

INEFFICACY, DESPAIR, AND DIFFERENCE-MAKING

A secular application of Kant’s moral
argument

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It does not matter how many doubts from history may be raised against my hopes, which, if these doubts were *proved*, could move me to desist from a task so apparently futile; *as long as these doubts cannot be made quite certain* I cannot exchange the duty for the rule of prudence not to attempt the undoable.

(TP 8: 309)

1. Inefficacy and opportunism

Let’s start by assuming that there is a sound argument for the following:

Don’t Produce: It is morally wrong to participate voluntarily in Production Activity A.

“Production Activity A” is just a placeholder; the reader is invited to fill in the blank. By “participate voluntarily”, I mean something like “direct or engage in, when not under compulsion or duress, typically with the aim of benefiting thereby”. An example of an A from food ethics might be “the raising and harvesting of animals for the purpose of selling their bodies, secretions, and eggs”.¹ Other A’s might be some of the production activities that occur in sweatshops, cobalt mines, coffee farms, chocolate farms, avocado orchards, cellphone factories, tanneries, diamond mines and so on.²

Now consider an average consumer of middling means – let’s call him Oppy. Oppy likes meat, cheese, chocolate and sweatpants and has a special weakness for leather shoes. He likes to save money by buying cheap sweaters and non-fair trade coffee. He also finds iPhones irresistible, especially if they come with a diamond-encrusted case (again: fill in the blank). So Oppy

would dearly like to purchase these products of our contemporary global supply chains. But he also believes that some of the activities involved in producing these products are morally objectionable; in other words, he believes that *Don't Produce* holds with respect to them. And he just assumes, like many of us do, that *Don't Produce* supports

Don't Purchase: It is morally wrong to purchase the products of Production Activity A if alternatives are readily available.³

And so, up to now, Oppy has resisted the urge to purchase.

Recently, however, Oppy has confronted some sobering empirical facts that seem to challenge the move from *Don't Produce* to *Don't Purchase* with respect to many production activities in the contemporary global context. The sobering empirical facts, roughly put, are that the sheer size and complexity of the industrial system that brings 99% of products to our refrigerators, pantries and closets make it *exceedingly* unlikely that an individual's choice not to purchase those products will have any effect at all on the system. This is particularly true of "lumpy" supply chains like those that supply us with industrial animal products. These systems are lumpy because the relevant goods (e.g. chicken products) are ordered in large lots all the way down the supply chain – from the restaurant to the various suppliers to the farmer to the incubator – rather than one by one. So even if a chicken sandwich from a fast food restaurant contains (let's say) 1/20th of a chicken, the sobering facts about the supply system give Oppy a *far* lower than 1-in-20 (i.e. 5%) chance that his order at a fast food counter will make a difference to any particular chicken. If we take account of seasonal variables, buffers, waste and other supply-chain "noise",⁴ then the chance that he will buy a "threshold" chicken sandwich becomes, in Mark Budolfson's words, "infinitesimal" (2016, 208).

Put another way: calculating the expected effect for each customer who orders a chicken sandwich would be difficult, given all these factors, but it is clearly *nowhere near* as high as 1/20th of a chicken.⁵ So the sobering empirical facts suggest that the standard expected utility response in these contexts – that is, divide through and assign responsibility for the *average* effect to each individual consumer – is flawed.⁶ Or that's what Oppy concludes, in any case. After reflecting on all of this, he comes to believe that his consumption patterns with respect to many industrial products almost certainly won't make a difference. And because he really likes his sausages and sweaters and cell phones, he now feels free to go ahead and purchase the next time he is at the drive-through. Note that this is not a case of weakness of will: Oppy remains fully committed to *Don't Produce*. He has simply given up the assumption that *Don't Produce* supports *Don't Purchase*. Oppy has become an opportunist.⁷

A number of philosophers (Martin 1976; Frey 1985; Budolfson 2018; Michaelson 2016a; Kingston 2020) have shown how such concerns about

inefficacy are pressing for act consequentialist advocates of the move from *Don't Produce* to *Don't Purchase*. This is because act consequentialism (hereafter “consequentialism”) endorses the following principle:

Causal Consequences Principle (CCP): Action A is morally wrong only if the causal consequences of A are worse than they would have been if some readily available alternative to A had been performed.⁸

“Worse” here is typically construed in a broadly *welfarist* way, where what matters is the well-being of sentient animals.⁹ So, given CCP, if a private¹⁰ purchase of a chicken sandwich that is wrongfully produced almost certainly *doesn't* cause any additional loss in welfare, and certainly *does* lead to the goods of nourishment and gustatory pleasure, then it cannot be morally wrong. It might even be morally required. This then sets up a trilemma for the consequentialist: give up CCP, give up *welfarism*, or give up *Don't Purchase* and get comfortable with opportunism. The whole problematic is now referred to as the *inefficacy* (or *futility* or *causal impotence*) objection to consequentialism.

Clearly it is an empirical question whether the sobering empirical facts described previously really obtain. Real-world industrial supply chains for non-perishables, for instance, are more likely to be vertically integrated than those for perishables.¹¹ In order to set aside this question, we can put the problem conditionally: *if* there are such sobering empirical facts about some of our industrial supply chains such that an individual purchase of their products is extremely unlikely to make a *causal* difference to overall welfare, then the intuitive-seeming shift from *Don't Produce* to *Don't Purchase* is blocked.¹²

A few philosophers (Michaelson 2016b; Budolfson draft) have argued that these concerns about futility also afflict some *non-consequentialist* efforts to move from *Don't Produce* to *Don't Purchase*. For example, they make things difficult for views on which *only* acts that involve or lead to the infringement or violation of rights count as morally wrong. That's because the sobering empirical facts indicate that an individual's choice to purchase the products of a gigantic, insensitive system is extremely unlikely to infringe or violate any rights. And most non-consequentialists of this variety will allow that it is permissible to perform actions that are extremely unlikely to infringe or violate rights.

Other varieties of non-consequentialism (certain forms of virtue theory, symbolic or expressive value theory, divine command theory and even Parfit's neo-Kantian theory)¹³ are not vulnerable to this form of the inefficacy objection, however. The decision to purchase the products of a morally wrongful activity can still be vicious, symbolically unacceptable, divinely proscribed or categorically irrational – and thus impermissible – even if it has no negative consequences for welfare.¹⁴

Oppy, for his part, finds the latter sorts of theories mysterious and/or implausible: he's a committed consequentialist. Thus, despite his unwavering

commitment to *Don't Produce*, he now feels comfortable being an opportunist. The principle underwriting Oppy's reasoning is something like this:

Badness as a Reason to Abstain: The badness of a production activity A is a reason to abstain from purchasing A's products *only if* abstaining has a non-negligible chance of making a positive difference with respect to the badness of A.

The more general idea here is:

Badness as a Reason to Act: The badness of some situation is a reason to perform an action *only if* that action has a non-negligible chance of making a positive difference with respect to the badness of that situation.

Oppy is also assuming, in keeping with CCP, that what it is to "make a difference" should be construed in a *causal* way:

Difference-Making, Causal: An action A makes a difference with respect to situation S if and only if A causes a change in S.

It would be worth thinking more about whether consequentialist theories can rebut the conceptual version of the inefficacy objection (and rule out opportunistic purchasing) without giving up one or more of their core principles. But I don't propose to go further into that debate here.¹⁵ In this chapter, I will just assume without further argument that Oppy is right: the inference from *Don't Produce* to *Don't Purchase* is hard to motivate within a consequentialist framework, given the sobering empirical facts.

In what follows, I propose to turn our attention away from Oppy in order to focus on another character: Hope. As we will see, Hope likes industrial products just as much as Oppy does. But Hope takes herself to have strong *independent* reasons for thinking that *Don't Purchase* is true. These reasons may include an appeal to one of the non-consequentialist theories just mentioned and in any case do *not* hang on whether her actions make a causal difference to welfare outcomes. All the same, Hope often – and quite understandably – finds her efforts to adhere to *Don't Purchase* threatened by her awareness of the sobering empirical facts that converted Oppy to opportunism. And she's not alone in this: for many of us, the recognition that our abstention almost certainly makes no causal difference *vis-à-vis* the morally objectionable system we're boycotting poses a serious *psychological* threat to our ongoing moral resolve. This is so even if we reject *Badness as a Reason to Abstain* – that is, even if our reasons for abstaining do not depend on our actions making a causal difference.

Here is another way to illustrate the difference between Oppy and Hope. The usual version of the inefficacy objection is *moral-conceptual*:

it challenges the intuitive-seeming assumption that *Don't Purchase* follows from *Don't Produce* by showing that consequentialist theories imply the opposite in circumstances where individual choices are almost certainly inefficacious. The version of the problem I consider here, by contrast, is *moral-psychological*: it starts with the conviction that *Don't Purchase* is true for non-consequentialist reasons. It then points out that many people (like Hope) who have this view but are still inclined to purchase will often be psychologically demoralized under conditions of *perceived* inefficacy such that they are unable to resist.¹⁶ So Hope's case, unlike Oppy's, does involve a kind of weakness of will.

Although he lived well before the advent of factory farms and gigantic supply chains, Immanuel Kant had something illuminating to say about Hope's situation. Or at least that's what I will suggest in the following. In Section 2, I set up the problem in more detail before going on in Section 3 to reconstruct one version of Kant's famous "moral proof" of God's existence and the future life of the soul. This is the version he developed in the 1790s towards the end of his career, just as his hopes regarding the French Revolution were giving way to despair. I call this the "moral-psychological" version of the proof in order to highlight the fact that – unlike the better-known version in the second *Critique* – it relies on empirical premises about our tendencies to hope and despair, and a putative need to trust in God or some other supersensible mechanism to shore up our moral-psychological resolve. As we will see, the conclusion of the moral-psychological proof is not that God and the future life exist but rather that we are morally justified in having Belief (the German term is "*Glaube*")¹⁷ that God and the future life exist. After making this detour through Kant's theistic moral psychology, my ultimate goal (in Section 4) is to see whether there is a secular analogue of the proof that applies to people in contemporary industrial contexts who, like Hope, are demoralized by our apparent inefficacy. Is there something analogous to trust in God that can shore up moral resolve in such circumstances, but without involving a supersensible commitment?

2. Demoralization and despair

We stipulated previously that Hope already takes herself to have an argument that allows her to bridge the gap from *Don't Produce* to *Don't Purchase*, without appealing to causal difference-making. One family of such arguments invokes the symbolic value of "standing with the good" and avoiding "moral taint" by not consuming the products of a morally objectionable practice (see Hill 1979; Appiah 1986; Cuneo 2016; Boey 2016). Another invokes an account of "complicity" or a "don't benefit from wrongness" principle that prohibits purchasing even if it makes no causal difference (Martin 2016; McPherson 2016). Another family appeals to virtue-theoretic or psychological considerations that don't require any

causal difference-making (Nobis 2002; Halteman and Halteman Zwart 2016; Bramble 2015). Yet another emphasizes that an individual can be a *joint cause* of bad outcomes even without making a causal difference and that the badness of being a joint cause can be a reason to abstain (Parfit 1984; Harman 2016; Albertzart 2019). Less common among applied ethicists than in the real world is the family of religious arguments: some people endorse *Don't Purchase* because they think it is against God's will or out of keeping with God's plan for us to purchase the products of morally wrongful systems.

As we saw previously, however, even if Hope accepts *Don't Purchase* on one of these other bases, or simply as an independent moral intuition, the sobering empirical facts remain: her food choices with respect to the industrial system are unlikely to make a significant difference. This has a profound psychological effect on Hope's moral resolve. In other words, her awareness of the sobering facts that led Oppy to opportunism leads Hope to a very natural kind of *demoralization*:

(D1) General discouragement and dejection in the face of the very long odds of making a significant positive difference with respect to the outcomes that one is morally concerned about.

This in turn produces another and more serious kind of *de-moralization*:

(D2) Loss of stable psychological resolve required to do what the agent *still* takes herself to have moral reason to do.

Call the state of being doubly demoralized in this way *despair*. When Hope falls into despair, she is liable to give up her boycott and revert to purchasing whatever is most convenient, tasty and affordable – despite her ongoing moral qualms.¹⁸

Kant was acutely aware of our psychological vulnerability to despair in the face of large-scale evil and injustice. In a sermonic passage in third *Critical*, he considers the psychology of an atheistic but “righteous man (like Spinoza)” who

does not demand any advantage for himself from his conformity to the moral law, whether in this world or another; rather, he would simply and unselfishly bring about the good to which that holy law directs all his powers.

(KU, AA 05:452)

Such a person's resolve, Kant says, is still liable to be sapped by the perception that his own moral strivings, as well as those of others, are inefficacious against large-scale structural evil and injustice:

But his strivings (*Bestreben*) have limits. . . . Deceit, violence, and envy always surround him, even though he is himself honest, peaceable, and benevolent. The other righteous people that he encounters at times will, in spite of all their worthiness to be happy, nevertheless be subject by nature, which pays no respect to that, to all the evils (*Übeln*) of poverty, illnesses, and untimely death, just like all the other animals on earth. It will always remain so until one wide grave engulfs them all together (whether honest or dishonest, here it makes no difference) and hurls them, the very ones who were capable of believing that they were the final purpose (*Endzweck*) of all creation, back into the abyss of the purposeless chaos of matter (*Schlund des zwecklosen Chaos der Materie*) from which they all were drawn.

(*ibid.*)

In the end, when faced with the abyss in this way, the righteous Spinoza has two options: either he will “certainly have to give up his end [i.e. of being righteous] as impossible” and collapse in despair, or “he will have to accept (*annehmen*) the existence of a moral author of the world (*Welturheber*), i.e. of God, from a practical point of view”. “Acceptance” is a synonym for “Belief”, and I read “impossible” here psychologically: Kant is saying that even someone as righteous as Spinoza simply cannot maintain moral resolve without some ability to trust that, ultimately, justice will prevail.¹⁹

These Kantian reflections on demoralization suggest that, in addition to finding out the sobering empirical facts about industrial systems, there is another empirical question that we need to consider in connection with inefficacy. It is an empirical-psychological question about which sorts of background commitments or states of trust do better by way of helping ordinary agents avoid despair in the presence of perceived inefficacy. Kant thought that someone who has Belief in the existence of a benevolent deity, and who trusts that this being is working behind the scenes to bend the arc of history towards justice (perhaps also recording and rewarding our efforts), will often have more resources to sustain their moral resolve, despite short-term setbacks and perceived inefficacy and futility. In the next section, I propose to look more closely at the structure of this moral-psychological version of Kant’s proof. After that, I will consider whether analogous forms of reasoning, and analogous kinds of trust, can help with the psychological version of the inefficacy objection in secular consumer contexts.

3. A moral argument for trust in God, or mere wishful thinking?

Kant’s project in *Religion Within the Bounds of Reason Alone* (1793) is to discover the rational essence of religion – the doctrines and practices that

can survive examination by the tribunal of universal rationality. The result is “moral religion”, “rational religion” or “rational Belief” (*Vernunftglaube*) – terms he uses to distinguish it from creedal or enthusiastic forms based in special revelation or alleged mystical experience. At one point, Kant offers the following as the rational essence of the doctrine of Providence:

Each must, on the contrary, so conduct himself as if everything depended on him. Only on this condition *may he hope* that a higher wisdom will provide the fulfilment of his well-intentioned effort.
(RGV, AA 06:101, my emphasis)

The passage displays what might be called a *consequence-dependent moral psychology*. Kant is famously not a consequentialist in ethics generally: “The fulfilment of duty consists in the form of the earnest will, not in the mediating causes of success” (KU, AA 05:451). Nor is he a divine command theorist: “Morality . . . needs neither the idea of another being above him in order to recognize his duty nor as an incentive anything other than the law itself in order to observe it” (RGV, AA 06:3). But Kant also recognizes that *after* we have willed to act on the moral law, it is often psychologically crucial to be able to *hope* that our ethical and political efforts will be fulfilled.

So Kant’s “rational” doctrine of Providence is sensitive, on the one hand, to the demand that we continue to be engaged, rather than waiting for God to do everything (“so conduct himself as if everything depended on him”). But it is also sensitive, on the other, to the empirical psychological fact that it is hard for us to keep soldiering on in the moral life without the hope that our efforts will have an effect (“the fulfilment of his well-intentioned effort”). This hope, in turn, motivates Belief and trust in a supersensible being (“a higher wisdom”). Here is another key passage:

Belief (Glaube) (simply so-called) is trust in the attainment of an aim the promotion of which is a duty but the possibility of the realization of which is not possible for us **to have insight into**. . . . *The Belief, therefore*, which is related to particular objects that are not objects of possible knowledge or opinion (in which case, especially if historical, it would have to be called credulity (*Leichtgläubigkeit*) and not Belief) *is entirely moral*. It is a *free affirmation*, not one for which dogmatic proofs for the theoretically determining power of judgment are to be found, nor one to which we hold ourselves to be obligated, but one which we *assume for the sake of an aim in accordance with the laws of freedom*; yet not like an opinion, without a sufficient ground, but as **adequately** grounded in reason (although only in regard to its practical use) **for that aim**; for without [this Belief] the moral way of thinking has no way to persevere in its collision with theoretical reason’s demand for a proof (of the

possibility of the object of morality), but vacillates between practical commands and theoretical doubts.

(KU, AA 05:472, original bold, my italics)

Kant recognizes, in other words, that prolonged experience of injustice – of a world-history in which the wicked prosper and virtue seems to make no difference – can chip away at our moral resolve. He also thinks that this fact can, in conditions of epistemic ambiguity, morally justify Belief and trust in Providence.²⁰

A concrete example: suppose that practical reason demands that we try to help the disadvantaged by donating money to various causes; for Kant, this will be true *regardless* of actual outcomes, and the fact that the moral law requires it is a sufficient rational motive. Kant sees that we (or many of us) *also* often have a “need” for our altruism to be effective:²¹ it helps us stabilize *not* our rational motive (which is based in the moral law) but our *psychological resolve* if we can believe or at least reasonably hope that the needy will genuinely benefit from our charitable efforts. Even in a Kantian context, then, a morally good person might well care a lot about the goodness of the *consequences* of her willing and not just about the goodness of her will.

This is a complicated piece of reasoning and a controversial reading of Kant’s argument. It is worth looking at it in an exhaustive step-by-step fashion:²²

- 1 I ought to do what is morally right. [Independent argument]
- 2 For me, it would be *demoralizing* in the (D1) sense (i.e. it would lead to discouragement and dejection) not to be able to have substantial hope that there is a moral order by which a just arrangement (i.e. a “moral world”) will come about, for then I would have to regard it as *certain* that the entire history of the world will not be good on the whole, no matter what I do. [Empirical premise, concept of “hope”]
- 3 Such demoralization has an enervating effect on my resolve, and is thus *de-moralizing* in the second, (D2) sense: I will almost certainly no longer perform actions that I take to be morally good or required. [Empirical premise]
- 4 Despair of this sort is seriously morally undesirable. [From (1)–(3)]
- 5 Therefore, there is serious moral advantage for me in being able to have substantial hope that there is a moral world order. [From (2)–(4)]
- 6 Substantial hope that *p* requires the positive belief or Belief that *p* is really practically possible. [Theoretical premise]
- 7 Therefore, there is serious moral advantage for me in being able to positively believe or Believe that a moral world order is really practically possible. [from (5)–(6)]

- 8 If a being or state of affairs is really practically possible, then there must be something in the actual world that can account for that fact. [Concept of “real practical possibility”]
- 9 The *actual* existence of God provides the only adequate account of the real practical possibility of a moral world order, because God is the only being we could trust to bring such an order about. [Theoretical premise]
- 10 Therefore, there is serious moral advantage, for me at least, in being able to believe or Believe that God exists. [from (7)–(9)]
- 11 There can be no sufficient epistemic reasons either for or against the existence of God. [Results of examination of natural theology in Transcendental Dialectic]
- 12 Rational belief requires sufficient epistemic reasons. [Kant’s evidentialism about belief]²³
- 13 Therefore, belief in God’s existence or non-existence is irrational. [from (11)–(12)]
- 14 Rational *Belief* (*Vernunftglaube*) does not require sufficient epistemic reasons; it can instead be based on sufficient moral or pragmatic reasons. [Conceptual truth]²⁴
- 15 Therefore, Belief (though not belief) that God exists is *prima facie* morally (though not epistemically) justified, for me at least. [From (10), (13), (14)]

The “for me at least” sounds worrisome, but Kant is explicit: “I must not even say ‘It is morally certain that there is a God’, etc., but rather ‘I am morally certain’ etc.” (KrV, A829/B857, original emphasis). Still, he thinks the proof does *not* count as an exercise in mere wishful thinking or self-deception, provided we acknowledge that

- the rational motive for action is not the production of the moral world order but simply the fact that the action is morally required
- the rational justification is moral rather than epistemic
- the result is not the attitude that we would call “belief” and Kant would call logical “conviction” (*Überzeugung*). The result, rather, is *Belief* (*Glaube*)
- the Belief in question is about a state of affairs that is evidentially ambiguous (in this case theoretically undecidable)
- the justification is defeasible – if Belief (*Glaube*) in God produces bad moral results, then it must be given up

Let’s take a closer look at a couple of the key premises. Regarding (6): everyone agrees that there is some sort of modal constraint on hope, but it is clear that superficial hopes often involve merely taking possibility

for granted (see Chignell 2014, 2022). Substantial, life-structuring hopes that p , on the other hand, arguably do require moderately clear conceptions of how, given the things and powers that exist in the world, p could turn out to be true.²⁵ It would be extremely hard to hope in a serious way that there will be perpetual peace – to really structure one’s life around this hope, for example – without having at least some positive conception of how we denizens of the actual world could really, practically get there from here. This is what I mean by “really, practically possible”.²⁶

Note, too, however, that by starting with the conditions on hope instead of on something stronger like Belief, we end up with a more acceptable moral-psychological pattern here. With respect to something like the Highest Good or “the moral world order”, it’s much easier (psychologically and rationally) to adopt hope that it will obtain than it is to form full-on belief or Belief that it will. But reflection on the conditions of having such hope then lead to the recognition in (6) that we are committed to its real, practical possibility, as well as anything else that is required for the latter.

(9) is obviously another lynchpin; a friend of the argument would have to rule out other accounts of the real, practical possibility of a moral world: dialectical historical processes, political revolutions, a karmic system that ensures that justice will be done, liberal democratic institutions and so on (Adams 1979). She would also have to explain why the full-blown classical deity, with all its omni-properties, is required to be the relevant object of trust. Kant himself makes efforts in this direction, suggesting that only a necessary, perfect being would be able and willing to arrange such an order. But many readers remain unconvinced (see Michalson 1999).

(11)–(14) are also crucial: the existence-claim here must be *evidentially ambiguous* in order for the Belief to be rational. Large swaths of the *Critique of Pure Reason* are dedicated to undermining traditional efforts to *prove* or even render *probable* the existence of God on either demonstrative or empirical grounds. Kant also rejects all atheistic arguments, including the empirical argument from evil. So, in the famous phrase, *all* knowledge-claims about God’s existence – theistic and atheistic – are “denied” in order to “make room” for the kind of moral Belief that overcomes demoralization (KrV, Bxxx).

In the passages from the *Religion* quoted at the beginning of this section, Kant is not discussing a moral world order generally but rather hope for *specific* outcomes of *specific* actions. But he clearly thinks that such specific hope, too, can underwrite Belief and trust in a supersensible mechanism: a providential “higher wisdom” that makes the “fulfilment of our well-intentioned efforts” possible. Returning to the contemporary inefficacy objection: it seems clear that people who *already* have such a supersensible commitment can just orient their hopes around that. They can focus, in other words, on the possibility that this mechanism arranges things such that their well-intentioned efforts *matter* – that they do indeed contribute to

the good, even if they seem in the moment to be futile. Kant rightly thinks that this would be important to them, even if they also trust that God will ultimately resolve things for the best in the end, no matter what. The hope is that *their* efforts will be included in the divine plan (so Kant's doctrine of Providence is anti-quietist). That hope in turn sustains and stabilizes their psychological resolve to keep doing what they regard as required.

I now want to turn to consider a version of this argument against demoralization that is available in secular contexts as well. Here the Belief and trust will not be in God but in fellow finite agents.

4. A secular moral-psychological argument in contemporary consumer contexts

Given that the morally objectionable A-system is deeply insensitive to slight changes in demand, any attempt on Hope's part to inculcate full-blown belief that *my abstention is going to make a significant positive difference* would be a miserable exercise in wishful thinking and self-deception. *Belief* in that proposition also looks more like a Kierkegaardian leap than sweet Kantian reason. As we have seen, Kant anticipates James and others in the moderate pragmatist tradition in rejecting the idea that a moral argument can support a conclusion whose *negation* we have strong reason to believe.

With this in the background, let's consider a moral argument that is based, like Kant's own moral-psychological proof, in a claim about what's required to maintain our moral resolve:

- 1* *Don't Purchase*: It is morally wrong to purchase the products of morally wrongful activity if alternatives are readily available. [From an independent argument or moral intuition]
- 2* It would be *demoralizing* in the (D1) sense (i.e. it would lead to discouragement and dejection) for me not to be able to have substantial hope that my abstention from purchasing A-products over time will make a significant positive difference with respect to A. [Empirical premise]
- 3* Such demoralization has an enervating effect on my resolve, and is thus *de-moralizing* in the second (D2) sense: I will almost certainly fail in my efforts to abstain from purchasing A-products over time. [Empirical premise]
- 4* Despair of this sort is seriously morally undesirable. [from (1*)–(3*)]
- 5* Therefore, there is serious moral advantage for me in being able to have substantial hope that my abstention from purchasing A-products will make a significant positive difference with respect to A. [From (2*)–(4*)]

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So far, so good: this looks like a simple argument for the practical rationality of *hope* that by abstaining I will somehow make a significant positive difference with respect to the system in question, where “significant positive difference” involves an improvement in the welfare conditions of the animals and workers involved in A. This is much easier than directly generating *Belief* that I will make a significant positive difference; it’s also much less problematic from a rational point of view, given that my difference-making is deeply unlikely given the sobering empirical facts. Note that “significant” is left vague precisely because the amount of difference-making required to avoid despair will clearly differ from person to person.

What are the conditions on having this sort of resolve-sustaining hope? We saw earlier that

- 6* Substantial hope that p requires the positive belief or Belief that p is really, practically possible. [Theoretical premise]

And from (5*) and (6*), we can infer:

- 7* Therefore, there is serious moral advantage for me in being able to believe or have Belief that it is really, practically possible for my abstention from purchasing A-products to make a significant positive difference with respect to A.

Finally, as we saw previously,

- 8* If a being or state of affairs is really practically possible, then there must be something in the actual world that can account for that fact. [Concept of “real practical possibility”]

People of great willpower may find it psychologically possible to leave things there. Even if they dearly miss the taste of deep-fried spicy mesquite chicken or the cozy feel of a sweat-shopped hoodie, these moral pillars will abstain from purchasing in the steadfast hope that their actions, over time, will *somehow* make a significant positive welfare difference with respect to the industrial chicken system. In other words, despite the incredibly long odds (e.g. globally, the industry slaughters 2000 birds per second!), moral pillars can maintain their belief or Belief that it is really, practically possible for their abstention to make a significant difference – and that is enough to sustain their resolve.

But Kant correctly saw that such pillars are rare: remember that even someone as righteous as Spinoza is liable to despair in the absence of *some* reassurance that justice will prevail. For the rest of us, clinging in hope to the brute possibility that our choice will somehow make a significant difference is extremely hard, especially when the products in question are so convenient, tasty and affordable.

Others might try to shore up their resolve by focusing on the fact that their own pivotality in the supply chain is at least possible. It is just possible, in other words, that this is the month in which everyone else in the region will purchase exactly the right number of sandwiches – all the way up to the threshold point where another purchase will cause (via a series of effects down the supply chain) a new batch of (say) 5000 chickens to be incubated. Being pivotal like this is just barely possible, and if it obtains, then the choice to abstain will make a significant positive difference indeed.

Facts about individual empirical psychology again play a key role here. Someone like Hope who is threatened by demoralization can try to focus on the “infinitesimal” possibility of her own pivotality and see if that will sustain her. That is, she can try to give that possibility a prominent place in her mind every time her colleagues drag her to the bar on Shotz-n-Wingz Nite, and in this way allow the thought of all the chicken suffering she *might* be preventing to sustain her resolve.²⁷ But that’s not going to be easy: given the sobering empirical facts, the chance that she is *ever* at a threshold point – much less right there in the bar – is vanishingly small. It will thus be hard for Hope to keep from sliding into despair and doing what she takes to be morally wrong (especially after a few shotz).

According to the account of hope that I favor, the key difference between hope and despair has to do with where the subject is disposed to place her mental attention or “focus”. I might strongly desire something and regard it as possible, but if I keep focusing on it as massively improbable, I am in despair. If instead I am disposed to focus on it “under the aspect of its possibility” – that is, as having at least a chance of occurring – then I am hoping (Chignell 2022).²⁸ But other things equal, the more unlikely a desired outcome is, the harder it is to stay focused on it *as possible* rather than fixating on the overwhelming odds against. So while hoping for pivotality is an option for staving off despair, most of us will find it a hard psychological row to hoe.

Given the Kantian proof we considered in the last section, another way to go suggests itself:

- 9* The existence of God provides the only adequate account of the real, practical possibility that my abstention from purchasing A-products will make a significant positive difference with respect to A. [Theoretical premise]

If this were correct, then the rest of the argument could run like the previous one and conclude with full-blown moral theism. Only such Belief, and the trust in God that accompanies it, makes it psychologically possible to sustain the hope that my abstinence over time will make a significant positive difference to a morally objectionable system. As a result, that Belief and trust are *prima facie* morally justified.

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But whereas (9) was debatable, (9*) is patently false. In other words, there was some plausibility in the idea that the existence of a supreme being is the *only* adequate account of the real, practical possibility of a moral world order (the Highest Good). But with respect to the more specific hope that Hope's individual actions will make a significant positive difference with respect to the A-system, (9*) itself is hopeless. After all, we just saw that there are empirical ways to account for the bare possibility here, even in a massive and lumpy supply system. It's at least possible, for instance, that Hope's choice is pivotal by way of being made on a threshold. So there can be nothing like a *proof* of moral Belief and trust that God, the "universe", karma, or fate is arranging for individual efficacy. Of course if someone already has a supersensible commitment that can do the job, then it makes sense for *him* to fix his hopes by appealing to a premise like

9** The existence of *supersensible mechanism X* provides an adequate account of the real possibility that my abstention from purchasing A-products will make a significant positive difference with respect to A.

But for someone (like Hope) who does not already have the supersensible commitment, there is no moral-psychological pressure to adopt one.

Given the difficulty Hope has in focusing on the slim possibility of her own pivotality, however, it would be useful to find some other naturalistic scenarios whereby boycotting an industrial system like the one that brings us our spicy mesquite chicken sandwiches might make a significant welfare difference. A candidate that comes to mind is this: Hope's decision might somehow be connected to the decisions of numerous *other* people such that, if she abstains, then a significant number of other people will or will be likely to abstain (where a "significant" number is precisely what's required for there to be a "significant" difference – keeping in mind that what counts as "significant" might be different across different subjects). This scenario divides into two: one causal and one evidential. I'll discuss each in turn.

The causal version of the scenario would invoke this premise:

9*** The existence of a *causal connection between my decision to abstain from A-products and the decisions of a significant number of other people to do the same* provides an adequate account of the real, practical possibility that my abstention from purchasing A-products will make a significant positive difference with respect to A.

This seems true: such a causal connection would provide an adequate account. Following the logic of the moral-psychological argument, we would then arrive at:

10* Therefore, there is serious moral advantage, for me at least, in being able to believe or have Belief that such an interpersonal causal connection exists. [from (7)–(9***)]

But could such belief or Belief be rational? That is, could it ever be rational to believe or have Belief in the following?

Interpersonal Causal Connection: If I choose to abstain from A-products, my action will **cause** a significant number of other people to abstain, and if I choose to purchase A-products, my action will cause a significant number of other people to purchase.

Interpersonal Causal Connection looks like a non-starter for people who aren't celebrities, dictators or top-level "influencers". There is no reason to think that there is any such connection between one's person's actions and the actions of a significant number of others. A quick look at Hope's number of Twitter followers provides decisive reason to think that there is *not* such a connection in her case.²⁹ But then both belief and Belief are ruled out on rational grounds (again, Kant is the forerunner of James rather than Kierkegaard here – an object of *rational* Belief has to be evidentially ambiguous).

There is a weaker version of the scenario, however, that looks more promising. Consider:

9**** The existence of a *strong evidential connection between my decision to abstain from A-products and the decisions of a significant number of other people to do the same* provides an adequate account of the real, practical possibility that my abstention from purchasing A-products will make a significant positive difference with respect to A.

9**** seems true, and so by the logic of Kant's moral-psychological argument, it would seem to give us *prima facie* moral justification for either belief or Belief that:

Interpersonal Evidential Connection: If I choose to abstain from A-products, that is strong **evidence that** a significant number of other people are likely to abstain from A-products, and if I choose to purchase A-products, that is strong evidence that a significant number of other people are likely to purchase A-products.

When applied to the case of Hope, is this a principle for which we have any warrant one way or the other? Here I think things are less obvious than they were with *Interpersonal Causal Connection*. It seems reasonable for Hope to think that a significant number of people *could* be motivated by the same

reasons against purchasing A-products that she is (in fact, such a thought might be a part of what it is to take them to be *reasons*). But that's different from thinking that if she chooses to abstain, a significant number of other people *will* be so motivated or are *likely to be* so motivated. Given that most of these decisions will be made in distant places and times (recall that Hope is not an "influencer"), it is *simply unclear* whether there is sufficient evidence for or against *Interpersonal Evidential Connection*. Indeed, even if over the short- to medium-term she acquires evidence that other people around her are *not* following her lead, her own choice might still count in favor of the idea that *over the long haul* a significant number of people (here or elsewhere) will see the power of her reasons.³⁰ This is particularly true if Hope is not a moral pillar but rather a fairly weak-of-will person – if *she* can do it, then certainly lots of other people can, too. The upshot here is that, in most contexts, anyway, forming a belief one way or other on the matter would be out of epistemic bounds. So *Interpersonal Evidential Connection* does not have sufficient epistemic grounds, and belief is not justified.

This is where Kant's famous thought that we can sometimes deny belief in order to make room for Belief and trust once again comes to the rescue. When there is no clear evidence one way or the other, we might still have *moral justification* for adopting a principle in this other, non-doxastic way. So if super-sensible mechanisms aren't a live pistic option for Hope, and if the chance that she will be causally pivotal is too slim to sustain her focus, she may be defeasibly morally justified in taking *Interpersonal Evidential Connection* on *Belief*. That is: she might be defeasibly morally justified in holding, as an article of Belief, that if she acts on her boycotting reasons, then that is strong evidence that a significant number of other people (somewhere, sometime) are likely to abstain too. Thus, if she chooses to abstain now, she gains strong evidence that there will be a significant improvement in animal welfare.

Belief in a principle like that, and the trust in other people (somewhere, sometime) that it involves, could presumably stave off despair, even for those of us who are not moral pillars. However, if Hope thinks like this up to the moment of choice but then defects and purchases (perhaps assuming that all those other people will still act on the reasons that she has), she thereby *loses her evidence* that others will abstain. It is crucial to note that *Interpersonal Evidential Connection* says that she only gets the relevant evidence if she *actually* abstains and not just if she appreciates the reasons for abstaining. Morally justifying one's trust in others still involves taking on a certain amount of risk.³¹

There is obviously more to be said about this last proposal, but here I simply want to note two intriguing features. First, the reasoning is broadly Kantian in a manner that goes beyond the use of moral arguments. Hope relies on the idea that (other things equal) moral reasons are universalizable – a theme we typically associate with Kant. The "universal law" formulation of the categorical imperative says that I have a good reason to act on a certain maxim

only if it is also good reason for everyone else to do likewise in saliently similar circumstances. Here the universalization goes the other way, too: if it is *in fact* a good reason for *me* to act in such-and-such a way, then it is a good reason for everyone else in similar circumstances to do likewise. So my acting provides strong evidence that others (if they are rational) are likely to follow. When Hope “thinks for herself” about these matters, she also takes herself to be “thinking from the point of view of others” – a maxim that Kant thinks of as common sense (KU, AA 05:294). And so her moral Belief in *Interpersonal Evidential Connection* invokes a broadly Kantian idea about the universalizability of reasons.

Second, and even more intriguingly, if Belief in *Interpersonal Evidential Connection* is what sustains the hope to make a significant positive difference, then we have arrived in a very roundabout way at a key principle of *evidential decision theory* (EDT). According to EDT, an agent ought to perform actions that are such that, if she performs them, then the chances of the desired outcome are maximized, *regardless* of whether there is any causal connection between her actions and the outcome. This is sometimes characterized as the view that we should be guided by “auspiciousness over efficacy”. It also assumes an alternative view about difference-making:

Difference-Making, Evidential: An action A makes a difference with respect to situation S if performing A *provides evidence* that a change in S is likely to occur.

According to this principle, a causal connection between A and S is not required for A to make a difference with respect to S – the mere “auspiciousness” that A represents with respect to S’s changing for the better is sufficient.

(Side note: This is why EDT is thought to support taking just one box in the Newcomb problem.³² Even if there is no causal connection between your choice and the action of a near-perfect predictor of your choice [since the prediction has already been made], there is an *evidential* connection: what you choose provides strong evidence regarding what the predictor predicted. So on the evidential conception of difference-making, what you choose does make a difference and so you should take just the one box [which will thus contain a million dollars]. In the causal conception of difference-making, by contrast, your action can’t make a difference – the predictor has already done its work – and so you should be safe and take both boxes [thereby acquiring a thousand dollars]).³³

In the scenario we have just been considering, Hope abstains for independent moral reasons – they are what *rationally* motivate her. But she also has a psychological need to hope that her action makes a difference, especially over time. Sustaining that hope is of serious moral advantage, and this justifies her in accepting *Interpersonal Evidential Connection* as an item of moral Belief, with *Difference-Making, Evidential* in the background. So

Hope can have justified moral Belief that her purchasing and boycotting actions make a difference even while recognizing that the sobering empirical facts indicate that her action does not make a *causal* difference.³⁴

5. Conclusion

Discussions of the inefficacy or futility objection tend to focus on the conceptual issue – that is, on how inefficacy poses a challenge to traditional consequentialism. In this paper, I focused instead on the psychological side of the problem – that is, on how the *perception* of our inefficacy as individual consumers in gigantic industrial contexts can threaten not our rational motivation but our psychological resolve. I suggested that an analogue of Kant’s moral-psychological argument against despair can be used to justify various resolve-stabilizing strategies. These include focusing in hope on the possibility that

- 1 At least one of my abstaining actions occurs at a “threshold” point in the system such that my choice makes a significant positive difference to welfare outcomes.

If hope for such pivotality is psychologically out of reach, alternative strategies involve adopting defeasible moral Belief in one (or more) of the following claims:

- 2 A supersensible mechanism causally connects my abstinence to some significant positive difference in welfare outcomes.
- 3 My decision to abstain is strong evidence that a significant positive difference in welfare outcomes is likely, even if there is no causal connection between the two.

Although the argument has a structure that is analogous to Kant’s moral-psychological theistic proof, only one of the options here (i.e. 2) involves Belief or trust in something supersensible.

A final Kant-scholarly point: the structure of the moral-psychological argument I’ve been considering here reveals an underappreciated way in which “the practical has primacy” for Kant. The argument says that if we morally ought to act a certain way, and we are threatened by resolve-sapping despair, then we are defeasibly morally justified in implementing stabilizing strategies to sustain our hope and thus our resolve with respect to the ought in question. But although the moral commitment and the accompanying hope have *primacy*, Kant is not an advocate of irrational leaps. Theoretical reason does kick in at some point and require an account of how the hoped-for scenario could really, practically come about. That in turn makes us *prima facie* morally justified in having Belief in something that can ground that real, practical possibility. The Belief in question can even involve a

“theoretical” issue that is evidentially ambiguous: an existence-claim, for instance, or a principle in decision theory.³⁵

Notes

- 1 This chapter is a revised and abridged version of my contribution to a volume that is explicitly concerned with animal ethics (Allais and Callanan 2020), which is itself an expansion of some sections of a contribution to a handbook volume on food ethics (Barnhill et al. 2016). My thanks to the editors of these volumes, and of the present one, for allowing me to extract and revise material from those papers for use here. What is provided here is the essence of the argument in those other pieces, revised and updated in accordance with some more recent feedback.
- 2 Here consult the Netflix series *Rotten* (2019), which goes episode by episode through various popular food items and leaves the viewer thinking that no product in the industrial food system will ever be cruelty free.
- 3 I leave “alternatives” and “readily” unanalyzed for present purposes.
- 4 For instance: cultural trends can make the demand for certain *cuts* of poultry go up (turkey breast at Thanksgiving, chicken wings during years when the local football team does well, etc.). But animals come in wholes, and so if wings are in high demand this year, a decision not to eat a chicken sandwich (which is not made of wings) is even less likely to have any effect on how many chickens are produced and processed, since retailers are demanding as many wings as possible. Thanks to conversations with food scientist and poultry expert Joe Regenstein here; see also Parcell and Pierce 2000.
- 5 Halteman and McMullen (2018) acknowledge these facts about buffers in the real-world poultry supply, but then note that the consumer will “know little to nothing about the distance to a threshold at their particular retailer, and even less further down the supply chain”. This is true, but in the noisy, buffered market situation described here, a consumer’s ignorance of precisely where he is relative to the next threshold seems moot. He merely needs to be able to recognize that the chance of ever being on *any* threshold is extremely small in order for the futility concerns to arise. Oppy can easily come to know that the most likely outcome – given the buffers, the noise and the trend – is that his decision to abstain will simply increase that month’s wasted oversupply by precisely one patty.
- 6 For detailed versions of this argument, see Budolfson 2016, 2018. For various versions of the standard response, see Singer 1980; Kagan 2011; Norcross 2004; Halteman and McMullen 2018.
- 7 For the term “opportunistic carnivore”, see Almeida and Bernstein 2000. For more discussion of Oppy and opportunism, see Chignell 2016.
- 8 Almeida/Bernstein (2000, 206) state this as a biconditional, but the point I’m making doesn’t require something that strong.
- 9 Some welfarist views restrict the morally relevant outcomes to human animals only. Joseph Raz calls this “the humanistic principle”: “the explanation and justification of the goodness or badness of anything derives ultimately from its contribution, actual or possible, to human life and its quality” (1986, 194, see also Raz 1980). Here I am working with a welfarist picture that is not anthropocentric (and speciesist) in this way.
- 10 The privacy condition is meant to forestall the objection that his action might have an influence on the behavior of others around him.
- 11 See Halteman and Mullen 2018.

- 12 Note that the sobering empirical facts also suggest that the choice to purchase small, family-farmed products is *much* more likely to make a difference. So if someone like Oppy maintains that *Don't Produce* holds across the board, he should only opportunistically indulge with products from the *industrial* system.
- 13 See Parfit's reformulations of the Categorical Imperative in response to the "problem of imperceptible differences" (2011, 341).
- 14 For an application of symbolic value theory to questions about which foods to consume, see Cuneo 2016.
- 15 I attempted some of that in Chignell 2016. See Nefsky 2018 for a helpful overview of such efforts. Kingston (2020, draft) argues in an opportunistic spirit that a focus on individual consumption patterns is a distraction. He calls instead for a "relinquishment" approach whereby we take the benefits (in time, money, and resources) that we gain from consuming readily available industrial products and try to "remediate" in more effective (often political or activist) ways.
- 16 Note that this means that the inefficacy doesn't even need to be real; the supply chain and causal situation just has to be *perceived* as insensitive in the relevant ways.
- 17 Kant uses this term in a variety of contexts, and there is no good English translation of it. In other work I use the technical (and Teutonic) capitalization "Belief" and will adopt that practice here too, in order to avoid the overly religious connotation of "faith." Note that Kant has a non-doxastic conception of Belief (which he sometimes also calls "acceptance" [*Annehmung*]). It is not a response to the presence of perceived evidence but rather a voluntary positive "holding-for-true" (*Fürwahrhalten*) regarding a proposition based on "subjective" and sometimes context-sensitive grounds. See Chignell 2007a, 2007b for more on this notion. Also Pasternack 2011, 2014 and Chance and Pasternack 2018, as well as Wood 2020, who likewise adopts the convention of translating the term as "Belief". For a contemporary discussion of non-doxastic conceptions of faith, see Howard-Snyder 2016, 2019.
- 18 To establish this, we would need sociological studies of consumer and activist behavior in response to perceptions of inefficacy. Interestingly, the North American Meat Institute itself cites recent CNN and USDA survey data showing that of the approximately 5 percent of Americans who claim to be vegetarians, *around 65 percent will confess, when pressed, to having eaten meat products in the past 24 hours*. The Meat Institute's conclusion? "Bottom Line: Meat Is Amazing – And Irresistible" (North American Meat Institute, n.d., 2). www.meatinstitute.org/index.php?ht=d/sp/i/101931/pid/101931, accessed 15 Oct 2020.
- 19 Camus (1942) famously rejects this: he considers the same predicament and says that we must both accept the demands of the moral law and embrace the absurdity of a world in which justice never prevails: "One must imagine Sisyphus happy".
- 20 See Pace and McKaughan (2022) for an argument that faith has typically been regarded in Jewish and Christian traditions as involving trust and a kind of loyalty.
- 21 The "effective altruism" movement introduces itself as follows:
 Most of us want to make a difference. We see suffering, injustice, and death, and are moved to do something about them. But working out what that "something" is, let alone actually doing it, is a difficult problem. It would be easy to be disheartened by the challenge.
 (www.effectivealtruism.org/articles/introduction-to-effective-altruism, accessed 1 November 2020)

- 22 Adams (1979) sketched an empirical-psychological way of reconstructing Kant’s proof a long time ago. My presentation here is influenced by his, though also different in many key respects. In the first *Critique*, Kant presents an early version of the moral proof according to which hope for happiness seems to be part of the *incentive* for acting rightly. In the second *Critique*, he provides the more canonical articulation of the proof that starts not with (1) previously but with the more controversial claim that we ought to will the highest good, and this involves, as a sort of rational presupposition, moral Belief in the existence whatever is required to make the highest good really possible (i.e. God and the afterlife). For articulations of that form of the proof, see Wood 1970; Willaschek 2016. Less attention has been devoted to the moral-psychological argument from despair in the third *Critique* and *Religion*, although see Van Impe 2014; Fugate 2014; Ebels-Duggan 2015 and Chance and Pasternack 2018.
- 23 Kant is a conceptual evidentialist about what *we* would call “belief” – the kind of holding-for-true (*Fürwahrhalten*) that can count, if true and justified, as knowledge (*Wissen*) (Kant calls it “conviction” (*Überzeugung*), as do many contemporary German epistemologists). See Chignell 2007a.
- 24 Rational Belief, for Kant, is a voluntary state of holding-for-true (*Fürwahrhalten*) that, for non-epistemic reasons, a subject uses to guide deliberation, action and assertion in certain contexts. See Chignell 2007b.
- 25 For the claim that there is a distinction between “superficial” hope and “substantial hope” and that the latter has extra conditions on it, see Pettit 2004; McGeer 2004. In my view, one of the main differences is found in the cognitive condition: substantial hope involves a more articulate sense of how the outcome is really, practically possible.
- 26 Compare Willaschek 2016 on “practical possibility”.
- 27 For more on how “Shotz-n-Wingz Nite” can destroy a person’s resolve, see Halteman and Halteman Zwart 2016, p. 131. Those authors claim that such events occur regularly at a place called “Baloneez”, but Barnhill et al. (2016, 171) also reference a sister establishment called “Jimmy’s You-Hack-it-Yourself BBQ”.
- 28 See Chignell 2022.
- 29 Obviously Hope could try to *establish* such causal connections (and thereby shore up her resolve) by signaling her choices publicly when she can, *attempting* to influence others, becoming part of a broader cultural movement, seeking to become or enlist a social media influencer and so on. And obviously the question of whether her actions have made any causal difference must be considered over the longer haul. It’s not clear how much this will help in private one-off moments under conditions of perceived inefficacy, however. Thanks to Elizabeth Harman, Renée Bolinger, Teresa Morgan and Judith Gundry for discussion here. Compare Lawford-Smith 2015.
- 30 There are many dissimilarities between the cases, but just by analogy, think of someone in, say, 18th-century South Carolina who decides, on moral grounds, to free the slaves that he inherited from his family. Those reasons were good, and in order to sustain his resolve, he might also have taken on Belief that his choice was strong evidence that others would (at some point) do the same. But it took a *long* while.
- 31 Thanks to Victoria McGeer for discussion here.
- 32 This problem, which has now generated thousands of articles, was originally stated by Nozick in 1969.
- 33 Jon Elster cites empirical evidence for the claim that people use “diagnostic thinking” to move from the assumption that they are “fairly typical members”

of a reference group to the conclusion that others “will tend to act like me”. Elster sees no flaw in this sort of reasoning *unless* explicitly causal claims are made – that is, unless people start thinking that “my action will bring it about” that others do the same. But the EDT conception of difference-making avoids that sort of “interpersonal magic”. See Elster (1985, 142–145). Thanks to Ewan Kingston (who pointed me to the Elster paper), Philip Pettit, Richard Bradley, Victoria McGeer and Kian Mintz-Woo for discussion here. Bradley and Mintz-Woo argue that this interpersonal “evidentialist” approach to consumption and voting cannot rationally be extended to Prisoner’s Dilemma cases, however, since defecting is *always* the best thing to do in the latter, even in EDT. This is presumably why followers of EDT have resisted David Lewis’s claim (in 1979) that “Newcomb’s Problem is a Prisoner’s Dilemma.” Compare Pittard 2018.

- 34 If this is correct, then the present broadly Kantian response to the psychological inefficacy problem has the added benefit of providing *prima facie* moral justification for Belief in a principle that supports one-boxing. There is something right about the prosperity gospel after all: Belief can indeed make you rich. . .
- 35 For discussions of these ideas, I am grateful to the editors of this volume and to Lara Buchak, Anne Barnhill, Renée Jorgensen, Mark Budolfson, Gabriel Citron, Silvia De Toffoli, Tyler Doggett, Gabriele Gava, Matthew Halteman, Daniel Howard-Snyder, Ewan Kingston, Tania Lombrozo, Victoria McGeer, Dan McKaughan, Kian Mintz-Woo, Philip Pettit and Leigh Vicens. I am particularly indebted to McGeer for lengthy written comments and long conversations. I also thank members of audiences and working groups at Cornell University, Humboldt University in Berlin, Goethe University in Frankfurt, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest, Georgetown University, University of Witswatersrand, the Center for Human Values at Princeton, the Oxford University “Trust” workshop and the Eighth Kant Multilateral Colloquium in Catania, Italy. Some of this work was made possible through the support of a grant from the John Templeton Foundation. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the John Templeton Foundation.

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