

## Outline of “Moral Diversity and the Division of Moral Labor”

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(But the outline below represents Thi’s mental image of the paper-in-progress, and the particular sloppy locutions should certainly not be attributed to Olivia)

- I. A starting observation: different people have very different moral temperaments, and this seems fine. Might it even be the best state of affairs?
  - A. The moral warrior for justice vs. the empathetic kind person
- II. This division of moral labor might, in fact, be good. It might be better.
  - A. On epistemic grounds
    - 1. We will be more likely to get the correct moral outcome.
  - B. On social/coordination grounds
    - 1. We will be more practically effective at achieving those outcomes.
  - C. On moral grounds - the ‘room for everybody’ argument
    - 1. It’s morally better to have a system in which people of diverse neurotypes and temperaments fit naturally.
  - D. WARNING: THIS PAPER DOES NOT DELIVER A CONCLUSIVE ARGUMENT. WE ARE SURVEYING THE POSSIBLE SPACE OF ARGUMENTS THAT MIGHT SOMEDAY DELIVER ON THE INTUITION.
    - 1. Baby steps
- III. Plausible (low-key) opening anecdotes
  - A. Everybody knows Thi will tweak a story to make it a better story, and everybody knows Thi’s spouse would never tweak any detail. Our claim is that it’s \*good\* that we have these lasting different, incompatible moral sensibilities.
  - B. It’s good that some people care more about beauty than social justice because those social justice warriors need some good tunes to chill down to!
    - 1. Imagine a world in which everybody good cared more about social justice through direct action than about beauty or comedy - even if it was deeply important
    - 2. If everybody auto-went to the most important thing, you’d get everybody moving to the same issue, or approaching it in the same way.
      - a) This is inspired by Phillip Kitcher’s argument from “The Division of Cognitive Labor”: that if scientists all used the same rational theory (“Believe and research the theory with the most evidence supporting it”), then scientists would all work on the same theory. This is, says Kitcher, a bad thing. We want scientists to break up and pursue different theories, including long-shot theories.
- IV. Refining our claim: moral diversity is good
  - A. Three versions of the claim
    - 1. OBSTACLE: Moral diversity is acceptable at the moment but should be something we work to get around

2. LIMITATION: Moral diversity is the best solution given the fact of human cognitive limitation
3. BEST: Moral diversity is in fact the ideal for beings even minimally like us
- B. What we're talking about: deep moral diversity and not mere practical division of labor
  1. Here's an obvious thing that we all accept: sometimes we might agree on what ought to be done - let's say we agree on the moral ideal for the case, or at least the moral goal. Then we divide up the *mere labor* because there's too much, or because some of us have speciality skills and capacities.
    - a) Roughly, we all agree to the same goal and plan of action, and divide up the labor.
    - b) Call this Simplified Planning Division of Labor - it is obviously true, but not the goal of this paper
  2. Our claim is more radical: Substantive Moral Diversity - that people might disagree on the *moral goal* in this case, and that this diversity is a good thing.
    - a) Obviously people will probably agree about the moral ideal in some abstract sense - "the human good", etc.
    - b) The disagreement is about more substantive goods
      - (1) Examples: that the right thing to do about neo-Nazi racists is empathy and forgiveness, or total unforgiveness and dismissal, or...
      - (2) That the world we want should consist of many arguing groups, or one peaceful group
      - (3) That the right thing to do about a plagiarizing student is reporting, justice, and punishment – vs. a conversation and a second chance.
        - (a) Again - at a very abstract level you might all agree that the goal is "the human good" but substantively you disagree on whether discipline/retribution or forgiveness/remediation is the more important substantive goal.
    - c) The litmus test Substantive Moral Diversity for "substantive disagreement on what should be done", or what would count as a good outcome – as opposed to agreement on the goal and plan, and simply dividing the labor.
- V. A specific version of the Substantive Moral Diversity thesis: Diverse Moral Temperments
  - A. Let's take a first pass at this.
  - B. That there are different moral temperments/sensibilities/virtues as instantiated in character
    1. The empathetic person vs. the moral warrior; the morally critical person vs. the forgiving person.
  - C. First claim: many temperaments are incompatible with each other

1. Call this the *occlusion* claim: what it is to be *moral warrior* is to have reasons of empathy be occluded. What it is to be empathetic is to have reasons of moral anger occluded.
  - D. But couldn't we switch between characters?
    1. Call this the Flexible Moral Temperament solution: wouldn't the ideal case be that we always *notice the situation* and *switch temperaments as appropriate*? To be empathetic when empathy is called for?
  - E. Second claim: it is better if we don't switch much (or switch very slowly) in some cases
    1. One reason is specialization: that there is some good to people that *default to a particular temperament* and *spend more time there*
    2. Another reason is various forms of coordination: that is good that we have people reliably playing certain roles - that I know how the moral warrior is and the empathetic person is.
  - F. The claim is opposed to the view that there is a singular ideal character
  - G. The claim isn't that having different characters is a compromise response to the vagaries of human psychology
  - H. The larger claim is that in a moral ecosystem it might be best for some qualities to be instantiated in different ways - to have moral specialists.
    1. All the virtues in balance might be best instantiated in a community
    2. This doesn't mean that everybody has to be a moral specialist - one version of the argument is just that it's good to have some.
      - a) Meta-diversity claim: that it is desirable to have both some flexible generalists and some specialists
  - I. A possibility that's softer than strict occlusion: the conclusion might be that there should be diversity of *orientations in action*
    1. What do I prioritize in action?
    2. What is first salient to me?
  - J. An example from Brandon Sanderson's *Stormlight Archives*: it is good that there are some heroes who are absolutely truthful and will protect everybody and can be relied upon to be perfectly honest, and good that there are some heroes who will bend truth and occasionally stab a something in the back for the greater good.
- VI. Some Opponents
- A. Opponent 1: Balanced Individuals.
    1. Virtue theory seems to often suppose that there is a single correct balance of the virtues, that we should all aim to instantiate in each individual.
    2. In particular, that it is good that we all have access to all the virtues, and slide between them as appropriate
    3. Our thesis is that it is best if some people specialize in some virtues and barely have others.
    4. The Bold Version of our thesis: some virtues *consist in* the exclusion of other virtues

B. Opponent 2: The unity of the virtues

1. The view that what it is to have virtue *in an individual* is to have all the virtues.
2. On our view, there is room for unity of the virtues, but at the community level - an ecological theory of virtue

C. Opponent 3: Moral consistency

1. One standard view is that ideal morality is *consistent* – that, in the ideal case, every moral agent will come to the same moral judgment about the same case.
2. Our view is that the ideal case is non-consistent at the individual level.
3. We have a diagnosis: the view, from Lorraine Daston, that the desire for consistency is a feature of bureaucratic institutions.

VII. Some Outcomes

A. Outcome A: Trust

1. If the moral diversity thesis is true, we need to trust each other, especially moral specialists. This is not particularly surprising - again, this is why we have, like, queer ombudspeople and consult neurodiverse readers. We already acknowledge, in daily life this need.
2. The radical version of this thesis is that, in some cases, we need to *trust each other despite disagreeing on a substantive conception of the morally ideal outcome*.

B. Outcome B: Emergence

1. Maybe we don't need even agreement. Outcome B is simply that different people are motivated to do different things and it *comes out right in the mix*.
2. Emergence has a weird meta-status. Because in a sense *\*this\** paper is articulating a vision where we acknowledge the good of emergence
  - a) But this is not a huge deal: it's unsurprising to recognize in an abstract way that certain goods can be realized only via a social system, but in day-to-day life we focus on some particular thing that yields substantive actions
  - b) This claim has an interesting relationship to the idea of self-effacing ends and moral theories.

VIII. Weird/simple social case: ethics codes

- A. Different professions have very different ethics codes.
- B. Engineer code: to serve the public interest, and report to client, professional organization, and authorities any violations that are asked by a manager, client, etc.
- C. Lawyer code: client privilege, confidentiality
- D. Doctors: hippocratic oath, do no harm.
- E. Each of these is a kind of specialist with a distinctive and now dependable moral thing - a kind of officialized version of a character.
- F. It's good that engineers we can rely on to serve the public interest and whistleblow

- G. Lawyers serve a different social role - it's good that we have some professions that we can rely on to serve *our* interests, and not the public's.
- H. Think about the place of doctors in warfare - can't have everybody under a "do no harm" for active harm mitigation, but there's a clear social role for *some*.
  - 1. And the ideal case seems, plausibly, that doctors are constituted or socialized as such that it never even *occurs* to them to do harm for the greater good.
- I. Another is pure scientist/philosopher vs. engineer/socially oriented academic.
  - 1. It's good that some people are exploring for the truth without worrying about the public interest and do a kind of pure exploration, and good that others serve the public interest and search the spaces most likely to lead to socially good outcomes.
- J. (Reflecting on doctors, spies, and the Hippocratic oath leads to the weird meta-view that perhaps it's good that we have some dedicated Kantians and some dedicated utilitarians in our moral ecosystem.)
- IX. We will now consider some possible arguments to our conclusion.
  - A. One of the primary goals of this paper is simply to survey the space of possible arguments for moral diversity
- X. POSSIBLE ARGUMENT 1: Simple cognitive specialization
  - A. We have too little time, we each learn to recognize different things as relevant
    - 1. Basic epistemic specialization thesis
  - B. If we focus only on technical specialization, we get Simplified Planning
  - C. A more interesting relative is to take onboard the *specialization involves moral vision*
    - 1. Versions: any virtue/Aristotelean theory that involves trained sensitivity, a la Nussbaum
    - 2. Tal Brewer, neo-Aristoteleanism: where skill involves detecting the value in a situation
  - D. In this case, specialization will involve different people picking up on *\*different values\** and being moved by them to seek *\*different outcomes\**
  - E. In particular, we get this from a version of *standpoint epistemology*
    - 1. If sensitivity to relevant reasons requires a particular background experience that not everybody shares
  - F. Notice that this version deeply depends on limited cognitive resources
    - 1. You could theoretically get over this if you had the time to study every specialization
    - 2. In other words, there is no *occlusion* thesis - it's just a matter of limited time that a single person can't onboard all the specializations
  - G. Note that you still get most of the outcomes from this one.
- XI. POSSIBLE ARGUMENT 2: Moral Exploration
  - A. This argument is stolen wholesale from Phillip Kitcher on the scientific division of cognitive labor
  - B. Kitcher says: we want people to split and explore the space - to follow different strategies

1. It's good for different people to be doing different things simultaneously for the best cooperative outcome
    - a) This is clear division of labor where we know what the task is
    - b) We want kindly accepting therapists and tough activists
  2. It's good for people to try different strategies to explore and discover what works (bet-hedging epistemic strategy)
    - a) Epistemic exploration
    - b) This argument is from epistemic humility
  - C. This is ideal if it arises from different temperaments
  - D. Larger thought: the explore/exploit distinction, and the goodness of some people acting conservatively and others more wildly
  - E. This is strictly an epistemic argument
    1. Epistemically speaking, exploration works better from diverse temperaments, so on moral *epistemic* grounds, it's good.
- XII. POSSIBLE ARGUMENT 3: Diversity Acceptance argument
- A. It's good that there's room for autistic people, ADHD people, angry people, depressed people, instead of saying that you suck.
  - B. Instead of idealizing an average norm, embracing difference - is a moral good in and of itself.
  - C. One worry about Diversity Acceptance is that it trades on a wrong kind of reason argument
- XIII. POSSIBLE ARGUMENT 4: Social-coordination argument:
- A. This advisor case: one of my grad school advisors was very emotionally sensitive and adapted their comments to my mood. The other was not. They were blunt, and would just cut loose about everything wrong with my papers.
  - B. Good because I *\*knew where to go\** to get a certain moral response.
    1. I could go to one advisor when I was feeling low, but if I absolutely needed to know how my paper was, I could trust the blunt advisor to just let me have it.
  - C. Notice this argument does not require temperament occlusion
    1. It could be that a person could simul-instantiate bluntness and sensitivity - or at least flip easily, but we have a social/practical reason to separate
    2. So social coordination could be served by *people playing roles* – a therapist role and a doctor role and a lawyer role, with reliable patterns of salience, etc. when occupying those roles.
    3. So if a temperamentally spontaneous person has learned to be rule-bound in their role as ombudsperson, then they are still findable as rule-bound to people, who seek that office.
    4. But it seems intuitively *\*better\** in less formal cases if it's temperament based and deep - but why?
- XIV. POSSIBLE ARGUMENT 5: Commitment Occlusion
- A. It's good to have them instantiated in different people in part because it permits a certain kind of dependability: I can depend on the blunt person to be honest because they *are insensitive in a certain way*.

- B. The love analogy: a love-commitment involves a commitment to being dedicated to this one person over others.
    - 1. Parallel to aesthetic love: you might think that committed aesthetic love to a particular style or genre is the ideal state, and not general love for all styles
    - 2. You might want to say: there's room for some well-rounded people and some committed Knights
  - C. The thought: some moral qualities can be instantiated in a commitment form: a commitment to honesty, a commitment to empathy, a commitment to rage at social injustice - and the *commitment* form is occlusive.
    - 1. This doesn't mean that those moral qualities can't exist in a non-committed form.
    - 2. But there may be distinctive goods to the committed form.
  - D. One challenge: is to articulate distinctive goods that adhere to the committed version and the non-committed flexible version.
    - 1. Goods to more occluded, salience-rigidified moral seeing, vs. more flexible, all-seeing person
- XV. OUR FAVORITE ARGUMENT POSSIBILITY: Temperament Occlusion
- A. There are some moral temperaments that are good to have, that involve occluding other moral temperaments.
  - B. Type 1: occlusion of salience
    - 1. To be a moral warrior is to be angry and be less sympathetic
    - 2. To be hyper-empathetic is to tend to be forgiving over being angry.
    - 3. So the argument would need to be that there are certain moral ways of being that are good to have in a social mix, that are occlusive.
    - 4. Notice that this is a moderately qualified of the occlusion claim: not that the moral warrior is never empathetic, but that reasons of empathy are low-salience.
    - 5. The most interesting cases we've mentioned are often about attention and salience - what the sympathetic and the angry person tend to notice
      - a) Here might be a good argument for a kind of occlusion: if the temperament involves a tendency to notice A over B, then it's incompatible with a temperament that involves a tendency to notice B over A
      - b) A response from our opponent is: the virtuous person always notices the \*right thing to notice\* - sensitive to the real ground
      - c) Why might it be better to instantiate A and B separately - to have specialists who are devoted? We have already surveyed possible reasons:
        - (1) Could be just an epistemic effect of specialization - this turns into a variant on the Specialist Path
        - (2) Or an argument, Kitcher-style, that you get better space exploration by dedicated people.

- (a) There's a cousin of legal advocacy arguments:  
socially better to have advocates in conflict to fully  
explore the space.

(3) Or social coordination

C. Type 2: Moral seriousness

1. Note: some moral temperaments are fluid between styles, and some are steadfast to a particular style
2. One familiar version of this playfulness vs. seriousness.
  - a) A tendency to take things "lightly" and try on different perspectives, vs. a tendency to stay within the morally serious perspective
3. The argument here is: notice that it seems intuitively good that some people are morally playful and light, and that some people are morally serious – and that these are *incompatible temperaments*. So the only way to achieve these goods is through moral diversity.
4. What it *is* to be morally serious is to *have occluded* the reasons to sometimes be less moral, more lighthearted, more playful.
5. (Notice that the tendency to be fluid/playful is actually closer to the Standard Position that we should notice what's most appropriate in each circumstance and adapting our moral temperament to fit. Moral seriousness is the temperament that requires some kind of occlusion.)

D. Type 3: moral spontaneity vs. moral rule-boundedness

1. Spontaneity is the tendency to react to a phenomenally evident reason right before you, without worrying about adhering to general articulated principles.
  - a) High contextual sensitivity + low adherence to rules
2. Rule-bounded is the tendency to not be spontaneous
  - a) Imagine, for example, the teacher that sticks to their late policy in the name of fairness, vs. the teacher that tends to bend it for various unexpected circumstances.
3. The argument here, again, is: it is intuitively good for some people to be rule-bound and some people to be spontaneous, but these temperaments are incompatible.
4. Again, notice that the Standard Position is closer to moral spontaneity,

E. Temperament Occlusion cases don't require lifelong temperaments

1. You can imagine that a person might change slowly over a lifetime, but for any given large time-chunk the quality involves stability across that time chunk.

XVI. Notice that there's been two temporal classes of argument:

A. The "at once" argument

1. In a particular breaking moral moment, we want different viewpoints represented, which needs different people who are currently occupied with one moral temperament.



- B. The commitment/stability argument that goes for there being certain persons who, in a dependable and temporally extended way, are stably committed.
  - 1. The examples of loyal friend vs. critical and honest one seem to be character claims
  - 2. A simple way to run the argument is: would it better to have two friends who moved from loyal to critical and honest as the time demanded, or two friends who were committed stably to different characters/ideals?
- XVII. One re-mix of the above arguments, coached in the Aristotelean language of practical wisdom style:
  - A. Practical wisdom leads to right action
  - B. Suppose that right action, at the social level is a diversity of approaches taken simultaneously
  - C. Then social practical wisdom involves disposition to a diversity of approaches
  - D. Taking different approaches happens more easily, naturally, and successfully if people have different temperaments and notice different things
  - E. The social instantiation of practical wisdom, in response to complex problems, is a division of temperments
  - F. In other words: there are many good things to be done, and they are best done by people devoted to that kind of good