3. See "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View," in *Kant on History*, ed. trans. Lewis White Beck, Robert E. Anchor, and Emil L. Fackenheim (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963), Sixth Thesis, pp. 17–18 (Ak. 23); hereafter Kant.

4. See chap. 1, "Love and Singularity," and chap. 4, "Security and Its Fear," in my *Singularity and Other Possibilities: Panenmentalist Novelties* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), pp. 19–41, 97–111. The metaphysics under discussion is called "panenmentalism."

Iddo Landau responds:

I believe that there is much to learn from Gilead's arguments, and that his paper adds to the understanding of the themes presented in the original discussion. However, in the end I do not think that the claims I made are rebuffed.

Gilead should be commended for expanding the discussion of the Mandarin thought experiment (henceforth: *Mandarin*) from the existentialist context, to which it was limited in my original article, to the Kantian one. This is a fruitful move. However, we should keep in mind that in Kantianism—unlike existentialism—to be autonomous is to be moral. Thus, some of my claims may be understood differently in existentialist and Kantian contexts. I wrote, "I would like to argue, however, that it [the Mandarin thought experiment] also casts doubt on an important and central existentialist notion: the value of being an authentic, autonomous individual, who behaves as he or she does not because of fear of what others would say, but because he or she genuinely chooses this or that course of action" ("To Kill a Mandarin," p. 95). But to claim, in a Kantian context, that the *Mandarin* casts doubt on the value of being autonomous is to suggest that the *Mandarin* casts doubt on the value of being moral, which it certainly does not. Similarly, in a Kantian context it cannot be the case that "if we were true, autonomous individuals . . . we would have killed an unknown person," since a Kantian autonomous individual is moral and would not kill an innocent person. In the existentialist context, however, things are different; there, autonomy is not tantamount to morality, and the suggestion that we should be autonomous creates many risks. When reading Gilead, I at times felt that he was examining certain expressions that had originally been set in an existentialist context, where autonomy does not equal morality, as though they had been presented in a Kantian one.

Gilead also seems to overstate my position on the ability to behave morally when social supervision is revoked. He suggests that, in my

[132.74.189.192] Project MUSE (2024-02-14 18:31 GMT) University of Haifa

view, "in order to behave morally, respecting the moral law or value is certainly less than enough" and that I regard as "self-deception or simply wishful thinking . . . any attempt at thinking . . . that other motives (such as the respect for the moral law) are sufficient to behave morally." However, I do not make such strong claims. I do not think that respecting the moral law is insufficient for behaving morally, only that many (even if not all) will not choose to mind the moral law. Nor do I think that, when there is no external social supervision, it is impossible to remain moral, or that no one can successfully withstand the temptation that the *Mandarin* presents, or that any view that people are able to withstand the temptation and act morally without social supervision is self-deception. However, I do believe that the number of people who can withstand the temptation, and act morally when there is no social supervision, is significantly smaller than we like to think. Unfortunately, if complete secrecy is guaranteed and the return value for wrongdoing is sufficiently high, many, including "nice" people like you and me, who condemn immoral behavior and are considered by others and themselves as perfectly decent, will either kill an innocent person or have significant difficulties in refraining from doing so.

But I should point out, first, that this is an empirical, objective question, and thus not in line with the subjectivist, personal character of much of the original paper. Second, I should note that while I cannot present a satisfactory empirical proof for my assessment, there is nevertheless some basis for it: too many people, upstanding people like you and me, told me time and again that they would accept the *Mandarin* deal, or at least find it difficult to resist it. Gilead thinks that only very few would so respond, but does not present any empirical evidence for this claim, not even as limited and unscientific as mine, stating that he simply believes "the opposite to be the case." He also feels the suggestion to be annoying. I agree that it is annoying, and would add that it is also depressing and tragic, and that I very much wish it to be wrong. However, such wishes, or the disturbing feeling that my contention arouses, differ, of course, from the question of the truth of the contention.

Note, moreover, that even if my estimation is exceedingly exaggerated, there are still good reasons to be wary of the call to reject external supervision. The suggested wariness does not rest on a supposition that the majority of people would accept the *Mandarin* deal. Even if only relatively few—say, only ten percent of the population—are of the sort who would accept the deal, much harm would be done if people were

"freed" of the fear of what others will say or think about them. Thus, we have good reason to be skeptical about the aspiration that people will rebuff the external social supervision of these gossipy, watchful others. Social supervision, and our fear of what "they" will say or think of us, may be insufficiently appreciated phenomena.

But isn't Kantian morality powerful enough to overcome people's inclination to behave immorally and kill innocent strangers? Gilead describes the way Kantianism would work (mostly through the first formulation of the categorical imperative) to reach the conclusion that it is wrong to kill the Mandarin. I agree with his analysis. Kantianism would, indeed, tell us that it is wrong to do so, as would any other respectable moral theory. But I suggest that the question is not what is right or wrong; it is wrong to kill the Mandarin. The question is, rather, whether I will resist the temptation to do what is morally wrong, now that no one is looking, and when it is clear that, even if I do commit the crime, I will not suffer any disagreeable consequences. Gilead is right that I do not, perhaps cannot, want other people to accept the *Mandarin* deal and kill *me*, since "no one wishes himself or herself to be in the Mandarin's shoes. No person wishes himself or herself to be treated in such a way." But in the situation described in the Mandarin thought experiment (as in many crimes in the real world) what I do is *not* universalized, and other people will *not* kill me if I choose to behave immorally and kill the Mandarin. In the Mandarin thought experiment, I can behave immorally, kill the Mandarin, and then enjoy the promised benefits, while being absolutely certain that there is no mutuality or retaliation and that I will not suffer in any way because of what I did. Will I then do it?

Gilead suggests that we should explicate the thought experiment to see that it presupposes what he calls "the mutual effect presupposition," which asserts that if one acts wrongfully, others will do so too, and this will affect one adversely. But in so doing, we would not be clarifying the Mandarin thought experiment by uncovering a hidden supposition in it, but, rather, we would be altering it by adding a new supposition to it. To do this is to formulate another, different, thought experiment. In the *Mandarin*, which aims to examine what happens when there are no dire consequences at all for the might-be criminal, one can get away with the crime without suffering any negative consequences. We find here the fullest temptation coupled with no risk whatsoever. Will he or she, or, rather, will you and I, do it?

I agree with Gilead's claim that there is some affective power to the knowledge that what we do is morally good or morally bad. Kant also

discusses, among other issues, our respect for the moral law. Most of us, other things being equal, would prefer what is morally good, and many of us, on many occasions, will choose the good even when other things are not equal, and it is in our self-interest to opt for the immoral option. But will we always do so? And are there some cases in which some, and perhaps many, of us would be ready to commit terribly immoral acts? If yes, what factors then determine our moral behavior? The thought experiment suggests that what motivates many of us, at least in some cases, to abstain from immoral, even terribly immoral, acts is simply a fear of public disapproval or retribution, and that, if this were removed, not only the unpleasant, noisy "they," but even the nice, decent we, may behave in quite horrid ways.

University of Haifa