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The nature and rationality of conversion

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Abstract

We can differ in our beliefs, values, interests, goals, preferences, and moral psychologies. How we see things can be different. But in none of these respects is our thinking fixed. Beliefs, values, preferences, moral psychology, and so on can change. And sometimes, the change can be significant enough to warrant talk of a conversion. The aim of this paper is then to investigate the nature and rationality of conversion. What is it to undergo a conversion? What practical or epistemic justification can be given of conversion?

1 | INTRODUCTION

People can think about the same things in different ways. Initially, you might see the drawing as a rabbit, while I see it as a duck. You might think that the durian looks tasty, while I have never got past the smell. You might think that the situation is such that our friendship demands that I help you, while my concern is merely with the opportunity this situation provides. Such differences in how the same things are thought about can come about because there can be widespread differences in how people think. We can differ in our beliefs, values, interests, goals, preferences, and moral psychologies. How we see things can be different. But in none of these respects is our thinking fixed. Beliefs, values, preferences moral psychology, and so on can change. I might come to see the rabbit you initially saw. I might choose to taste the durian and get to know what you knew all along. And while these changes are minor, on occasion, change can be significant, and sufficiently so for it to be described as a *conversion*. Becoming sensitive to the demands of friendship might amount to a conversion in how I think about the situation we find ourselves in.

The aim of this paper is to investigate the *nature* and *rationality* of conversion. *What is it to undergo a conversion? What practical or epistemic justification can be given of conversion?* These are the central questions. A conversion is a change in something. Section 2 considers what it is that changes; Section 3 considers the nature of the change characteristic of conversion; and Section 4 elaborates on this. These sections thereby address the question of the nature of conversion. With this answer in hand, Section 5 then considers what justification of conversion is possible. To some extent, this will turn out to hinge on the mechanism of conversion, which is considered in Section 6. Section 7 then concludes by considering the possibility of converting others.

2 | WHAT IS IT THAT CHANGES?

A conversion is a change in something. Broadly, it is a change in a subject's way of thinking. To consider how a *way of thinking* might be characterised, and to inform later discussion, it would be helpful to outline some cases of conversion in a little more detail. I describe five cases.

Case 1 A paradigm of conversion is that of Paul, or Saul as he was then known, on the road to Damascus. Before his conversion, Acts describes Saul as "breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples" and he was travelling to Damascus in order take these disciples "as prisoners to Jerusalem" (Acts 9: 1 and 2). But "[a]s he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' 'Who are you, Lord?' Saul asked. 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' he replied. 'Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do'" (Acts 9: 3–6). When Saul got up, he was blind, but in Damascus, his sight was returned to him by Ananias a follower of Jesus, and thereafter, he was known as Paul and "preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus" (Acts 9: 27).[1]

Case 2 In *Radical Hope*, Jonathan Lear describes the life of Plenty Coups, the last great chief of the Crow nation in a time when the Crow moved into a reservation and abandoned their nomadic-hunting way of life (Lear, 2006). As nomadic hunters, courage was taken to be the paradigmatic virtue, where this was understood in terms of planting coup sticks and counting coups. The coup stick was planted in battle, and once stuck in the ground the fundamental principle of warrior honour was not to retreat from the place where the coup stick was planted. Coups were then brave acts performed in battle or skirmish that were ritually recounted afterwards, where the bravest act was to strike an enemy with one's coup stick before defeating him. The Crow's martial way of life then ended when they moved into a reservation. With this change, it was no longer possible to be a Crow warrior, to plant coup sticks or count coups. And with the end of these practices, the goods internal to these practices were no longer available (MacIntyre, 1997). A coup stick could still be stuck in the ground, but it would no longer mean anything; and there were no more coups to be counted. So it was no longer possible to display courage or be courageous, understood in these terms. Faced with the collapse of this Crow way of life, Plenty Coups and the Crow were thereby forced to reimagine what counted as courageous. In this, Plenty Coups was led by a dream—where dreams were taken by the Crow to enigmatically reveal the order in the universe—about the chickadee, which is a bird that learns from others. What is courageous, it was reimagined, is to listen and so learn what needs to be done for the Crow to keep their lands and thereby survive. And on its basis, Plenty Coups allied the Crow to the U.S. government against their traditional enemy the Sioux, and the Crow survived as a nation.[2]

Case 3 In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoyevsky describes how a lieutenant colonel, as commanding officer of an army division, used to speculate with the money he received for provisions: He would "lend it to a merchant of our town, an old widower by the name of Trifonov, a man with a big beard and gold spectacles, whom he trusted implicitly. Trifonov used to go to the fair, do some business there and on his return immediately return the whole sum to the lieutenant colonel, bringing with him a present from the fair and with the present the interest on the loan" (Dostoyevsky, 1958, Chapter 4, pt. 1, p. 129). Each party trusts the other, on Russell Hardin's view, because each is willing to depend on the actions of the other on the basis of a convergence of interest. Trust, for Hardin (2002), is *encapsulated interest*: "I trust you because I think it is in your interest to attend to my interests in the relevant matter" (p. 4). The obvious limitation of this ground is that lieutenant colonel should have seen the following coming: When Trifonov learns that the lieutenant colonel's command is to be replaced, he promptly keeps the final loan of 4,500 roubles. When the lieutenant colonel confronted him, "all the reply he got from him was: 'I've never received any

money from you, and couldn't possibly have received any'" (Dostoyevsky, 1958, Chapter 4, pt. 1, p. 129). Now, suppose that a different explanation holds for the lieutenant colonel's "implicit trust." Suppose the lieutenant colonel trusted Trifonov *as one would trust a friend*. In this case, he would not merely curse his naivety but would feel wronged by Trifonov; and it would be quite appropriate for him to blame Trifonov for his theft and to feel thoroughly betrayed by this action. From the lieutenant colonel's perspective, Trifonov misconceives their past relations and looks at their present situation the wrong way. Crucially, Trifonov fails to recognise the reason to return the money given by the fact that he lent him the money. And this failure shows Trifonov to have a different ethical outlook.[3]

Case 4 According to decision theory, one should choose the action whose outcome has the highest expected value, where this is calculated by assigning probabilities and subjective values to outcomes (Jeffrey, 1965). Subjective values concern what an outcome is like for a subject experientially. A problem here, Paul (2014) observes, is that some experiences are *transformative*. They are both *epistemically* transformative in that the experiences give you knowledge that you could not have got in any other way and *personally* transformative in that the experiences change your preferences and so your assignments of subjective values. Transformative experiences thereby bring about a conversion in how you experience the world. As examples of this Paul suggests having a first child; a congenitally blind person choosing to have a retinal operation; and choosing to become a vampire. To take the first case, there is lots of information one can gather about how having a first child will change your life, but none of this can quite prepare you for the experience of having a first child. As such, the only way to properly assign a subjective value to this experience is to have the experience: Prior to this, given that you know the experience will change you in unknown ways, you cannot assign a subjective value to it. It follows that you cannot rationally choose to have a transformative experience, or at least, you cannot do so according to decision theory.

Case 5 Science, Thomas Kuhn argued, involves long periods of normal paradigm-dominated research broken by revolutionary changes or shifts in paradigm (Kuhn, 1970). The shift from Ptolemaic to Copernican astronomy was one such revolutionary change in paradigm. This revolution introduced a new set of fundamental laws and assumptions and defined a new set of research questions. But more than this, the change in paradigm involves a gestalt switch: The world is seen differently. Take our observations of the Sun rising in the East and setting in the West. This can be seen as the Sun rotating around a fixed Earth, or as the Sun remaining fixed as the Earth rotates. Insofar as this change rests upon a change in "world view," Kuhn (1970) then compares the paradigm shift to a religious conversion (p. 115).

What these cases illustrate, I think, is that it is possible for us to undergo a conversion in our religious belief, our ethical outlook, or, more broadly, our "form of life," where this includes our practices and the values that inform and structure these. It is possible for us to undergo a conversion in our moral psychology, or how we conceive and deliberate ethical matters, where this equally includes the values that guide our deliberation. It is possible for us to undergo a conversion in our subjective values, where these exclude the explicitly ethical but include the experiential or phenomenological aspects of how we think about matters. And it is possible for us to undergo a conversion in our beliefs that is sufficiently significant that it changes how we see and explain worldly events. Thus, a conversion is something that happens between *ways of thinking*, which need to be understood broadly such that a way of thinking necessarily extends into ways of seeing, valuing, and deliberating. This broad understanding of ways of thinking is a necessary concomitant of conversion: One would not take a change in a single belief to be a conversion unless that belief was embedded in such a way that this change lead to a more general change in the subject's way of thinking broadly construed.

Moreover, the danger of adding great specificity to "way of thinking" is a failure of necessity. For example, a conceptual scheme is a good candidate for rendering "way of thinking" more precise, where this might be defined in

terms of sentences held true or, following Lynch (1997), as a scheme of concepts or that "network of general and specific concepts used in the propositions we express in language and thought" (p. 418). Understood in this way, our conceptual scheme, as Lynch puts it, is "only one element of a *world view*," which would include not only "the concepts we employ in forming our beliefs, but [also] the interests we have which explain why we have those concepts, the values that guide those interests, and [our] underlying practices" (Lynch, 1997, p. 422). And while the world view of, say, Trifonov and the lieutenant colonel might be very different, such that a conversion is needed to get from one to the other, both might share the same scheme of concepts; crucially, they might share the concepts of trust, friendship, and interest. If this were the case, then Trifonov's retention of the lieutenant colonel's final loan shows that his valuation of interest is such that he does not give the same deliberative priority to friendship; it shows that his way of thinking about their situation is different.

It might be that you do not think that this case describes a conversion; you might just see it as a triumph of self-interest. Equally, you might think that scientific change doesn't amount to a conversion, given that the view that it does so requires commitment to a Kuhnian philosophy of science. And doubts might be raised about every case, except, perhaps, Saul's road to Damascus experience. But it should be emphasised that Cases 1 to 5 are just examples. If you don't like these cases, please substitute ones that you think are better. And if you doubt that there are any cases of conversion, then put the metaphysics to one side and skip ahead to discussion of the justificatory issues associated with conversion, which might then be seen merely as the justificatory issues associated with *significant* change in ways of thinking. On the present understanding, talk of conversion is appropriate when these significant changes are sufficient to cross a certain threshold. The next metaphysical question is how to characterise this threshold.

3 | WHEN DOES A CHANGE AMOUNT TO A CONVERSION?

There can be a change in how one thinks about something without there being a change in one's way of thinking. Particular changes in belief do not ordinarily amount to any change in our way of thinking. And our way of thinking about something can evolve and change without any break that requires talk of "conversion." This is what happens during the course of "normal science"; the existing paradigm is developed, and with it, our understanding of the phenomena it describes extends and deepens. We talk of conversion only when there is a break in our way of thinking and it makes sense to speak of a "before" and "after," or an "old" and "new." Conversion is then what is required to bridge these ways of thinking because and insofar as the new is unintelligible from the perspective of the old. This is the first feature of conversions: They form a bridge to a new way of thinking whose judgements are *prospectively unintelligible* from an existing old way of thinking. Prospective unintelligibility with respect to a given judgement might then be defined as follows. *A new way of thinking is prospectively unintelligible with respect to an old way of thinking if and only if the new way of thinking yields a judgement that p and it is not possible to see p to be true, or reason to the truth of p from within the old way of thinking.* When this is the case, and starting from the old way of thinking, a conversion is necessary to reach the judgement that p is true.

Prospective unintelligibility, I propose, is a necessary condition for conversion being the bridge between two different ways of thinking. As such, it is a feature of all the cases described above, and this might be illustrated. That Saul would "preach fearlessly" is not something that could be predicted when the purpose of his trip to Damascus was to persecute. In talking about the Crow warrior, Lear (2006) says, "[i]f he has been trained from earliest youth that courage consists in going on *like this* … , it is not clear how we can expect him to make the psychological changes needed to see things differently" (p. 64). There will be an aspect of incomprehension to the lieutenant colonel's resentment: How could Trifonov not return the loan given their friendship? Transformative experiences, like becoming a vampire, are epistemically transformative: The only way you could get to know what it is like to be a vampire is to become one. And from the perspective of the existing scientific paradigm, van Fraassen says (2002), "the new

view is literally absurd, incoherent, inconsistent obviously false or worse—meaningless, unintelligible—within the older view" (p. 72).

All these cases demonstrate prospective unintelligibility, but one might worry that it is both too weak and too strong to capture the change that is a conversion. First, prospective unintelligibility might seem too strong; it need not be, for instance, that Saul found unintelligible the claims made by the followers of Jesus, it might be that he simply took these claims to be false. The worry here concerns the definition just given: It might be that you can neither see nor reason to the truth of p but yet find the claim that p perfectly intelligible. While I think this worry is a natural one, it can be put aside because "intelligible" is being used to refer to acts of believing. What is unintelligible to Saul is how the followers of Jesus could believe that p when he can neither see nor reason to the truth of p. Of course, Saul might recognise that this belief would be intelligible, were he to change his background of belief; but this is just to say that if he changed his background of belief in the envisaged way, then he would be able to see or reason to the truth of p.

Second, prospective unintelligibility might seem too weak; a "way of thinking" has been characterised broadly to include changes in perception: A conversion can involve a gestalt switch with things seen differently or seen with a different emotional or moral colouration. However, prospective unintelligibility is defined with respect to a given proposition, and this involves commitment to the claim that the change from old to new way of thinking, which is the conversion, can be expressed in propositional terms. And the worry is that to characterise conversions in this way is to over-intellectualise them. Put most forcefully, the worry is that the change that is the conversion is simply missed and what is described—a change in what propositions are taken to be true—is epiphenomenal. There is certainly a truth to this worry, which is that not all aspects of conversions can be captured in terms of a change in what propositions are taken to be true. Such a minimal description will miss important perspectival facts. For example, a moral conversion might involve a change in how things are perceived, where things will come to be seen with a different emotional and moral colouration, as observed. And this change in affect will importantly involve a change in motivational psychology. These changes will not be reducible to changes in what propositions are held true. However, they will entail changes in what propositions are held true, and the reason for focusing on this, admittedly rather intellectual change, is two-fold. First, a metaphysically broad characterisation of conversions is sought, which covers simple change in belief (when it is sufficiently significant). Second, issues to do with the justification of conversion only come into focus given a propositional characterisation, and it is these questions of rationality that are the other central concern of this paper. The definition of prospective unintelligibility then goes someway to meeting the worry that this characterisation is overly intellectual—and to accommodating the breadth of "ways of thinking"—by use of the disjunctive "see or reason." That is, it is credited that a conversion can be a change *in what one sees to be true*, as well as what truths one can reason to.

All conversions involve prospective unintelligibility. Two further features of conversions are as follows: *non-voluntariness*—conversions cannot be chosen; and *retrospectively unintelligibility*—there can be unintelligibility in both directions, looking forwards and backwards. This conjunction is not present in every case; it is only present in some; but every case has at least one of these further properties. Consider each.

Conversions are non-voluntary and cannot be chosen. Saul did not choose to be blinded on the road to Damascus. The Crow did not choose the collapse of their form of life. The breakdown in an established scientific paradigm is not chosen. These are things that happen, and the conversion is the result of their happening. But this is not the case for transformative experiences. We can, and do, choose to have these experiences. Were vampires to exist, as supposed, one could choose to be bitten; and one can choose to try and have a first child. The case of friendship and interest is slightly more complex. On the face of it, insofar as Trifonov knows what friendship demands, it is natural to assume that he could choose to listen to these demands and assign them the appropriate deliberative priority; it is just that he choses not to. However, this assumption does not appreciate the shift in ethical outlook needed to feel the force of these reasons of friendship. McDowell (1998b) puts this as the problem of continence. The continent person does not share the perspective of the virtuous person because the reason the virtuous person apprehends is still one that is weighed and measured, whereas if properly appreciated, it *silences* other reasons (p. 56). Silencing

could be interpreted strongly as the idea that if Trifonov really does know what friendship demands, then he will not put the reason of friendship in the balance against interest at all. Or more moderately as the claim that friendship demands that Trifonov act against interest. Either way the point is that one could not reason to this conclusion from a perspective that starts from interest; hence, McDowell (1995) talks about coming to see the matter correctly as involving a conversion.

Conversions can also be between two ways of thinking that are mutually unintelligible, that is, where there is both *prospective* and *retrospective* unintelligibility (terms from Fraassen, 2002, p. 72). When this is the case, let me say that these ways of thinking are *incommensurable*. Prospective unintelligibility does not imply incommensurability insofar as it is compatible with retrospective intelligibility. Indeed, when conversion is principally a matter of belief change, this will be the case and any unintelligibility between the two ways of thinking will be one way only. Thus, van Fraassen (2002) notes that a characteristic of scientific revolutions is that the new paradigm can explain the successes of the old (p. 72). However, incommensurability is found when the conversion is between religious or ethical outlooks. There is no overlap in the cares and motivations of Saul and Paul. A Crow warrior could not but find it shameful to pass up an opportunity of stealing Sioux horses, but this shame cannot be re-animated once reservation life has taken hold. Equally, the lieutenant colonel could not go back to thinking of his engagement in terms of interest once friendship had superseded his motivations. This incommensurability in religious and ethical outlooks is then related to the phenomenon of: One cannot hold two sets of values, with their associated modes of deliberation, at one and the same time. Something similar is then true with respect to subjective values: Different valuations of experience are exclusive. The subjective values of their past non-vampire self would be as alien to the established vampire as their present set of subjective values were to this past self.

Conversion can then be understood as an extended concept: *two ways of thinking "old" and "new" are related by conversion if and only if (i) from the perspective of the old, the new is prospectively unintelligible; and either (ii) the change from the old to the new is non-voluntary; or (iii) from the perspective of the new, the old is retrospectively unintelligible.* The disjunction here is inclusive, so conversions need to have either property (ii) or property (iii), but they can equally have both. The *prototype* conversion then has all three properties, which is to say it is an involuntary change between incommensurable ways of thinking. This is illustrated by Case 1: Paul on the road to Damascus. While I think the extended definition captures our loose use of the term "conversion," hereafter, let me reserve this term "conversion" for its prototype, and let me refer to those changes in ways of thinking that possess only one of either (ii) or (iii) as "revolutions." So a paradigm shift in science is a revolution in thinking; and having a transformative experience equally effects a revolution in thinking. This distinction between conversions and revolutions becomes important when considering the question of justification, which I turn to Section 5. But first, a further discussion of prospective unintelligibility is needed.

4 | PROSPECTIVE UNINTELLIGIBILITY

When a new way of thinking yields the judgement that p, the new way of thinking is prospectively unintelligible with respect to this judgement and an old way of thinking if and only if *it is not possible to either see p to be true or reason to the truth of p while wedded to this old way of thinking*. This definition has no temporal indices. It thereby implies not only that p cannot *presently* be seen to be true and that p is not supported by *current* evidence and reflection; it also implies that *future* evidence and reflection will neither support p nor allow that p be seen to be true, given the old way of thinking. But why rule out this possibility? Why think that the judgement that p could never be reached from within the old way of thinking?

What underlies this question is the worry that the definition of prospective unintelligibility will never be satisfied because there is always the possibility that some bit of future evidence will allow the judgement that p to be reached from within the old way of thinking. And if there is no prospective unintelligibility, there is no conversion phenomenon on the current definition. Section 3 supported the idea that there are conversions largely by appeal to cases, and

how we describe these cases. This section 4 hopes to philosophically support the correctness of these descriptions. It does so through appeal to two familiar arguments that supply supporting answers to the question just posed. The first argument concerns our epistemic reasons for factual judgements; and the second argument concerns our practical and moral reasons for "thick" judgements—such as that an action is courageous. I take these arguments in turn.

First is the epistemic argument. On the supposition that a new way of thinking N yields a judgement that p that is rejected by an old way of thinking O, subjects who are wedded to N and O will disagree not merely over p but also over how one should make judgements like p. This disagreement over epistemic matters—over matters of epistemic principle—can then be the grounds of the prospective unintelligibility of N with respect to p and O. It can be so when the disagreement satisfies the conditions for being, what Lynch (2010) calls, a *deep disagreement*. These conditions are as follows.

> Commonality: *The parties to the disagreement share common epistemic goal(s).*
> Competition: *If the parties affirm distinct principles with regard to a given domain, those principles (a) pronounce different methods to be the most reliable in a given domain; and (b) these methods are capable of producing incompatible beliefs about that domain.*
> Non-arbitration: *There is no further epistemic principle, accepted by both parties, which would settle the disagreement.*
> Mutual circularity: *The epistemic principle(s) in question can be justified only by means of an epistemically circular argument. (Lynch, 2010, p. 265)*

Commonality is just the condition that the disagreement is over whether it is a fact that p or whether p is true. If the subject wedded to N then supports the claim that p is true by an argument that appeals to an epistemic principle, say X, that the subject wedded to O does not endorse, then this is a case of competition. Competition alone does not imply that the subject wedded to O cannot reach the judgement that p because there might be some further epistemic principle that supports this judgement. Non-arbitration then rules this possibility out. Nevertheless, the subject wedded to O might still be able to reason to p if it was possible to reason to the truth of principle X. Mutual circularity rules this out: Any argument to the truth of X is ultimately epistemically circular; and epistemically circular arguments do not have any persuasive power (Alston, 1986). So if the subject wedded to O starts from a position of not endorsing X, it is not possible for this subject to reason to the truth of X. It follows that the judgement that p is unreachable; and, as Lynch (2010) puts it, deep disagreements are "rationally irresolvable" (p. 269).

To put some flesh on this argument, consider Lynch's example of a believer, Abel, disagreeing with a non-believer, Cain, as to the age of the Earth. One might suppose, in line with present interests, that Abel has just had a road to Damascus experience and been converted. From within his new fundamentalist Christian way of thinking, Abel claims that the Earth is 7,000 years old and would support this claim by appeal to the epistemic principle that it says so much in the Bible, and this is the most reliable method of knowing about such matters. Cain will both reject this claim about the Earth's age and reject this epistemic principle: Consultation of the historical and fossil records, which is the method that should be employed, makes the Earth much older. From Cain's way of thinking, which is Abel's old way of thinking, there is no way to reach the judgement that the Earth is 7,000 years old. There is disagreement about matters of epistemic principle (competition); no further principle Cain could appeal to (non-arbitration); and any argument that Abel might give for the authority of the Bible will not be persuasive: It will ultimately rest on the belief that the Bible is authoritative (mutual circularity). Thus, Abel's judgement is prospectively unintelligible for Cain: The only way of reaching it is by conversion.

A worry about this argument, in the present context, is that it proves too much. It is true that Abel's judgement is prospectively unintelligible for Cain, given he is wedded to the old way of thinking, but it is equally true that Cain's judgement is retrospectively unintelligible from Abel's new way of thinking. That is, the satisfaction of Lynch's conditions for deep disagreement delivers more than just prospective unintelligibility; it also delivers retrospective unintelligibility—or epistemic incommensurability. Deep disagreement is a symmetrical notion. However, prospective

unintelligibility can be combined with retrospective intelligibility. As observed, a characteristic of scientific revolutions is that the new paradigm can explain the success of the old. So this representation of the epistemic change raises the question: How is retrospective intelligibility possible when conversion involves such a change in epistemic principles?

The answer lies in recognising the role that our cognitive and epistemic limitations play. The key condition is *non-arbitration*. Retrospective intelligibility is achieved through there being a sufficient overlap in epistemic principles for the truth of past judgements made within O to be recognised. But this same overlap could make the judgement that p made within N prospectively intelligible. But "could make" does not imply "does make": It is possible that this route to judgement is obscured through our cognitive and epistemic limitations. That is, while there might be possible route to judging that p from within O, it need not be that this route is cognitively accessible. Conversion could then be seen as playing a role analogous to the role diagrams can play in mathematical reasoning: It triggers awareness of the reasons for judgement.

This possibility then requires that subject and temporal indices be added to the definition of prospective unintelligibility; thus, *a new way of thinking N is prospectively unintelligible with respect to an old way of thinking O, a proposition p, a subject A, and at time t if and only if N yields a judgement that p and it is not possible for A, working within O at t, to see p to be true or reason to the truth of p.* What follows is that conversions also need to be indexed to a subject and time. *When there is prospective unintelligibility for a subject*, then a conversion is needed to bridge two ways of thinking O and N; but what is prospectively unintelligible at one time for one subject need not necessarily be so at another or for another.

Second is the practical argument. Suppose that the judgement that p, yielded by the way of thinking N, is a "thick" judgement that has the implication that the subject A has a reason to φ. The prospective intelligibility of this judgement and reasons statement is a matter of whether A, at time t and working within way of thinking O, can see p to be true or reason to the truth of p, and so come to recognise that he has a reason to φ. If this is possible, then A has an *internal reason* to φ, where an internal reason is one that is deliberatively accessible starting from some desire, or, more broadly, starting from what Williams (1980) calls A's *subjective motivational set* (p. 101). Deliberation, Williams then argues, should equally be conceived broadly:

> *There is an essential indeterminacy in what can be counted a rational deliberative process. Practical reasoning is a heuristic process, and an imaginative one, and there are no fixed boundaries on the continuum from rational thought to inspiration and conversion. (p. 110)*

On this present account, this is wrong: Williams's continuum is in fact discontinuous with rational deliberation on one side and conversion on the other. Whether, and to what extent, conversion can be rationally conceived is a question that we will come back to later (and we will also come back to the place of inspiration). But without prejudging this question as to the rationality of conversion, conversion should be opposed to rational deliberation because and insofar as it involves a significant change in the subject's way of thinking. It involves a "before" and "after." As such, a judgement whose truth is reached by conversion is not one whose truth is reached by rational deliberation. With conversion thus excluded from the process of deliberation, the idea of prospective unintelligibility can be stated as the idea that starting from his subjective motivational set, A cannot, through rational deliberation, reach the judgement that p, or thereby the conclusion that he has a reason to φ. The idea of prospective unintelligibility is thereby the idea that the only reason that A has to φ is an *external reason*. (Otherwise put, it is the idea that the judgement that A has a reason to φ can only be given an external interpretation.)

The idea of conversions then speaks directly to Williams's (1980) argument that external reasons statements are mere "bluff" (p. 111). He illustrates this argument with Henry James's story of Owen Wingrave whose family "urge on him the necessity of his joining the army, since all his male ancestors were soldiers, and family pride requires him to do the same," while Owen "hates everything about military life and what it means" (Williams, 1980, p. 106). Owen's family think that he has a reason to join the army, but, Williams argues, this is true only insofar as Owen

could deliberate to the same conclusion. But if he could, then he has an internal reason to join the army. And if he couldn't, there would be nothing to explain his joining the army, were he to do this, where a constraint on practical reasons is that they must be capable of explaining action. So the claim that he has a reason, regardless of whether he can endorse it through deliberation, is just bluff.

This argument then rests on the assumption, made plausible by the broad interpretation of deliberation in play, that if A could not come to judge that he has a reason to φ by deliberation, then A could never be moved to endorse this judgement. However, once conversion is excluded from deliberation, as it properly should be, this assumption misses the possibility that a conversion could move A to endorse this judgement. It is exactly this possibility that McDowell (1995) points out when he says:

> *The idea of conversion would function here as the idea of an intelligible shift in motivational orientation that is exactly* not *effected by inducing a person to discover, by practical reasoning controlled by existing motivations, some internal reasons he did not previously realize he had. (p. 102)*

McDowell then attaches the idea of conversion to that of "considering matters aright," but we need not follow him here. To return to the case of Owen Wingrave, the idea is simply that while he might not be able to deliberate to the truth of what his family says, hating all things to do with the military, there remains the possibility that he could be converted to seeing things as they do—and this requires no commitment to the claim that they see things correctly. But if there is no incoherence to the idea that some reasons might be external, to a subject at a time, a reasons statement can be defined as prospectively unintelligible just when it can only be given an external interpretation.[4] Williams's argument that it is mere "bluff" to assert that reasons thus interpreted give the subject a reason for action—as Owen Wingrave's family does implicitly assert—then provides an argument for the conclusion that Wingrave could not reach this conclusion short of a conversion, which is the proposal advanced by the definition of prospective unintelligibility. Williams's argument also hinges on the claim that there is no rational route to recognise such reasons, and whether this is true is something I consider now in turning to the question of the justification of conversion. (To anticipate: in considering this question, the next two sections offer some substantiation of Williams's claim that external reasons are mere bluff.)

5 | THE JUSTIFICATION OF CONVERSION (PART 1)

The basic problem of the justification of conversion starts from prospective unintelligibility. For a given judgement that *p* made within way of thinking N, it is neither possible to see that *p* nor reason to the truth of *p* starting from way of thinking O. For example, Saul, when persecuting the followers of Jesus, is not able to judge that these followers are in the right; and your non-vampire self cannot find blood desirable. However, this basic problem is slightly more nuanced that this suggests because it can be that there is seeming agreement between two ways of thinking. Thus, consider Case 3 and not the last unreturned loan but a previous loan that Trifonov did return along with "a present from the fair and with the present the interest on the loan." On this occasion, there seems to be congruence of judgement. Starting from interest, Trifonov reasons that it is in his interest to return the loan because doing so will ensure future loans. While starting from friendship, the lieutenant colonel's reasons that he should give Trifonov the loan to help his business and Trifonov should return the loan because he needs to balance his books. That is, each reasons in a different way, but both seem to reach the same end point. So with respect to the judgement that Trifonov should return the loan, it seems that their respective ways of thinking are in agreement. However, although both conclude that the loan should be returned, the judgement that each hereby makes is different because of the different ways that each understands the "should" this judgement contains. This point will be familiar from Prichard's (1912) discussion of moral motivation. He observes that one could motivate someone to behave in the same way as the moral person by showing this action to be in that person's interest, but this reason for acting is

not the reason that would motivate the moral person. Equally, insofar as Trifonov and the lieutenant colonel conceive of the reasons for returning the loan differently, they reach different conclusions about what should be done. So despite appearances to the contrary, there is prospective unintelligibility with respect to this judgement. (And, for thick judgements generally, reasoning to the truth of "p" is not reasoning to the truth of p.)

So the basic problem: we start talking about conversions, conceived broadly, when there is prospective unintelligibility between two ways of thinking; that is, precisely when, starting from the old way of thinking, one cannot, at that time, either see, or reason to, the truth of a judgement made from within the new way of thinking. This basic problem then has some resolution in the case of revolutions in thinking.

First, consider a revolution in thinking which is non-voluntary but where there isn't incommensurability between the two ways of thinking. Insofar as there is no incommensurability, there is retrospective intelligibility and the new way of thinking can make sense of the old. This is the case of scientific revolutions. *Once* the new paradigm is established, there is then no problem with justifying it: With respect to any judgement made within the new paradigm, I should endorse this judgement because it is justified within the new paradigm, and this new paradigm marks an improvement on the old because the successes of the old are retrospectively intelligible in terms of it. As van Fraassen (2002) notes, there is a "royal succession" of scientific theories (p. 71). What is problematic is justifying the transition in thinking from the old to the new ways of thinking. Van Fraassen puts this problem forcefully when he asks, "Is there any *rational* way I could come to entertain, seriously, the belief that things are some way I now classify as absurd?" (p. 73). However, here, it should be observed that the answer just given as to why I should endorse a judgement made within the new paradigm also serves as an answer to the question of why I should transition to the new paradigm. Because insofar as there is retrospective intelligibility, there will be possible route, visible from the objective or God's eye point of view and mediated by epistemic principles that are shared by old and new ways of thinking, from what is endorsed by the old way of thinking to the given judgement made by the new way of thinking. This justificatory possibility makes the objective rationality of the transition from old to new unproblematic. Thus, van Fraassen's rhetorical question arises only through a focus on the epistemic rationality of temporally located subject for whom this justificatory route is obscured. Since this question thereby has greater bite when this objective possibility of justification is removed, I'll return to it in Section 6 when considering the justification of conversions (proper).

A worry here is that all conversions involve the attempt to make sense of the old way of thinking and so involve some kind of retrospective intelligibility. Once converted, for instance, Paul will seek to make sense of Saul's judgements; and does make sense of these past judgement from the starting premise that his old way of thinking was corrupted by sin. In response, it might be conceded that all conversions are accompanied by *conversion stories* but denied that this is sufficient for retrospective intelligibility. For what retrospective intelligibility requires is that the condition of *non-arbitration* be *not* satisfied, so that there be some shared norm or value that bridges and arbitrates between ways of thinking. It is then in terms of this bridging norm or value that sense is made of the old. By contrast, conversion stories make sense of an old way of thinking by the conjunction of the attribution of massive error, and some empirical account of what made this massive error possible and how it was eliminated. Thus, and for instance, Paul might describe Saul, literally and figuratively, as a blind man who saw the light. Conversion stories thus make sense of the old way of thinking but not in a manner sufficient for retrospective intelligibility.

Second, consider a revolution in thinking where there is incommensurability between the ways of thinking but where the new way of thinking can be chosen. Or, since ways of thinking cannot be chosen, this is better put as: where one can choose to act in a way that one knows will result in a change in one's way of thinking. Insofar as choice is possible, there is scope for justification, where this is practical rather than epistemic. In her discussion of transformative experiences, Paul is at pains to argue that we have limited justification for choosing to have a transformative experience. The problem is that rational choice requires us to be able to subjectively value outcomes, but in the case of transformative experiences, we cannot do this. The experience itself is unknown, and it changes how we subjectively value things. But limited justification is not none at all, and Paul allows that a transformative experience can be chosen on the grounds that one subjectively values opening oneself to the possibility of having one's

thinking revolutionised. The idea here is that "[i]f you choose to have the transformative experience, to choose rationally, you must prefer to discover whether and how your preferences will change" (Paul, 2014, p. 118). It is arguable that we have further grounds than this. Campbell (2015) gives the example of someone who decides "to accept a post as a high-school teacher in a bad part of town" (p. 791). This person will be less concerned with discovering how their subjective values change and more concerned with helping these kids. In her reply, Paul (2015) claims that this concern can be conceived in terms of subjective values because it follows from a desire to live authentically: Being authentic "can include imaginatively knowing how you understand yourself in relation to others" (p. 810). Even if authenticity does include this, this reply misses the point that the would-be teacher's primary concern is the kids and not authenticity. And the point here is that the rationality of our decisions needs to take into account how much we care about the outcomes, where this set of cares will not be entirely determined by the subjective experiential character of the outcome and so will not be reducible to subjective values. It follows that it is not only subjective values that rationalise our choices but also our cares or values more broadly conceived. Paul's (2014) worry is that to shift the locus of our decision making away from subjective values is to be inauthentic; "we want," she claims, "to choose in a way that is true to ourselves, in a way that involves our *self* as a reflective, deliberating person" (p. 127). But Campbell's case suggests that this want will not be satisfied unless our decision making includes more than subjective values; being true to one's self can involve being true to what one cares about. However, irrespective of the exact grounds one has for choosing a transformative experience, what matters for present purposes is just *that one can have such grounds*. It follows that a practical justification can be given of any revolution in thinking that follows from a transformative experience.

The justificatory problem for conversions is then that *these lines of argument are not available*. The question, then, is how, if at all, can such conversions be justified?

6 | THE JUSTIFICATION OF CONVERSION (PART 2)

To review, the question is what justification can be given for endorsing a judgement made within a new way of thinking. A prospective epistemic justification is impossible given prospective unintelligibility; a retrospective epistemic justification is impossible given retrospective unintelligibility; and a practical justification is impossible given that the new way of thinking cannot be chosen. Thus, the prospects for rationally endorsing the converted judgement look dim. But not that dim: there is some scope for practical reason. What scope there is depends upon how the conversion happens. Two possible causal histories—or *models of conversion*—might be identified.

Conversion can happen by *revelation*. This is what happened to Saul on the road to Damascus. There is a sudden shift in the subject's way of thinking as, in Dees' (1996) words, the convert "collides with a new moral perspective that completely overwhelms her" (p. 542). This shift will have some cause—for Saul, it was the light he saw and voice he heard—but this cause does not rationally explicate the shift in thinking but is rather akin to a blow to the head. The shift in thinking will be experienced as a gestalt switch with the world seen anew and, according to the converted, seen aright. But while "to reveal" is a factive verb, "revelation" is non-factive. So while the converted, from within the new way of thinking, can justify some judgement that follows from the new way of thinking, this justification is unavailable to the unconverted, for the reasons reviewed above. Equally, the justification the converted gives of their conversion—the rationalisation of the cause into a conversion story—can gain no foothold with the unconverted because even if the unconverted desires to tell such a story of themselves, the conversion is not chosen but happens by revelation, or "by the grace of God" as one might say.

However, not all conversions happen by revelation, some, and probably most, are historical phenomena. This is to say that the new way of thinking emerges from the old by a complex historical process involving evolution and discovery. Kuhn (1957) proposes this *historical model* of conversion for the case of scientific revolutions and describes how the Copernican Revolution took 150 years to complete. Following Kuhn, van Fraassen (2002) then proposed two key historical background conditions for change: (i) there being some kind of crisis in the old way of

thinking and (ii) there being an awareness of a new way of thinking (pp. 91–93). For example, Lear's description of cultural change amongst the Crow saw a new conception of courage emerge from the crisis that was the collapse of the Crow's traditional way of life. This new conception did not emerge by revelation—even if its basis was Plenty Coups' dream—but, as Lear tells it, by Plenty Coups' imaginative interpretation of his dream against the historical backdrop that was the Crow's new social reality. This background of crisis and the existence of a new way of thinking then allow an analogue of Paul's justification for having a transformative experience, which is grounded on the desire for renewal. Thus, Lear (2006) argues that what motivated Plenty Coups to imaginatively develop the interpretation of his dream of the chickadee, and so lay the grounds for a new conception of courage, is *radical hope*, which is "basically the hope for *revival*: for coming back to life in a form that is not yet intelligible" (p. 95). Revival is form of renewal, what it adds is the hope that the way the world will be seen anew will still be recognisably Crow. It is a hope for the renewal of Crow culture. But note that it is a *hope* for renewal not the *decision* for renewal (or better: not the decision to have an experience that will cause renewal). And this is because the conversion, unlike the transformative experience, is not something that can be decided upon. As such, the hope for renewal cannot rationalise conversion in the way that the desire for renewal can rationalise the revolution in thinking brought about by a transformative experience. However, what it can practically rationalise is something akin to the strategy Pascal's wager leads him to propose (Pascal, 2006).

Pascal's wager can be presented, in brief, as follows: You do not know whether or not God exists; but if God exists and you believe, you gain "an eternity of life and happiness"; so on the grounds of self-interest, it is better to believe than not; belief can follow from religious participation; so on the grounds of self-interest, you should take up religious practices (Pascal, 2006, §233, p. 67). If this argument is sound, self-interest alone should motivate you to take up religious practices. Arguably, the wager is unsound: It assumes that because it is logically possible that God exists, the hypothesis that God exists has a non-zero probability. But this principle of indifference is false (Cargile, 1966, p. 257). However, the unsoundness of the wager is immaterial for present purposes since what is relevant is Pascal's idea that one can become religious—be converted—merely by taking up religious practices. James (2014) criticised this idea, saying that faith "adopted wilfully after such mechanical calculation would lack the inner soul of faith's reality" (p. 6). However, this criticism misses the point of Pascal's idea: It is true that the mechanical adoption of religious practices will "lack the inner soul of faith's reality," but at this point, the self-interested subject does not have faith. Faith only comes with conversion. And once it does come, Cargile (1966) remarks, "the believer may genuinely despise his old sceptical self and shudder to think that such considerations as self-interest ever moved him" (p. 252). Pascal's idea, then, might be put like this: Taking up religious practices—acting as if one were a convert—can be enough to cause a shift in one's thinking and precipitate a conversion.

So where there is a crisis in an existing way of thinking and some awareness of a new way of thinking, there is the possibility of radical hope—a hope for renewal—or specifically the hope that this new way of thinking will speak to the crisis. This radical hope can then justify acting in various ways. It can justify engaging with the new way of thinking on a practical level; it can justify the performance of rites, "taking the holy water, having masses said, etc." (Pascal, 2006, §233, p. 68). How this practical engagement can then cause a shift in thinking—how it can precipitate a conversion—is moot. But four comments might be made about this process. First, to reiterate this process is not a rational process, so much is implied by the incommensurability of new and old ways of thinking. And here, we return to van Fraassen's (2002) problematic question: "if you stop for a moment to envisage yourself converted … , you see yourself stooping to blatant nonsense" (p. 102). Second, there is ample empirical evidence that Pascal was correct and that social forces do not merely elicit behavioural conformity but also elicit conformity of privately held judgements (Haidt, 2001, p. 818). Third, the process of engaging with the new way of thinking seems to be both an imaginative and an emotional process (construed broadly to include what Williams calls "inspiration"). Van Fraassen (2002) emphasises the emotions because of their power to change how one sees matters; and gives the example of how anger can transform theft, which was previously viewed as immoral, into a just act. "Somehow," he says, "emotional transformations [then] … change how one sees the outcome of conversion to the new world picture" (p. 108). And the role of the imagination needs to be recognized, in part, because engaging with the new way

of thinking need not be a conscious process, as illustrated by Plenty Coups' dream of the Chickadee (O'Shaughnessy, 2002, p. 358). So by practically engaging with the new way of thinking, our imagination and the emotions can somehow render the new way of thinking cognitively available. One suggestion, for the moral case, is that this process is mediated by moral intuitions: the new way of thinking becoming available as a consequence of moral intuitions having been socially and affectively instilled (Haidt, 2001). Fourth, performing the rites does not cause the conversion to happen; it merely creates a situation wherein it can happen. The rational agency behind conversion is thereby what Béatrice Han-Pile calls *medio-passive* (Han-Pile, 2013, p. 308). Medio-passivity involves doing something in order to let something happen. Agency is involved because one does something and lets something happen, but passivity is involved because things happen to one. Going to sleep is an example of medio-passive agency: One creates the conditions under which sleep is possible and then lets sleep happen, or not. More pertinently, Han-Pile gives the example of understanding. I have some control over whether I understand something since I can do things to facilitate understanding, but at the same time, whether "I understand something is not up to me" (Han-Pile, 2013, p. 309). Thus, the performance of rites creates a situation where conversion can happen and one has some control over this by one's imaginative and emotional engagement, but the gestalt shift, the becoming available of the new way of thinking, ultimately requires something like a revelation.

7 | CONCLUSION: CONVERTING OTHERS

How do you convert others to your way of thinking? There are two strategies here corresponding to the two models of conversion outlined in Section 6. First, you might assert some judgement made within your way of thinking, possibly with its internal supporting justification, and hope that confrontation with this different way of thinking will prompt a revelation in the unconverted. Within the Christian tradition, this is the form of ministry that is *proclaiming* the word of Jesus. On this, Løgstrup (1949) says, "[p]roclamation is a category of address. That means: what is proclaimed to a human being comes into force for him. What is proclaimed is valid for him, as soon as it is proclaimed to him" (p. 249). And "[p]roclamation presupposes authority that establishes the validity of that which is proclaimed" (Løgstrup, 1949, p. 249). Løgstrup's idea here can be elucidated by comparing proclamation to telling. In telling A that p, S presupposes the authority to give A reason to believe that p. This authority will come in part from S's knowing that p and in part from A ceding this authority to S. One might say that S's authority is, in part, second personal. The idea of proclamation is then the idea that S has this authority not by virtue of A's attitudes or by virtue of S's grounds, but by virtue of S's *office*, where this is understood as deriving ultimately from God. Thus, it is God who both ensures that A has a reason to believe and who arranges the revelation necessary for A to appreciate this reason (Bennett, Faulkner, & Stern, 2019).

The second model of conversion is historical, rather than synchronic. Conversions happen after some practical engagement with a new way of thinking. As such, you might hope to convert another by practically engaging them with your way of thinking. Alasdair MacIntyre gives the example of teaching chess to a smart child through bribery with candy.

> *Thus motivated the child plays and plays to win. Notice, however, that, so long as it is the candy alone which provides the child with a good reason for playing chess, the child has no reason not to cheat and every reason to cheat, provided he or she can do so successfully. But, so we may hope, there will come a time when the child will find in those goods specific to chess, in the achievement of a certain highly particular kind of analytical skill, strategic imagination and competitive intensity, a new set of reasons, reasons now not just for winning on a particular occasion, but for trying to excel in whatever way the game of chess demands. (MacIntyre, 1997, p. 125)*

The hope is that by engaging with chess, the child will come to appreciate its value. Or consider blaming someone for something that is wrong by your lights but not theirs; the lieutenant colonel blaming Trifonov on the interpretation of this case proposed above, for instance. Blame, Williams suggests is a *proleptic mechanism*; that is, the blamed party are treated *as if* they possessed the reason when, given their way of thinking, they did not (Williams, 1995, pp. 41–42). But the hope is then that their desire for the respect of the blaming party activates their emotions and imagination in a way that can cause them *to come to have this reason*.[5] Here, the hope is that by engaging the blamed party with your way of deliberating about matters, they will come to see things as you do. The same idea but put positively, in effect, in terms of praise is suggested by Montaigne (2004) who observes that he gives his servant full charge of his purse since he "could cheat me just as well if I kept accounts, and, unless he is a devil, by such reckless trust I oblige him to be honest" (p. 1079). The mechanism here, I've suggested, is that in trusting his servant Montaigne makes manifest that he presumes his servant trustworthy, or thinks well of him (Faulkner, 2011, pp. 157–158). And this form of praise, Montaigne hopes, can make his servant sensitive to the reason for being trustworthy, namely, just that Montaigne depends on his being so.[6]

Thus, it is possible to move someone towards thinking as you do. But both these strategies, historic and synchronic, depend ultimately upon revelation, and revelation need not come. Others can be wedded to their way of thinking. Trifonov, for example, might celebrate his financial gain irrespective of the lieutenant colonel's blame and simply see him as a sucker. There will always be the unconverted. This possibility might be taken to suggest scepticism with respect to other, new, ways of thinking (Williams, 2006, p. 142). A simple response to such scepticism would be to assert the rightness of one's own, old, way of thinking. This is the response McDowell (1995) makes when he says:

> *Nothing more would be in question, in any particular appeal to a determinate conception of how relevant matters are rightly considered, than confidence in some part of an ethical outlook. (p. 109)*

What one needs when faced with other ways of thinking, against a backdrop of crisis or not, is "confidence" in one's own way of thinking, specifically understood in this case as one's own ethical outlook.[7] This might be illustrated by Case 3: If Trifonov persists, in the face of the lieutenant colonel's blame, in merely regarding the lieutenant colonel as a sucker, then the lieutenant colonel can do no more than think that Trifonov is simply looking at things in the wrong way. And here, he might well be attracted by McDowell's (1995) thought that "the shape of his [Trifonov's] motivations reveal that he has not been properly brought up" (p. 103).

However, it is possible to endorse this reaction of the lieutenant colonel and still shy away from the idea that one ought to respond to disagreement with the unconverted with confidence. Rather, one can follow Raz and explain the attraction of this thought about Trifonov in terms our determination to keep friendship-based and interest-based deliberations apart. Thus, in his discussion of incommensurability, Raz (1986) argues that

> *Significant social forms, which delineate the basic shape of the projects and relationships which constitute human well-being, depend on a combination of incommensurability with a total refusal even to consider exchanging one incommensurate option for another. (p. 348)*

Raz gives the example of companionship and money: It is important to our valuation of the former that we judge it to be incommensurable with money. That is, we reject the possibility of reasoning from our care about our companion to a cash price our relationship has for us. We reject the idea of reasoning from care to cash even if we can and do implicitly weigh these things—as we might in considering whether to take a job in a different city.[8] But this is not to say that we reject cash-based reasoning; sometimes, we allow that it is best to reason in terms of cash and interest. So while incommensurability can imply that another way of thinking is both alien and wrong by our lights—Lynch's (2010, p. 264) example of young Earth Creationism, considered above, is as demonstrably wrong as any view can be—incommensurability need not imply this. So incommensurability need not institute any demand for

conversion, or require a confident approach. Rather, it can simply flag the rational disconnection between different ways of thinking, which, each in their own way, are perfectly respectable.

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ENDNOTES

[1] A parallel example, from Dees (1996, p.542), is Malcolm Little becoming the black Muslim preacher Malcolm X.

[2] This is conversion in the context of cultural collapse, but such collapse is not necessary for conversion. See Comaroff and Comaroff (1991) which describes a shift from traditional religion to Christianity in South Africa which involved no radical break from the past.

[3] I describe this case in more detail in Faulkner (2014, pp. 196–199). The example originally comes from Hardin (2002, p. 2).

[4] This could also be put in terms of deep disagreement: There is deep disagreement between Owen Wingrave and his family as to whether he has a reason to join the army. There is so because the conditions of commonality, competition, non-arbitration, and mutual circularity are satisfied with respect to the practical and moral norms that structure how Owen and his family deliberate about this matter. I have not put things this way because to do so involves commitment to the view that deliberation is structured by practical and moral norms, and arguably, this is false. See McDowell (1998a, pp. 57–58).

[5] Williams's idea has been well developed in Fricker (2010).

[6] This case is cited in Elster (2007, p. 350) as part of an argument to the conclusion that trustworthiness is essentially a *by-product*; that is, it cannot be revealed that Montaigne's trust has the aim of making the servant trustworthy or it would fail to have this effect. It must thereby be genuine, or a case of thinking well of servant.

[7] Slightly confusingly, Williams comes to the same conclusion *except* he understands confidence less dogmatically: The plurality of ethical views must be taken more seriously. "We can go on, no doubt, simply saying that we are right and everyone else is wrong … but if we have arrived at this stage of reflection, it seems a remarkably inadequate response" (Williams, 2006, p. 160). For his discussion of confidence, see p. 170ff.

[8] Raz, who understands incommensurability in terms of the incomparability of options, would say: the option of ceasing one's relationship and gaining a sum of cash are not of equal value and nor can they be compared in value.

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