

Ethical Life

The following gives an overview of my beliefs about what it is to live an ethical life. At no point do I defend the beliefs or elaborate in sufficient detail to really persuade, I am simply trying to state them roughly and indicate how they interrelate. Often the claims are more an expression of mood or sentiment than anything to be taken too literally. Even the citations are not generally to defences of the views they are attached to, and in some cases the author's views may be opposed to mine. Rather, at some point in writing this the bibliography became something like an intellectual auto-biography. The citations are thus to indicate pieces on the topic in question, which I have at some point over many years I read at least part of, and which made a noticeable impression on me. My views on ethics are not especially interesting, novel, or coherent. I imagine this document will mainly be of interest to me, but I share it on the encouragement of friends. I intend to return to this at some point and make the writing more aesthetically pleasing.

The world is morally blank. Likewise it is aesthetically and epistemically blank. Considered in itself the universe is totally lacking in evaluative features. That is to say, devoid of significance, meaning, or any "oughts" that accompany how it is¹. Nor is anything intrinsically or in itself desirable or repulsive². This does not and could not change because we come into the world, it is just as true of us and all we do and think and feel that we and they are valueless events within this world rather than something ennobling or disfiguring³. Our monochrome world, devoid of normative colour, will neither validate nor refute any ethical code considered purely in its prescriptive aspect.

However, for the great majority of us for the very great majority of the time, this is nothing like how we experience the world. Given our evolution we in fact tend to think under a moral light⁴. We experience things as having a moral valence, as accompanied by a sense of whether they are right or wrong⁵. This is plausibly a result of our evolutionary circumstances selecting for some pro-social traits⁶, though this should in no means be taken to imply that all that results from this will be viewed to be desirable or pro-social on reflection⁷. This native moral thinking is primarily realised through emotional reactions colouring our actions and experiences, or driving us to will as desirable certain ends or states of affairs⁸. Anthropological evidence confirms that the precise content of our moral attitudes, what we resultantly will and do, is rather malleable indeed and susceptible to cultural formation⁹. Once we become aware of this possibility of variation it becomes a problem for us how we may express and harmonise our own values to ensure they may be coherently expressed - and hence how we may decide when faced with conflicting moral sentiments. Bringing these sentiments into alignment both within oneself and along with other people, and expressing them through that which we will and do, is the problem of ethical life.

¹Mackie 1977

² Garfield 1995, pt.1 ch.6/pt.2 ch.6 - see also Khapa 2006 ch.6, though note some of the arguments here depend on believing that a sage is possible. I believe this, and come to it later.

³ Wittgenstein 1922, props 6.41-6.43; what can be seen in moments of clarity

⁴ Wiredu 1996, pt.1 ch.4, Joyce 2007, Machery & Mallon 2010

⁵ Van Norden 2008 2A6 pg.46; everyday experience of life

⁶ Binmore 2006, Zollman 2008, O'Connor 2016, Birch 2017 ch.8

⁷ O'Connor 2019, Hare & Woods 2020

⁸ Schlick 1939, Anderson 2004 §3, Prinz 2007, Van Norden 2008 6A6, pg. 149, Smith [1759] 2010, de Grouchy [1798] 2019

⁹ Henrich 2020

Of course we do not usually experience ethical life as a choice - neither the general fact of being bound by moral reactions, nor adherence to a general ethical perspective, nor any particular moral judgement, are typically the sorts of things that present themselves to us as open to question or change. The emotional psychology presented above simply does not seem that way from within. But there is a very important sense in which none the less something like choice is at play here. Any response to the interplay of one's own emotions is as justifiable as any other, under the aspect of eternity. One could very well actively seek the pain of constant moral self-reproach. Harmony and sincerity in expressing one's emotional state are modes of evaluation felt from within and could not be justified from without. So while ethical life is not experienced as a realm of choice, it is one devoid of external standard of correctness, and there is hence an inhuman sense in which anything you do is as good as anything else¹⁰. In this manner life itself is no better than death¹¹. Taking a life lived for emotional harmony and earnest self-expression as guides is thus, considered from this perspective, a free choice of basis for an ethical life, whose justification can only come after the fact and because the very choice was made¹².

(This explains my attitude to moral semantics. The question of what form one's semantic theory takes for a given bit of discourse is to a significant degree a matter of deciding upon a convention¹³. I think important truths can be highlighted by the error theoretic view that moral statements are all cognitive but false¹⁴. From the emotivist view that moral semantics is in some important way especially concerned with our emotional attitudes rather than truths¹⁵. Or from something of a hybrid view that sees moral claims as expressing truths within a conventionally adopted system whose prescriptive axioms encode and explicate our chief moral sentiments¹⁶. Depending on what seemed important to stress or study in a given circumstance I could be happy with proposals built around any of these ideas.)

Ethical life is founded first and foremost on the social impulses¹⁷. There is something within us that takes joy in the happiness of others, sees their misery as something regrettable, and compels us to act in solidarity and friendship with fellows¹⁸. We tend to expand outwards our sense of who counts as a fellow, always self-reproaching if the suffering of another creature is clearly and vividly conceptualised but does not generate immediate sympathy. I find myself with such preferences, but also that that they compete with less sociable motivations such as envy and spite. My project is to develop my instincts of solidarity and act politically so as to see their objects realised¹⁹. Cultivating and expressing this universal friendship and compassion is how the problem of an ethical life presents itself as a practical matter in a complex society wherein one is aware of many more people than one can personally get to know²⁰.

¹⁰ Wittgenstein [1953] 2001 §256 - or at least my dim memory of it

¹¹ Schopenhauer [1859] 1966 ch. 46, Camus [1942] 1975, Job 3:11-19

¹² Kierkegaard [1843] 1985, Jeffrey 1995

¹³ Carnap 1950

¹⁴ Mackie 1977, Joyce 2007

¹⁵ Ayer 1936 ch.6, Hare 1963, Gibbard 1990

¹⁶ Hagen 2007, Carnap [1958] 2017

¹⁷ Schlick 1939 ch.8 §8, Hanley 2019 ch.2. Forthcoming work by Christa Peterson & Jack Samuel.

¹⁸ This is to some degree merely biographical. But see Stebbing 1948 ch.4

¹⁹ Mozi 2010 universal love III, Galatians 3:28, Epictetus 2010 bk.1 chs. 9 & 13, De Grouchy Lt. II, Schliesser 2017 ch.5 §f, Appiah 2007; a personal desire to be of that cohort of whom St. Augustine writes: "For the city of the saints is above, although here below it begets citizens, in whom it sojourns till the time of its reign arrives, when it shall gather together all in the day of the resurrection; and then shall the promised kingdom be given to them, in which they shall reign with their Prince, the King of the ages, time without end."

²⁰ Bai 2019 ch.5

The social impulses within us compete with very powerful counter-veiling tendencies. It is not a given that one will always in fact relate to one's fellows as friends, even when you clearly perceive them as akin to you²¹. The possibility of developing benevolent moral emotions (and their holding greater sway within us than reactions such as loathing and jealousy) is to a very large extent a function of the social circumstances and material conditions you are raised in²². Modes of social organisation will tend to produce norms, laws, and mores (sometimes jointly incoherent²³) that legitimise whatever it is the dominant are able to get away with therein²⁴ - doing so may even be part of what causes long lasting social forms to be perpetuated²⁵. Forms of belief that tend to justify the powerful in their superior position are due to well entrenched cognitive habits very hard to revise²⁶. These beliefs and habits of mind will tend to discourage rendering aid and assistance to the poor and downtrod, since such would equalise things. They also tend to present as deserving of their status (and so unworthy of sympathy) large swathes of the underclass. Even when these beliefs are revised or abandoned by many people, such beliefs may still de facto enjoy a privileged position in coordinating social activity²⁷. What is more, scarcity and desperation make us more susceptible to ideologies that cut us off from fellow feeling²⁸. We end up isolated and lonely and with no idea what to do about it²⁹. The social arrangement giving rise to such a state of affairs thus tends to directly thwart ambitions to develop and express the widest possible bonds of solidarity, friendship, and fellow feeling.

Nor is the problem merely more or less subconscious habits of belief formation being responsive to social conditions. Plenty of direct material intervention to foster conditions ill conducive to solidarity are carried out by those who have power. The powerful of a given society can use their position to shape academia and the education system³⁰. Given that the ruling class benefit from the hierarchy that would be disrupted by solidarity, they may bend educational institutions to foster enmity, and targeted contempt³¹. They can perpetrate or condone raw violence to murder and intimidate groups who might oppose them³². They may own the press or bribe those who do³³, and by similar means render hypocritical potential dissidents³⁴. More generally, the nature of cultural work is such that the intelligentsia must always adapt themselves to their social order if they are to survive³⁵. The more savvy members of the ruling class can use this to quite consciously foster moral norms that serve their interest, by funding and propagating the right sort

²¹ Manne 2016

²² Van Norden 2008 6A6.7 pg. 149

²³ Du Bois [1940] 1984 ch.6

²⁴ Cohen 1978 ch. 8, Táíwò 1996, Smith [1759] 2010 1.3.3.1, Herzog 2014, Mohseni *et al* 2019

²⁵ Railton 1986, Haslanger 2007 §4

²⁶ Stanley 2015 ch.5, Mills 2007, Dotson 2017, Dorst 2019 ch.3, Kinney & Bright 2020

²⁷ Táíwò 2018

²⁸ Du Bois 1926, Cassirer 1946 ch.18

²⁹ Putnam 2001, Laing 2016, Hochschild 2018

³⁰ Du Bois [1903] 2008, [1935] 1992, Woodson 1933, Weatherall *et al* 2018

³¹ Du Bois [1935] 1992 ch.16, Mills 2017 ch.7

³² Du Bois 1926

³³ e.g. Wells-Barnett 2002 ch.4

³⁴ e.g. Sala-Molins 2006

³⁵ Mannheim 1936 ch.3 §4

of moral argumentation and associated organisations³⁶. A society in which people are afraid, unequal, and under the sway of institutions they do not control, will be one in which we are unable to form and express the social impulses to their fullest degree.

One might assume from the above that the problem is a lack of fellow feeling created by inequality. The solution would thus be to create a world in which people are equals and can thus enjoy the emotional states and associated relationships which I claim are most valuable. Indeed I am an enemy of socially salient forms of inequality for something like this reason. Further, even quite arbitrary inequalities have a way of compounding upon themselves and creating yet further sources of exploitation and misery³⁷. And the perception of inequality suffices to cause material inequalities³⁸ which will then kick off the cycle of disregard outlined above. However, there are considerable difficulties in working out what is meant by the ideal of equality and why it should be desirable³⁹. Worse, insisting upon such ideals in the abstract can even serve as a means of upholding states of affairs quite ill conducive to ethical life⁴⁰. As such and despite considerable sympathies for egalitarianism, rather than simply declaring for equality a more complex path is required. With our guide only the vague idea of a state of society in which to the greatest extent possible we can grow together in friendship and kindness, we must make careful study of particular proposed courses of action and their effects on the wellbeing (so understood) of sentient beings.

In carrying out this careful study necessary for ethical life there is no substitute for a rigorous and scientific study of the natural and social world. Only by means of this can we discern what sort of arrangements are feasible, and by what means they may be arrived at, such that we secure a felicitous society⁴¹. This is worth stressing since my overwhelming experience is that people who are sympathetic to my general ethical and political perspective are hostile to the epistemic steps one must take in order to realise our shared goals. Rather than be put off by facile dichotomies between the heart and the head⁴² and the attendant bitter rivalries between humanistic academics and scientific thinkers⁴³, we ought make the most use of those methods of inquiry that hold some hope of giving us sufficiently general and precise information upon which to base intelligent action⁴⁴. Without this we cannot hope to purposefully change so complex a system as a human society, especially given that it is protected by powerful forces who will obstruct our efforts and who - by means already stated - constantly interfere with our attempts to understand their operation⁴⁵. There is, of course, a very great deal of uncertainty in reasoning about social life, and a modest attitude about what we shall be capable of is called for⁴⁶. But this does not mean that

³⁶ e.g. Cooper 2017

³⁷ Engels [1884] 2010, Merton 1968, Crenshaw 1990, Heesen 2017 — my contribution to this literature in O'Connor *et al* 2019, but subsumed by O'Connor 2019

³⁸ Luxemburg [1904] 1999 §2. See also Lee 2016 — my contribution to latter literature in Bright 2017, but subsumed by Hengel 2017

³⁹ Marx [1875] 1968, Anderson 1999

⁴⁰ Wood 1986, Mills 2005, Wenner 2017

⁴¹ Du Bois 1904 pg 292, Khaldun [1377] 2015 pg.11-32

⁴² <https://aquarusa.wordpress.com/2017/07/03/incongruent-dichotomies-logical-vs-emotional/>

⁴³ Lamont 2009; personal experience of pathetic behaviour from academics

⁴⁴ Du Bois 1898, Hempel [1961] 2013 §2, Bright 2018 — one may also use such methods to directly refine moral reasoning, e.g. Harsanyi 1977 ch.4, Thoma 2015, Bjorndahl *et al* 2017

⁴⁵ Nkrumah 1965 ch. 18

⁴⁶ Neurath [1913] 1983, Carnap 1969 §18

precise methods of reasoning about our situation are unavailable⁴⁷ or could not be invented⁴⁸. And nor should we slip into the opposite scientific error of ignoring the information that can be gained by engaging with people's experience of their own lives⁴⁹. But if we are to have any hope of building a better world we simply cannot allow ourselves to ignore sources of insight or tools that give us the best hope of being able to successfully and consciously plan our joint projects.

(This point really cannot be stressed enough to academics and intellectuals. Anything less than our best epistemic efforts in this sphere are self-indulgent sentimentalism, not actually aimed at creating felicity for one's fellows or providing others with the information they need to do so themselves⁵⁰, but simply creating in oneself the pleasant feeling accompanying thinking that one has done as one ought. What is more, genuinely doing what one thinks one epistemically ought, for the sakes of the goals set by and for oneself, wins a mental freedom that is necessary for general liberation and personal tranquility⁵¹.)

There are vast wells of wisdom and experience presently untapped, indeed despised and ignored, because of the way we have organised society⁵². Given the enormous epistemic difficulty of the task ahead of us this is unacceptable. Social change is hence necessary to gain the requisite knowledge, and ability to act upon that knowledge, that we will need to create widespread flourishing and the mutual joy thereof⁵³. To stop this dreadful waste of talent and resources we must place the means of production under the control of the great mass of working people⁵⁴. Not only would this directly draw upon the skill and intellect of those newly empowered and probably gain more time for rest and fulfilling activities⁵⁵, but it would also put an end to many of the antagonisms which fostered our ignorance⁵⁶. By more directly democratising we also avoid the reliance on great leaders or small cliques, which is hard to regulate and has historically proven highly problematic⁵⁷.

Socialising the means of production is no easy task and we must squarely face the limits of what can be achieved by various methods⁵⁸. And even if we have secured the power to carry out the change in principle, the precise means of socialising industry is vexed and many attempts have ended in dreadful failure - indeed, not everything that seems desirable is possible⁵⁹. This is a prime example of where we must make careful, non-dogmatic and scientific, study of what we

⁴⁷ Carnap 1947, Leitgeb 2017 ch. 6, e.g. Bradley & Steele 2015, e.g. Bradley & Bright 2020

⁴⁸ Novaes 2020, e.g. Kadane & Seidenfeld 1996, e.g. Bright *et al* 2016, e.g. Malinsky 2018

⁴⁹ Collins [1990] 2002, Barnes 2016 ch. 4. This is related to the ability to acknowledge wisdom in quite distinct traditions; Oruka 1983, Kresse 2007. See also: <http://sootyempiric.blogspot.com/2018/06/empiricism-is-standpoint-epistemology.html>

⁵⁰ Curry & Curry 2018

⁵¹ Bright forthcoming, Epictetus 2010 bk.4 ch.1 - I will presently say more about liberation, and return to the value of tranquility later.

⁵²Du Bois 1920 ch.5, James 1956, Wiredu 1995, Landemore 2017, Goodin & Spiekermann 2018

⁵³ Neurath [1931] 2020 pg.246

⁵⁴ As in e.g. Luxemburg [1918] 1999

⁵⁵ Davis 1983 - see also Anderson 2019, and Russell's In Praise of Idleness.

⁵⁶ Arrow 1978

⁵⁷ Luxemburg [1918] 1961 ch.6, James [1938] 2001, Young [1958] 2017, Wiredu 1980, Gooding-Williams 2009 ch.4, Heesen 2017

⁵⁸ Luxemburg [1900] 1986, Milliband 1972

⁵⁹ Arrow [1951] 2012, Sen 1970, List 2006

can achieve and how⁶⁰. Socialist countries have often had a troubled relationship with scientific inquiry⁶¹, and it is in any case an intrinsically difficult issue to navigate relating experts to democratic governance⁶². Caution, and judicious institutional design, will be required.

However this is decided, the power thus gained by the democracy must also be used to dismantle the economic and political structures which give rise to or embody imperial competition. Thereby the democracy must act in solidarity with those seeking liberation⁶³. Such structures foster war and breed callousness, hatred, and enmity⁶⁴. They are totally opposed to what is at heart a pacifist project⁶⁵. Further without the material means of colonial domination hanging over the greater part of the world we may better hope to avoid needless misery and suffering due to human caused climate change⁶⁶, and we may all better assist each other as equals and co-partners in a project of development along lines the global majority are themselves in a position to democratically determine⁶⁷.

By bringing industry under control in this way we do not thereby achieve our goal, only put ourselves in a position to do so by gaining for ourselves the knowledge and power to direct resources towards projects not necessarily profitable for capitalists⁶⁸. There would remain complex questions about how to structure an educational system that fosters the values and skills necessary for a kind society⁶⁹. What is more, we do not begin society anew. We would no doubt inherit various bigotries from the old world, and the lasting effects of an all pervasive cultural industry attuned to the opposite values of those we seek to propagate⁷⁰. As such we must in tandem to the above work on creating an artistic culture that will foster the sort of sentiments and modes of relationship we hope to enjoy with one another⁷¹. This will necessitate materially transforming the spaces we inhabit together⁷². This is not to suggest some new interference in art and culture, it is only to suggest a continued and deepened support for present practice: we already use good art to reflect on and evoke the passions associated with our deepest concerns⁷³

⁶⁰ Lewis [1949] 2003 ch.9, Nove 1983, Ostrom 1990, Albert 2004, Srnicek & Williams 2015

⁶¹ Lecourt 1977, Spufford 2010, Medina 2011 - see Sheehan 2018

⁶² Klaw 1968, Longino 2002, Douglas 2005, Brown 2009, Kitcher 2011, Steele 2012, Holst & Molander 2017, Dang & Bright 2020 - problems are more pressing in animal science Birch 2018

⁶³ Luxemburg [1913] 2015 ch.26 & 27

⁶⁴ Luxemburg [1902] 2005, Schleichert 2003, Tierney & Shusui 2015

⁶⁵ The extent to which a full pacifism is possible given my wider ends here is a matter I am undecided upon. See Fanon 1961 vs Sharp [1994] 2012, Holmes 2016. See also Reader 2000. The argument of Mozi 2020: Against Offensive Warfare III is fully satisfying. I am very influenced by Shelley's *Masque of Anarchy* and Coulter's *The Town I Loved So Well* (as performed by Luke Kelly), as well as experience growing up in contact with Northern Irish Catholics and, later on, people whose families had fled the Biafran war.

⁶⁶ Táíwò & Cibralic 2020

⁶⁷ Condorcet [1795] 2012 ch.10, Du Bois 1906 pg.241, Nkrumah 1965, Gyekye 1997, Sen 1999, Nussbaum 2011, Táíwò 2014

⁶⁸ Roemer 1982 ch.8, Wills 2020 pg. 244

⁶⁹ Dewey 1923; 2011, Nussbaum 2010, McLellan *et al* 2016, Friere [1968] 2018

⁷⁰ Horkheimer & Adorno [1944] 2002 ch. 4, Kukla 2002, Gilroy 2004, Manne 2019 ch.6

⁷¹ Hutton 2014 ch.20, Du Bois 1926b, De Grouchy [1798] 2019

⁷² Gallison 1990, Potochnik & Yap 2006, Anderson 2013- on this see also Royster 2003, Shelbie 2016, Easwaran 2019, Kukla 2020

⁷³ e.g. Beauvoir 1992 & Borges 1964 on mortality — Milton's Satan on courage.

- and our critical discourse about these works is a form of moral reflection⁷⁴. While we should avoid any philistine crude propagandism, which invariably succeeds neither as art nor as propaganda⁷⁵, it seems possible to create sufficiently refined art so as to both foster greater understanding and also induce direct aesthetic pleasure⁷⁶.

Such large changes in our socio-cultural environment would entail and be supported by changes for how we interact with one another in every day settings. These sort of every day interactions are the primary means by which attitudes of mutual respect are expressed and cultivated⁷⁷. Exactly what sort of changes in this sphere is vexed and our only guide is that we should look out for ways in which we can better express solidarity and mutual friendship. We must scrutinise the interesting proposals out there⁷⁸. Our language comes bound up with an entire cultural history and mode of life⁷⁹, and so will presumably be gradually adapted to our new circumstances⁸⁰. Indeed it might be that some of the aforementioned reforms are sufficient to resolve injustices presently causing much distress⁸¹. We need an attitude of tolerance and experimental curiosity in allowing people the space to work out how best they can find flourishing together.

To review: while there is not any favoured or objectively correct moral code, we just so happen to be creatures with moral instincts, emotional drives that compel us to relate to each other in a certain way if we are to be happy. Within me I hence find a drive to exist in fellowship with as wide a sphere of others as is possible, for our joys to be many and mutual and our burdens minimised and equitably shared. I wish this sociable element of myself to be given full room to develop and express itself, and for conflicting desires to be resolved in its favour. As such I turn to consider which aspects of my society help, and which hinder, this project of developing a jointly felicitous lifeworld. I find that rampant inequalities of power, prestige, and access to resources, greatly hinder the preferred elements of my nature. And while I cannot yet say exactly what sort of social forms would be required for the full development of the social impulses, I know enough to know that in order to take rational steps towards getting there we would have to democratise factors of production, engage in careful and objective study of the means available to us, roll back domineering imperial ways of relating to one another, and be willing to change many aspects of the culture we inhabit and how we interact on a day to day level. In the name of building the better world, indeed coming to know what that better world is we should build, I hence wish for the changes to science and society necessary to foster shared joy.

It only remains to be said how we may make ourselves the sort of people capable of working towards these changes. It is no easy matter to live ethically⁸². What must we make of ourselves?

One must remain sincere and reflective⁸³. Resist misinformation, and the innumerable temptations to avoid honestly⁸⁴. Rational reflection guards against errors and discordant passions that drive us

⁷⁴ e.g. Jeffers 2013

⁷⁵ Locke 1928

⁷⁶ Neurath 2010, Battle-Baptiste & Rusert 2018 - for more traditionally aesthetic examples, see the films *Moonlight* or *Millennium Actress*

⁷⁷ Olberding 2016

⁷⁸ Mills 1994, Haslanger 2004, Barnes 2016 ch.6, Harris 2017, Clardy 2019, George & Briggs 2019

⁷⁹ Gyeke 1995, Wierzbicka 2006

⁸⁰ Neurath 1946, Bright 2017a, Dembroff & Wodak 2018

⁸¹ Jenkins forthcoming

⁸² Analects VIII. 7.

⁸³ Stebbing 1939 ch.13, Arendt 1964, Elshtain 1995 ch. 4, Hanh 2005 ch.5, Hitz 2020 ch. 3, Meyer *et al* 2020

⁸⁴ Arendt [1956] 2006

apart, and sincerity guards against temptations to betray one's better instincts. Constantly reinforced⁸⁵ inner discipline⁸⁶ and emotional self-regulation⁸⁷ are required. This may involve some renunciation of personal gratification⁸⁸. But this is not an ethic of grim duty. Ethical life helps one become tranquil, and thereby receptive to joy and capable of genuine play⁸⁹. For the mental habits which assist in avoiding becoming a puppet of inhumane social forces⁹⁰ are those which generally help to render you calm and observant. In this way one will be able to experience the world as an aesthetic phenomenon and participate in the simple pleasures it offers. The fruits of this can be seen in the manner in which poets capture moments of pure experience⁹¹.

It is the aspect of serenity involved in ethical life that philosophers have often somewhat misleadingly⁹² expressed via soaring metaphysical language concerning the unity of all things⁹³. The truth that these pick up on is that ethical life, inner happiness, and an observant appreciation for one's world, are all deeply intertwined. At base the ethical person is the one who, ever aware of the contours and richness of the world they inhabit, can honestly see what they do as part of a great scheme of mass cooperation involving all sentient beings⁹⁴. Living in tranquility and rationally following the direction of the social impulse, the ethical person's experience of the world is totally distinct from that of the selfish, the vain, the cruel - and also that of the lonely, the hopeless, and the harried⁹⁵. Those living ethical lives cheerfully pursue such harmony as they are capable of generating⁹⁶, and in due time they vanish into a world they so dearly love.

Despite the cold I walk above deck, with the sound of waves gently lapping the hull my only companion. The wine dark sea illuminated by the quarters below, the sky appears a uniform azure. I look out over the ocean.

A single breath, rendered mist - for a moment it seems to hold its form. But soon enough it dissipates, spreading out through the air and into the waters, vanishing in the night.

The ship sails on.

⁸⁵ Ivanhoe 2000, Wu Yubi 2013, Angle & Tiwald 2017 ch. 7

⁸⁶ Epictetus 2008 — on this see Pigliucci 2017, Marcus Aurelius 2014 — on this see Hadot 1998

⁸⁷ Śāntideva 1995 ch.6, Graver 2008, Suzuki [1970] 2011, Táiwò 2020

⁸⁸ Schopenhauer [1859] 1966 ch. 48 - great philosophers also often die with equipoise, as in Plato's *Phaedo*, Luxemburg [1919] 2010 or Condorcet 2012 ch.10 final paragraph. I have also been very much influenced on this by conversation with Susanne Burri.

⁸⁹ Schlick 1927, 1939 ch.8 §10

⁹⁰ Marcus Aurelius 2010 12:19-20

⁹¹ Some examples: Bashō 1986 "You the Butterfly", 1996 pg.75, Sei Shōnagon 2006 bk.1 §1, Tu Mu 2008, Novick 2017, Akisuke 2018, Gilbert's "Brief for the Defence", and Novick's unpublished translation of Tao Younming's "Drinking Wine, No. 5". See also Cooper 2012. Matthew 6:26-34

⁹² Carnap [1932] 1958 §7

⁹³ e.g. Nishida 1990 or Priest 2014 ch.14 or Van Norden 2020 §5

⁹⁴ Spinoza 2020 pt. 5 - see also Norris 1991

⁹⁵ Wittgenstein 1922 6.43

⁹⁶ Ziporyn ch. 2

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