to be questionable or controversial (Bromwich 2018; Yar 2019). In such a culture, people gain prestige for publicly "calling out" those in their community who are postulated as committing offences, even

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minor ones (Friedersdorf 2017). Those cancelled tend to be shamed, condemned, cut off, ignored and blocked on everything (Yar 2019). If they were celebrities, the support and money given to them could be withdrawn (Bromwich 2018). For fear of the mental and material pressures calling-out may bring about, "life in a call-out culture requires constant vigilance, fear, and self-censorship" to avoid convictions from the highly motivated public (Haidt and Lukianoff 2018). "Many in the audience may feel sympathy for the person being shamed but are afraid to speak up, yielding the false impression that the audience is unanimous in its condemnation" (ibid.). Voices disliked by certain groups of people, hence, are silenced in the microfibers of the social life in a community by peer pressure expressed through prosecution, condemnation, shaming and social distancing and by the people holding dissents themselves through self-censoring and "self-castration."

The third and fourth kinds of means by which silencing can be enforced are more subtle, but are gaining more attention from the philosophical academia (due to the fact that they are subtle but have received much more attention from philosophers, my introduction to the means would be sketchy). Patricia Hill Collins shows us in her *Black Feminist Thought* the impact of silencing on the basis of stereotyping and discounting some people's status as credible testifiers (Collins 2002). According to her, four images control how black women are perceived socially: they are seen as mammies, matriarchs, welfare mothers, and whores (ibid., p. 72-81). This set of "controlling images" or stereotypes stigmatises black women as a group, preventing them from being perceived as knowers, thereby perpetuating the practice of other groups' discounting the information black women give. Being routinely taken as non-

knowers who give incredible information, black women gradually lose their confidence or courage and desire to share with other groups what they accept as valuable information. Such stereotyping and discounting may eventually damage the epistemic agency of black women, rendering them *de facto* non-knowers, who are unable to comprehend the world in their own way and share different understandings with other groups.

The fourth means of silencing is, in practice, closely connected to the first means. That is, depriving people of the background knowledge and concepts they need to produce, communicate, or uptake certain information tends to involve physical force that suppresses the circulation of these concepts and knowledge. From our vantage point, we are hardly unfamiliar with various attempts by powerful authorities to curtail the spread of knowledge and concepts for silencing the information unwanted by them, ranging from the Church's *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, through the ban on communist works in capitalist societies in the last century, and finally to the prohibition against liberal thoughts in authoritarian, totalitarian, and theocratic states.

Now that we have witnessed above the various techniques of silencing dissenting voices, from antiquity to the contemporary world, from government-leading to mass violence, from physical cruelty to mere mental pressure, from stereotyping to the deprivation of relevant knowledge, a question might be asked: what does silencing have to do with credibility? Some may suspect that a piece of information made believed by silencing is necessarily untrustworthy. This view, however, is problematic (cf. Emerick 2019). Even in our contemporary world, where science greatly flourishes, superstitious speech,

pseudoscience, and conspiracy theories are still attractive to many people. At least in the schooling period, governments have to employ standardised textbooks so as to exclude and silence these anti-intellectual propagandas, unless we are willing to bear the consequence that many schoolkids grow up believing, for example, that God creates the world or that COVID-19 vaccines are in fact chips produced by Microsoft to control people's mind. Furthermore, unlimited freedom of speech is never an option, even in the eye of libertarians, because hate speech and expressions promulgating racism, sexism, terrorism, etc., tend to gain some popularity in an unregulated public sphere. These speeches are not only untrue but also harmful to society as a whole. When a piece of information is definitely untrue and likely to impact society tremendously, some authoritative information sources – governments, organisations, or individuals – seem obligated to constrain it in public space in an appropriate way in case of the possible harm the information might bring.

It is by now crystal clear that not all beliefs established through silencing are unreliable. It is exactly through the restriction of some undesirable views in a proper way by certain authoritative information sources that most of us acquire scientific knowledge and normative beliefs in freedom, equality and justice. Which expressions should be silenced, to what extent, and in what manners, nonetheless, are under heated debate, which exceeds the scope of my current topic. Here I only consider a point most relevant to the topic: when does the silencing of information matter most to historians who attempt to write a genealogy that helps readers evaluate the reliability of a MPJ?

In some cases, where the information silenced was obviously untrue with our

hindsight, while the information spread was true, it is easy for us to judge the credibility of

the resulting MPJ (whether it was morally right to silence the false information is another

question). On the contrary, when the voices muzzled told the truth, but the silencing

authorities promulgated falsity, the credibility of the MPJ was apparently dubious. Since

readers are able to judge credibility based on the content of information in both kinds of

situations, it is not necessary for genealogists to record the act of silencing in both kinds of

cases. However, when it comes to cases in which the content of the silenced information was

not well documented or the truth value of it remains ambiguous, we cannot but consider the

epistemological consequence of silencing seriously. It is in these cases the silencing of

information matters most to genealogists.

  To sum up, that certain information sources establish a MPJ through silencing

conflicting voices counts against the credibility of the MPJ, unless we know for sure that the

silenced information was not credible. In constructing a genealogy of a specific MPJ, it is

helpful for historians to investigate which voices are muzzled by information sources for the

MPJ to eventually emerge. In cases where the muzzled information is not well recorded or its

truth value is not clear, historians are supposed to display the silencing by information

sources to readers.

8.3. Echo Chamber

  Silencing is not always a workable option for information sources to spread ideas. In a

democracy, the freedom of speech and press is guaranteed by the constitution and the

mechanism of check and balance, leaving governments and other organisations only limited

power to constrain dissents. Even in totalitarian or authoritarian states, there is still space

beyond the reach of power for complaining activists to engage in public discourse - otherwise,

mass movement can never be mobilised.[105] In other words, a wall built from without is never

omnipresent, imposing constraints on conflicting voices. However, when there is no wall

imposed from without, human beings have a tendency to impose a wall on themselves from

within. It has been well evidenced that human beings are predisposed to selectively expose

themselves to information that is consistent with their assumptions, beliefs, and emotions,

especially with regard to moral and political matters (Berelson and Steiner 1964; Frey 1986;

Iyengar and Hahn 2009; Knobloch-Westerwick and Meng 2009; Stroud 2010).[106] Although it

is unavoidable that people from time to time are exposed to dissonant viewpoints, the biased

way in which human beings process information received from both the congenial and the

uncongenial sides tends to undercut the effectiveness of cross-spectrum information

exchanges. On the one hand, we are readily prepared to accept, without further investigation,

information and opinion consistent with our existing beliefs (Freedman and Sears 1965). On

the other hand, we are more likely to critically examine the evidence that appears to go

against our views, especially when the matter at issue attracts our attention. Worse still, the

examination is unlikely to be dispassionate and impartial but usually biased: people's pre-

existing assumptions, beliefs, and emotions affect their perception of which evidence is

strong and which is weak. As a consequence, it is more often than not that people come out

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[105] For an overview of social movements, one may see (Snow, Soule, and Kriesi 2008).

[106] Some, however, argue that previous research overstates the extent of selective exposure, e.g., Pablo Barberá et al. (Barberá et al. 2015) argue that partisan segregation in social-media usage is not as serious as past work claimed.

from a critical examination reaffirming what they have already believed. The dual influences of selective exposure and biased processing on the information-seeking activity of human beings create from within a wall surrounding an echo chamber, in which similar-minded individuals mutually affirm and strengthen their existing viewpoints.[107]

Under circumstances where silencing is not available, information sources might fall back on human beings' proclivity for selective exposure and biased processing for persuasion. An information source might create a new echo chamber or take advantage of a ready-made one by catering to chamber members' pre-existing attitudinal systems. The information source might also maintain the echo chamber by putting a wedge between its subscribers and information channels with conflicting positions. Inside an echo chamber, an information source, by its nature, should also provide followers with various materials, such as a conceptual framework and narratives constructed from a specific perspective – the resources I have discussed in preceding chapters – so as to inculcate followers with certain information.

The conservative media establishment in the U.S., including the political talk radio of Rush Limbaugh, Fox News, and the editorial pages of the *Wall Street Journal*, provides a well-studied example of how information sources promulgate information through a reinforcing spiral – the mutual reinforcement between selective exposure of conservative readers to these media outlets and the media effect on the readers – within a conservative echo chamber (Slater 2007). Conservative-minded people that consisted of economic elites, churchgoers, and southerners have existed in the U.S. for a long time, along with a system of

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[107] Recently, research has shown that the Internet has compounded the degree of selectivity of exposure through its information-filtering mechanisms (Colleoni, Rozza, and Arvidsson 2014; Conover et al. 2011; Sunstein 2018).

conservative beliefs. Therefore, it could be said that the conservative media establishment is

parasitic on a pre-existent climate of conservative thinking. When there were no conservative

substitutes but mainstream media outlets, conservatives could only consume mainstream

news. However, driven by the tendency of selective exposure, economic elites, churchgoers,

and southerners quickly converted when conservative alternatives came out. For instance,

many conservatives and republicans, who once had no alternative but listened to mainstream

television news outlets, turned exclusively to Fox News not long after its establishment in

1996 (Jamieson and Cappella 2008).

For a set of homogeneous media outlets to establish authority on epistemic matters

through a reinforcing spiral, it is first and foremost to produce user stickiness, to keep the

audience and readers in an echo chamber. This entails that the media establishment in

question should continuously provide subscribers with information consistent with their pre-

existing system of attitudes. That is why Rush Limbaugh, Fox News, and the editorial pages

of the *Wall Street Journal* cater with persistence to economic conservatives' preference for

laissez-faire policies and social conservatives' faith in traditional values of life. However, an

information source built on an echo chamber is supposed to maintain the integrity of the

chamber. I have argued above that there are potential conflicts between two main sorts of

subscribers – economic elites versus social conservatives – to the conservative media

establishment.[108] To maintain the conservative echo chamber, as I have said, the conservative

media establishment ballyhooed the despise of liberals as cultural elites for social

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[108] See 3.1.

conservatives. It also emphasised mainstream media outlets' *double standards* and *liberal media bias* towards conservatism. Media experts Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Joseph Cappella give us a delicate summary of two all-purpose lines of argument that the conservative media establishment uses to isolate subscribers from the mainstream media so that they stay within the conservative echo chamber:

> First, as they are ideologically biased, the "liberal media" cannot be trusted to convey what is happening in politics or faithfully represent conservatives and conservatism. Second, liberals cover up their own versions of the very abuses for which they attack conservatives. The first line of argument insulates the audience from information found in the mainstream media when it disadvantages the conservative cause. The second provides evidence to rebut charges against conservatives and sets the grounds from which to counterattack (ibid., p. 58).

By various means for years, the conservative media establishment has succeeded in driving a wedge between its followers and mainstream outlets, thus keeping a united echo chamber. Nevertheless, being an authority on epistemic matters is not simply to keep some people within an echo chamber. A group of media outlets attempting to shape their audience's mind as authoritative information sources should find ways to impose some information on the audience and avoid others. In order to influence audience's evaluation of policies and election candidates, the conservative media establishment tells stories from a conservatism perspective. In the stories, some facts are included, while some are avoided. Some are emphasised while others are downplayed. Some are positively elaborated, while others are maliciously interpreted. At the beginning of this section, I argued that human beings are predisposed to process information biasedly. The conservative media outlets save their customers from such hard work by pre-processing information in a biased way even before it

reaches the customers.

The scholarly literature on media study calls the process of telling stories from a specific perspective *framing*,[109] which is to provide an organising structure that tells the audience "what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration" (Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997, p. 567). When a conservative media outlet reports a piece of news, writes an editorial or broadcasts a commentary talk, it somehow encapsulates an issue into a partial representation from its own perspective or frame, thereby inducing the viewers to see the issue at hand as it does. However, media outlets are also able to influence their customers' way of seeing the world when they are absent. By repeating the conservative frames in a resonant way, the conservative media establishment, including Rush Limbaugh, Fox News and the editorial pages of *The Wall Street Journal*, increases "the likelihood that these frames will become for them cognitive structures that invite consistent ways of seeing politics, even when the conservative opinion media are silent or distracted (Jamieson and Cappella 2008).

Besides providing subscribers with framed stories or even a frame for themselves to pick up some items in their experience as relevant, the conservative media establishment also primes the audience with specific concepts that affect how the audience categorises the world. As I have argued in previous sections, certain categorisation of beings in the world through concepts already preconceives a certain evaluation before conceiving a narrative from a specific perspective. For example, the conservative concepts, such as *liberal media*, *death tax*,

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[109] See also chapter 6 in this book.

and *feminazis*, I discussed in chapter 5 certainly prime the subscribers to the conservative media establishment to see relevant policies in a negative light.

The case of the conservative media establishment exemplifies how an information source utilises, maintains, and spreads information within an echo chamber. A specific MPJ might build itself upon the information circulated in an echo chamber by information sources. For example, the MPJ that it is morally progressive to prohibit Mexican refugees from entering the U.S. made by the right-wing may be a product of the conservative echo chamber in the U.S., given that the rise of social media exacerbates the rupture of heterogeneous opinions.[110]

That a specific MPJ results from information spread by certain epistemic authorities within an echo chamber, despite our negative intuition, does not necessarily count against the credibility of the MPJ. For information foreclosed outside the echo chamber may be utterly incredible, while the information received by those inside the chamber is credible and complete. Nonetheless, we are normally unable to know what information is excluded from an echo chamber. Nor are we able to make sure the information spread in the chamber is accurate and complete. Therefore, the origin of a specific MPJ in an echo chamber is, in most cases, a good reason for us to doubt its credibility. In a case where the information included in or excluded from an echo chamber is not clear, historians or genealogists should heed to how the echo chamber functions to establish a MPJ for readers to have a better epistemological grasp of the MPJ.

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[110] For the effect of social media on the formation of echo chambers, see (Colleoni, Rozza, and Arvidsson 2014; Stroud 2010; Sunstein 2018).

8.4. Summary

In this chapter, I have introduced three common modes of persuasion that information sources may employ to shape their followers' mental states. When constructing a genealogy of a specific MPJ, it is, of course, paramount to ascertain the content of the information *qua* its foundation, be it a conceptual framework, narratives from a specific perspective, or other materials. Nevertheless, there are cases in which the information's exact content or credibility remains obscure to us despite every effort to figure it out. In these cases, the role of modes of persuasion looms large. From what I have analysed above, information spread by rational argumentation tends to be reliable. On the contrary, the information inculcated into followers by silencing or excluding from an echo chamber dissonant voices is, *by default*, unreliable unless a study of its exact content says otherwise. Modes of persuasion used by information sources, in conclusion, are auxiliary materials a historian of MPJs might heed to for writing a genealogy that helps readers evaluate their credibility.

Concluding Thoughts

As a Tribute to Max Weber's Lectures on Science and Politics as Vocations

In this conclusion, firstly, I briefly recap the core content of previous chapters. After that, I describe the recent development of various scientific studies of moralities, viz., the emergence of moral science. Then, I introduce the disenchantment of the theological-teleological worldview by modern science, and discuss the effect that the development of moral science may have on the Project of replacing the enchanted worldview with a new arbitrator that endows morality with authority. Given the assumption that the disenchantment of the Project occurs, in the fourth section, I discuss what a moral entrepreneur could do for his moral convictions. Eventually, I put forward some thoughts on the place of moral progress in a world disenchanted with the Project.

i. A Synopsis

To read a longish philosophical work complicated by my proclivity to insert empirical stuff, I cannot but confess, is an exhausting effort. Hence, I would like to spare my readers from more tedious reading (and free myself from repetitive writing) in the very end of this book. Instead of an exhaustive summary, I present a schematic table of the main points from previous chapters. For those interested in any specific questions listed in the table, please kindly refer back to the previous chapters for more informative content.

Part I: for philosophers
Dedicated to explaining and justifying a method for assessing the credibility of

	judgments about moral progress
Chapter I	The elaboration of the concepts of moral progress and judgments about moral progress
Chapter II	Why do we need to develop genealogies of judgments about moral progress that help us assess their credibility?
Chapter III	Why do we need to conduct a genealogical study using a case study approach?
Chapter IV	How do we conduct a genealogical study using my proposed method (a concrete analysis framework)?
Part II: for genealogists or historians Dedicated to elaborating and justifying the factors or materials we may take into consideration in writing a genealogy of moral progress judgments	
Chapter V	A brief summary of Part I and an explanation of how it is connected to Part II
Chapter VI	Conceptual Frameworks
Chapter VII	Narratives from specific perspectives
Chapter VIII	Modes of persuasion

Now allow me to spend space on some discursive thoughts on the relationship between my method and moral progress.

ii. Moral Science

The research method I advocate in this dissertation has as its focus the credibility of MPJs. To ascertain a MPJ's credibility, the method suggests putting its genesis under the lens of a case study. This particular method, nonetheless, reflects a general mindset according to which moralities (in the descriptive sense) should be studied in a (social-)scientific fashion. As I noted in section 4.4., the examination of MPJ's credibility is but merely a step in the long journey of understanding human moralities.

The moralities as the object of scientific study, of course, are not morality in the normative sense, namely, some moral ideal of what to do and how to live that would be accepted by anyone who meets certain intellectual and volitional conditions (Gert and Gert 2020), but codes of conduct that guide the behaviours, attitudes and character traits of people in society. The scientific mindset inherent in my proposed method treats moralities as social institutions, similar to laws, policies, and formal structures of organisations, that human beings created and modified for themselves to satisfy various needs, wants, and goals. To my mind, moral norms in a specific society can be seen as laws that are not backed up by state-monopolistic force but by people's mutual expectations (Anderson 2014b, p. 3). That is, the compliance to a moral norm is facilitated by the fact that people expect each other to follow it and predict non-compliance would probably be punished by negative responses from others.

The scientific mindset, in fact, resonates with a bunch of emerging works in the literature on moralities. The bio-evolution of human moral capacities (in real history or presumptive circumstances) is becoming the rising star in philosophy, with an increasingly large number of monographs on this topic (Greene 2014; Joyce 2007; Pettit 2018; Singer 2011). Besides moral philosophers, evolutionary scientists are also interested in and contribute by their expertise to the topic of moral evolution (Boehm 2012; Tomasello 2016). Partly due to the ground-breaking works in cultural evolution (Henrich 2015; Richerson and Boyd 2008), recently moral philosophers interested in the evolution of moralities have expanded their horizon to the bio-cultural co-evolution of moralities (Buchanan 2020; Buchanan and Powell 2018; Kitcher 2011; Kumar and Campbell 2022). Although these

works are, to a large extent, speculative due to the scarcity of evidence and have only achieved a thin consensus even among the evolutionary moral theorists, the scientific spirit flowing in them serves as a preliminary try to demystify human beings' capacities to have moral concepts, moral emotions, and moral codes.

The turn to science in the study of moralities has many other manifestations than the evolutionary theories. During the past decades, various social sciences increasingly engage in research on moralities. The empirical approaches to moral psychology, for example, have by now attracted a large number of disciples.[111] With the thriving of scientific moral psychology, we may, in the near future, be able to explain what drives the formation of moral beliefs, how we acquire motivations to perform moral behaviours, why we feel morality has authority upon us, and many other topics of interest in moral theory. Apart from psychology, there is also an ethical turn in the field of anthropology, with morality and ethics becoming the fastest-growing subfield within the discipline (Klenk 2019). In my view, institutional economics and new institutionalism in political science may also be able to have moralities as their research object in the exploration of human economic and political behaviours, once moral norms are demystified as a kind of social norms. However, the obstacle to this endeavour is that morality as an informal institution is often intangible and difficult to define, operationalise, or measure.

The recent development in moral theory also contains some insightful works on the historiography of moralities, which provide detailed descriptions and explanations of the

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[111] There are too many works in the literature to be enumerated. For an introduction to these works, please see (Doris et al. 2020).

changes in moral codes (Appiah 2011; Baker 2019; Keane 2017). Unlike the traditional

approach, these works are not dedicated to the history of moral theory, but to the

historiography of the moral concepts and norms that reigned in everyday life. For example,

Kwame Anthony Appiah provides us with historical accounts of how the transformations of

honour codes resulted in dramatic changes of the moral norms concerning duels and slavery

in Britain, foot-binding in China, and women's emancipation in Pakistan. In the same vein,

Robert Baker gives us a historical description and explanation of various revolutions in the

moral codes of medical practices.

      The recent trend towards scientifically understanding moral phenomena in a variety of

interrelated disciplines calls for integration. Upon the resources from various natural and

social sciences, the new inter-discipline of moral science may come into being, as political

science once emerged by standing on the shoulders of multiple established disciplines. Moral

science will find a way to illuminate the psychology, the origin, the evolution underneath

human moral practices, and the causal effects of moral regulation. In the past centuries,

science has encroached on philosophy by replacing speculation with empirical methods, such

as observation, controlled experiments, and statistics. Physics, chemistry, and other natural

sciences first came out of the territory of philosophy. And during recent centuries, sociology,

psychology, political science, and other social sciences followed (Backhouse and Fontaine

2010). With regard to the various subject matters for which individual disciplines have been

founded, philosophy is left to tackle metaphysical and normative questions these scientific

disciplines cannot but also have no interest in dealing with. As a whole, as science rises,

philosophy falls. This tendency cannot but put a question mark in my mind: what would eventually happen to moral philosophy, as moral science or scientific understanding of moralities witnesses further development?

Facing the trendy scientific study of moralities, some may console themselves: "anyway, the development of moral science would not make a difference, for modern moral philosophy has almost occupied itself with metaphysical and normative questions." In response to such optimism, I would like to take you first on a detour, talking about how modern science resulted in the disenchantment of the once mystical world, throwing us into a meaningless stage of life.

iii. Disenchantment

> Let us first of all be clear about what precisely this intellectual rationalization through science and scientifically oriented technology means in practice … It means the knowledge or belief that if we only wanted to we could learn at any time that there are, in principle, no mysterious unpredictable forces in play, but that all things — in principle — can be controlled through calculation. This, however, means the disenchantment of the world. No longer, like the savage, who believed that such forces existed, do we have to resort to magical means to gain control over or pray to the spirits (Weber 2008, p. 35).

There was once upon a time when all sorts of things many of us now see as of no significance, such as the existence of supernatural beings, divine will, revelation, and Aristotelian *telos*, were the central concerns of humanity (Evans 2003; Robiglio 2015). However, the processes of Disenchantment brought about by modern science gradually pushed the considerations of them to the edge of both ordinary life as well as the activity of academia (cf. Weber 2008). Modern science, in fact, did not confront the core questions

posed by theological and teleological thinking in a direct way. To a large extent, it did not and

could not address questions, say, concerning the existence of God, his Commands, or the

raison d'être of things. Humanity's disenchantment, rather, came about as the by-products of

scientific activities. The advancement of science displayed a mechanical view of the world

unharmonious with the theological-teleological worldview. More to the disadvantage of the

latter, modern science achieved a much greater degree of success in practice, relative to the

enchanted worldview, which reset the agenda within academia and attracted the budget and

personnel once put into tackling the puzzles posed by the enchanted worldview.[112] Step by

step, the efforts to address the central questions of the theological-teleological worldview

have been relegated to a marginal place with just a handful of practitioners. As a result,

serious human practices nowadays, to a less and less extent, depend on answers to these

questions. Governments no longer seek recognition from the Pope, as Medieval kings did.

Ordinary people feel no need to buy indulgences from the Church. Witch hunt is no more a

solution to pandemic. And the reason for criticising or invading the Islamic world is not

anymore that Muslims are heretics. Humanity has witnessed a deceasing faith in revelation

and *telos*.

The decreasing faith in revelation and *telos*, unfortunately, throws human beings into

a meaningless stage of life, while modern science provides no alternative answer to questions

about what values to be pursued and what we should do. As Max Weber says,

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[112] Following the Kuhnian terminology, one may call the contrasting worldviews two alternative paradigms with different conceptual frameworks, legitimate questions, and evaluative criteria. See (Kuhn 2012).

> All the natural sciences give us an answer to the question: What should we do if we want to gain technical control of life? But whether or not it is right to gain such technical control, and whether or not we want to do so, and whether or not, in the final analysis, it really makes sense to do so, are questions that they leave unanswered, or to which they assume answers that suit their purposes (Weber 2008, pp. 40-1).

The tragedy of the lost faith, expectably, manifested itself in moral philosophy. Alasdair MacIntyre devotes himself to rescuing virtue ethics from the relics of the theological-teleological worldviews (MacIntyre 2013), while Gertrude Elizabeth Margaret Anscombe asks whether deontology still makes sense in a world disenchanted with the divine will (Anscombe 1958). Without God or the final end as the ultimate arbitrator, some thinkers started to believe, the different purposes we value seem to be in a "perpetual conflict of different gods with each other" (Weber 2008, p. 44), for which only a leap of faith, deciding for ourselves which values to pursue and take the responsibility, can save us from a constant anxiety over what to do (Sartre 2021).

Moral philosophers from the Enlightenment on, for sure, could not be satisfied with nihilism as a reaction to the retreat of theological-teleological worldview from human life. In place of the divine will and *telos*, they either put forward the existence of moral facts, the self-legislation of will, or other secular foundations, as the final arbitrator, which determines an authoritative morality that we have decisive reason to obey (at least in the public sphere).[113] The question, then, is what effect the development of moral science may have on modern moral philosophers' efforts.

There is a feeling that some effort to establish a new arbitrator for behavioural

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[113] Thoughts on the reasons to follow a universal morality are often implicit in philosophical writings, while Christine Korsgaard's *The Sources of Normativity* brings out this problem explicitly. See (Korsgaard 1996).

standards is uncongenial to the scientific understanding of moralities. For instance, Richard

Joyce and Sharon Street (Joyce 2000, 2007; Street 2006), after conducting evolutionary

thinking on human moral practices, cast doubt on the existence of *sui generis* moral facts or

human beings' capacity to comprehend these facts. And as I have argued in Chap. 3, Michael

Huemer's attempt to explain moral progress by the existence of *sui generis* moral facts fails

to be supported by historical evidence. The increasing scientific understanding of moralities,

it seems, pulls up the general threshold of acceptability as to an account of the arbitrator.

Other efforts to look for a new arbitrator are not as overtly incompatible with

scientific understanding as non-naturalistic realism is. Some even try to incorporate moral

science. For example, it is after giving an evolutionary account of how moralities came into

being that Philip Kitcher in *The Ethical Project* infers morality is constituted by the function

it originally evolved to perform, viz., facilitating cooperation (Kitcher 2011). But from our

historical experience, moralities have served many other functions than facilitating

cooperation. Some moral norms probably evolved in the beginning for reproductive success

through facilitating cooperation, but at some point some were created for stabilising social

control by the vested interests. And many moralities had also experienced reforms or

revolutions with explicit human intentions to promote efficiency, equality, or freedom in a

way irrelevant to facilitate cooperation.[114] It may worth asking whether to identify the

function of facilitating cooperation as the arbitrator is no less arbitrary than letting individuals

decide what they should do. Mobile phones were manufactured originally for making phone

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[114] Clear-cut examples of these are the moral norms promoting the welfare of disabled people and future generations.
See Buchanan's critique of Kitcher's functionalist account of morality in (Buchanan 2020, pp. 80-2).

call, but a timeworn iPhone can be still a mobile even if it can no longer serve that function. Why, then, does the function of making phone call have to be the arbitrator over what it is to be a mobile? Moreover, we may still wonder what reason we have to obey morality, even if we know that it is constituted by the function of facilitating cooperation.

Although the development of moral science renders some attempts to re-establish an arbitrator in the shrine that once belonged to the divine will or *telos* suspicious, it does not directly give a negative answer to the concern – what decides what we should do – of modern moral philosophers, precisely as modern science is no direct rejection of theology and theology. A descriptive account of how moralities are in reality, at best, constrains thoughts on what we should do, but is certainly no alternative to moral thinking.

It appears now that the development of moral science is, to a large extent, irrelevant to the Project of re-establishing an arbitrator that has authority over what we should do. At best, it serves as a filter that weeds out overtly mystical thoughts. For no matter how much knowledge we have gained of moralities in the descriptive sense, it does not address the questions we ask about morality in the normative sense. But if that is the case, why does it not strike us as unintelligible for scientifically-informed thinkers, such as Richard Joyce, Sharon Street, and Robert Baker, to lose faith in the Project of relocating morality?

Here is a naturalistic picture of moralities, I think, in the mind of some scientifically-informed thinkers:

1. A set of moral norms are consciously or unconsciously created, transformed, or sustained as a means by interest groups for satisfying and conciliate certain (and always divergent depending on to which groups the moral norms serve)

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needs, wants, and goals at a certain historical junction under specific circumstances;

2. Nevertheless, the needs, wants, and goals are not fixed but also products of the circumstances;

3. Extant moral norms are not independent of the circumstances but a part of it.

4. Moralities are not so different from formal laws, social institutions, and organisational structures – in reality, they often provide mutual support, and are sometimes closely correlated to the point of indistinguishable, e.g., whether the abolition of slavery in the U.S. was a change of the constitution or moral norms.

We may see this naturalistic picture of moralities from Baker's description of moral norms related to dead bodies (Baker 2019, chap. 2). In early modern Britain, corpses were once treated as sacrosanct, and the dissection of dead bodies was an act of sacrilege. However, the development of medical education required a much bigger number of corpses for dissection training than could be supplied by those from the death rows. The enormous need for dead bodies, for medical improvement, motivated the highly profitable career of grave-robbing, which under the moral conviction at the time, expectably, raised the wrath from the public. After struggle by intellectuals like Bentham, the Anatomy Act of 1832 was passed and the new moral norms emerged that saw "a corpse … as a utilitarian vehicle best used for the sake of others." The utilitarian moral norms that demanded the use of a dead body for others' sake, we may say, served as a means to satisfy the need of, on one hand, medical dissection, and on the other hand, reducing repugnance and fear of using corpses, in the ecological interaction between an established morality, the development of medicine, and the rampage of crave-robbing.

The naturalistic picture of moralities, for sure, does not rule out the possibility of an authoritative morality that we have decisive reason to obey, but at least some with the

naturalistic view in mind would wonder where the place of the true morality should be in the interaction of various circumstances. Would the true morality as a means satisfy the needs, wants, and goals of people of a given time, and would it be sustainable under the social and technological conditions of the time?[115] What makes the same morality applicable to different societies with disparate needs and wants under various circumstances? The prospect of finding a morality that is valid regardless of time period, regardless of circumstances, regardless of what people actually need and want, seems alien to the naturalistic view that always locate moralities in the interplay of many all-too-human factors.

If one asks a person interested in reading history what is the best form of government from the lessons of history. The first question raised by the history lover would probably be: under what specific conditions and for what purposes are the government you ask about? A suit-for-all form of government would be peculiar from the eye of the history lover, as a suit-for-all morality would be peculiar from the view of the naturalistic picture.

What I said above does not claim that an authoritative morality is impossible or inconceivable. Instead, I just try to describe a naturalistic picture of moralities and how the Project of re-establishing an arbitrator that determines an authoritative morality would be perceived from this picture: the Project looks alien, as the theological-theological worldview is alien to or unharmonious with the mechanical view of the world held by modern science.

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[115] Here I choose not to complicate the picture by discussing the thought of those relativists who believe there are multiple authoritative moralities depending on different cultures. But for them, similar questions apply: would the true morality specific to a culture satisfy the needs, wants, and goals of people of a given time, and would it be sustainable under the social and technological conditions of the time; what makes the same morality applicable to different stages of a culture? If the relativists bite the bullet, saying that a morality is authoritative only relative to a specific set of circumstances, we may wonder what he means by "authority."

For moralities, from the naturalistic picture, are always means to some ends, whereas an authoritative morality is insensitive to ends or is an end by itself.

Given the alienness, could we expect a trend that once occurred in the relationship between modern science and the theological-teleological worldview to show up again in the relationship between moral science and the Project of re-establishing an arbitrator: the former waxes, while the latter wanes? The puzzles posed by the Project of looking for a new arbitrator – what the true morality is, what grounds the morality, and what reason we have to conform to it – has long occupied many excellent philosophical minds since the Enlightenment. And ominously, it seems that not even rough consensus is about to come in the near future.[116] On the other hand, moral science is based on the paradigms, to use the Kuhnian terminology, established within various scientific disciplines, such as evolutionary biology, neurology, psychology, and social sciences, which give the assuring promise that practitioners would contribute to the cumulation of knowledge if they strictly stick to legitimate problems, concepts, criteria for evaluating good work, and instrumentation sanctioned by the paradigms, insofar as the paradigms themselves have not been overturned by new scientific revolutions. If this is the case, I wonder if the relative prospects of attainable knowledge would induce conversion of the disciples of the Project to moral science. And as the budgeting for different disciplines does not belong to the jurisdiction of practitioners within each discipline, but is a matter to be decided by the academic community

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[116] The serious disagreement, to my mind, can be explained by the naturalistic view that moral norms are means to serve divergent and more often than not conflicting needs, wants, and goals, of different nations, classes, genders, etc.: it is hard to image that different interest groups can converge on a set of moral norms

as a whole or the national education ministry, I am curious of whether a higher proportion of research funding would flow from research on the Project to moral science, given the latter's sparkling promise of attainable knowledge.

Whether the relationship between moral science and the Project would go along the track of the waning and waxing of modern science and the theological-teleological worldview is still an open question, to which any predication can only be highly speculative. For researches on the various subject matters within moral science are merely ascendant, with no clear sign of an eventual victory. I am no prophet who foresees the disenchantment of the Project that is alien to the naturalistic view held by some moral scientists, but just concerned with whether and to what extent moral science would substitute a significant element of modern moral philosophy, that is, the Project of looking for a new arbitrator that determines an authoritative morality.

In this dissertation, anyway, I have offered a method that may help us avoid the disenchantment with the Project. We may find out that some MPJs (and the moral beliefs underlying them) are credible, or at least more credible than their antitheses, after an exploration into the beliefs' genealogies. No matter whether we can ultimately discover a final arbitrator, vindicative genealogies can give us some confidence in the authority of some moral norms. We can hope for the best, but we still need to prepare for the worst. If the genealogies of our moral beliefs turn out to be debunking, or if the disenchantment with the Project is, we may finally realise, unstoppable, should we still engage in moral reform or moral revolution? And will there still be any place for the concept of moral progress? In the

following sections, I set off to answer these questions.

iv. The Ethics of "Ultimate Ends" and the Ethics of Responsibility

In the section above, I raised the question of whether the development of moral science would eventually bring about the disenchantment of the Project of relocating an authoritative morality to a new arbitrator. However, even if the disenchantment indeed happens, it does not imply that there is no private conviction in any moral ideal anymore, as the disenchantment of the theological-teleological worldview did not imply that every individual lost faith in revelation and destination. What happens would probably be the marginalisation of the quest for an authoritative morality in within the circles where the naturalistic view of moralities has taken root. However, the debates on what is morally desirable will persist thanks to human beings' resilient capacities and proclivity to think and talk in moral terms. Some might have agreed with moral abolitionism and believed that they should eliminated all talk and thought of morality (Garner 2010; Ingram 2015; Joyce and Garner 2018), if moral science had made them lose faith in the existence of an authoritative morality. Otherwise, they are behaving in an insincere way. The problematic of giving up the moral language, however, is that they would disarm himself in a surrounding where moral norms are still an important means to further needs, wants, and goals. As noted above, whose needs, wants, and goals would be satisfied, according to the naturalistic picture of moralities, depends on the moral norms to be enacted and sustained. And as the debates on what is morally desirable will greatly impact the societal selection of moral norms as long as human beings' ingrained inclination to moral reasoning remains, to think and talk in moral terms is

an influential means for them to further their own goals and the needs and wants of the interest group they represent. The consequence of their withdrawing willingly from moral debates is that the interests they represent would suffer, insofar as others still engage in moral persuasion that steers how society proceeds. For example, the needs and wants of blacks might be severely compromised, if the advocates of blacks' entitlements step out of moral deliberation, leaving the space for white supremacists. Whether moral abolitionists have a realistic agenda for eliminating moral language from society as a whole is another question, but to the extent that many still cling to the use of moral terms, their retreat from moral debates is senseless from the point of instrumental rationality.

In a world where moral language has not yet been abolished all together, instrumental rationality, after all, requires people disenchanted with the Project to engage in moral debates for their moral convictions, for the interests these convictions would facilitate. Mostly, people can only affect the behaviours and conceptions of those around them through moral discourse. But there are skilled, demagogic, and influential activists – in Richard Posner, Richard Rorty, and Martha Nussbaum's terminology (Nussbaum 2007; Posner 2009; Rorty 2007), moral entrepreneurs – who have the capacities to bring about society-wide moral reform or revolution that foregrounds the interests of the groups they sit with. With a view to their dramatic influence, special attention is called upon to how they may act for their moral convictions. Hence, I now turn to describe two different maxims of conducts that a moral entrepreneur may follow in the pursuit of moral reform or revolution – in Max Weber's word, two different ethics "that are irreconcilably opposed to each other: an ethic of 'ultimate ends'

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or an ethic of "responsibility" (Weber 2008, p. 198).

A moral entrepreneur, if he is a follower of the ethics of "ultimate ends", attempts to impose his convictions on society regardless of consequences. Once if the circumstances are so unfavourable that his attempts lead to disastrous consequences, or the conflicting interests of others are too formidable to enforce his moral ideal, the problems, in the eyes of such an entrepreneur, lie not with himself but with the world, with the stupidity of others who cannot recognise the true interests they have. Instead of coming to terms with reality, he is motivated by moral convictions to align the world with his "ultimate ends" by his rhetorical talent, by using the various materials and means of persuasion I have introduced in Part II, and as a last resort, by physical force. It is not rare that moral entrepreneurs with such a mentality emerged in world history, from the Crusade, through the Religious Inquisition, to the massacres and massive incarceration done in the name of communism and Nazism. However tragically the moral entrepreneurs brought disasters to "heretics," the fate of their enterprises did not escape the naturalistic view of moralities. At the end of the day, the moralities they established did not make the interests of all integrate, but disproportionately benefited the interests of certain groups, the Catholic Church, the bureaucracy, and the militarised mobs, respectively. In an age when the Project of an authoritative morality still made sense, the moral entrepreneur could have assured himself by the principle of noble ends justifying horrible means. But as one disenchanted with the Project, I wonder how a moral entrepreneur with the ethics of "ultimate ends" can stand up comfortably to his own conscience.

Contrast to an ethics of "ultimate ends," a moral entrepreneurs may follow an ethics

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of responsibility, with which he must answer for the foreseeable consequences of his action. A moral entrepreneur clearly aware of the naturalistic picture recognises that the prospect of carrying out his moral convictions in the world depends largely on circumstances. Under unfavourable conditions, a single-minded pursuit of the moral enterprise will cause consequences unacceptable even from the point of his own convictions. Hence, a moral entrepreneur with the ethics of responsibility is constantly weighing his moral convictions and the potential outcomes the incarnation of these convictions in moral norms may bring about, and tries to find efficient but innocuous – innocuous in terms of his moral convictions – means to realise his goal. Among the various circumstances of moral enactment, special attention is paid to the conflicting needs, wants, and goals of antagonistic interest groups. Enacting a set of moral norms that satisfy a certain group, the naturalistic picture of moralities tells the entrepreneur, tends to sacrifice the interests of others, and whenever there is the discounting of interests (be it just or unjust from our moral perspective) there are also resistance and rebellion. From the experience of history, we have witnessed the Royalist reaction to the French Revolution, the White Army's resistance to the Bolshevik revolution, and the Ku Klux Klan's rebellions against the abolition of slavery and the Civil Rights Movement. For the foreseeable resistance and rebellion, a naturalistically-minded entrepreneur would appeal to the "politicising of moralities,"[117] that is, seek to reach compromises between different interests for settling the moral terms under which the various interest groups can co-exist. When the resulting *modus vivendi*, capitulated as moral norms,

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[117] In recent political philosophy, there is a clear tendency to moralising politics, which seeks to impose some conceptions of (distributive) justice on the state. However, I believe the opposite is right. See (Williams 2009, chap. 1).

places the interest represented by the entrepreneur above those of others, the moral

entrepreneur refrains from undignifying opponents by saying "I won, because I was right"

(Williams 2009, p. 195), for the denigration of moral commitments can achieve little but only

incur hatred and resentment on the part of the defeated. What is of value is, firstly, to refine

the moral norms in a way that minimises the conflict of interests between different parties,

and secondly, to assimilate the interests of opponents by rearranging the context in which the

conflict occurs. Needs, wants, and goals, according to the naturalistic view, are not fixed but

products of the circumstances under which moral norms are transformed and sustained. After

civil war, for instance, the sharecropping system – which fell short of the abolitionists' moral

convictions – in short run mitigated the interest conflict between the freed slaves and the

previous slave holders (Ransom and Sutch 2001, pp. 95-7), and the latter were finally

assimilated to an economy without chattel slavery in a larger picture of history. And more

importantly, state propaganda and education were set in such a fashion that the slaveowners'

offspring eventually accept, even if the slaveowners themselves could not accept, that the

abolition was a clear case of moral progress, which did no harm to their interest at all. A

paragraph Bernard Williams writes about politics, I believe, can rightly apply to the position

of a moral entrepreneur, if we replace "political" with "moral":

> One important political [moral] activity is that of finding proposals and images that
> can reduce differences … What people actually want or value under the name of
> some given position may be indeterminate and various. It can make a big difference,
> what images we each have of what we take ourselves all to be pursuing (ibid., p. 13,
> content within the square bracket added).

I have presented to you two images of a moral entrepreneur, who has been

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disenchanted with the Project by a naturalistic view of moralities but still aspires to steer

moral transformation by his moral convictions and for the interests he sits with. Given the

assumption of disenchantment, I am of course in no position to make a moral choice between

the two kinds of entrepreneurs. But here I ask you: if you are to be a moral entrepreneur but

unfortunately have been disenchanted with the Project, which kind of moral entrepreneur you

prefer to be?

I assume that the answer could be evident. Nonetheless, some may ask me: "Well, no

matter which type of entrepreneur I choose to be, where is the place for moral progress in a

naturalistic picture of moralities?" Here is the topic I now turn to, as a terminus of my

dissertation.

v. Moral Progress Revisited

As Thomas Kuhn says, the final triumph of a new paradigm in general does not result

from the conversion of the diehards of an old paradigm, but from the fact that these

opponents eventually die (Kuhn 2012, p. 150).[118] This observation, to my mind, also applies

to the state of affairs after a moral reform or moral revolution. Normally, a moral

transformation takes place, when moral entrepreneurs succeed in recruiting the moderates, or

sometimes when they secure the backup from the enactment of relevant laws or governmental

acts.[119] For example, the abolition of slavery in the U.S. was mainly a result of the centralist

Northerners being persuaded and the passing of the *Thirteenth Amendment to the United*

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[118] Thomas Kuhn cited the following sentence from Max Planck: "a new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die ⋯ ."

[119] See (Baker 2019) for multiple examples.

States Constitution. As the diehard opponents after a moral reform or moral revolution do not endorse the new moral norms – often not until they die – these norms are merely, as I said above, a *modus vivendi*. Although it is ill-advised to claim a victory of moral superiority that may incur opponents' backlash, it is important to instil gradually to the uncommitted public and later generations the illusion (given the disenchantment of the Project) that the new moral norms are more than a *modus vivendi* but a case of moral progress. For whether a set of moral norms can be sustained or whether they can function well to serve certain needs, wants, and goals, depends much on the public's mutual expectations that most people would follow the norms and non-compliance would probably be punished by negative responses from others. Such mutual expectations are possible only if people have faith in the legitimacy of the moral norms.

To manufacture the illusion of moral progress, the most effective way would be to destroy physically all the opponents. But when this measure is not available or not desirable from his own moral convictions, a moral entrepreneur can appeal to the materials underlying MPJs I have introduced. He may publicise arguments for the new moral norms through influential outlets while silencing counter arguments, hence putting the public in an echo chamber where only the supportive voices are heard and amplified. With regard to conceptual frameworks, he can spread the concepts amiable to the new morality by all means, while silencing the opposite concepts. For example, he may ensure that the public can only access to "fireperson" instead of "fireman," "black people" instead of the N-word, "gays" instead of "perverts." In other words, he needs to propel the public to categorise the world in a way in

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which the new moral norms seem to be natural while the old ones look extremely horrendous.

As for narratives, a moral entrepreneur may inculcate the public with a narrative that

amplifies the past sufferings and emphasises the contrast between the present and the past. In

other words, he should offer an epic of the world becoming better and better from the view of

the public's moral commitments. Metaphorically, *Gone with the Wind* should be suppressed

but *Uncle Tom's Cabin* should be eulogised.

For sure, there are many other materials moral entrepreneurs may utilise to give the

public an impression of moral progress but I shall stop here leaving further discussion to a

work specific to ideology. What matters here is that needs, wants, and goals, according to the

naturalistic view of moralities, are the products of circumstances or ecology, and the efforts to

propagate the superiority of a new morality could reshape and therefore realign the public's

perceived self-interests with the interest served by the new moral norms. A *modus vivendi*,

then, eventually becomes a consensus.

Some may shrug their shoulders and say, "after all, moral progress is an illusion, once

we lose faith in the Project." In a world disenchanted with the Project of looking for an

authoritative morality, MPJs are illusionary. It is indeed ironic for me to make this claim at

the end of a book in which I introduce a method for assessing the credibility of MPJs.

Personally, I wish the liberal MPJs could triumph in the examination of credibility. But if it

turned out that the liberal judgments were no more credible than their counterpart, never

mind, the consistent commitment in my heart to liberalism would reply: "As long as we stand

up and stand by the interests of the chained, of the subjugated, of all the insulted and all the

downtrodden, does it really matter that what we see as a better world is merely an

illusion?"[120]

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[120] As one may notice, my position share similarity with that of moral fictionism. See (Joyce 2011; Kalderon 2005).

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