CONSCIENCE, THE OTHER AND THE MORAL COMMUNITY: A STUDY IN META-ETHICS AND TRAGEDY

by

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ABSTRACT

How do we make moral decisions about how to treat other people? Classic conscience theories suggest one set of answers, founded in the interplay between external moral authority and personal factors involving reason, emotion and instinct. This paper applies such concepts to three iconic Greek tragedies and the genocidal history of the early Spanish Caribbean – interesting applications of, respectively, Hellenic ideas about the role of reason in moral decision-making and a complex theology of Indian nature with roots in Aristotelian philosophy and scriptural interpretation. A common thread emerges. A moral agent may conceive the object of action as Other – subhuman or even nonhuman – entirely circumventing operations of conscience and moral decision-making. Fortunately, recent studies suggest that the instinctual inclination to view others as Other is considerably mediated by our capacity for abstract thought and by the influence of culture.

Keywords:

Conscience, Greek tragedy, moral theory, Other, Spanish Caribbean.
For Mum,

who taught me the value of keeping an open mind
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INTRODUCTION

Conscience, The Other and the Moral Community: Connections

Conscience is but a word that cowards use,
Devised at first to keep the strong in awe.

William Shakespeare, Richard III (5: III)

This new century must become the Century of Humanity, when we as human beings rise above race, creed, colour . . . and put the good of humanity above the good of our own tribe.

General Romeo Dallaire, upon his appointment to the Senate 1

Why do we sometimes fail to empathize with The Other – that is, with members of perceived out-groups? This failure of moral imagination – this lack of sympathy, as Adam Smith called it – has led to murder and genocide, with escalating and horrific efficiency as developments in lethal technology – iron-bladed weapons, firearms, gas chambers and the atomic bomb – have facilitated both individual and mass killing.

In this paper, I consider two cases of killing, one literary and one historical, both characterized by strong underlying themes of conscience, Otherness and moral community.

I start in the classical Greek period with an analysis of three great tragedies, the Oresteia, the Antigone and the Medea, in which Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides explore the limits of both emotion and reason in moral decision-making. As they do so, they reveal the Greek devaluation of women and foreigners, both of whom were very much The Other in classical Greece and were consequently accorded distinctly inferior

moral status by Greek male citizens. Clytemnestra, Antigone and Medea are portrayed as emotional and unreflective, blindly responding to tradition and mysterious old laws of the gods. They are ruled by passion rather than reason, whereas their respective foils, Orestes, Creon and Jason, are models of the new Hellenic rational man. Yet, as the playwrights demonstrate through the suffering of these three men, reasoning that overlooks passion is faulty reasoning and perhaps no reasoning at all. In so demonstrating, they explore themes that would be articulated again in theories of conscience developed from the thirteenth century on. As to Otherness, Euripides in particular explores the issue through the character of Medea, who is doubly Other, both woman and foreigner, and outlandishly so at that. As such an extreme Other, she does not trigger Jason's conscience as he abandons her in favour of a new – Greek – wife. If living in Greece, being married to a Greek and having children with a Greek citizen do not make one a full member of the moral community, what does?

Moving from this series of literary killings to an historical genocide, I next consider the Spanish obliteration of the Arawaks, original inhabitants of the West Indies, between 1492 and 1530. I focus on Bartolome de Las Casas' horrified moral revulsion at the Arawaks' suffering, revulsion which stood in deep contrast to the indifference of many of the colonists, including the priestly class, who saw the Arawaks as subhuman, perhaps even animals – The Other – and thus undeserving of conscientious treatment at Spanish hands. How is it that Las Casas' conscience bit so deeply when those of his countrymen were not activated by the suffering, exploitation and death they inflicted on the Indians?

What are the common threads running through these cases? I have two primary interests. First, how do classic theories of conscience help us understand how we make decisions about how – or even whether – to treat other people morally? Second, how is it that we identify some human beings as The Other – as members of an out-group, "not
one of us” – sometimes so alien in fact that we perceive them as less than human or not human at all? Why does The Other escape our moral imagination and thus fail to attract the conscientious treatment that we accord to similarly situated members of our in-group? Sam Harris addresses this conundrum in terms of "moral community":

The notion of a moral community resolves many paradoxes of human behaviour. How is it, after all, that a Nazi guard could return home each day from his labours at the crematoria and be a loving father to his children? The answer is surprisingly straightforward: the Jews he spent the day torturing and killing were not objects of his moral concern. Not only were they outside his moral community; they were antithetical to it. His beliefs about Jews inured him to the natural human sympathies that might otherwise have prevented such behaviour. (176)

This confident, perhaps overconfident, assertion leaves many questions unanswered. Why did this Nazi guard's conscience not scream at him to stop or at least run away? Why did he not perceive Jews as part of his moral community? Why was he unconcerned about torturing and killing other human beings? Did he even perceive them as human beings? My goal is to tackle these interlocking questions.

My interest in these issues originates in childhood experience. I grew up in Bermuda, a mid-Atlantic small island nation whose population is about sixty per cent African and forty per cent European in racial origin. Until 1965, Bermuda was effectively an apartheid state, albeit with very little if any poverty, benign in comparison to the South African apartheid state. Yet I went to a white school, lived in a white neighbourhood, went to whites-only beaches and sat in the white section at the movies. The Anglican

\[2\] In this paper, "The Other" and "Otherness" denote relationships of moral object to moral agent based on the notion of woman as Other developed by Simone de Beauvoir in The Second Sex (1949). Building on Hegel and Sartre, de Beauvoir proposed that: "the standard human . . . is implicitly defined as male, woman dismissed as mere in-itself embodiment" (O'Grady 191). Woman, therefore, "is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential" (de Beauvoir xvi). She "appears essentially to the male as a sexual being . . . – absolute sex, no less" (xvi). As a result, man "objectifies" (51) and seeks to "possess" (192), "dominate" (58) and "oppress" (78) woman. Further, he sees her as "[e]vil" (143), eliciting the projection of his "ancestral terrors" (169). In this paper, I explore Otherness in both male-female and other contexts, all of which involve the objectification, domination, oppression and self-referential moral agency proposed by de Beauvoir.
Church went even further than the cinema: there was black Sunday School on Sunday mornings, an hour break, then white Sunday School, eliminating any chance that I would encounter black Anglican children, face-to-face, student-to-student, equal-to-equal, within the holy confines of St. Paul's Church, as the colour of Sunday School skipped from black to white. My personal contact with black Bermudians was uniformly in the context of master-servant relationships in which I, or more accurately my parents, were the masters, and blacks were the servants: maids, gardeners, tradesmen, longshoremen.

By 1967, when I was 14, Bermuda was rapidly desegregating in response to outside influences like West Indian independence and the civil rights movement in the United States. Consequently, I suddenly found myself in a fully integrated school, where I realized, really only for the first time, that blacks were fellow humans, with abilities, emotions, aspirations, dreams. Thus ended my comfortable view of humanity as composed of "us" and "them".

Most Canadians have not experienced segregation. On the contrary – with the notable and seemingly intractable exception of First Nations people, especially those living on reserves – most Canadians have known steadily expanding, more or less integrated multiculturalism since the 1970s. They must, then, have difficulty understanding how another race, with whom I shared such a small and crowded island home, could seem so other-worldly and how surprised I could be to learn that blacks were more or less "just like me". Thus arose a life-long interest in race relations and the illogic of racial segregation and other forms of discrimination – whether flowing from race, ethnicity, religious affiliation or gender – and the absurdity of social inequality founded on group identification. Of course, the examples to be explored in this paper go well beyond the senseless social and economic oppression that black Bermudians
suffered in the 1960s, although that oppression undeniably originated in the brutal slavery of the pre-emancipation British Empire.

Clearly, many approaches could be taken to thinking about The Other and the moral community. The concept of conscience, richly varied as it evolved over the centuries, yet always centred on the individual as moral agent, is a particularly useful filter through which to analyse the studies which form the core of this paper: the words and actions of individuals like Clytemnestra and Orestes, Antigone and Creon, Medea and Jason, and Las Casas and Sepúlveda. How is it that the women and barbarians of Hellenic times and Arawaks in the early Spanish Caribbean colonies came to be seen by Greeks and Spaniards as The Other, subhuman or perhaps not even that, undeserving of conscientious treatment? And why were there exceptions like Las Casas who swam against the moral tide of their time and place in history?

The case studies that follow provide several perspectives on these themes. Clytemnestra exults in the revenge murder of her husband Agamemnon, but Orestes suffers extreme anguish both before and after he kills his mother Clytemnestra in revenge for Agamemnon's murder. Creon's conscience, at first, is troubled neither by leaving Polynices to rot on the battlefield nor by ordering the execution of Antigone, yet Antigone's conscience stirs her so strongly that she invites her own death by fulfilling her duty to bury Polynices. Jason heartlessly abandons his barbarian mate Medea in favour of Glaucce, his new Greek wife, whereas Medea's tormenting conscience does not stop her from murdering her sons to avenge Jason's rejection of her. Las Casas was so horrified by the genocide of the Arawaks that he devoted his life to defending them, in the face of indifference or worse on the part of almost all his compatriots, yet Sepúlveda, a highly-educated court intellectual who studied the Arawak issue closely, if second-hand, argued that they were fit only for slavery.
I want to consider these events through the filter of several classic theories of conscience in an effort to understand how and why we can sometimes act, apparently untroubled, with great cruelty towards other human beings. Why do we sometimes fail to perceive our victims as human at all, yet other times we are willing to sacrifice our own well-being, perhaps even our lives, in the acting out of our moral values?
I

CONSCIENCE, THE OTHER AND THE MORAL COMMUNITY: THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

General Approaches

Conscience occupied a rich and prominent position in moral philosophy from the mediaeval period to the early nineteenth century, roughly from Aquinas to Kant. But by the twentieth century, the study of conscience in both philosophy and psychology had fallen into neglect. Following in the reductionist footsteps of Darwin and Marx, Freud characterized conscience as little more than an emotional warning buzzer constituting a component of the superego. Some contemporary philosophers, J.F.M. Hunter for example, go even further, contending that conscience simply does not exist (Langston 100, 107). Clearly, theories of conscience in which "conscience can be reduced to moral reasoning or emotional conditioning" (100) and theories of its non-existence are not particularly useful as an analytical tool. The problem is further complicated by lay use of the word conscience. For instance, non-specialists may use it to denote the emotional reaction to an ethical challenge ("My conscience is bothering me") or, at the other end of the spectrum, as virtually synonymous with substantive morality ("He doesn't think it's wrong to do that — he has no conscience"). In its classic formulations, conscience is a much richer and more precise concept; while it does indeed have cognitive or affective aspects, or both, in various classic theories, it is not a mere substitute or shorthand for the reasoning or emotional aspects of moral judgment.

So my purpose is not to affirm or reject, prove or disprove, the existence of conscience as an entity like cabbages and kings. Nor do I settle upon a single theory of
conscience as the "correct" theory to apply to the case studies. Rather, I use conscience, as it is described in several classic theories, to fuel an analysis of moral decision-making and its consequences for the moral agent's conduct, particularly towards members of perceived out-groups, The Other. Maintaining a wide variety of approaches to conscience offers perspectives that would be lost by settling on a single theory. In a similar if somewhat different perspective, Nicholas Dent contends:

It is inappropriate to ask which of the . . . aspects of conscience comprises its essence or makes up what it "really" is. In different contexts one or more of [its] aspects may be in view and it is more important to appreciate the variety of elements . . . than it is to determine which of them is definitive of conscience.

Thus, the first step in my analysis is to review several classic theories of conscience. In short, I use these conceptions of conscience as a way of thinking about certain issues in ethics and meta-ethics with the moral agent as focal point of the analysis. The theories reviewed in this chapter are the following: (1) complex religious views of conscience, particularly those of the Scholastics Bonaventure and Aquinas; (2) Butler's view of conscience as reflective moral judgment; (3) Kant's conscience as an inner judge that detects violations of moral duties; (4) Hume's and Smith's theories of moral imagination – the propensity or instinct for sympathy – and the relationship between sympathy and conscience in their theories; and (5) conscience as an emotional faculty – a warning bell – as described by Freud.

The Classical and Scholastic Origins of Conscience Theory

And I will place within them as a guide
My umpire Conscience.

John Milton, Paradise Lost (III: 194-195)

Thomas Hill describes the "popular religious conception" of conscience as "God-given instictual access to moral truth" (17). Douglas Langston similarly sets out
Aquinas' view of conscience in stark simplicity: "Because conscience is the voice of God, it ought to be obeyed" (40). In practical terms how is this instinctual access to God's moral truth supposed to operate? How is the moral agent to hear, interpret and apply the voice of God? In the thirteenth century this was the subject of typically exquisite Scholastic debate, producing several treatises which also formed the foundation upon which later theories of conscience would be erected.

As a starting point, Bonaventure viewed conscience as having two parts, which Langston calls "potential conscience" and "applied conscience" (25-26). Potential conscience consists of an innate, unerring ability to know general principles of morality like "obey[ing] God". Notably, "do not harm your neighbours" is among these general principles (Langston 25-26; Bonaventure 934a).

Applied conscience, on the other hand, consists of the application of these general principles to specific situations (Langston 26). Thus, unlike potential conscience, applied conscience is fallible. For example, I can harm my neighbours: (1) by not recognizing that they are in fact my neighbours; (2) by not realizing that I am harming them; or (3) by both failures of awareness. In short, applied conscience can fail "through ignorance or faulty reasoning" (26). Since potential conscience is infallible, acting morally in specific circumstances must hinge on the operations of applied conscience. How is the moral agent to accomplish this?

Aquinas explored this problem in *Summa Theologiae*. He held that there are essentially two sets of moral duties. First, we are to obey the conscience. Then there is a second moral duty: to develop the conscience so that errors in (applied) conscience do...
not occur in the first place (Ia iiiae, q. 19, aa. 5-6). Daniel Westberg, using the term "misinformed" conscience, explains article 6 in these terms: "There is culpable ignorance when the person should have known better or could have taken steps to supplement his or her knowledge, but prefers to remain ignorant" (97). Thus, I can take steps to know who my neighbours are and what will harm them. If I choose not to, my applied conscience may be untroubled but I act contrary to the injunction not to harm my neighbours which is infallibly accessible through potential conscience.

Joel Garver expands on this aspect of articles 5 and 6. What happens when conscience is not triggered, yet – in retrospect or with fuller knowledge or contemplation of the circumstances – we decide that it should have been? Garver contends on this point:

"[I]t does not follow from the fact that it is always wrong to violate the conscience that it is always right to follow the conscience. Sometimes the only right choice is to set aside the conscience and rethink the conclusions.

So applied conscience is not an infallible detection system for impending moral failure, since a clear applied conscience does not unfailingly mean that the moral agent should proceed. Rather, it may indicate one of two situations. I may indeed be about to act in a way that conforms with potential conscience and my applied conscience is operating correctly. But it may also mean that my applied conscience is faulty – "misinformed" – and I am about to transgress against general principles accessible through potential conscience. Sometimes a clear (applied) conscience simply means: "Stop and think". As the moral agent cannot know which of the two quite different situations a clear applied conscience is signalling, the safe way to proceed is to always stop and think. In essence, then, Garver is arguing for cognitive rather than instinctual, automatic conscience."
This calls to mind the Greek exploration of whether virtue^4 is innate or learned, a problem considered by Plato in the Gorgias, Meno and Protagoras and elaborated by Aristotle in Nicomachean Ethics. Plato and Aristotle agree that virtue can be learned but they differ on the process. Plato held that morality is absolute knowledge; that there are universal virtues which are the province of experts; and that it is possible to achieve contemplation of The Forms^5 by adhering to these universal virtues (Langston 19). In some sense, then, one might see this as akin to the applied conscience being used to achieve an ever improving knowledge of the absolute principles associated with potential conscience.

Aristotle, on the other hand, denied the existence of elite expertise, absolute moral rules and Forms: morality is no more than a skill for living. Learning virtue requires participation in the everyday world, not simply debate and speculation. Thus "practical wisdom" is the ability to deal with moral contingencies and act correctly in unpredictable circumstances (Nicomachean Ethics 1140a-1145a). Such moral behaviour is the product of rational choice and deliberation (1112a-1113b), not learning and applying rules like Platonic universal virtues to particular situations. As A.C. Grayling puts it, for Aristotle: "There is no code or list of rules, no 'though shalt' and 'thou shalt not', but a requirement to do the sensible thing, based on practical wisdom or prudence" (29).

Straddling this Platonic-Aristotelian divide, Bonaventure struggled with the question of what to do when we have contemplated an intended action, the conscience is untroubled, yet our intentions seem at odds with Church authority. Abiding by the Church's prescription would run contrary to our conscience. Should we nonetheless act

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^4 In this context, "virtue" has a broad meaning which includes what we would now understand to be conscience.

^5 A Platonic term signifying the essence or character of something.
against conscience and obey the Church? This, of course, is an extension or application of Garver's concept of the "misinformed" conscience.

Bonaventure answered the question using the Aristotelian notion of practical wisdom, albeit in a manner that somehow evokes Plato as much as Aristotle. He held that *untroubled* applied conscience, if it is inconsistent with Church direction, is a sign of *faulty* applied conscience. One should refrain from acting and contemplate the situation in an effort at self-education, "so that the applied conscience can be brought into conformity with [moral] authority" (Langston 28). Bonaventure thus invoked the Aristotelian process of practical wisdom, or at least a variant of it, as a means of achieving normative Platonic adherence to a universal moral authority, the very existence of which Aristotle denied. For Bonaventure, the norms associated with potential conscience are absolute and accurately identified by the dictates of Church. The individual has room to move only within the scope of applied conscience, in a cognitive process. One must first come to a proper understanding of the content of potential conscience as interpreted and decreed by the Church. The next step is to accurately identify the salient facts involved in the moral decision to be made. Finally, those facts must then be correctly applied to the relevant rule accessed through potential conscience.

Obviously this approach is of limited utility when the repository of moral authority, as interpreter of divine absolute rules, is an elite class. If the goal is truly moral behaviour rather than merely compliant behaviour, what is the moral agent to make of the shifting sands of such authority, as the elite interprets and reinterprets God's word or, as in the case of the sixteenth century Spanish Catholic Church, different priestly elites offer conflicting opinions on a moral question? The Bible — which Bonaventure and Aquinas presumably honoured as a source of potential conscience — approves, at least at face value: (1) the death penalty for those practising birth control (Genesis 38:9-10),
witches (Exodus 22:18) and children who curse their parents (Exodus 22:21); (2) contempt for "fools" (Proverbs 26:1-11); (3) slavery (Leviticus 25:44-46; Deuteronomy 20:14); and (4) the rape, pillage, murder and complete destruction of utterly innocent cities and their inhabitants (Deuteronomy 20:10-18; Joshua 10:14). Even the New Testament is problematic, supporting: (1) sectarianism (Matthew 10:5-6); (2) racism (Matthew 15:26; Mark 7:27); (3) the subjugation of women (1 Peter 3:1); and even (4) gratuitous environmental destruction (Mark 11:12-21). Witches, disrespectful children, the mentally disadvantaged, blameless non-Jews, women and even the odd fig tree that finds itself in the wrong place at the wrong time all seem to be undeserving of conscientious or even neutral behaviour. This points to the problem of forcing one's conscience into conformity with external authority as a way of resolving moral dilemmas:

Bonaventure, irreconcilably, would have had to believe that he ought not to harm his neighbour (934a), yet should kill, enslave, rape and oppress the innocent, including his own children, in certain biblically prescribed circumstances.

Of course, it is often said that these passages are to be read figuratively. Indeed, scriptural interpretation consumed the Scholastics. The problem arising, however, is that the moral agent is then hampered by the inchoate and unstable – or at least imperfectly articulated – content of potential conscience principles resulting from vagaries of interpretation. Grayling expresses the conundrum in these terms:

[A set of fifty theology PhDs] would doubtless respond [to criticism of biblical passages which are based on plain reading] that it is a mistake to read the Bible literally, and that some or all of these things are to be understood metaphorically, symbolically, mystically, or all three. A different set of questions therefore arises. Which bits are to be taken literally, and which figuratively? Whose interpretations of the latter are the authoritative ones – and why are they so? How does one know which of competing interpretations to accept? (81)

Notwithstanding these problems of application, the Scholastic approach was instrumental in setting the stage for the development of conscience theory by initiating
what Langston terms the "dynamic view of conscience", a partially cognitive process that starts to leave behind the thin conceptual gruel of instinctively obeying God. After Bonaventure and Aquinas, Langston continues:

\[\ldots\text{conscience [is] a faculty that grows and changes with experience. To be sure, it directs behavior, but it changes with the results of behavior as well. Not only does it increase through experience in the world the number of very general practical principles it sees as true, but it also constantly changes the general applied principles as well as the specific applications of those principles based on experience. The dynamism Bonaventure posits is crucial for a theory of conscience. The fact that the content of conscience changes in reaction to experience and teaching is essential to any proper understanding of conscience. (36-37)}\]

I agree with Langston that Scholastic theory leaves room for changing the contents of conscience, but only insofar as those changes are consistent with God-given, Church-interpreted potential conscience norms. Thousands of women were burned alive in Europe and America, in keeping with Exodus 22:18, a principle of potential conscience which applied conscience could not find a way to circumvent. The dynamism of Scholastic conscience theory is thus a constrained dynamism. Applied conscience can grow only within, not beyond, the bounds of potential conscience as it is interpreted from time to time by the theological elite. This, of course, reflects a perennial problem of conscience – the ever-present potential for conflict between individual conscience and the demands of an external authority which promulgates moral rules, be they religious or secular.

**Butler: Conscience as "Reflective Moral Judgment"**

In the early eighteenth century, Bishop Joseph Butler elaborated an early and robust cognitive theory of conscience, centring on psychology and human teleology rather than theology. In doing so, he took a giant step away from the Church as a source of moral authority. Admittedly, he held that it is God who installs conscience as

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6 Hill 27.
the enforcer of divine law in the first place (Penelhum 77) and Nomi Stolzenberg points out that Butler's theory requires faith in at least some principles of general application to set it in motion:

Butler's conception just assumes that individuals somehow have access to the standards of right and wrong, which are to "guide" their conscience. . . . [S]ome articles of faith - for example, that certain acts, such as murder and adultery, are morally wrong - are required to get the thing going. Reason is not used to establish what is in the class of right and wrong acts; the existence of a class of wrong acts and the knowledge of what it contains are simply assumed. Butler apparently expects us . . . to "know" them by virtue of some nonrational process. (65)

Yet, Butler was not as "nonrational" as Stolzenberg puts it in her overstated case. Having installed conscience and some general moral rules, Butler's God - unlike that of Aquinas and Bonaventure - then leaves the individual alone, free of both deity and Church, to deploy conscience without external authoritarian constraint.

For Butler, conscience is a personal and highly rational moral guide that grows out of our nature as social beings. It does not arrive whole and perfect from God. Reacting to Hobbes' pessimistic view of human life as nasty, brutish and short, Butler claimed that we are fundamentally good. This is reflected in the view of human nature set out in his Fifteen Sermons (1726),7 recapitulated by Langston:

[T]here is a divinely given harmony to people as well as to the universe such that acts of human self-interest invariably lead to the common good. Moreover, [Butler] asserts that people have not only a drive for self-interest but also naturally possess an instinct of benevolence towards others. (80)

Butler held that this instinct of benevolence arises from a principle expressed in Romans XII: 4-5: "we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Butler 19). In essence, then, this conflates self-interest and benevolence towards others, producing the following normative moral principle:

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7 My references are to Butler's Five Sermons, which encompasses Sermons I, II, III, IX, and XII of the original sermons, along with Dissertation II and an abbreviated version of the original Preface to the full set of fifteen sermons.
From this review of the nature of man and the comparison of the nature of man as respecting self and as respecting society, it will plainly appear that there are as real and the same kind of indications in human nature that we were made for society and to do good to our fellow creatures, as that we were intended to take care of our own life and health and private good. . . . Though benevolence and self-love are different, though the former tends most directly to the public good, and the latter to the private, yet they are so perfectly coincident that the greatest satisfactions to ourselves depend upon our having benevolence in due degree. . . . Their mutual coinciding, so that we can scarce promote one without the other, is equally a proof that we were made for both. (Butler 21-23)

In practice, of course, our drive for self-interest and instinct for benevolence can conflict. The Butlerian mediator is conscience. For Butler, conscience involves, indeed is synonymous with, reflection. Hill expresses this reflective moral process as follows:

[We have the] capacity to deliberate reasonably before acting and taking proper account of our nature, circumstances, options, estimated consequences, and certain (supposedly obvious) deontological constraints. Such deliberation requires a time of "calm", "cool" reflection. (28)

Butler described this human capacity for rational deliberation as "conscience or reflection" and asserted the authority and supremacy of the outcome:

Appetites, passions, affections, and the principle of reflection, considered merely as the several parts of our inward nature, do not at all give us an idea of the system or constitution of this nature, because the constitution is formed by . . . the relations which these several parts have to each other; the chief of which is the authority of reflection or conscience. It is from . . . the supremacy of reflection or conscience, that we get the idea of the system or constitution of human nature. . . . One of those principles of action, conscience or reflection, compared as they all stand together in the nature of man, plainly bears upon it marks of authority over all the rest, and claims the absolute direction of them all, to allow or forbid their gratification. (8-11)

As Hill summarizes, "[conscience's] authority is unchallenged. The reason is that its verdicts are conceived as, all things considered, deliberative judgments of our own reason, a faculty whose natural role is to supervise our conduct" (28).

Butler thus articulated a procedural moral theory that is empirical and relies entirely upon individual reflection in making moral judgments. Here arises a clear departure from Aquinas and Bonaventure. In the Scholastic scheme, where the
individual's conscience conflicts with Church moral authority, there is an underlying assumption that personal moral reasoning has gone wrong – there has been an error in the operations of applied conscience. The individual is then to refrain from acting and undergo self-education so as to correct the malfunction of applied conscience, thus understanding and complying with potential conscience as interpreted by the Church.

For Butler, individual conscience, not God or Church or secular authority, is the "supreme moral authority" (Langston 100). As Hill puts it:

... in Butler's account, the voice of conscience is ... the conclusion of our best, reasoned reflection. If other individuals or state or church authorities disagree with our initial judgment, then this is new information that may call for new reflection; but it remains information to be conscientiously reflected on, not a verdict that any person of conscience can blindly accept. ... Others' disagreement may be a sign that our initial judgment was based on a self-deceptive picture of the facts or that we were too hasty or emotionally distracted in our initial deliberation. In either case, however, the check is a new use of conscience, not a decision to accept the authority of someone else's judgment over our own. (29)

If Butlerian conscience is thus a step beyond Scholasticism, there are nonetheless problems with such a highly rationalistic view of conscience. Not the least of these is that it runs counter to our experience of conscience as, at least in part, a warning bell – an emotional reaction to an impending or actual moral dilemma. Notwithstanding its rational procedure and departure from theology, Butlerian conscience does require at least some theology and faith to get it off the ground in the first place, supplying in the process rather indeterminate principles of general application (Langston 28). Finally, individual consciences in Butler's scheme can produce different answers to the same moral question: "Because even small variations in the capacities and specific situations of individuals can matter, what conscience rightly tells one person may differ from what it rightly tells another who seems similarly situated" (Langston 28-29).
Butler's is an empowering and liberating theory of conscience. Ultimately it is up to us to apply conscience, that is, reflective moral judgment, to make particular decisions. In doing so, we are not bound by the Church or other external authorities although we are to take their positions into account in reasoning out moral decisions. The downside of such individual freedom is loss of the situational moral certainty that is a more cogent characteristic of Scholastic theory.

**Kant and Duty: Conscience as "Judicial Self-Appraisal"**

Kant took yet another step away from God and towards reason. Like Butler, he held that reason is the instrument we use to make moral decisions. But now God and theology make no appearance at all, not even the brief foundational appearance they make in Butler.⁹

Kantian moral decision-making is centred upon humanity rather than deity. We not only apply but are also the source of general moral principles, whereas in Butler's scheme at least some moral principles are God-given, along with the instinct for benevolence. Further, Kant relocated moral decision-making from conscience to reason itself. In essence, he separated out the close identification of conscience and moral deliberation that one finds in Butlerian theory. As Hill explains, "[for Kant] [c]onscience is no substitute for moral reasoning and judgment but in fact presupposes these" (35). Instead, Kantian conscience serves as an inner judge that comes into play after we have acted or formed an intention to act and is thus different from the Butlerian deliberator,

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⁸ Hill 31.
⁹ God is not entirely absent from Kantian theory, though. Rather, it is relegated to the distant background. Ralph Perry expresses this aspect of Kant's God: "[C]onscience reveals another world, deeper and more real than nature, which is the proper sphere for the exercise of the will. This is the world of God, freedom, and immortality. It cannot be known in the strict sense, only nature can be known; but it can and must be believed in, because it is presupposed in all action. If one is to live at all, one must claim such a world to live in. So Kant, who began by justifying science, ended by justifying faith". As Hill puts it: "We can also think of conscience as demanding accountability to God, but this is a 'subjective' construal rather than an essential feature of [Kantian] conscience" (33).
supervisor, or coach. Kant explained the role of conscience thus in *The Metaphysics of Morals* (1797):

Consciousness of an *internal court* in man ("before which his thoughts accuse or excuse another") is conscience. Every man has a conscience and finds himself observed, threatened, and, in general, kept in awe (respect coupled with fear) by an internal judge; and this authority watching over the law in him is not something that he himself (voluntarily) makes but something incorporated in his being. It follows him like his shadow when he plans to escape. He can indeed stun himself or put himself to sleep by pleasures and distractions, but he cannot help coming to himself or waking up from time to time, and when he does, he hears at once its fearful voice. He can at most, in extreme depravity, bring himself to heed it no longer, but he still cannot help hearing it. (233-34)

Kant thereby restored the emotional significance and affective dimension of conscience which we experience in the practical world, but which is absent from Butlerian theory.

What activates Kantian conscience, this internal judge? Kantian morality is a morality of duty — not theology, teleology, or utility. Intention and motivation, rather than consequence, are central (Blackburn 102). The source of these moral duties is the categorical imperative, with "categorical" signifying absolute. That is, the existence of a moral duty is not dependent on circumstances or predicted results. If the categorical imperative requires truth-telling, for example, then I must always tell the truth even if it may have dire consequences for me or someone else (Blackburn 102; Langston 83-84). If I lie or intend to lie, the inner judge — conscience — will condemn me.

The categorical imperative derives its content from a universalization test which asks: "What if everyone did that?" Hill explains that these moral duties "are constituted by what reasonable, autonomous persons ideally would 'legislate' for themselves" (37). As Kant was an eighteenth century European intellectual, it seems unlikely he thought women, the peasantry and so on should participate in this legislative process, which raises an interesting intersection — or disjunction — between conscience and Otherness. If The Other does not participate in discovering and articulating the moral duties which
are to interact with conscience, it is inevitable that those moral duties will tend to serve the interests of the legislative elite. In fact, those duties may entirely overlook the interests of The Other. Thus, actions that would stir the conscience if aimed at the favoured class may fail to activate conscience at all when inflicted upon The Other. For example, as I explore in upcoming chapters, women and other non-citizens in Greece and Arawaks in the Spanish Caribbean took no part in any debates about how they were to be treated, and they suffered the consequences. In the Kantian scheme, the conscience of a Spanish colonist, for example, might well be clear even after treating an Indian in a way he could never conscientiously treat fellow Spaniards, Indians having had no say at all in what moral duties were to apply in the colonies.

Notwithstanding this elitism, Kant did stress, at least at a theoretical level, the notion of moral imagination. As Dave Robinson expresses it, for Kant, "[t]o be moral, we have always to imagine ourselves being on the receiving end of other people's decisions" (*Ethics* 86), a variation on the theme of universality. Thus, Robinson continues, "[p]eople who are wicked, in other words, may just be unimaginative". This is one way of conceptualizing the actions of the Nazi camp guard who simply could not conceive of his Jewish inmates as members of his moral community, or the Spanish Caribbean colonists who considered the Arawaks no more than beasts of burden, not really human at all. In Kantian terms, they lacked moral imagination. In Scholastic terms, perhaps, they did not stop and think.

Leaving aside, for the moment, the elitist lacuna in Kant's approach, he asserted that moral duties can be induced from the Formula of the Law of Nature and the Formula of Humanity.¹⁰ Both Formulae are dense, perhaps even opaque, but involve claims that:

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¹⁰ The Formula of the Law of Nature: "Act as if the maxim of your action were to become by your will a *universal law of nature*" [emphasis in original]. The Formula of Humanity: "So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means". Quoted in Blackburn 104.
... [t]hese basic requirements, articulated in the forms of the Categorical Imperative, are supposed to be part of the rational knowledge of all ordinary moral agents,¹¹ even though nonphilosophers may not be able to articulate them in pure abstract form. (Hill 31)

Further, "the norms expressed in the Categorical Imperative are necessary principles of reason" (50). In addition to truth-telling they include, for example, duties like not granting oneself an exemption that one would deny to another (Blackburn 101) and not committing suicide (Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals 53-54). Again, it is an open question who, in Kant's view, can be or is an "ordinary moral agent" with "rational knowledge" of these "basic requirements".

Conscience is connected with these moral duties at two levels. Obviously, conscience judges breaches of first order duties like the duty to tell the truth. More than that, Kant claimed, conscience also judges a second order duty, the duty to "know (scrutinize, fathom) yourself". This requires us to evaluate ourselves "against the law" and thus measure our "inner worth" (Metaphysics of Morals 236). In essence, Kant would have us assess not only how we fulfill a moral duty but also how we assess our understanding and formulation of that moral duty: were we diligent in arriving at our understanding of the moral principle upon which the act was based? In this way not only our acts but also our moral beliefs – our knowledge of the principles of general application – are improved. If we fail to cultivate our moral beliefs, the inner judge of conscience will painfully suggest a course correction. In this, Kantian theory bears some resemblance to the Scholastic injunction to avoid misinformed conscience, though their ultimate aims are different. When conscience is activated and our moral beliefs appear to diverge from the opinions of others, including those of self-appointed moral authorities like the Church, Kant, like Butler, thought we should take these factors into account as

¹¹ Possibly, then, psychopaths are not "ordinary moral agents", although the literature indicates that psychopathy involves impairment of the ability to emote rather than the impairment of rationality. See Kiss 72-73.
just one step in moral deliberation (Hill 17). Unlike the Scholastics, and again in line with Butler, he thought those external authorities were not determinative and he emphasized the importance of human reason in making moral judgments. In the end, Kant held that "each of us must carefully make, and rigorously follow, our own best moral judgment" (Hill 17), striving to cultivate our conscience and follow it. Conscience is a personal inner judge which "resid[es] in each individual, speak[s] to each individual alone" (Stolzenberg 66).

David Hume and Adam Smith: Sympathy and The Other

Almost two million years ago, a 40 year old male Homo erectus, living in what is now the Republic of Georgia, lost all his teeth (Fischman 16-27). When his skull was discovered in 2004, the tooth sockets displayed evidence of full bone growth, suggesting that his companions fed him, a old man unable to chew his own food, throughout his last few years. This led Fischman to speculate that "those toothless jaws might testify to something like compassion, stunningly early in human evolution" (18).

Along these lines, Butler posited an instinct for benevolence and the Kantian universality test implies a capacity for morally imagining others. But it is David Hume and Adam Smith who more deeply developed theories of moral imagination, "to imagine ourselves being on the receiving end of other people's decisions" (Robinson, Ethics 86). The main thrust of this section, then, is not conscience theory, but a discussion of how we bring other people into our moral imagination and consequently accord them conscientious behaviour, as related by Hume and Smith. This in turn leads to an understanding of how it is that our moral imagination may fail to extend to others, rendering them The Other, outside our moral community and therefore not entitled to conscientious behaviour.
Turning first to Hume, his approach to moral decision-making is thoroughly secular and he rejects the notion that "if religion goes, morality will disappear with it" (Schneewind 2, 5). Interestingly, he does not follow Butler and Kant in their insistence upon human reason as the new basis for moral decision-making. Hume was a subjectivist who "thought that there were virtually no human beliefs that could be 'proved' and that 'reason' was greatly overrated" (Robinson, Philosophy 70). Schneewind expresses a similar account of Hume's views: "[T]he powers of reason are extremely limited. Most of our convictions do not have the demonstrable certainty that is the mark of true knowledge" (5). Thus, Hume contended, "the world could be explained not in terms of the working of reason but in terms of the working of feeling" (5). Why feeling if not reason? Like Butler, and based on his observations of human behaviour, he rejected Hobbes' view that humans are "essentially self-seeking". Rather, he insisted that "we can take immediate pleasure in the flourishing of others" (7) and he explained his feeling-based moral theory in the seminal *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751):

[N]o qualities are more intitled (sic) to the general good-will and approbation of mankind than benevolence and humanity, friendship and gratitude, natural affection and public spirit, or whatever proceeds from a tender sympathy with others, and a generous concern for our kind and species. These, wherever they appear, seem to transfuse themselves, in a manner, into each beholder, and to call forth, in their own behalf, the same favourable and affectionate sentiments, which they exert on all around. (18)

In short, Hume's moral scheme is based on our ability to develop compassion for "our kind and our species". As I point out in the upcoming chapters, this would not assist, for example, the Arawak Indians. In the eyes of Spanish colonists, they were not "our kind", perhaps not even human. They were Other and therefore not within Spanish moral imagination and not part of the Spanish moral agent's moral community.
Optimistically, Adam Smith contended that with mental effort our moral imagination can have immense reach, suggesting the Arawak genocide may not have been inevitable.

Moving on to Smith, then, he initially expressed an ambiguous view about the source of moral faculties. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), he started with an equivocal stance on reason as the foundation for moral decision-making, though without rejecting it outright like Hume. But he did contend for an inner moral authority, even if it is not necessarily reason-based:

> Upon whatever we suppose that our moral faculties are founded, whether upon certain modification of reason, upon an original instinct, called a moral sense, or upon some other principle of our nature, it cannot be doubted, that they were given to us for the direction of our conduct in this life. They carry along with them the most evident badges of this authority, which denote that they were to be set up within us to be the supreme arbiters of all our actions, to superintend all our senses, passions, and appetites, and to judge how far each of them was to be indulged or restrained. . . . [It is the particular office of those faculties now under consideration [i.e., the moral faculties] to judge, to bestow censure or applause upon all the other principles of our nature. (164-65)

In this sense, then, Smith is similar to Kant in his view that one function of inner moral authority is to act as internal judge. Like Hume, Smith thought that it is an innate capacity for sympathy which underlies this governing faculty, as a principle of our nature:

> How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it. . . . That we often derive sorrow from the sorrow of others is a matter of fact too obvious to require any instances to prove it . . . The greatest ruffian, the most hardened violator of the laws of society, is not altogether without it. (9)

Our moral faculties then, whether founded in reason or instinct, will judge how well we follow this principle of nature. As to how we come to know and appreciate the happiness or sorrow of others, the key is moral imagination. Smith continued:

> Though our brother is on the rack . . . our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. . . . By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even
feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them. His agonies, when they are thus brought home to ourselves, when we have thus adopted and made them our own, begin at least to affect us, and we then tremble and shudder at the thought of what he feels. (9)

What happens if the person on the rack is not my brother, but someone more remote? Smith also addressed this issue, the potentiality of moral imagination – of putting ourselves in the place even of unseen strangers:

When we are always so much more deeply affected by whatever concerns ourselves, than by whatever concerns other men; what is it which prompts the generous, upon all occasions, and the mean upon many, to sacrifice their own interests to the greater interests of others? (137)

He answered his own question:

It is not the soft power of humanity, it is not the feeble spark of benevolence which Nature has lighted up in the human heart, that is thus capable of countereacting the strongest impulses of self-love. It is a stronger power, a more forcible motive, which exerts itself upon such occasions. It is reason, principle, conscience, the inhabitant of the breast, the man within, the great arbiter of our conduct. (137)

Thus, sympathy and moral imagination imply much more than recognition and comprehension of another's suffering. Conscientious behaviour, for Smith, involves a complex emotional response to such suffering, which can only occur after we profoundly imagine the moral situation of the other person. This involves identification with the sufferer as a fellow human being, deep contemplation of the position in which the other person finds herself or himself, and especially reflection upon what our feelings would be in that position. Thus, Lawrence Blum suggests, our moral imagination is directed towards, not caused by, the sufferer's plight (175-77) and, he asserts, "[a]s a motive to beneficence, compassion can have the strength, stability, and reliability that Kant thought only the sense of duty could have" (180).

Smith gave an example of sympathy in action. Perhaps inspired by the 1755 Lisbon earthquake, he asked how "a man of humanity in Europe" would react if all of
China "was suddenly swallowed up by an earthquake" (136). He contended that this European man would:

... express very strongly his sorrow for the misfortune of that unhappy people, he would make many melancholy reflections on the precariousness of life... He would too, perhaps, if he were a man of speculation, enter into many reasonings concerning the effects which this disaster might produce upon the commerce of Europe. And when all this fine philosophy was over, when all these humane sentiments had been fairly expressed, he would pursue his business or his pleasure... with the same ease and tranquillity as if no such accident had happened. ... If he was to lose his little finger to-morrow, he would not sleep tonight, but, provided he never saw them, he will snore with the most profound security over the ruin of a hundred millions of his brethren, and the destruction of that immense multitude seems plainly an object less interesting to him, than this paltry misfortune of his own. (136-37)

Smith held that we are capable of extending sympathy, if we are prepared to make the effort of cultivating moral imagination. Thus, we can develop compassion well beyond a brother on the rack or a distant population devastated by natural disaster:

[O]ur good-will is circumscribed by no boundary, but may embrace the immensity of the universe. We cannot form the idea of any innocent and sensible being, whose happiness we should not desire, or to whose misery, when distinctly brought home to the imagination, we should not have some degree of aversion. (235)

The heavy lifting must thus be done by "reason, principle, [and] conscience" (137), which requires attention and intentionality. Being moral requires effort, active thought. In this sense, Smith abandons his early equivocation about reason - at least if we think of intentionality and abstract thought as aspects of reason - as a foundation for our moral faculties.

Contemporary compassion theorists point to additional benefits of sympathy. The very act of contemplating another's precarious position may produce a solution to a moral dilemma that was not initially clear, indeed where the situation perhaps seemed

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12 Interestingly, and with obvious significance, Smith mentions not the theological connotations of the earthquake but only its economic effects. Later in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* Smith speaks disparagingly of the "numerous and artful clergy" who "possessed all the little learning which the times could afford" and arrogated to themselves the role of "directors of conscience" (334).
hopeless. Compassion itself may be a moral good: even when nothing direct can be done to alleviate suffering, the sufferer may benefit simply from knowing that he or she is on the receiving end of genuine compassion (Blum 181).

On balance, this approach offers relief from the religious authoritarianism of Scholastic theory, the sheer rationality of Butler\(^\text{13}\) and the austerity and problematic non-consequentialism of Kant. It is a hopeful, outward-regarding scheme of moral decision-making which is capable of helping us understand how compassion might be expanded, by cultivating moral imagination, to bring The Other into the moral community.

**Freud: Conscience as the Superego's Warning Bell**

Langston, a neo-Kantian, laments the Freudian conception of conscience, which he sees as eviscerating the much more robust Scholastic theory and its heirs. It does so, asserts Langston, by reducing conscience to a "judging and punishing faculty" (7) which lacks any functional role in moral reasoning. In this sense, Freud takes the Kantian trajectory to its logical endpoint. Moral decision-making resides outside conscience, as for Kant. But Freud went even further in the reduction of conscience, conceiving of it as "an emotional buzzer [which] hardly preserves a notion of conscience" (Langston 1). In this sense, it at least retains some of the character of the Kantian inner judge, albeit a conceptually more slender one. Yet psychoanalytic theory does offer useful, if metaphorical, ways of thinking about conscience and Otherness. Before moving on to that analysis, a brief review of Freud's theory of the mind may be useful.

In *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis* (1940), Freud posited a tripartite structural model of the mind, consisting of the id, ego, and superego. The id is present at birth, a

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\(^{13}\) In a sense, Smith's "sympathy" both displaces the source of and expands Butler's "benevolence". While Butlerian benevolence flows from theology (the communitarian nature of humanity enunciated in Romans XII: 4-5), Smith based sympathy on psychology ("a generous concern for our kind and species" which is simply a feature of human nature). Smith then went on to develop the operations of sympathy in a much fuller way than Butler worked through the dynamics of benevolence.
self-centred instinct driving the infant to meet its own needs without regard for the needs of the parents or anyone else (2-3, 67-68, 71, 77). As the child experiences the world, the ego emerges and grows. It strives to satisfy the id but in a way that protects it from its own impulsive nature (3, 69-70, 77). Finally, at about age five, the superego starts to develop. The superego internalizes the authority of parents, teachers, and other powerful figures in such a way that it gradually supplements and displaces the influence of those external authorities. The superego thus becomes an internal regulator of the ego: "[I]t observes the ego, gives it orders, corrects it and threatens it with punishments, exactly like the parents whose place it has taken" (77). It continues to grow even after the influence of external authority figures has waned: "It is a remarkable thing that the super-ego often develops a severity for which no example has been provided by the real parents" (77-78).

Freud conceives of conscience as a feature of the superego: "We call this agency the super-ego and are aware of it, in its judicial functions, as our conscience" (77). This judicial conscience has a strong emotional aspect: "The torments caused by the reproaches of conscience correspond precisely to a child's dread of losing his parents' love, a dread which has been replaced in him by the moral agency" (78).

Further, conscience can cause this torment both consciously and unconsciously:

[Freud] is unwilling to limit the activities of conscience to the conscious consideration of beliefs and attitudes that take place in conscious moral reasoning or in conscious reflection on moral feelings like shame, guilt, and remorse. We perhaps are most aware of conscience and its power when we consciously think about how our actions violate our beliefs, but this fact does not undercut Freud's belief in the power of our preconscious beliefs to guide behavior. (Langston 91)

Langston suggests, in fact, that "preconscious dictates of the superego" can affect behavior more strongly than conscious commands and injunctions:

[U]ntil one becomes introspective and examines one's beliefs, the preconscious dictates are probably more determinative than one's conscious dictates. Moreover, even when we are able to articulate our
beliefs and assumptions, we are not always actively conscious of them. Many return to the preconscious where they exert an important, although unconscious, influence. (90)

This principle has clear implications for Clytemnestra, Antigone and Medea, all of whom seem to act from the gut without much if any reflection, simply conforming with tradition. By way of counterpoint, Freud maintained in Civilization and Its Discontents that hardship sharpens conscience and promotes introspection:

As long as things go well with a man, his conscience is lenient and lets the ego do all sorts of things; but when misfortune befalls him, he searches his soul, acknowledges his sinfulness, heightens the demands of his conscience, imposes abstinences on himself and punishes himself with penances. (87)

This assertion provides an interesting perspective on Creon's sudden soul-searching, once things start going wrong. Adolf Eichmann, after his arrest and especially during his trial, seemed to display considerably deeper moral reflection than in 1943, when his Nazi career was on the ascendant. Yet Las Casas changed his life dramatically, apparently without the nudge of some personal catastrophe. On the other side of the coin, it cannot be said that any of Clytemnestra, Antigone or Medea become particularly introspective once calamity strikes. This Freudian claim, then, introduces another way of thinking about the role of conscience in moral decision-making, albeit one that seems problematic at first blush. Personal misfortune may or may not be necessary or sufficient for the triggering of conscience, these cases seem to suggest.

Finally, Freud's ideas about personality theory and aggression, again explored in Civilization and Its Discontents, are useful in thinking about the notions of moral community and Otherness. He contends that we are innately aggressive, that this aggressive instinct must be contained if civilization is to survive, and that conscience is a critical factor in its containment:

What means does civilization employ in order to inhibit the aggressiveness which opposes it, to make it harmless, to get rid of it, perhaps? . . . What happens in [the individual] to render his desire for
aggression innocuous? . . . His aggressiveness is introjected, internalized . . . it is directed towards his own ego. There it is taken over by a portion of the ego, which sets itself over against the ego as super-ego, and which now, in the form of "conscience", is ready to put into action against the ego the same harsh aggressiveness that the ego would have liked to satisfy upon other, extraneous individuals. The tension between the harsh super-ego and the ego that is subjected to it, is called by us the sense of guilt; it expresses itself as a need for punishment. Civilization, therefore, obtains mastery over the individual's dangerous desire for aggression by weakening and disarming it and by setting up an agency within him to watch over it, like a garrison in a conquered city. (83-84)

In short, Freud contends that conscience is a necessary component of the psychoanalytic process inhibiting our instinct for aggression, an instinct that is antithetical to civilized life. Presumably, then, a civilized society must somehow install the moral value of non-aggression in the individual in the first place, so that it can reside in the superego, ready for violations to be detected by the conscience.

There is another side to this equation. What, in this formulation, constitutes an "other, extraneous individual" against whom, according to Freud, we must be restrained from inflicting "harsh aggression"? To benefit from this Freudian dynamic, the potential objects of aggression must be within the moral agent's contemplation as such an "other, extraneous individual". Otherwise, aggression against them will not trigger Freudian conscience in the first place. These are The Other, outside the actual or potential moral community that this Freudian dynamic posits. Unfortunately, Freud does not explain who is to benefit from these counter-aggression operations of conscience, perhaps thinking it obvious that the principle applies to all members of the species H. sapiens. Counter-examples abound, however, including the doomed slaves of the mines of Athens and Hispaniola and the Jewish slaves of World War II Europe. It seems an immense understatement to say that the failure to constrain aggression against such Others – who were incapable from the beginning of triggering Freudian conscience because of their Otherness – had a deleterious effect on the civilization of their day.
Conclusion: Theories of Conscience and The Other

These classic theories explore two interconnected issues. First, they track the evolution of moral theories from those based in divinity to ones founded on human reason or other human attributes like an instinct for sympathy. Along the way, conscience takes a number of guises: the voice of God or instinctive knowledge of God's laws, a more complex religious view of conscience espoused by the Scholastics, reflective moral judgment, the Kantian inner judge which requires us to continuously appraise not only our actions but our moral belief system, and Freud's much-reduced conception of conscience as a sort of warning bell in the superego.

Secondly, many of these theories address, at least implicitly, the concepts of moral imagination and moral community and, thus, notions of The Other. Most notably, Hume and Smith reacted to Hobbesian pessimism by insisting upon the existence of sympathy for others as a principle of nature. Smith, in particular, held that sympathy has the potential to embrace even those on the other side of the world — and limitlessly beyond, with mental effort. Butler, Kant and Freud also addressed the importance of bringing others into our moral contemplation. Butler spoke of a theologically derived benevolence for fellow human beings, Kant posited a universality test for determining moral duties and the importance of imagining what it would be like to be on the receiving end of an action, and Freud insisted upon the civilizing influence of conscience in restraining the instinct for aggression against others. Yet none of them were explicit as to how far the effects of their conceptual constructs extended — who is to be included as beneficiaries of these various dynamics described by Butler, Kant and Freud? As I move through the case studies in the next two chapters, it becomes clear that sometimes not all human beings qualify as potential objects of moral imagination and as such do not even trigger conscience, let alone defeat it, in any of its conceptions. In Hellenic Greece, there was a struggle between religious and secular conceptions of
morality and an exploration of the limits of reason in moral decision-making, all played out in a world in which almost two out of every five inhabitants of Greece were slaves, and women and barbarians were considered distinctly inferior to Greek male citizens. Similarly, in the sixteenth century Spanish Caribbean, both religious and secular approaches to morality were in play, accompanied by a fierce debate as to whether the Arawak Indians were human at all. If they were not, was there any reason to accord them the conscientious treatment one might accord a Spaniard?

In the next chapter, I explore three classic Hellenic tragedies which raise these issues, and in the following chapter I examine the short and unhappy colonial history of the Arawaks, a history that, perhaps counterintuitively, ultimately consists of their enslavement and obliteration by a very Catholic and God-fearing Spain.
II
ORESTEIA, ANTIGONE, AND MEDEA:
CONSCIENCE AND OTHERNESS
IN CLASSICAL GREECE

Introduction: Conscience and Otherness in Greek Tragedy

In this chapter, I identify and consider issues of conscience and Otherness that arise, albeit not in so many words, in the Oresteia (458) by Aeschylus (526-456), the Antigone (441) by Sophocles (496-406), and the Medea (431) by Euripides (484-406).

The fifth century BCE was a golden age in Greece, a century of intellectual innovation with consequences for theories about moral decision-making that continue to resonate in Western thought. Classical Greek philosophers sought to discard or at least constrain mysterious old unwritten laws, supposedly handed down from on high by the gods, in favour of a more complex, human, rational morality (Vellacott, Introduction to the Medea 15-18), anticipating in some ways the later philosophical stream flowing from Aquinas and Bonaventure through Butler and on to Kant. They made a distinction between obedience to "blind commandments" on one hand and "deliberative acts resting on the choice of the reasonable man" on the other (Kuhns 56). This promoted a shift from "honour codes" (Grayling 16) and Homeric "warrior or heroic virtues" to a new form of justice involving "civic virtues" (Grayling 14). Superstition, prophecy, violence, disorder and the claims of passion were to be superseded – or at least curtailed – by order, control, proportionality, and above all the application of human reason. Grayling relates that "one aspect of this ideal is encapsulated as sophrosyne":

... a word for which no single English expression gives an adequate rendering, although standardly translated as "temperance", "self-restraint" or "wisdom". In his most famous dialogue, The Republic, Plato defines...
sophrosyne as "the agreement of the passions that Reason should rule". If to this were added the thought – reflecting the better part of what other Greeks besides Plato thought – that the passions and the senses are important too, something like their ideal conception of human flourishing results. (10)

But Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides all express doubt, or at least caution, about the extent to which this "optimistic rationalism" (Segal 71) can mitigate ancient Greek values or control the perceived passion, violence and disorder of the non-Greek, "barbarian" world. Their tragedies are largely an exploration of this theme, as the characters in these three iconic plays struggle to make moral judgments against a backdrop of rapidly changing values and the conflicting, yet often complementary, claims of passion and reason, divinity and humanity. Conscience, especially in its religious and Butlerian guises, though obviously not identified as such by these classical playwrights, is a factor in these struggles. For example, Clytemnestra and Antigone display an easy obedience to laws received from the gods, whereas Orestes, Creon and Jason struggle to apply human reason in arriving at moral stances. Sophocles, through Creon, makes a complex argument for the value of being open to persuasion, an idea consistent with Butler's approach to conscience as reflective moral judgment that takes into account, without being tyrannized by, external authorities and the views of other moral agents. In contrast, Euripides uses Jason's cold calculating approach as a cautionary note about the limits of reason in making moral decisions. Indeed, all three plays explore the tensions between Greek, male reason on the one hand and the perceived irrationality of barbarians and women on the other. In doing so, they highlight the often ambiguous and opaque nature of reason and closely-related concepts like rationality and reasonableness, and they illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of classic conscience theories developed many centuries later, theories which would similarly push God and instinctual compliance with divine command into the background.
If reason forms the theoretical core of the new Greek morality, there is yet a siege mentality in its application, exhibiting sexism and racism, even misogyny and xenophobia. This raises Otherness as a check or even a block on the operations of conscience. Classical Greece evinced a certain intolerance of, or at least disdain for, women and foreigners. *Sophrosyne* was thought to be exclusively a quality of Greek, male citizens – at least by Greek, male citizens – whose duty it was to protect the civilized Greek city from the chaos of surrounding barbarian societies and the unpredictable passions of women. This privileged class was small. Research by R.K. Sinclair suggests that:

\[...\] those with full civic rights represented a select group within the total population. Most estimates at different points in [the fifth century BCE] assume or imply that slaves constituted perhaps 30%-37% of the population, persons of metic [resident alien] status 10%-15%, citizens and their families 50%-55%, with only 14%-17% of the total – the adult male citizens – in possession of full political rights. (*Democracy* 200)

Thus while the fifth century, in a general sense, witnessed an expansion of moral community from family to city – the evolution and consequences of which are explored in the *Oresteia* and the *Antigone* – there was an underclass of Others outside and even within the city whose claims to membership in the moral community were non-existent, tenuous, or of a lesser order. This underclass constituted, according to Sinclair, perhaps four out of five people living in fifth century Greece – Others who were not deserving of conscientious treatment by the new rational elite, the less than one in five residents thought to be uniquely capable of living a full civic life in adherence to the ideal of *sophrosyne*. The Otherness of women and barbarians is thus a theme running through these three tragedies and a factor that plays against the conscience of many of the characters confronted with moral dilemmas in the plays.
Oresteia, Antigone, and Medea: The Stories

Although the three tragedies are well-known, a brief review of their plots may contribute to appreciating how notions of conscience and Otherness develop in them.

In the Oresteia, Aeschylus reflects on the growth of moral awareness in the Greek classical era, using the bloody history of the House of Atreus as his literary backdrop and Orestes as the central figure. Orestes' father, King Agamemnon of Argos, prosecutes the long war against distant Troy, first sacrificing his daughter Iphigenia to the gods to ensure favourable winds for the fleet's journey to the east. During Agamemnon's long years at the walls of Troy, Orestes is brought up not in Argos but in the foreign court of Strophius. Meanwhile Clytemnestra - Agamemnon's wife and the mother of Orestes and Iphigenia - rules Argos in Agamemnon's absence, along with her lover, the usurper Aegisthus. Agamemnon returns in victory, accompanied by his lover Cassandra, a princess of Troy. In revenge for the killing of Iphigenia - though there are obviously additional motivations - Clytemnestra kills Agamemnon and Cassandra. The gods call upon Orestes, now an adult, to avenge Agamemnon by killing Clytemnestra, in keeping with the long tradition of such revenge killings in the House of Atreus. But Orestes, raised outside Argos and exposed to other customs, questions the morality of this ancient practice. In Orestes' struggle for a solution to his dilemma, Aeschylus explores the clash between traditional and new values, between an ethic of blind vengeance decreed by the gods and a new justice based on reason, an exploration which raises issues of conscience and Otherness examined in this chapter.

Seventeen years after Aeschylus finished the Oresteia, Sophocles wrote the Antigone. Like Aeschylus, Sophocles addresses the tension between old and new values – here, between loyalty to family and loyalty to city state. Sophocles' Oedipus at Colonus relates how, prior to the events described in the Antigone, Oedipus' sons Polynices and Eteocles kill each other in a war for the throne of Thebes. Polynices was
exiled before the war and thus becomes an aggressor against Thebes, while Eteocles stands as its defender. Creon, uncle of Polynices and Eteocles, now becomes king. He orders Eteocles buried with traditional rites, while Polynices is to be left rotting outside the city gates where he fell. These orders are in keeping with the roles played by Creon's nephews in the war of succession. Antigone, sister of the fallen men and Creon's niece, buries her brother Polynices anyway, in keeping with traditional unwritten divine laws which require loyalty to one's family and burial of human remains. Creon, invoking the new, human law of loyalty to city – and thus obedience to his commands as the city's leader – orders Antigone entombed alive in a cave outside the city. Also drawn into this tragedy by the decree is Haemon, son of Creon and Antigone's betrothed, who pleads with his father to spare his beloved's life. In the end, Creon revokes the order, but by this time Antigone, Haemon, and Creon's wife Eurydice have all committed suicide. Here, I explore Creon's struggle with his conscience and his discovery of the limitations of a purely rational approach to moral decision-making, which stands in neat juxtaposition to Antigone's instinctive obedience to godly tradition. At the same time, I examine issues of Otherness evoked by Sophocles – as the moral community expands from family to city – and the interplay of conscience and Otherness.

Finally, Euripides' Medea explores the suffering that can accompany moral decision-making – evoking Kantian and Freudian conceptions of conscience as inner judge, warning bell and tormentor. In particular, Euripides explores the suffering of Medea as killer of her own children and, by way of counterpoint, Jason's apparent lack of suffering for the heartless treatment of his wife Medea. At the same time, Euripides portrays the "patriarchal terrorism" (Lucas) of classical Greece – the Medea conveys a strong sense of the Otherness and consequential oppression of women.

Before the events of the Medea, Jason sets off with the Argonauts on his famous quest for the Golden Fleece. In distant Colchis, he encounters Medea, a princess and
sorceress, who falls in love with him as a result of the plotting of the goddess Hera. Medea gives Jason drugs that help him defeat a test set by her father, Aeëtes, and Aeëtes, furious, then plans to kill Jason and the Argonauts. Before he can do so, Jason, again with Medea's magical aid, kills a dragon guarding the Golden Fleece and flees in the Argo with both the Fleece and Medea. Aeëtes pursues them. As Jason and Medea flee, Medea kills her brother Apsyrtus, who had joined them, and drops his body parts into the sea. This delays Aeëtes, who must pick them up for burial, ensuring Jason's and Medea's escape. After more adventures, in which Medea engineers yet another bizarre killing for Jason's benefit, that of Pelias, Jason and Medea arrive in Corinth, where King Creon receives them.¹⁴

As the Medea opens, then, Jason and Creon have arranged that Jason will abandon Medea and marry Glauce, Creon's daughter. Because Glauce is Greek, she is an acceptable wife for an ambitious Greek citizen like Jason in a way that Medea, a barbarian and sorceress, most assuredly is not. Fearing the worst, Creon banishes Medea and her two sons, who are also Jason's sons – his half-Greek, half-barbarian, and therefore second-class sons, soon to be displaced by the full-blooded Greek sons Jason expects to have with Glauce. After arranging sanctuary for herself in Athens, Medea sends Glauce a poisoned dress and crown which kill her when she puts them on. Creon is likewise killed by the poison in the dress when he takes the dying Glauce in his arms. Finally, Medea kills her sons, in revenge for her betrayal by Jason. She refuses the pleas of Jason, who wants his sons' bodies so that he can perform the traditional rights, and she flies off with the corpses in a chariot drawn by dragons, ending the play.

Euripides thus confronts head-on the rationalism of the new Greek morality, a morality which does not prohibit "patriarchal terrorism" of The Other, that is, non-Greeks and women like Medea. If Medea as Other fails to activate Jason's conscience at all,

¹⁴ I have drawn heavily on Porter in summarizing the events leading up to the Medea.
Medea herself, although suffering pitiable pangs of conscience, is nonetheless able to murder her sons. What, then, are the factors in conscience theory and concepts of Otherness that play out in the moral decision-making of Euripides' tragic literary figures?

Putting Mother to the Sword: The Oresteia

The traditional law of the chthonic gods, based on a morality of vengeance, encompassed three major offences against the social order: "blasphemy against the gods, treachery to a host or guest, and the shedding of kindred blood" (Vellacott, Introduction to The Oresteian Trilogy 17). Orestes' moral duty thus appears clear: to kill Clytemnestra in revenge for killing his father Agamemnon.

Orestes' and Clytemnestra's Decisions to Kill

Orestes does, in the end, kill Clytemnestra. But he does not do it in blind, automatic, comfortable obedience to the ancient law of revenge. Rather, he suffers through an anguished reasoning process in deciding to proceed with the murder.

Richard Kuhns explains Orestes' internal conflict and his growth of moral awareness in these terms:

The daimonic supernatural forces are specific in their commands: their voices speak with urgency in the present instant; they allow no time for deliberation. They do not permit questions, and thus when a man like Orestes who has traveled, who has been instructed by an enlightened teacher, questions the ancestral ways, he discovers inconsistencies in the moral obligations set forth. The morality which enjoins blood retribution appears to be irrational to him. Therefore he cannot exult in his act as his mother could when she took the life of Agamemnon. While Clytemnestra celebrates her deed . . . , nourished by murder, Orestes seeks first to rationalize his act . . . (54-55)

Orestes' doubt and deliberation are apparent at the moment of imminent murder, when he questions his friend: "Pylades, what shall I do? To kill a mother is terrible. Shall I show mercy?" Pylades, obviously a traditionalist, urges Orestes to simply obey Apollo's command to kill (136). But Orestes, in a final dialogue with Clytemnestra,
articulates the reasons he has discovered for killing her. She banished him when he was a child. She waited in comfort and perhaps even luxury at home while Agamemnon suffered at the walls of Troy. She committed adultery and her continuing partnership with Aegisthus, a de facto usurper, is costing Orestes the throne (136-137). While all of these reasons for killing contain elements of vengeance, the crucial point is that they are abstract reasons for killing. Orestes takes the time to work them out rather than responding to tradition like an automaton. As Kuhns expresses it, Orestes has a "conscience [which] enjoins forbearance, reflection, restraint" (34). This is an elegant example of moral calculus, akin to Butlerian conscience as reflective moral judgment.

Even after the murder, Orestes continues to suffer and work his way through the moral quality of what he has done. He says:

Now listen. At this moment I am like a man
Driving a team of horses and not knowing where
The gallop's going to end. My wits chafe at the rein
Under my weakened grip, and carry me off the course;
Terror begins to sing at my heart and set it dancing
In anger. Therefore, while I am still in my right mind,
To all who are loyal to me I solemnly proclaim:
It was no sin to kill my mother, who was herself
Marked with my father's blood, unclean, abhorred by gods.
And, for the spells that nerved me to do this dreadful act,
I offer, in full warrant, Apollo Loxias,
Who from his Pythian oracle revealed to me
That if I did this deed I should be clear of blame;
If I neglected it – I will not tell the penance;
Such torments lie far beyond the bowshot of man's mind. (141-142)

In contrast, Clytemnestra does not undertake any such self-examination at all.

She acts out of instinct, simply obeying the gods' laws of revenge, her "deep savage passions . . . dictat[ing] action" (Kuhns 34):

And then I struck him, twice. Twice he cried out and groaned;
And then fell limp. And as he lay I gave him a third
And final blow, my thanks for prayers fulfilled, to Zeus,
Lord of the lower region, Saviour – of dead men!
So falling he belched forth his life; with cough and retch
There spouted from him bloody foam in a fierce jet,
And spreading, spattered me with drops of crimson rain;

40
While I exulted as the sown cornfield exults
Drenched with the dew of heaven when buds burst forth in Spring.
So stands the case, Elders of Argos. You may be
As you choose, glad or sorry; I am jubilant. (90-91)

Conscience Theory and the Oresteian Murders

Aeschylus — obviously — does not treat the moral dilemmas facing Clytemnestra and Orestes as instances of Kantian deontology or Freudian psychoanalysis, though the suffering of Orestes certainly does evoke the image of Kant's fearsome inner judge or the Freudian torments of conscience as the superego's warning bell. Nor does anything in the Oresteia suggest that an instinct for sympathy, in keeping with Hume and Smith, might found the basis for moral decision-making. Rather, Aeschylus focuses on the use of reason, in juxtaposition to adherence to tradition, in moral decision-making. In this sense, Aeschylus in many ways anticipates the approaches to conscience that would be taken by Bonaventure and especially Butler, afresh, many centuries later. As Kuhns explains, in the Oresteia "rational morality enjoins the individual to refrain from action until the right of action has been established". He continues: "In a rational morality the right must be determined by deliberation and the springs of conduct molded through persuasion" (56) rather than by unquestioning response to authority. Clytemnestra, of course, does respond unquestioningly to divine command, though one suspects her murder of Agamemnon is driven by a desire to rule Argos with Aegisthus and jealousy of Cassandra, as much as by a necessity to obey the gods. Leaving that suspicion aside, Clytemnestra's conscience reflects the narrowest type of religious conscience. Transposed into Scholastic terms, a supreme moral authority — the chthonic gods — promulgates a rule — the rule requiring revenge killing — which forms the content of potential conscience. Exercising applied conscience, Clytemnestra takes the only moral
action possible in the circumstances – killing Agamemnon. There is little or no real deliberation, merely compliance with external religious authority.

As for Orestes, conceptions of conscience and the related analysis of his moral decision-making are more complex. He does not kill like a moral robot, in unthinking obedience to the gods. In terms of Scholastic theory, Orestes falls short in the functioning of applied conscience. Bonaventure held that, when applied conscience is placed on alert, one should refrain from acting and contemplate the moral situation, since this is a warning sign that one may be about to violate potential conscience. Orestes does stop and think. Crucially, Bonaventure's theory then requires that this deliberation be aimed at bringing applied conscience into conformity with the moral authority of potential conscience. In short, Bonaventure's approach would have Orestes resolve his moral dilemma by somehow forcing himself to accept the morality of revenge killing. For Butler, in contrast, conscience is reflective moral judgment in which the deliberative process is aimed at achieving an understanding, through reason, of the moral action that fits the circumstances, not manipulating the reasoning process so as to conform with external moral authority. Apparent conflict with external moral authority is only a factor to be taken into account; the course of action which ultimately must be taken may well diverge from that apparently prescribed by authority. Thus, Orestes struggles with the dictates of the gods. While he ultimately does what they command, he does not do it for the reason that they command it. Rather, after considering divine law as only one factor in his deliberations, and also seeking Pylades' opinion, he concludes that his own conscience requires the killing of Clytemnestra. Thus it is Orestes' rational conscience, more than divine command or the traditional view of his friend, that is the supreme moral authority for him. In this sense, two millennia before Butler wrote his Fifteen Sermons, Aeschylus was, in a remarkably similar fashion, thinking his way through the role of reason in moral decision-making. Notably, too,
Aeschylus has Orestes addressing the second order moral duty of Kantian theory, to use experience to refine personal moral beliefs and so refine the operations of conscience.

At the same time, Aeschylus recognizes the limitations of reason in moral decision-making. Orestes is at times the antithesis of the reasonable man, having "to bring himself to [a] pitch of anger" before he can bring himself to put Clytemnestra to the sword (Kuhns 34). In keeping with the relationship between reason and passion implicit in the concept of sophrosyne, Kuhns draws the following theme out of the Oresteia:

The moral development of the civilized individual is from a primitive instinctual mode of behavior dominated by passion to a restrained conduct ruled by reason. Yet this is achieved . . . only through controlling and changing the function of passion. . . . [But] if the claims of passion are not recognized, actions done from seemingly rational motives can become perverted and reason can be used to the most perverted ends. (54)

This theme – the limits of reason in moral decision-making – is explored further by Sophocles in the Antigone, to which I turn later in this chapter.

**Aeschylus and Otherness**

Aeschylus' implicit theme in the Oresteia is that Greece's emergence from its superstitious past is not mirrored by a like evolution in foreign lands, which remain an uncivilized realm of barbarism – of Otherness. In Kuhns' words:

[T]he central figure of Orestes makes the conjunction of present with past possible, for in that one character the fullness of developing civilization is compacted. The growth of moral awareness in the action of Orestes, furthered by the gods, is in fact the consciousness of morality in the flowering of civilization as the Greeks viewed it. (8)

This flowering of Greek civilization stands in contrast to the perceived stasis, moral stagnation, and decidedly uncivilized nature of non-Greek cities like still smouldering Troy. The personal resolution accomplished by Orestes is thus a symbol for both the growth of moral awareness within Greece and for Greece's self-perceived moral superiority over the rest of the world. Greece is the better for sophrosyne, for
moderation and control of passions like the continual bloodletting of the House of Atreus which, a Greek audience must surely have realized, threatened the stability of the city. For the good of the city, then, the royal family must look beyond the murderous internecine feuds that traditional moral commandments seem to require. Thus, one implication of *sophrosyne* is the expansion of moral community from family – here, the House of Atreus – to city, an implication which Sophocles continues as a major theme of the *Antigone*. Non-Greeks, however, remain firmly Other.

There is a certain incongruity in this devaluation of the non-Greek. Orestes, after all, called traditional vengeance morality into question in the first place for the very reason that he had been exposed to fresh ideas during his foreign upbringing. His moral growth could not have occurred without his long and formative contact with The Other. Ironically, then, an inference to be drawn is that ideas which Orestes encounters in the foreign court of Strophius lead in time to a new moral awareness in Greece, a moral awareness that the Greeks consider superior to the foreign notions from which they sprang, at least in part.

**The *Antigone*: Loyalty to City? To Brother? To Both?**

In many ways, the dynamics and resolutions of the moral dilemmas confronted by Clytemnestra and Orestes in the *Oresteia* mirror those faced by Antigone and Creon in the *Antigone*.

**Antigone's Unreflective Obedience to the Gods**

Antigone obeys the old traditions of loyalty to kin and the requirement to bury human remains, even though they are "unwritten, and thus not codified or clear" (Scodel
She does so without reflection, knowing she risks execution for disobeying Creon's order to let Polynices rot in the open. To obey Creon rather than the gods, she says, would make her "guilty of dishonoring laws which the gods have established in honor" (119) and it is those which Antigone considers supreme.

Twenty-first century audiences tend to see Antigone as a tragic and honourable heroine, ruthlessly oppressed by an unfeeling Creon. This is too simplistic. According to Ruth Scodel, "Polynices' crime, the attempt to sack his native city, is one of the worst imaginable for a Greek" (46). Thus Hellenic audiences, while perhaps having some personal sympathy for Antigone as a misguided young girl on a fatal course, would have had none for Polynices in his eternal fate, nor for Antigone in so far as her attempt to defeat that fate is concerned. Even Antigone, though prepared to die for her perceived duty to Polynices, never defends Polynices' actions against Thebes. She does not bury him because she thinks him innocent, only because divine law demands it. Her resolve to proceed at any cost is thus what one might expect of a headstrong teenager. It is not a complex, thoughtful, heroic moral act. Rather, her conscience is of the narrow religious kind described by Hill: "Because conscience is the voice of God, it ought to be obeyed" (40).

**Creon, New Hellenic Rationalist**

For Creon, on the other hand, moral decision-making is a more complex and tormenting process, and becomes ever more complex and tormenting as events unfold. As a starting point, Creon rejects the old value of loyalty to family which, for Antigone, is supreme. For him, it is the city that matters since, as Scodel puts it, "the city [is] a

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15 The issue of unwritten divine law was itself a subject of contention in Greece after about 450 BCE (Scodel 47), an interesting and related topic but one which is beyond the scope of this paper. But see the discussion, above, at pages 8 and 10-12, of some of the issues and problems arising in the human interpretation and application of laws said to be handed down by God (or gods).
human creation... whose survival is the basis of civilized life" (48). That survival, she continues, "depends on obedience to its laws" recognizing that "the families who constitute the city can yet conflict with it" (48). For Creon, this conflict is resolved by requiring loyalty to the city over loyalty to the family, which in turn requires adherence to human law in preference to the divine law honoured by Antigone. Like Orestes, Creon must explore the limits of this new rational – human, all too human – approach to moral decision-making.

**Does Antigone Exhibit Some Aspects of Reason?**

Antigone's traditional religious conscience drives her to bury Polynices at the risk of her own life. I have suggested that the operations of her conscience do not involve reflection of the kind contemplated, for example, by Butler. Her moral map is a narrow religious one at best. Yet, I wonder if Sophocles does not use Antigone to tantalize us with the ambiguities of reason. Antigone does in fact articulate reasons, if debatable ones, for her actions. She says to her sister Ismene: "I shall rest, a loved one with whom I have loved, sinless in my crime; for I owe a longer allegiance to the dead than to the living, for in that world I shall abide forever" (119). In an elegant if counterintuitive bit of reasoning, Antigone tells Creon, as he is about to shut her up in the tomb:

> Never, had I been a mother of children or if a husband had been moldering in death, would I have taken this task upon me in the city's despite. What law, you ask, is my warrant for that word? The husband lost, another might have been found, and child from another to replace the first-born; but father and mother hidden with Hades, no brother's life could ever bloom for me again. (137)

One might question the reasonableness of "replaceable" husbands and children being of less value than an "irreplaceable" brother, although the ostensibly rational Creon similarly tells Ismene that Haemon, losing Antigone, will find "other fields... to plow" (130). This provides an interesting symmetry of dubious reasoning. One might
also wonder about Antigone's unquestioning faith in the existence of an eternal world below which forms part of the foundation for her reasoning. Yet theories of conscience similarly require, variously, a certain faith in the existence of God, duty, evolution, the superego and, in fact, something we call conscience, none of these being any easier to hold in one's hand – or mind – than a "world below". In this sense Antigone exercises, if not reflective moral judgment in the Butlerian sense, at least a species of reasoning, perhaps a sort of personal utilitarian calculus. The point is this: Sophocles has Antigone saying, in effect, that in certain circumstances her conscience would not drive her to bury her kin, notwithstanding the divine law requiring it. This is closer to Butler than to Aquinas and Bonaventure, surely, though not purely Butlerian. It suggests that Antigone also undertakes Kant's second order duty to refine conscience. Finally, it is effective in pointing out, as I would suggest Sophocles meant to point out, that exactly what reason and reasoning involve can be elusive.

**Creon and the Pitfalls of "Too Much" Reason**

What then of Creon's claims about the value of rational technical control of the city? The rationality implicit in his treatment of Polynices and Antigone is obvious, at least in the beginning. Leaving Polynices to rot reinforces the law that elevates the interests of the city above competing interests. Condemning Antigone to death for choosing family over city drives the point home for anyone who might be likeminded. As Sophocles makes clear, such a purely rational approach to moral decision-making is not as straightforward as it may appear at first blush and, through Creon's character, he explores this issue from several perspectives.


**Reason, Fortune and Fate**

Importantly, Creon's pure rationalism overlooks the unpredictability of human existence and the vagaries of fate and accident. When we apply reason in the making of moral decisions, especially in complex circumstances, we may be unaware of all the salient factors, past, present and future. Early in the tragedy, the guard who reports interference with Polynices' body says of the culprit: "Well, may he be found! That would be best. But whether he is caught or not – fortune must settle that – you will surely not see me here again" [emphasis added] (124). Creon refuses to accept this: "[I]f you do not show me the doers of these things you shall avow that dastardly gains work sorrows" (124). As if to make the point, Sophocles has the guard, "who would surely not be seen again", return to be seen by Creon not only "again" but almost immediately, this time with Antigone in custody. For now, fate gives Creon what he wants, quickly and against the confident expectations of the guard, but he is unprepared for the other side of the coin, the possibility of bad fortune, soon to arrive on his doorstep.

**Creon's Inconsistency on Loyalty to City and Family**

Next, Creon contradicts himself on the central issue of loyalty to family, another form of faulty reasoning. While he condemns Antigone to death for her loyalty to Polynices, he demands personal loyalty from his son Haemon, who wants Antigone spared:

"Yes, this, my son, should be your heart's fixed law – in all things to obey your father's will. 'Tis for this that men pray to see dutiful children grow up around them in their homes, to requite their father's foe with evil, and to honor his friend as he himself does. But the man who begets unprofitable children – what shall we say he has sown but troubles for himself and much triumph for his foes?" (132)
Clearly this is a demand for Haemon's loyalty to Creon as father, not as king, loyalty to family over city, the converse of what Creon urges upon Antigone. Loyalty requires obedience, and Creon goes on to demand exactly that from Haemon:

But disobedience is the worst of evils. This it is that ruins cities; this makes homes desolate; by this the ranks of allies are broken into headlong rout. But of the lives whose course is fair the greater part owes safety to obedience. Therefore we must support the cause of order. (132)

Creon now urges Haemon to be loyal to both city and family, apparently oblivious to the possibility that these loyalties could come into conflict. If they do, is Haemon to choose his father over the city? Is obedience to one's father truly "heart's fixed law"? If so, how does Creon reconcile that with his insistence that Antigone choose Thebes over Polynices? How is it reasonable for Creon to so flatly reject Antigone's faithfulness to the divine law requiring family loyalty which, no matter how vague its origins, forms a deeply rooted Theban custom? His own incoherence in demanding that Haemon be loyal to him as son to father reflects how profoundly Creon himself remains imbued with this traditional value. Reasoning is a complex process and conscience can become entangled in these conflicting moral claims. Creon's extreme rationalism does not provide an effective escape hatch and his autocratic, even tyrannical, approach, precludes the possibility of finding a way to reconcile ancient divine law with the new law of the city.

Creon, Emotional Rationalist

Creon, would-be rationalist, is not always in full control of his emotions, though no doubt he would wish to be so. At the very beginning of the play, his order to leave Polynices alone is hardly a dispassionate measure aimed simply at asserting control over the city: "[l]t has been proclaimed to our people that none shall grace him with sepulture [burial in a grave] or lament, but leave him unburied, a corpse for birds and
dogs to eat, a ghastly sight of shame" (121). This is passion, not reason. As events unwind, Creon's rationality unravels further. He loses his temper with the guard who reports that someone has sprinkled earth on Polynices' body. He calls the guard a "born babbler" (124), becomes angry with Haemon for arguing with him about Antigone's fate (133-34), and gratuitously torments Antigone in her moments of anguish (141). None of this is in keeping with Creon's assertions about the disvalue of emotion and the value of rational control. Just as he seems in denial about his own emotionality, he overlooks the power of the love which drives Antigone to sacrifice herself for Polynices, Haemon to kill himself for Antigone, and Eurydice to commit suicide after her loss of Haemon. In this vein, the chorus relates the power of Haemon's love for Antigone:

Love, unconquered in the fight, Love, who makest havoc of wealth, who keepest thy vigil on the soft cheek of a maiden; thou roamest over the sea, and among the homes of dwellers in the wilds; no immortal can escape thee, nor any among men whose life is for a day; and he to whom thou hast come is made.

The just themselves have their minds warped by thee to wrong, for their ruin . . . (135)

Thus, Creon is unreasonable in denying or overlooking the power of emotion, both his own and that of others.

The Dysfunction of Creon's Binary Approach to Reason

Even when Creon applies reason, he does so in a binary, dysfunctional manner. Charles Segal suggests that Creon "lacks a deep awareness of the complexities within the human realm. He tends to see the world in harshly opposed categories, right and wrong, reason and folly, youth and age, male and female" (69). Thus, Polynices is an enemy and must be denied all rites. Yet rites for the dead are really performed for the living, a nuance overlooked by Creon and an aspect of emotion we ignore at our peril. Even that ardent advocate of sympathy, Adam Smith, in *The Theory of Moral
Sentiments, demonstrates a surprising failure of sympathy for the dead and the mourners they leave behind, almost ridiculing our tendency for sentimentality towards the dearly departed:

We sympathize even with the dead, and overlooking what is of real importance in their situation, that awful futurity which awaits them, we are chiefly affected by those circumstances which strike our senses, but can have no influence upon their happiness. It is miserable, we think, to be deprived of the sun; to be shut out from life and conversation; to be laid in the cold grave, a prey to corruption and the reptiles of the earth; to be no more thought of in this world, but to be obliterated, in a little time, from the affections, and almost from the memory, of their dearest friends and relations. Surely, we imagine, we can never feel too much for those who have suffered so dreadful a calamity. The tribute of our fellow-feeling seems doubly due to them now, when they are in danger of being forgot by everybody; and, by the vain honours which we pay to their memory, we endeavour, for our own misery, artificially to keep alive our melancholy remembrance of their misfortune. That our sympathy can afford them no consolation seems to be an addition to their calamity; and to think that all we can do is unavailing, and that, what alleviates all other distress, the regret, the love, the lamentations of their friends, can yield no comfort to them, serves only to exasperate our sense of their misery. The happiness of the dead, however, most assuredly, is affected by none of these circumstances; nor is it the thought of any of these things which can ever disturb their profound repose. (12-13)

Like Smith, Creon evinces a certain disdain for the human emotions surrounding death, emotions we ignore or deny at immense peril. In his either-or application of reason he overlooks an effective way of dealing with the earthly consequences of Polynices' death. There are more than two options for dealing with Polynices' body, that is, leaving it to rot or burying it with the traditional rites. Instead, he could allow Antigone to move Polynices beyond the city's borders and bury him there, an acceptable practice for dealing with traitors' bodies (Scodel 46). Overlooking this possibility, Creon violates his own model for rational technical control of the city and misses a way in which Antigone might remain loyal to both family and city. Antigone, too, ignores any possibility of a middle ground right from the outset, "reject[ing] life with its compromises for the absolutes of death" (Segal 64).
The Irrationality of Being Closed to Other Views

Finally, Creon is unwilling to listen to others in making his moral judgments. As he asks Haemon: "Am I to rule this city by other judgment than my own?" (134) While Butler held that we are ultimately responsible for our own moral decisions and Kant held that "each of us must carefully make, and rigorously follow, our own best moral judgment" (Hill 17), neither meant to suggest that the process is an asocial enterprise, indeed the opposite. As Haemon futilely tries to convince Creon:

No, though a man be wise, it is no shame for him to learn many things and to bend in season. Do you see, beside the wintry torrent's course, how the trees that yield to it save every twig while the stiffnecked perish root and branch? Even so he who keeps the sheet of his sail taut and never slackens it upsets his boat and finishes his voyage with keel uppermost.

Nay, forgo your wrath, permit yourself to change. If I, a younger man, may offer my thought, it would be far best, I suppose, that men should be all-wise by nature; but otherwise (and often the scale does not so incline) it is good to learn from those who speak aright. (133)

Thus, as Butler would reiterate much later, while moral agents are responsible for their choices, the views of others are factors they ought to consider in the operation of conscience as reflective moral judgment. In this, Creon fails until it is too late to listen. As a tyrant, he sees the opinions of others as "opposition to him which must be the work of either those seeking to depose him or as victims of madness" (Scodel 52); this failure to listen to different views renders his orders potentially arbitrary decrees rather than "fair laws to obey" (Sinclair, Democracy 2).16

16 Sophocles' audience would have been acutely aware of the dangers of such tyranny, since the liberating assassination of the tyrant Hipparkhos in 514 had occurred only two or three generations earlier (Sinclair 2-3). Greeks would thus have struggled with the conflict between Antigone's dangerous choice of family over city, on the one hand, and Creon's excessively autocratic approach to pursuing the desirable goal of protecting Thebes, on the other.
Conscience Theory and the Antigone: The Limitations of Reason

In sum, then, Sophocles reminds us that we must think our way through moral issues and not simply jump in response to a set of rules, whether those rules are divine or human. Reason is crucial; as Haemon tells us, "the gods implant reason in men, the highest of things that we call our own" (132). But, while he rejects barbarian passion in favour of a rational approach to moral decision-making, Sophocles is no pure Butlerian. He acknowledges the danger that the emotions, like Antigone's love for her brother and Haemon's love for Antigone, can pose to the process of moral decision-making. Creon's own use of reason is hindered by his denial of, perhaps contempt for, the emotions – both of others and of himself. He does eventually respond to the warnings of his Kantian inner judge, the torments of his Freudian conscience, but too late, and moral wisdom comes to him not through reason alone but by his suffering as well (Scodel 51). As Scodel puts it, he "is forced to face the power of the irrational, and he admits his guilt in the deaths of Haemon and Eurydice" (53).

Not only does Creon try futilely to ignore human emotion, he applies reason itself dysfunctionally. He does not take into account that some things are unknown or unknowable, so that fate can deliver an unexpected blow. He is logically inconsistent on whether Haemon should ultimately be loyal to family or city. He applies reason in a zero-sum manner that overlooks its complexity, subtlety, and ambiguity. He is unreasonable in ignoring the opinions of others. It is only at the end, with the death of his son and wife, that he struggles with and responds to the demands of a more complex conscience. The blind prophet, Teiresias, says to him: "All men are liable to err; but when an error has been made, that man is no longer witless or unblest who heals the ill into which he has fallen and does not remain stubborn" (140). Creon takes heed: "I too know it well and am troubled in soul. It is dire to yield, but by resistance to smite my pride with ruin – this too is a dire choice... Ah me, it is hard, but I resign my cherished
resolve..." (142). In this, he is an example of Freud's contention that hardship sharpens the conscience.

Finally in this vein, and quite apart from all the defects in Creon's application of reason, Sophocles points out that there is a certain ambiguity in reason itself, exemplified by Antigone's debatable reasons for choosing death over life.

In the end, the application of reason must be flexible and take into account the vagaries of fate and the demands of passion, calling to mind the balanced nature of *sophrosyne*, as Grayling describes it in its neo-Platonic formulation (10). Creon and Antigone fail to do so, Creon by overlooking the emotional aspect of human behaviour and Antigone by putting too much emphasis on it. In this, Sophocles' *Antigone* points out the weaknesses in both the traditional religious view of conscience as unquestioning response to divine command and in the purely rational process described by Butler. At the same time, Creon's experiences do serve as an example of the value of the second order duties that would be articulated by Kant, to refine conscience by amending personal moral beliefs in response to lessons learned from life. Though the outcome is ultimately tragic, Creon the new rational man thus develops – amid the ruins of tragedy – a dynamic conscience.

**Sophocles and Otherness**

In the *Antigone*, Sophocles also raises issues of Otherness and the differential treatment which moral agents accord to those they identify as Other. Creon, as I mentioned earlier, is a binary thinker, dividing the world into "us" and "them" or, recalling Segal, "[h]arshly opposed categories, right and wrong, reason and folly, youth and age, male and female" (69). In particular, Creon's moral map draws a bright line between the obedient and the disobedient (Scodel 50). As he says to Haemon, "disobedience is the worst of evils" (132). Thus, it is only right in Creon's mind, though he will eventually see...
things differently, that Polynices be left to rot, Antigone be walled up in her cave, and even that Haemon die along with her. They all, by their actions, have moved themselves from being citizens of Thebes, deserving of conscientious treatment, to a zone of Otherness where such considerations are irrelevant, where conscience in any of its conceptions does not apply. Even the geographic imagery of the Antigone portrays the Otherness of the world outside rational, controlled Thebes: Polynices' corpse on an empty, lonely plain being dismembered by dogs and birds (121), a "storm of dust" like a "plague from the gods" which one of the guards reports to Creon (126), and the dark, lonely distant cave in which Antigone is to die, "the rock-closed prison of my strange tomb" (136).

Antigone herself senses the Otherness created by her disobedience. In fact, she embraces it. She does not seek or particularly care about conscientious treatment at the hands of Creon, by his moral rules, because to her it is the law of the gods, not Creon's order, that matters:

[!]It was not Zeus that had published that edict; not such are the laws set among men by the Justice who dwells with the gods below. Nor did I deem that your decrees were of such force that a mortal could override the unwritten and unfailing statutes of heaven. (127)

In essence, Antigone perceives herself as Other, but in the context of moral agent rather than moral object, an Other bound by higher godly moral requirements, not human rules.

Antigone's Otherness arises from another source – her femaleness – which for Creon is "one of his characteristic dichotomies of man-woman, superior-inferior" (Segal 70). Creon proclaims: "I am no man, she is the man, if this victory shall rest with her" (128). He disparages Haemon as a "woman's slave" (134). For him, women are irrational and dangerous, to be treated by different considerations of conscience and morality: "Hers is the woman's emotional resistance to the ordered male reason of the
state. She reinforces her action by the least rationally comprehensible of human acts, the sacrifice of her life” (Segal 66). Aeschylus ends by addressing Greek sexism in the Oresteia, in:

... a long argument [at the end of the Eumenides] between Apollo and the Furies on the respective rights and status of a man and a woman in marriage and parenthood; and a brief but emphatic argument on the rival claims of freedom of a husband and a wife ... at the climactic moment of The Choephoroi. (Vellacott, Introduction to The Oresteian Trilogy 20-21)

According to Sophocles, as one might expect, a wife's claims to freedom are inferior. But it is in the Medea that the issue of woman as Other is given a fuller airing and it is that to which I now turn.

"Daemonic Woman" or "Patriarchal Terrorism"? The Medea

How is Medea able to kill her own sons, apparently unrestrained by conscience in any of its conceptions? What of Jason? How is it that a civilized Greek man of the new rational elite can so easily discard his wife, the mother of his children? What role do Medea's foreign origins play in the murderous events of the Medea?

Medea and Jason: Extremes of Passion and Reason

Rejected and about to be exiled, Medea decides to kill her children as a way of wreaking revenge on Jason. Euripides makes it clear that Medea considers this morally wrong and that her conscience will torment her for it:

I will kill my sons.
No one shall take my children from me. When I have made Jason's whole house a shambles, I will leave Corinth
A murderess, flying from my children's blood.
Yes, I can endure guilt, however horrible. (41)

Knowing that she will "endure guilt", that she will be a "murderess", Medea is determined nonetheless to wreak vengeance on Jason by killing their sons, agonized but not halted by conscience:
I understand
The horror of what I am going to do; but anger,
The spring of all life's horror, masters my resolve. (50)

Unlike Clytemnestra and Antigone, though, her action is not mindless compliance with laws handed down by the gods. Rather, it is a passionate act of revenge through which Euripides warns us about the dangerous emotionality and irrationality of women, especially exotics like Medea, "a woman scorned, depicted at that stage of emotion in which her first torment of misery has passed into vindictive hatred" (Page xviii). In the throws of such extreme passion, Euripides warns us, reason cannot function, let alone prevail. Thus, mourns Medea's nurse:

But now her world has turned to enmity, and wounds her Where her affection's deepest.

... Poor Medea! Scorned and shamed,
She raves, invoking every vow and solemn pledge
That Jason made her, and calls gods as witnesses
What thanks she has received for her fidelity.
She will not eat; she lies collapsed in agony,
Dissolving the long hours in tears. Since she first heard
Of Jason's wickedness, she has not raised her eyes,
Or moved her cheek from the hard ground; and when her friends
Reason with her, she might be a rock or wave of the sea,
For all she hears - unless, maybe, she turns away
Her lovely head, speaks to herself alone, and wails
Aloud for her dear father, her own land and home,
Which she betrayed and left to come here with this man
Who now spurns and insults her. Poor Medea! (17-18)

Warning the children to run and hide, the nurse worries about what is to come:

The dark cloud of her lamentations
Is just beginning. Soon, I know,
It will burst aflame as her anger rises.
Deep in passion and unrelenting,
What will she do now, stung with insult? (20)

Jason fares no better than Medea's friends in trying to reason with her. He points out to Medea that, in return for helping him during his adventures in foreign lands, she has received far more: both personal fame and an escape from barbarism to rational, orderly Greece where "you have known justice" – a debatable assertion. As for his
marriage to Glauce, Jason tells Medea that she, Medea, is better off for it. It assures that Jason will be wealthy, in turn guaranteeing that they will all "live well, and not be poor". Further, the sons of Glauce and Jason will be brothers to the sons of Medea and Jason, which will "build up a closely-knit and prosperous family" (32-34). Jason goes on to make further offers, even after all of Medea's arguing with him:

- If there's anything else
  I can provide to meet the children's needs or yours.
  Tell me; I'll gladly give whatever you want, or send
  Letters of introduction, if you like, to friends
  Who will help you. – Listen: to refuse such help is mad.
  You've everything to gain if you give up this rage. (35)

As Denys Page explains, "Jason . . . cannot understand why Medea is being so troublesome". He continues:

- It is astonishing [to Jason] that [Medea] is not likely to be reasonable. He has made it plain time after time: he does not really love this other woman; he is thinking as much of Medea as of himself; if she would only consider it impersonally for a moment she would see that she is really being betrayed for her own advantage. Most of her misfortunes are the outcome of her own fault and folly: she has brought exile upon herself by her foolish threats against his bride, and she has contemptuously refused his offer of money and protection. What else could Jason possibly have done? (xvi)

Of course this is all preposterous. Euripides does not expect his audience to accept Jason's treatment of Medea as right. Jason's befuddlement at Medea's rejection of his reasonableness, indeed his generosity, aptly demonstrates the shortcomings of purely rational moral decision-making processes, like Butlerian conscience, which pay inadequate attention to human emotion. Jason, says Page, "is not altogether hypocritical; he is stupid enough to believe his defence a good one; he really cannot understand why Medea is being troublesome" (xv-xvi). He has not achieved sophrosyne, that balanced form of applied reason that accommodates passion.

What then of Medea? Is she entirely emotional, passionate, raging, irrational? Or does she display at least some signs of reason?
She is indeed emotional and passionate. In her passion she kills her brother and Pelias, as well as Glauce and Creon, all without any apparent moral qualms. In fact, she exults in the deaths of Glauce and Creon (52), much as Clytemnestra exults in Agamemnon's death. Her passion also, finally, encompasses the kind of torment posited by the conscience of Kantian and Freudian theory — the inner judge, the warning bell, the tormentor — when, contemplating the imminent murder of her sons, Medea laments:

Oh, my heart, don't, don't do it! Oh, miserable heart, Let them be! Spare your children! . . .

... My pain is more than I can bear. (49-50)

**Medea's Use of Reason in Moral Decision-Making**

Even if Medea's conscience does not ultimately stop her from killing her sons, it does prevent her from committing these acts without reflection, in contrast to the unthinking responses of Clytemnestra and Antigone to unwritten divine laws. Contrary to Jason's view of her as bewilderingly irrational, Medea does carefully think her way through the killings recounted in the *Medea*, even those which do not explicitly prick her conscience. This is one form of reason, in process if not result, a weighing and balancing of how she is to accomplish her goals. Thus she lulls and disarms Jason by "giv[ing] him soft talk; tell[ing] him he has acted well" (41). She elaborately plots the bizarre murder of Glauce, using her sons to deliver the lethal gift (41), after first considering the relative merits and demerits of stabbing or burning Glauce to death instead (28). She convinces Aegeus to grant her sanctuary in Athens by promising to make him fertile (37-40) and Aegeus in turn compliments her on her "remarkable forethought" (40). Only then does she finally decide to actually carry out the murders of
her sons (40-41). All of this bears the hallmarks of procedural reasoning, the ability to think abstractly in planning future events.

Medea also has substantive reasons for her actions, reasons that transcend the malevolent narcissism of which she is so often accused. She believes that death, as opposed to banishment (27) or living as fatherless foreigners in Greece (41), is a preferable fate for the children (55). Moreover, since she gave the children life, it is right that she be the one to take it:

For they must die
In any case; and since they must, then I who gave
Them birth will kill them. . . . (55)

This may seem an odd – irrational? – idea to the twenty-first century liberal mind. Yet, some contemporary views of the superordinate rights of women with respect to abortion and child custody share one core value with Medea’s values, that mothers somehow have "higher rights" in children than their fathers do.

Of course, Medea's various reasons for what she does are not all reasonable. Like Clytemnestra, Medea is motivated by revenge (22, 49) and, as I pointed out earlier, anger and hatred. She intends to make Jason suffer by taking his sons although, unlike Clytemnestra and – oddly – like Orestes, she struggles to find some rational basis for this act of vengeance. In this sense, she exhibits the torment-driven inner voice of Kantian and Freudian conscience, not the pure rationalism of Butler. Medea goes so far as to displace the responsibility for the murders onto Jason: "O sons, your father’s treachery cost you your lives" (59). She claims that the death of the children is not one possibility of many, but inevitable (55). In this, she retreats from reason and the belief in human ability – her ability – to affect events, reflecting the barbarian tendency to accept fate and the whims of unseen and unfathomable gods.

There is another interesting aspect to Medea’s reasonableness. She is able to convince Creon to delay her banishment for a day, Glauce to accept her deadly gifts,
Jason to believe that she has become convinced he is right, and Aegeus to grant her asylum in Athens. In all of these manoeuvres, Medea successfully uses feigned reasonableness as a cloak for the unswerving trajectory of her homicidal passions. In this, Sophocles uses the complex personality of Medea to demonstrate another way in which reason can operate in a dangerously defective manner.

**Jason: Too Reasonable by Half**

If Medea struggles unsuccessfully to apply reason to her moral decision-making, Jason is only too successful in the enterprise. His motivation is self-interest, a self-interest which renders Medea and his half-barbarian sons disposable. Medea aptly expresses the weakness of Jason's approach to moral decision-making, the way in which reason can camouflage self-interest:

To me, a wicked man who is also eloquent
Seems the most guilty of them all. He'll cut your throat
As bold as brass, because he knows he can dress up murder
In handsome words. He's not so clever after all.
You dare outface me now with glib high-mindedness! (34)

Thus, reason can be used to make the unreasonable appear reasonable. Implicit in this condemnation of Jason is Medea's belief that he is lying to her. In fact, though, Jason is lying to himself. In this, he reveals another weakness of reason, its potential for defeat by self-delusion. He seeks to better his position by marrying a young Greek wife and having full-blooded Greek children. His pursuit of such self-interest requires the discarding of Medea and her sons. It is his attempt to justify this abandonment, using reason, that blinds Jason to the importance of considering the emotional aspect of human existence, and the consequences are horrifying. Jason is reasonable in the narrow sense of acting like a human calculator with credit and debit columns that must somehow balance at the end of the day, but entirely unreasonable in disregarding the

17 Oddly, then, Medea, quintessential Other, finds sanctuary at the very centre of not-Other – Athens.
feelings of Medea and his sons. Medea acknowledges such emotion, although her reasoning process is as faulty as Jason's. But it is far from clear that Jason's reasons for his actions are any better than Medea's reasons for hers. In this, Euripides nicely plays the two characters off against each other to demonstrate some of the limits of reason in moral decision-making.

Reason and Lying: Kant's Duty to Tell the Truth

Can it be rational to lie? Medea lies, not only to Jason, but also to Creon and Aegeus, as she carries out her plot. Counterintuitively, perhaps, the civilized Greeks considered truthfulness a barbarian attribute, not a Greek value. Thus Medea exhibits, according to Page, "childish surprise at falsehoods and broken promises". He continues: "Broken promises Medea finds it most difficult to forgive. Time after time she 'cries out upon [Jason's] vows and pledge of his right hand'. The contrast of truthful barbarian and lying Greek had long been a commonplace" (xix). This, of course, runs entirely contrary to the Kantian categorical imperative, which holds truth-telling to be an absolute, to be followed regardless of consequences. Medea shows no pangs of Kantian conscience as she lies her way through multiple murders, even though she is the product of a barbarian – presumably truth-valuing – society. Perhaps her barbarian honesty has been tainted by the apparently more covert values of Greek civilization. Jason, for his part, lies not to Medea but to himself, Kantian conscience asleep at the switch as he careens towards disaster.

Euripides, Conscience Theory, and Sophrosyne

Like Aeschylus and Sophocles, then, Euripides uses tragedy to explore the emergence of reasoned moral decision-making in classical Greece. And, like them, he cautions not only against the purported dangers of barbarian and female irrationality but
also against an excessive form of reason that overlooks or denies the importance of the passions. In tracing the Hellenic shift in emphasis from divinity to humanity in moral decision-making, Euripides thus anticipates aspects of the journey that the Scholastics and then Butler and Kant would undertake so many centuries later, though there are of course many differences.

In the final analysis, Euripides, like Aeschylus and Sophocles, is engaged in an exploration of the nature of *sophrosyne*. As Philip Vellacott expresses the point:

> The lesson of [the *Medea*] is that civilized men ignore at their peril the world of instinct, emotion, and irrational experience; that carefully worked-out notions of right and wrong are dangerous unless they are flexible and allow for constant adjustment. (Introduction to the *Medea* 9)

Thus, if reason is to become the touchstone for moral decision-making, it nonetheless must take account of the power and irrationality of human instinct and passion. This suggests a vibrant approach to moral decision-making that is in line with the dynamic approach to conscience presaged by the Scholastics and subsequently developed by Butler and later thinkers.

**Medea as Other: Sorceress, Woman, Barbarian**

Clearly, one reason Medea does not activate Jason’s conscience is that she is Other, and doubly Other at that, both non-Greek and a woman. She simply does not merit the same conscientious treatment that a Greek man or even a Greek woman would merit. Her foreignness may have been particularly compelling for Hellenic audiences – Euripides completed the *Medea* in 431 BCE, the year in which the Peloponnesian War began, throwing Athens into patriotic fervour (Page xi).

Furthermore, Medea is not only a foreigner, she is a particularly exotic foreigner. As a sorceress, she helps Jason accomplish the quest for the Golden Fleece using her magic powers, convinces Aegeus that she “know[s] certain drugs whose power will put an end
to your sterility” (39), makes a poisoned dress and coronet that kill Glauce and Creon in a most otherworldly manner and, at the end of the play, "appears above the roof, sitting in a chariot drawn by dragons" (58).

Euripides, speaking through the chorus, points out the practical problem of this barbarian and female Otherness at the outset: "This passion of hers is an irresistible flood" (23) and the consequence of this irresistible flood is Medea's adherence to old warrior virtues which conflict with the new civic values:

Let no one think of me
As humble or weak or passive; let them understand
I am of a different kind: dangerous to my enemies,
Loyal to my friends. To such a life glory belongs. (42)

Not only is Medea a foreigner, she may even be not quite human. Euripides puts these words in the mouth of the nurse:

I fear I shall not persuade her
... She glares at us like a mad bull
Or a lioness guarding her cubs. (23)

Jason also characterizes Medea, after she kills the children, as an animal or worse:

I married you, chose hatred and murder for my wife –
No woman, but a tiger; a Tuscan Scylla – but more savage. (58)

Thus, for a Hellenic audience, not only is Medea governed by her wild passions, she may be completely closed to reason because of her near animality, her monster-like nature, a theme that will repeat itself in some of the justifications offered by sixteenth century Spanish colonists for their murderous treatment of Caribbean Indians. Not only is she unwelcome in Greece now, she has become a source of "pollution" according to both Jason (58) and the chorus (43), again echoing an accusation that will be levelled against the Arawaks to justify their horrific treatment at the hands of Spanish colonists. When Otherness becomes not only foreignness but animality and pollution, conscience
in any of its definitions is not triggered. Such Others are simply not entitled to moral
treatment. In fact, they may be seen as deserving exploitation and even punishment.

Perhaps even more than her barbarian roots, though, it is Medea's gender that
puts her beyond the pale of conscientious treatment. Medea herself says of women:

We were born women – useless for honest purposes,
But in all kinds of evil skilled practitioners. (29)

Thus it has been said that Euripides' "treatment of tragedy [is] 'pathological'" in
that he "[makes] a special study of the nature of women, and their 'daemonic'
possession by passionate love, against which the voice of reason is utterly powerless"
("Peculiarities of Euripidean Dramas" 169). Balanced against this, Gerald Lucas
characterizes the Medea as a work that exposes the horror of Greek "patriarchal
terrorism". A certain sexist thematic certainly does characterize the Medea. I have
already addressed some of its aspects: allegations of destabilizing passion, incapacity
for rational thought, dishonesty, Medea's weakness as "she lies collapsed in agony"
(18), and her deviousness. Creon goes beyond sexism to misogyny, telling Medea: "I
fear you" (25). He continues:

You're a clever woman, skilled in many evil arts
... I'll act first, then, in self-defence. I'd rather make you
My enemy now, than weaken, and later pay with tears. (26)

The most potent sign of this differential approach to Medea as woman is the
Greek view of the murders she commits. Jason abhors her in these terms:

You abomination! Of all women most detested
By every god, by me, by the whole human race!
You could endure – a mother! – to lift sword against
Your own little ones ...
... ... you became my wife, and bore
My children; now, out of mere sexual jealousy,
You murder them! In all Hellas there is not one woman
Who could have done it ... (58)
Page suggests that "the inhuman cruelty of the child-murderess was a typically foreign quality" to the Greeks (xx), apparently conflating her gender and foreign origins as sources of Otherness. Jason similarly accuses her of an act that, he says, no Greek woman could commit, apparently limiting the source of Medea's Otherness to her origins in Colchis and not her gender. Yet the horror of Medea's act for the Greek audience, I suggest, flows primarily from the fact that she is female, the children's mother rather than their father, and not particularly from the fact of her barbarian origins. One need only consider Agamemnon's "sacrifice" – not "murder" – of Iphigenia, by way of contrast. The moral texture of that killing is quite different from the child-kilings committed by Medea. There is a certain perceived justification for Agamemnon's act: to gain favour from the gods – the gods who are the source of morality in that time and place. In an interesting incongruity, the same gods then require Clytemnestra to kill Agamemnon in revenge – for the very act they have required as a condition of providing fair winds to Troy. Thus, Agamemnon's murder of Iphigenia, in the Greek mind, can be considered almost noble – he must know that his life will inevitably be forfeit for taking Iphigenia's. He makes a double sacrifice – the life of his beloved daughter and eventually his own life – for the greater glory of Greece. Not so, Medea's murder of her sons. She is a "polluted fiend, child-murderer" (58). Agamemnon kills simply because the gods require it.

Euripides' Sympathy for the Plight of Women

That, perhaps, illustrates the pathology of Euripides' approach to "daemonic" women. What, on the other hand, of his exposition of the "patriarchal terrorism" of classical Greece? Euripides does, in fact, acknowledge the unhappiness women can suffer as a result of their oppression. He has Medea say this:

Surely, of all creatures that have life and will, we women Are the most wretched. When, for an extravagant sum, We have bought a husband, we must then accept him as
Possessor of our body. This is to aggravate
Wrong with worse wrong. Then the great question: Will the man
We get be bad or good? For women, divorce is not possible.

... And if in this exacting toil
We are successful, and our husband does not struggle
Under the marriage yoke, our life is enviable.
Otherwise, death is better. If a man grows tired
Of the company at home, he can go out, and find
A cure for tediousness. We wives are forced to look
To one man only. And, they tell us, we at home
Live free from danger, they go out to battle: fools!
I'd rather stand three times in the front line than bear
One child. (24-25)

Yet Euripides does not advocate the equal treatment of women, an approach
which would require that they be accorded fully conscientious treatment and, in essence,
be reclassified as not-Other. Jason's conscience fails to be triggered by Medea's plight
for the simple reason that he is only following Greek conventions about the relative roles
of men and women, Greeks and barbarians – conventions that Euripides accepts. He
steadfastly warns against women's irrationality and the dangers that their passionate,
uncontrolled – and perhaps somewhat uncontrollable – behaviour can pose for the
stability of the city. If women suffer for it, that is unfortunate but inevitable in Euripides'
view. Women and barbarians are, and are destined to be, Other. Thus, they simply do
not attract the conscientious treatment that the Greek male citizen deserves.

Conclusion: Conscience and Otherness in Greek Tragedy

These three Greek classics thus anticipate what would become the concepts of
conscience and Otherness, as they investigate reason as a basis for moral decision-
making and develop the concept of sophrosyne. All three tragedies highlight problems
with instinctual behaviour and blind obedience to mysterious, unwritten laws of gods.
Clytemnestra, Antigone and Medea all represent in one way or another the problems
such unthinking response to passions and divinities poses to the new Greece. But the
use of reason in making moral decisions has limitations too, as Orestes, and especially Creon and Jason, discover. These same themes would be renewed in the conscience theories of the Scholastics, Butler and Kant, and to a lesser extent in that of Smith.

For the Greek tragedians, emotion cannot be completely eliminated from moral decision-making. Moral agents must take the passions of others – and indeed Others, like barbarians and women – into account or suffer the consequences. They must acknowledge and use their own emotionality. Purely rational technical control of the polis is unworkable. An element of fear, whether of godly or human laws, has its place in political affairs (Kuhns 49 and 58, note 47). Thus, non-rational behaviour must be not simply recognized and accommodated but exploited to obtain compliance. This principle would later find expression in the otherworldly punishments of Christianity, the fearful voice of the inner judge of Kantian conscience, and the tormenting conscience of Freudian superego. Finally, these Greek tragedians recognize and explore the often ambiguous and failure-prone nature of reason itself and, as in the Antigone, the unknown and perhaps unknowable potential of fate and happenstance to interfere with carefully reasoned-out plans.

Thus, while Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides might well find Butlerian conscience as reflective moral judgment attractive, they would in the final analysis reject its purely rational approach, a point made forcefully through the experiences of Orestes, Sophocles' Creon and especially the morally robotic, übert-rational Jason. For all three playwrights, sophrosyne requires the recognition and accommodation of passion. They would also find value in Kant's concept of the second order moral duty to refine conscience, as Orestes and Creon display in their travails.

This Hellenic liberation from unreflective obedience to divine law in favour of sophrosyne seems, from our vantage point, to be more abrupt than the parallel release from strong Church authority in early and middle Christianity, on to Butler's reflective
moral judgment and Kantian deontology and, even later, utilitarianism, psychoanalysis, and other theories. For example, Butler requires faith in God to set his system in motion in the first place and even Kant's essentially human-centred model of moral decision-making at least presupposes the existence of God. In short, the process of humanizing ethics in medieval and later Europe seems more gradual than in classical Greece. Yet it is similar in many ways in its content, as it ventures along the path from instinctual obedience to God and on to human reason and other human qualities as the underlying basis of moral decision-making.

In that vein, I next explore conscience and Otherness in the context of the sixteenth century Spanish colonization of the Caribbean. Again, in this different historical context, reason in various guises confronts religious authority in moral decision-making, a confrontation that can be illuminated with conscience theory. Like the barbarians of Hellenic Greece, there is an Other in the colonial Spanish Caribbean who, not being quite human and perhaps indeed beastly, escapes the operations of Spanish conscience altogether, with genocidal consequences.
Introduction: The Destruction of the Arawaks

In 1492 Columbus arrived in the West Indies, probably landing in the Bahamas, then populated by peaceful Arawaks\textsuperscript{18} who also inhabited the Greater Antilles and Trinidad. Other parts of the Caribbean were occupied by Caribs, the total Arawak and Carib population being estimated at between 225,000 and six million (Rogozinski 18, 32). Within two decades, almost all were dead (18). The two thousand Arawaks still surviving in Trinidad in 1777 eventually vanished, their villages succumbing to the steady expansion of plantations (120). Today, the Caribbean Indian population survives only as part of a mixed race population — the Garifuna — in Belize, Guatemala and Honduras, the result of intermarriage between Indians and runaway African slaves in St. Vincent during the eighteenth century, their descendants finally being deported to Central America in 1795 (Foster 11-12; Perrottet 237; Rogozinski 308). Arawak and Carib cultural legacies are now lost (Rogozinski 31).

How did this indigenous population of the West Indies die out? Jan Rogozinski claims the Spanish "accidently (sic) exterminated them" (18) by bringing infectious European and African diseases to the New World, diseases to which Caribbean Indians had no immunity. It is a notorious fact that this is one legacy of European arrival in America. Yet Rogozinski himself characterizes Spanish conduct as "genocide" (31) and

\textsuperscript{18} Generally, I will refer to the indigenous population of the contact period Caribbean and Latin America as "Indians", an ethnographically absurd term, yet one used widely in both the writing of the time and the literature of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.
he details this behaviour: outright murder, often mass murder, as the Spanish invaded new areas; harsh labour – to the point of death – in mines and fields in a slavery system known as *encomienda*; and lethal neglect – confinement inland with no access to traditional marine sources of nutrition, for example (28-33). Observers of the period, like Motolinía, a Franciscan who lived in the New World from 1524 to 1565, confirmed the high rate of death caused by both disease, mainly smallpox, and deliberate or at least negligent homicide, including death from starvation and the hardships of mining (44-45). Figueroa, arriving in Hispaniola in 1519 to undertake inquiries for the king, found "the Indians fast melting away" (*First Social Experiments* 42).

Curiously, all of this was entirely counter-productive to the Spaniards' colonial self-interest – they soon had to look outside the West Indies for more New World populations to exploit (Rogozinski 28). By 1530 at the latest, a short thirty-eight years after arrival in the New World, they went back outside the Americas altogether, spawning African slavery to replace their almost extinct Arawak and Carib captives (50).

Rogozinski describes the pattern that thus emerged in the Spanish Caribbean:

> Overall, the occupation of other islands followed the pattern set in Hispaniola. The expeditionary forces marched quickly through the island, terrorizing the natives and crushing any rebels. A brief gold rush drew in thousands of Spaniards, who divided the natives up in *encomienda*. After only a few years, with the natives dead and the mines exhausted, the colonists moved on, leaving behind their cattle and pigs to take over an empty landscape. (29)

Ironically, it was the Dutch, English and French, not the Spanish, who would ultimately settle many of the islands from which Spaniards obliterated the Indians.

From the beginning, a few Spanish priests objected vociferously to this decimation. Rogozinski relates that "[a]s early as 1511 . . . Antonio de Montesinos, a Dominican preaching before the governor, officials, and citizens of Santo Domingo, told his distinguished congregation that they would burn in hell because of their mortal sins against the Indians" (31). The best known conscientious objector to this maltreatment of
Caribbean Indians is another Dominican, Bartolomé de Las Casas, the "Apostle to the Indies", whose *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (1542) was translated and published throughout Europe. Las Casas came to Santo Domingo in 1502, took part in the 1511 invasion of Cuba, and assembled a large inventory of Indian slaves by 1515. But he soon liberated his slaves and dedicated the rest of his life to trying to stem the tide of genocide at a moment in history when that still seemed possible, if barely (Abbott 62; Collard xvi; Pagden xxix; Rogozinski 32). In *A Short Account* he alleged not only the displacement and exploitation of Indians but a constant stream of hideous Spanish atrocities against them. He argued that the Arawaks and Caribs were rational human beings with souls, victims of genocidal exploitation which had utterly perverted Columbus' evangelizing mission.

Examining the advocacy of Las Casas, particularly his defence of the Arawaks and Caribs, through the filter of conscience theory, I investigate in this chapter how he and a few others were able to transcend the Eurocentric theological and colonialist zeitgeist of the early sixteenth century. How is it that the consciences of these few Spaniards were triggered, when most of their compatriots saw no immorality in the slaughter of the Caribbean population, indeed viewed their treatment of the indigenous population as the theologically supported, if wastefully executed, use of animals or at best subhumans? Why did their moral imagination - their compassion - not come into play, in the way that it did so potently for Montesinos, Las Casas, and a very few others?

**The Indian as Other**

Most Spanish colonists saw Indians as Other, not as part of their own moral community: thus, Indians were not entitled to the conscientious treatment that the colonists would be expected to accord fellow Spaniards. This view had anthropological, cultural, and theological roots, as well as psychological motivations, which I explore in
this chapter. There was a robust countervailing view, of which Las Casas was the most prominent advocate. Continual, torturous debates about the nature of Indians during the first half of the sixteenth century, almost from the beginning of colonization, culminated in the Valladolid Debates between Las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda in 1550 and 1551, a series of highly-charged and exhaustive exchanges about the nature of Indians which ultimately asked, at least by implication: "What does it mean to be human?" Unfortunately, the Caribbean Indians were being exterminated even as the Spanish conducted these exquisite discussions, enacted various legal measures to address the "Indian problem", and carried out social experiments in attempts to determine whether Indians were capable of at least semi-autonomous social and political life, as the Spanish of the sixteenth century understood it.

I first want, then, to explore how Europeans constructed New World aboriginals as Other and how these constructions were opposed from within. I then consider the moral implications and the manner in which those implications can be understood in terms of conscience theory.

Spanish Cultural Readiness to Perceive the Indian as Other

The Spanish were culturally prepared to see Indians as Other. As early as the fifth century, Augustine, in *City of God*, wrote at length of "monstrous races of men" and by 1492 this theme had been elaborated into a "rich body of fantastic ideas . . . ready for use in America" (*Aristotle and the American Indians* 3-4). These fantastic ideas included figures like a "[t]rumpet-blowing ape" and a monkey with a coat of multi-coloured feathers and red fur that sang like "a nightingale or a lark" (4). The "wild man" had become a common motif in mediaeval art and literature and "crossed the Atlantic with

19 A "court intellectual" (Rivera-Pagán).
20 The "wild man" can be seen as a metaphor for uncivilized, or at least pre-civilization, human beings, extending in the canon as far back as Enkido, the wild man from the hills in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. 

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Spanish workmen" (4). These images contributed to delusional descriptions of Indians as "blue in colour with square heads" (4) and, according to no less an explorer than Sir Walter Raleigh – who presumably met a few Indians face-to-face during his travels – as having "their eyes in their shoulders, and their mouths in the middle of their breasts" (Takaki 149).

Notwithstanding these hyperbolic descriptions, Indians must genuinely have seemed strange to the Spanish. While they did not have square heads, blue skin, or oddly positioned eyes and mouths, they were dark-skinned, much more lightly dressed than the Spanish, and painted their bodies (Rogozinski 14). The New World itself was a place of alien landscape and commodities. For example, Oviedo declared that only the most skilled painter would be able to render American flora. Alonso de Zuazo, a Spanish judge in Cuba, found articles like fruit in the local marketplace so odd that he abandoned his attempts to describe them to his Old World correspondent (Pagden xxxv).

All of these novelties of appearance, then, played upon cultural images of odd apes, monkeys and wild men to lay down a psychological matrix in which Indian Otherness could form and grow. But there was more. Crucially, both colonial psychology and European attitudes to nature, including human nature, interacted with Indian social, political, and economic life in ways which tended to promote the denigration and subjugation of the Indian, apparently unhindered by conscience.

**Spanish Greed and the Drive for Domination of the New World**

The typical colonist did not come to the New World to live in peaceful, respectful and egalitarian coexistence with the indigenous population. Rather, he was often an escapee from the lower rungs of Spanish society seeking, in essence, to recreate feudalism in the New World, with himself at the top of the socio-economic heap and
Indians as his serfs (Pagden xxiii). Motolinia, mortified, called these lower class Spaniards the "fourth plague" on the Spanish colonies:

Even though they are for the most part farmers from Spain, they have become overlords in this land and command its principal native chiefs as if these were slaves . . . Wherever they are, they spoil and corrupt everything, emitting a stench like spoiled meat. They make no effort to do anything but command. (45)

Similarly, Peter Martyr wrote in *De Orbe Novo* (1511-1530), based in part on his interviews of Columbus and other explorers, that, "[c]arried away by love of gold, [the colonists] become ravenous wolves instead of gentle lambs" (*First Social Experiments* 60). Las Casas, somewhat more temperately, pointed out the danger of empowering the Spanish lower class in a colonial setting (an ironic example of class-consciousness in an argument about racism): "[N]ever should jurisdiction be given to poor men, since these by ambition and greed will seek through inordinate means to rise above their property and to achieve riches and wealth and position" (*Octavio Remedio*" 40).

Lewis Hanke gives a more balanced explanation of this dynamic, the desire of the immigrant to become a *caballero* in the New World, an unattainable social status back home in Spain. He points out that the typical colonist accepted danger and even death in the pursuit of New World riches, yet firmly declined manual labour:

The New World offered a rich field for the bold and resourceful Spaniards who were prepared to fight bravely and, if necessary, to die in the attempt to carve out a piece of empire for themselves . . . They were not prepared, however, to settle down as farmers to till the soil or as miners to extract gold and silver from the bowels of the earth. That was work for Indians. (*Aristotle and the American Indians* 13-14)

This desire to make manual work the Indians' lot, then, provided a strong motivation to perceive them as Other, not the equal of the would-be lord of the manor. Fortunately for the colonist, and unfortunately for the about-to-be-exterminated Arawak, there was, in fact, a robust theological basis for such an exploitative approach to the New World and its indigenous population.
By 1500, Christian theology supported the notion that "nature" exists to be developed by humans, with agriculture seen as a process promoting "civilization". Keith Thomas explains:

"Man's task, in the words of Genesis (i.28), was to "replenish the earth and subdue it": to level the woods, till the soil, drive off the predators, kill the vermin, plough up the bracken, drain the fens. Agriculture stood to land as did cooking to raw meat. It converted nature into culture. (14-15)"

Put another way, this time in terms of cultural evolution, Thomas tells us:

"The first human beings, it was widely believed, were "woodland men", homines sylvestres. The progress of mankind was from the forest to the field.... The Irish, said an Elizabethan, remained "wood-born savages", while John Locke contrasted the "civil and rational" inhabitants of cities with the "irrational, untaught" denizens of "woods and forests".... Untamed woodlands were thus seen as obstacles to human progress.... (195)"

A related strand of this philosophy bore upon the nature and role of animals in the development of civilization. Like the forests, thought sixteenth century Europeans, God intended animals, which were fundamentally different from humans (21), for the use of humans, thus "justify[ing] hunting, domestication, meat-eating, vivisection... and the wholesale extinction of vermin and predators" (41). This theory, according to Thomas, had fatal consequences for human relations and highlights the importance, from the Spanish colonists' point of view, of the social and cultural construction of Indian Otherness. To the extent that Europeans defined their "humanness" as the possession of certain qualities, qualities not generally shared by the indigenous populations of the West Indies - cities, complex agricultural technology, iron tools and weapons, oceanic navigation, and monotheism, for example - these Indian populations were viewed as lesser humans, beast-like creatures akin to animals (41-50). In fact, as Hanke relates in First Social Experiments, "Item twenty-four of the Laws of Burgos devised in 1512 gives some hint of how Spaniards regarded Indians. It provides that 'no person may call an
Indian dog' unless it is his real name" (22-23). He adds, in *Aristotle and the American Indians*: "One may suspect . . . that the law faithfully reflects the contemptuous attitude towards Indians of many Spaniards during those early, turbulent days" (27). This derogatory colonialist language similarly appears in *The Tempest*, in which the New World aboriginal is impliedly characterized as a pig: "The theatregoers saw Caliban's 'sty' located emblematically at the back of the stage, behind Prospero's 'study', signifying a hierarchy of white over dark and cerebral over carnal" (Takaki 156).

Once the Spaniards constructed Indian Otherness in this way, likening Indians to animals, it was a short step to treating them like animals and, as Thomas (41ff.) and Courtney Campbell both suggest, this is a lower standard of treatment. Campbell makes the point: "[This] dehumanisation . . . has a substantive normative implication . . . Wild beasts are not given the same protections as human beings because they are not members of the moral community", bringing to mind Harris' comment on the concept of moral community, quoted earlier. Just as the typical concentration camp guard could spend loving time with his children, untroubled after a day of torturing and killing Jews, the typical Spanish colonist had no problem treating Indians like animals. In Harris' terms, they were not "objects of his moral concern" since – being animals rather than humans – "they were outside his moral community" (176). How did Indians come to be viewed not just as subhuman but as animals, well outside the Spanish moral community and therefore not entitled to conscientious treatment?

Not only were such views and behaviour considered justified, they were thought to be in line with God's plan for developing nature. The mercenary treatment of Indians was considered, incredible as it may seem to the twenty-first century liberal mind, to "advance Christianity and serve [the] king" (*Aristotle and the American Indians* 14). In essence, the Spaniards found an undeveloped "forest" in the New World, populated by "animals". It was their Christian duty to put those animals to work exploiting and thus
civilizing the Caribbean forest, perhaps even civilizing the Indian animal in the process.

A similar – justificatory – view would later be taken in the English colonies, according to Lawrence James:

The moral question faced by Englishmen was, by what authority could they claim the fertile, untilled lands of North America? A broad and infallible answer was provided by the prevailing view of the divine ordering of the world and man's place in it. "God", wrote John Milton in a defence of colonisation, "having made the world for the use of men... ordained them to replenish it." The newly revealed American continent was favoured with abundant resources by a benevolent God, but it was peopled by races who had never recognized nor acted upon their good fortune. Their wilful inertia, combined with other moral shortcomings, debarred them from their inheritance which passed to more industrious outsiders. (12-13)

In short, then, it was the religious and moral duty of Europeans to develop the New World. Indians would serve as their beasts of burden.

The Inability of Indians to Care for Themselves

A related rationale for Spanish domination was that the Indians simply could not survive without help, an assertion that flew in the face of pre-contact historical fact but stood firm nonetheless. A telling justification is cited by Hanke:

Licenciate Christóval Serrano corroborated this opinion of Indian prodigality, and considered that, inasmuch as Indians showed no greediness or desire for wealth (these being the principle motives for impelling men to labor and acquire possessions), they would inevitably lack the necessities of life if not supervised by the Spaniards. (First Social Experiments 30)

It seems to have crossed few Spanish minds that Indians only began to lack the necessities of life when marauding Europeans set about appropriating them.

The Constructed Depravity of the Indian

The Spanish went further, however, in their portrayal of Indians. Not only did they construct the Indian as Other – as a lesser human or an animal – they also
constructed what amounts to social and cultural Indian depravity, a depravity that justified, in their minds, not only exploitative but punitive treatment of Indians.

In the first place, at the surface level, the Indian mode of dress – or, more crucially, undress – carried negative moral implications for the typical Spanish observer. For example, Oviedo, a long time resident of Panama and Hispaniola, wrote:

*Naguas* are pieces (*mantas*) of cotton that the women of this island wear from the waist to half way down the leg, all the way around, in order to cover their shameful parts, and the most important women wear *naguas* that go down to their ankles. The girls who are virgins . . . do not wear anything over their shameful parts, nor do the men . . . (14)

Oviedo also took great offence at homoerotic Indian jewellery:

[[In some parts of these Indies they wear a jewel made of gold, representing one man on top of another in that base and diabolical act of Sodom. I saw one of these jewels of the devil that weighed twenty pesos of gold, which was acquired at the port of Santa Maria . . . in the year 1514. . . . And since . . . they subsequently brought it to be smelted before me as a royal official and overseer of gold smelting, I broke it with a hammer and pounded it up with my own hands on an anvil . . . (13-14)

To the sins of nudity and male homosexuality, Oviedo added the worship of "*cemí*", which he took to be a devil (9); ignorance of God (17); tobacco use (12); polygamy amongst the upper classes (13); female promiscuity (15); the killing of wives upon their husband's demise, often but not always constituting voluntary suicide (14, 16); and cannibalism (16). Oviedo also alleged, somewhat fantastically, that a *cacique*, a member of the Indian royalty, "had certain wives with whom he united in the manner that vipers do", "a base and filthy crime" (13). Europeans did in fact feel threatened by the relatively unrestrained sexuality of Americans. For example, Takaki offers this insight into Caliban's character, and the typically English reaction to it, in *The Tempest*:

Like Caliban, the native people of America were viewed as the "other". . . . Unlike Europeans, Indians were allegedly dominated by their passions, especially their sexuality. . . . Caliban personified such passions. Prospero saw him as a sexual threat to the nubile Miranda, her "virgin-knot" yet untied. "I have used thee (filth as thou art) with humane care," Prospero scolded Caliban, "and lodged thee in mine own cell till thou didst seek to violate the honor of my child." And the unruly native
snapped: "O ho, O ho! Would't had been done! Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else this isle with Calibans." (149-50)

In the area of trade, the gulf between European and American material values was also, in Spanish eyes, a sign of Indian inferiority – and moral inferiority at that.

Oviedo grumbled:

[T]he Indians of Haiti or Hispaniola . . . [trade and exchange] not with the astuteness of our merchants, who demand for something that is worth a real a much larger sum and swear oaths so that the simple-minded will believe it, but completely the reverse of this and [they bargain] with great heedlessness . . . [A]s soon as they receive something, they would immediately sell it again for some absurdity . . . because among them the primary use of wealth was to do as they wanted rather than to be constant in anything. (17)

In this connection, Hanke relates the comments of a colonial official:

Jeronimo de Aguero complained that . . . [the Indians] seemed to have no sense of value, for an Indian would trade his best shirt or only hammock for a mirror or a pair of scissors! . . . Whoever saw a Castilian laborer as simple as that? (First Social Experiments 30)

Oddly, then, Oviedo valued fraud over generosity and Aguero equated a lack of materialism with simple-mindedness.

The colonial view of the Indian is well summed up in the following remark of Oviedo:

They are naturally lazy and vicious, melancholic, cowardly, and in general, a lying, shiftless people. Their marriages are not a sacrament but a sacrilege. They are idolatrous, libidinous, and commit sodomy. Their chief desire is to eat, drink, worship heathen idols and commit bestial obscenities. What could one expect from a people whose skulls are so thick and hard that Spaniards had to take care in fighting not to strike on the head lest their swords be blunted? (Campbell)

In retrospect, we can see that the conquest itself contributed to the decline of Arawak civilization, a decline which the Spaniard, its very agent, then blamed on his victim. Anthony Pagden speculates that this "cultural dislocation" went so far as to include practices "the Europeans found most reprehensible, suicide, infanticide, and induced abortion", as well as an "apparent willingness to abandon the sick and the old
and to mock the sufferings of the dying" (xxvi). Hanke opines in *First Social Experiments* that "[p]robably this wholesale indictment of Indian character was substantially true – a tragic example of that hopeless disorganization which usually results when a civilized nation tries to impose its customs upon a primitive people" (33). It need hardly be said that "hopeless disorganization" certainly would be one result of the imposition of civilized customs like slavery and genocide.

To the extent that one is prepared to accept Las Casas' description, in *A Short Account* and his other works, of terrible atrocities like mass burnings and hangings, the slaughter of babies, and the negligent or intentional working to death of Indians in mines, this constructed depravity helps explain not merely the exploitation and displacement, but punitive treatment, of Indians, treatment that was ironically counterproductive to the colonial enterprise. The Spanish wanted it both ways, Indian land and gold in their hands, and Indians as serfs in their New World feudal estates, the *encomienda*, over which they would be lords and masters. This went far beyond fulfilling God's plan to have the Spanish conjure civilization forth from nature, using and perhaps "civilizing" Indians in the process. Those aspects of theology may have operated as rationales at one level. But Indian depravity invokes, as Campbell puts it, "the biblical paradigm of conquest and holy war". She continues:

> [T]hese Indian practices are "abominations" in the sight of God and punishable by death. The theological language of "abomination" identified some act or practice that threatened the cosmic or social order. The person who performs the act is rendered "unclean" and a potential source of pollution to the religious community.

So, Oviedo suggested, Indian practices caused the Indian to "deserve what God [had] given him" (13), namely the conquest, and Alvira and Cruz propose that, for Sepúlveda, "an inhuman way of life seemed like a mistake of a kind which was in some way culpable, which might suggest that measures of punishment or subjection could be warranted" (103). This justification for punitive treatment was a convenient further
justification for enslavement and genocide, once the indigenous population stopped regarding Europeans as gods, as they initially had (Takaki 141), and started to resist the suddenly obvious and unwelcome intentions of the invaders (Pagden xxv). As Hanke cautions:

One should always keep in mind . . . the much quoted passage from Gilbert Murray's *Greek Epic*: "Unnatural affection, child-murder, father-murder, incest, a great deal of hereditary cursing, a double fratricide and a violation of the sanctity of dead bodies – when one reads such a list of charges brought against any tribe or people, either ancient or in modern times, one can hardly help concluding that somebody wanted to annex their land." (*First Social Experiments* 34, note 27)

Even smallpox epidemics were seen as a divine intervention in these New World expropriations. By decimating the Indian population, it was claimed, God intended to make way for Europeans eager to put the land to use in accordance with God's plan. Thus, Takaki reports: "William Bradford recorded in his diary: 'For it pleased God to visit these Indians with a great sickness and such a mortality that of a thousand, above nine and a half hundred of them died'". Takaki continues: "The colonists interpreted these Indian deaths as divinely sanctioned opportunities to take the land" (159).

From our historical perspective, we can see this conflict as involving a difference of values between a more or less subsistence level hunting and gathering society with a few simple agricultural practices (Rogozinski 14) on the one hand, and a technologically complex and materialistic (and virus-ridden one) on the other. Spanish-Indian relations were not to be an evenhanded relationship between equals. The sixteenth century Spanish view was driven by values which denied the humanity of Indian nature and culture. If Indians were human to any degree, they were lesser humans, subhumans, and depraved ones at that, deserving not only enslavement but punitive treatment. But the Indian was equally or even more likely to be seen as a beast of burden, to be used in the enterprise of calling forth neo-European civilization from the American wilderness.
The Spanish Minority: Las Casas' View of Indians as Human

The demonization and destruction of Caribbean Indians stands in stark contrast to Columbus' original instructions from the Crown, the beliefs and actions of a small but vociferous group of Spaniards led by Las Casas, and the Spanish public policy enunciated in a series of laws and edicts over the first half of the sixteenth century.

"In the Beginning": The Official Spanish Intention

The Crown's early intention was to treat the Indians humanely, if paternalistically. This is clearly reflected in the 1493 Instrucciones to Columbus to:

... by all ways and means to endeavor and work to attract the residents of the said islands and terra firma so that they will become converted to our Holy Catholic faith ... to seek and have the said Admiral to treat the said Indians very well and lovingly, without annoying them, encouraging much conversation and familiarity from one to the other, doing the best work possible. (Andújar 73)

Columbus, in a "Letter on the New World" of the same year, expressed a generally positive view of Indians. While he pointed to their patently unsophisticated society – no towns or villages, public nudity, lack of metallurgy, simple weapons, and no religion that he could discern – he consistently referred to Indians as "people" (Cowans 29-31). He reported that they "have very sharp minds and are men who navigate all these seas, and the full account of all of it is a marvel" (31) and he gave no hint of the annihilation to follow:

I freely gave them a thousand good things that I had brought along, so that they would be won over and, moreover, become Christians inclined toward love and the service of Their Highnesses and the entire Castilian nation, seeking to help give us those things that they have in abundance and that we need. (30-31)

While Columbus' reference to Spanish "need" might sound somewhat ominous, it is clear that Columbus did not anticipate stealing and destroying Indian property, land,
freedom, lives, and culture. Rather, he intended to institute a form of friendly bilateral relations, albeit tilted in favour of the Spanish – paternalistic but benevolently so.

To this end, Isabel and Ferdinand established the *encomienda* in 1502. The Indians were to provide labour, receiving in return "the protection of the Castilian Crown, instruction in the Christian faith and a small wage" (Pagden xx). Their goal was "the protection and promotion of the natives, who were to be treated as free individuals and not as slaves" (Andújar 74). In practice, *encomienda* almost immediately became a system of slavery, often lethal slavery at that (Pagden xx), one in which Las Casas himself was an early – if caring – participant (Andújar 74; Collard xi; Pagden xix, xxi).

The first recorded objection to *encomienda* was that of the Dominican friar Montesinos. His 1511 sermon to the colonial elite in Hispaniola was thunderous and blaming:

_In order to make your sins against the Indians known to you I have come up to this pulpit, I who am a voice of Christ crying in the wilderness of this island . . . This voice says that you are in mortal sin, that you live and die in it, for the cruelty and tyranny you use in dealing with these innocent people. Tell me, by what right or justice do you keep these Indians in such a cruel and horrible servitude? On what authority have you waged a detestable war against these people, who dealt quietly and peacefully on their own land? . . . Why do you keep them so oppressed and weary, not giving them enough to eat nor taking care of them in their illness? For with the excessive work you demand of them they fall ill and die, or rather you kill them with your desire to extract and acquire gold every day._

("Indians and Spaniards" 15)

Las Casas later claimed, in his *History of the Indies*, that far from being chastened by this rebuke, the colonists threatened Montesinos and other Dominicans with forced repatriation to Spain and demanded a retraction (184-86; see also Pagden xxi). According to Las Casas, rather than recant as the colonists expected, Montesinos repeated his warnings in a subsequent sermon, whereupon the colonists "grumbled in indignation, frustrated in their hopes that the friar would deny what he had said, as if a
disavowal could change the law of God which they violated by oppressing the Indians" (186).

**The Conversion of Las Casas from *Encomendero* to "Apostle of the Indies"

Las Casas was unmoved by Montesinos' sermon when it was delivered. Pagden characterizes his reaction as "unremarkable" and says that "he does not seem to have grasped immediately that the full implication of what Montesinos had said was that 'one could not in conscience possess Indians' and still claim to be a Christian" (xxi). At the same time, however, Las Casas "did not share the indignation of the rest of the colony" (xxi) and two experiences would soon convert him into the famous "Apostle of the Indies" of history. First, while still an *encomendero* shortly after Montesinos' sermon, Las Casas "accompanied Diego Velázquez to Cuba, where he witnessed, apparently for the first time, the massacres which he was to describe so vividly in *A Short Account*" (xxi). Second, in 1514, he read a passage in the Bible which led to days of contemplation and a dramatic change in the course of his life. Pagden's account of Las Casas' conversion experience bears repeating in detail:

> [I]t was the consequence not of an encounter with an individual, nor of the divine illumination which had struck Paul to the ground on the way to Damascus . . . , nor even of direct experience of the misery of Indians . . . It was the consequence of an encounter with a text. . . . Las Casas . . . was struck by the written word, Ecclesiasticus (*sic*) 34:21-2, which he "began to consider" in preparation for his Easter sermon. "The bread of the needy is their life," he read, "he that defraudeth him thereof is a man of blood. He that taketh away his neighbour's living slayeth him, and he that defraudeth the labourer of his hire is a bloodshedder." It was this that led him "to consider the misery and slavery that those peoples suffered", and which drew his mind back to Montesinos's sermon. He spent, he says, many days agonizing over the issue until he had "determined within himself of the same truth, that everything that had been done to the Indians in the Indies was unjust and tyrannical". This conclusion, too, possessed textual authority and could be checked against "every book" he had read "in either Latin or the vernacular, which in forty-four years were infinite". None of these, he now noticed, could provide any legitimation for "the condemnation and the injustice and harm that they, the Indians, have been done". (xxii)
In concert with these reflections about the Indians, Las Casas also began to worry about the well-being of Spain, the Spanish, and perhaps even the Church, which was "getting immensely rich in material goods thanks to the exploitation of the land and the work of the Native Americans" (Rivera-Pagán) and, incredibly, even possessed slaves (First Social Experiments 66). He would later characterize certain events as divine retribution upon the Spaniards for their oppression of Indians. Thus, God sank a treasure ship for carrying an Indian captive and treasure, with heavy loss of Spanish life, before it could reach Spain (The Tears of the Indians 8). He sank six ships in harbour for the same offence, with all hands lost (A Short Account 21). He shattered a Spanish settlement with "the full force of Divine Justice . . . by three violent disasters, the first lashing it with heavy rain, the second burying it beneath a deluge of earth, and the third pulverizing it with hailstones the size of ten or twenty oxen" for branding and slaughtering Indians (A Short Account 61). Las Casas went on to speak of a "Day of Judgement" when "God will come to punish the wickedness and atrocious behaviour toward the inhabitants of the New World of men masquerading as Christians" (90). Thus, warned Las Casas in the Thirteenth Reason of the "Octavo Remedio", "the Church is losing the souls of both Indians and Spaniards, [and] the latter [are] seemingly in league with the devil himself" (40).

As a result of his days of soul-searching in 1514, Las Casas gave up his encomienda (History of the Indies 208-10; Pagden xxii), ironically following right on the heels of the 1512 Laws of Burgos which "modernized the Encomiendas system to provide that 'the holder is now at the same time guardian and company manager, and is responsible for the protection and christianisation of the natives'" (Andújar 74); the 1513 Clarification of the Laws of Burgos which provided that "capable Indians" might be set free (First Social Experiments 24-25); and the 1513 Laws of Valladolid which were a sort of early employment standards statute, setting rules for hours of work and prohibiting
child labour, the employment of pregnant women, and the hiring of unmarried women without parental consent (Andújar 74). Las Casas probably believed that, even at this early date, encomienda was beyond redemption, notwithstanding these well-intentioned laws promulgated in distant Spain. In fact, Martyr wrote at the time that his interviews of Columbus and other explorers showed the colonists to be "heedless of royal instruction" (First Social Experiments 60). According to Andrée Collard, Las Casas accused the colonists of sabotaging the honourable intentions expressed in the Instrucciones and the Laws of Burgos and Valladolid:

Las Casas makes it clear that early license and anarchy, together with the lack of advocates for the Indian cause in Spain, were responsible for the later spoliation and depopulation of the Indies. He reports . . . the outrageous disorganization of the Spanish administration in the New World, where favoritism and personal interests pass before the interest of the nation. All these crimes remain unpunished because the King is kept ignorant of the actual situation in the Americas. (xix)

Las Casas relinquished his slaves to Governor Velázquez, even knowing that they would likely be worse off with another master, so as to have a free hand in preaching against encomienda (History of the Indies 209). The Governor and the colonists were shocked at his renunciation of slaves and slavery: "[T]he idea of sinning because one used Indians was as incredible as saying man could not use domestic animals" (211). As Hanke interprets the passage: "[T]he colonists manifested as much astonishment as if he had declared that they had no right to the labor of beasts in the field" (First Social Experiments 23). Las Casas never wavered once he rejected encomienda. He would write in the 1540s, in the Twentieth Reason of the "Octavo Remedio":

[B]y eliminating the encomiendas Your Majesty would bestow upon all Spaniards, in the Indies and all of the Spanish Empire, an inestimable blessing: You would be preserving them from the grave sins of tyranny, robbery, violence, murder, which they daily commit through their oppression of these peoples. (40)
Las Casas' Belief in Indian Rationality and Indian Souls

A central issue for Las Casas was his belief in the rationality of Indians and, indeed, the intrinsic value of rationality itself. If Indians were rational, said Las Casas, serious consequences for Spanish conduct in the New World necessarily followed: Indians' land could not be taken without compensation and Indians could not be branded, compelled to work, taxed without consent, or forced to convert to Christianity (*First Social Experiments* 12-14). Reason rather than force was required, a view consistent with the biblical passage which led to Las Casas' epiphany in the first place.

Don Abbott expresses Las Casas' position thus:

> While the natives of the Indies, like all peoples, varied in their intellectual capacity, they must be included among those possessed of common sense, imagination, memory and judgment.

> Because the Amerindians were reasoning beings, they could be, indeed they must be, persuaded to accept Christianity in a way that was peaceful and rational. (63)

Luis Rivera-Pagán expands on this non-violent approach to conversion:

> Las Casas vigorously insists that there is only one way to convert the innumerable gentiles and infidels that the Iberians were encountering in their global expeditions: the way of the apostles, through devout preaching, deeds of love, sacrifice, compassion, and confidence in the Holy Spirit. [Las Casas authored] one of the most passionate and ardent defences of the peaceful and nonmilitary expansion of the Christian faith ever written.

> This is related to the issue of whether Indians, as rational beings, had souls capable of being saved (*Aristotle and the American Indians* 19). Descartes would later argue that animals "were mere automata, devoid of souls and therefore insensible to pain" (Harris 174). As I pointed out in the discussion of Keith Thomas' research, even before Descartes, theology supported the idea that Indians might be soulless subhumans or animals, for whom God intended not salvation but exploitation. As Harris points out, "doubt on the part of Spanish explorers, about whether or not . . . Indians had
'souls' surely contributed to the callousness with which they treated them during their conquest of the New World" (174-75).

Las Casas, however, did believe in Indian souls and lived in a manner consistent with his ideas about Indian rationality, teachability, and conversion. While "no one is born enlightened", he said, we can all "be guided and aided at first by those who were born before us" (*Apologética Historia*, quoted in *Aristotle and the American Indians* 112). Las Casas continued:

And the savage peoples of the earth may be compared to uncultivated soil that readily brings forth weeds and useless thorns, but has within itself naturally such virtue that by labour and cultivation it may be made to yield sound and beneficial fruits.

He considered that he had observed firsthand this ability to learn and flower, when he "was particularly impressed by the meticulous attention paid by the Mexican Indians to the education of their children in the ways of chastity, honesty, fortitude, obedience, and sobriety" ("Indians and Spaniards" 16). There is no reason to think that Las Casas held a different view of the Arawaks' capacity for teaching and being taught. Thus, Las Casas insisted upon properly preparing Indians for baptism. The bull *Sublimis Deus*, issued by Pope Paul III in 1537, "declare[d] that the 'Indians, as true men, not only are capable of receiving the Christian faith, but as we have learned, are eager to receive it'" (Abbott 64). This stands in amazing counterpoint to much of the colonial Church's treatment of Indians, exemplifying the bewildered disconnection of both the Crown and the Old World Catholic establishment. At any rate, in contrast to Las Casas' careful approach, which truly did treat Indians as rational, teachable beings, many New World priests seemed to be conducting mass *pro forma* baptisms rather than meaningful conversions, perhaps attempting to quickly produce a throng of new Catholics, even if they were a lesser species of Catholic, in response to Lutheran assaults upon the Church back in Europe. Thus:
Las Casas in 1546 created a painful scene in the Franciscan monastery at Tlaxcala when Frey Toribio de Benavente, known as Motolinía, asked him to baptize an Indian – since existing regulations prohibited Motolinía from doing so. The Indian had travelled a long distance to be baptized and Las Casas robed himself to perform the ceremony. Discovering that the Indian was unprepared, he refused to proceed, to the great annoyance of Motolinía, who neither forgot nor forgave. And Las Casas long remembered Motolinía's attitudes and doctrines, for the Franciscan believed that faith should be preached quickly, "if necessary by force." (Aristotle and the American Indians 21)

By this time, there were of course far fewer such candidates for baptism than there had been in 1492, and even these survivors were thoroughly traumatized by the oppression, torture, and murder meted out by Spanish colonists. We can only imagine their reaction at being asked to accept the religion of those who had done such an effective job of enslaving and eradicating them.

At the end of his life, Las Casas pulled his thoughts on Indian nature together in a 1564 letter to the Pope, in which he:

... request[ed] a decree of anathema against any negation of the rationality of the Native Americans, their personal liberty, their right for public sovereignty or private ownership, or their ability to understand the mysteries of the Christian faith. In all of those essential dimensions of humaneness, insist[ed] Las Casas, there is no fundamental ontological distinction between Europeans and North Americans, and thus no legitimate justification for dispossessing them of their political sovereignty, their private goods, their personal freedom, or for abrogating their right to the ecclesiastical sacraments. (Rivera-Pagán)

Las Casas was both a "spiritual son of Aquinas" and "child of the Renaissance". His thoughts about Indian rationality were "based . . . above all on observation", holding "an environmentalist interpretation of cultural differences". Thus, he believed that "all peoples . . . were capable of advancing along the road to civilization" by the methods just described. His was a "scientific" approach to cultural difference and evolution (Keen). In many ways, he thought, Indian culture was "equal to anything the Old World had produced" (History of the Indies, quoted in Pagden xxviii), although elsewhere he would only say that Indians "were like all men 'at the time when the earth was first populated"
(quoted in Alvira and Cruz 105) – a somewhat less enthusiastic endorsement. For Las Casas the Indian was not The Other, but "us" at an earlier stage.

Las Casas' analysis was not value-neutral, however. Like Sepúlveda, he thought there was a "great cultural distance between Indians and Spaniards" (Alvira and Cruz 103). While Indian culture was to be advanced, not destroyed, by means of European instruction, Las Casas viewed Christianity as superior to Indian religious beliefs ("Indians and Spaniards" 16) – his position in the Valladolid Debate addressed the best method of evangelization, not whether the Indians ought to be evangelized (Andújar 75-76). Las Casas never doubted the legitimacy of the Spanish occupation of the Caribbean, nor did he ever challenge the Pope's right to distribute the lands of the New World (Pagden xvi). In short, "[i]ndependence from Spain was something he never contemplated . . . for the Indians" (Pagden xiv). In essence, then, while Las Casas vigorously opposed Indian slavery and certainly the torture and killing of Indians, his approach was paternalistic and, I would suggest, probably infused with a sense of kindly superiority – in John Parker's elegant formulation, "tempering [an] admission of inequality with benevolence" (quoted in "Indians and Spaniards" 16). Thus, even for Las Casas, there would be no return to liberty. Indians were to forever be subjects of Spain, albeit well-treated and properly baptised subjects.

Spanish Laws and Experiments into the Nature of Indians

While most of the colonists continued on their pig-headed course of genocidal exploitation, the same cannot be said of the Crown. The essential political question was: how were the Spanish to exploit the resources of the New World, while at the same time proselytising the Indians, if indeed it was even appropriate to do so? This gave rise to

21 Similarly, Jefferson saw Indian cultures in the USA as, in effect, a series of cultures, an east to west continuum reflecting the stages through which European culture had "progressed", the most advanced being in the east where contact with Europeans had been occurring the longest, the most primitive being at the far western frontier which had had minimal contact (Takaki 171).
periodic law reform and social experimentation, a reflection of the intense interest of Spanish officialdom in the nature of Indians.

In 1513, Spain issued the *Requerimiento*, a multi-page document in Spanish legalese, to be read to Indians before attacking them, the principle being that if the Indians obeyed they would be spared (Pagden xxiv; Cowans 34). The *Requerimiento* started with the story of Adam and Eve, sped through a fragment of the Christian history of Europe, or at least of the Church, and demanded that the listener consent to be treated as "subject and vassal" and to "acknowledge the Church as the ruler and superior of the whole world" (Cowans 35). Of course, the very notion of Indians understanding the language – let alone the content – of the *Requerimiento* is absurd, as some Spaniards pointed out at the time (34). The absurdity was aggravated by the fact that some conquistadors read the *Requerimiento* "at night to sleeping villages or out of earshot of the Indians" (A Short Account 33, 56). That the Crown could consider such a legal procedure to be viable demonstrates how ill-informed they were about the reality of colonial affairs, notwithstanding the lobbying of Las Casas and others.

Another legislative initiative, mentioned earlier, was the 1513 Clarification of the Laws of Burgos, intended to provide for the freeing of "capable Indians" (*First Social Experiments* 24-25). By 1516, not a single Indian had been liberated. In fact, tellingly, the colonists were already complaining to Spain about a shortage of Indian labourers (25). The New Laws of 1542 went even further than those of 1513, purporting to free almost all Indians. They were repealed only three years later, having been "met at first with disbelief" in the colonies, ultimately proving utterly unenforceable and ineffective (Pagden xxvii).

The Crown continued to hear Las Casas and others arguing for Indian rationality and all that followed from it. So, Hanke relates, "[f]aced with masses of contradictory

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22 This is related to the theory of just war, which is beyond the scope of my paper.
evidence given by colonists, officials and missionaries, the Government decided to experiment and determine by more or less objective means the true nature of the natives" *(First Social Experiments* 19). These reflected "the question whether these copper colored natives were rational beings, barbarians, or a sort of intermediate species between men and beasts", a "problem which thoroughly agitated Spanish theorists" (4) – if not Spanish colonists. The experiments were primarily aimed at determining whether Indians were capable of living independently, at least as the Spanish conceived of "independence" in the Caribbean context.

The first recorded social experiment was disillusioning. In 1508, Governor Nicolás Ovando freed two Indians chiefs whom he considered particularly promising, even providing them with slaves so that they could emulate the Spanish colonial lifestyle. They spent their time dancing and drinking, showed no inclination to mine gold, and ate a month's supplies in a single day. They died "in poverty and without honor" *(First Social Experiments* 36-37).

The next attempt was the Jeronymite Interrogatory of 1516 to 1518. Cardinal Ximénez "dragged three reluctant friars from their monastic retreats" and packed them off to the New World to "discover whether any Indians could be found capable of living by themselves, and to set free all such Indians". Treading carefully, partially for fear of Las Casas' volatility, they sent twelve leading colonists a questionnaire and received a "hundred closely written pages of replies". The results were predictable and unequivocal: "Not one of the colonists considered the Indians capable of living in freedom". One Antonio de Villasante, resident in the New World since 1493, testified: "If allowed to run free, the Indians would revert to their former habits of idleness, nakedness, dancing, eating spiders and snakes, patronizing witch doctors, drunkenness, improvidence and gluttony". Perhaps most important of all, "the colony would face economic ruin". Of course, the Indians have no historical voice, no responses to
questionnaires sitting in the archives with their point of view duly recorded; the Jeronymites seem to have ignored their instructions "to treat the Indians with almost as much consideration as they were to accord the Spanish colonists". In the end, they liberated only one Indian, fate unrecorded, and concentrated all others in villages where crowded and unsanitary conditions soon led to a massive smallpox epidemic which decimated the population (*First Social Experiments* 26-39).

Following right on the heels of the Jeronymites was Rodrigo de Figueroa. Arriving in the New World in 1519 with instructions "to grant all capable Indians their liberty", he freed three villages immediately. This ran against the unyielding advice of colonists, officials and even friars, raising great concern that the economic base of the colonies would be uprooted. Nonetheless his orders to liberate Indians were renewed in 1520, in large part due to Las Casas' lobbying back in Spain. Colonial concern now became alarm and the colonists dispatched numerous complaints about Figueroa to Spain. Interestingly, it was his response to these complaints that doomed the Indians and gave the colonists their way – he reported that all three free Indian villages were failures, their inhabitants showed no inclination to mine for gold or work the fields, and he had therefore returned them to their *encomenderos*. As one last experiment, he put sixteen Indians in the charge of one of his relatives "to determine whether they could mine gold without help from Spaniards". During the two months the experiment ran, they produced hardly a speck, and Figueroa turned them over to a new *encomendero* who put them to work building a sugar mill. The subsequent testimony of colonists at a judicial inquiry characterized the Figueroa affair as pointless, beneficial for neither the colonists nor the colonized (*First Social Experiments* 40-48).

The "last act in the drama of the Indian liberty experiment" was the Cuban *experiencia* of 1525 to 1535. This time, the orders were "to put at liberty all Indians [in Cuba] then without *encomenderos* as well as those whose *encomenderos* might die in
the six months to come". About a hundred Indians were sent to the isolated town of Bayamo in 1531, to mine gold and farm, unmolested by colonists. Support was uneven at best and within a year most of the Indians were dead or dying from starvation or had fled. Another, final, experiment had the same results. All of this was aggravated by unrelenting resistance on the part of the colonists, an Indian revolt, and a smallpox epidemic in 1530 which made the colonists more than ever unwilling to release slaves (First Social Experiments 59-66). All of these experiments were doomed from the start, given the imperatives of the colonial economy, the sad fact of extreme social disruption which had afflicted the Indians from the outset, and the disconnect between the colonists and distant policy-makers.

Natural Slavery: The Valladolid Debate

Almost sixty years of agonizing over the nature of Indians – and therefore the appropriate way to treat them – culminated in the 1550 and 1551 Valladolid Disputatio, or Debate, between Las Casas and Sepúlveda.23 The purpose was, in part, "to examine by which method [the Indians] can become subjects to the Majesty our Emperor without damaging their royal conscience" (Domingo de Soto, Summariun, quoted in Andújar 69). In its starkest terms, the question was whether the Indians were to live in freedom or slavery. Eduardo Andújar continues that "it is now difficult to read Las Casas without seeing him as Liberator of the Oppressed, or to read Sepúlveda other than as a bellicose and impenitent advocate of slavery" (70-71). Venancio Carro, in his La Teologia, puts it this way: Las Casas and Sepúlveda were "two noisy representatives of two opposite trends that divided the allegiance of the Spanish people in the sixteenth century" (quoted in Andújar 72).

23 The "debaters" appeared individually before a Council of Fourteen made up of judges, and did not "debate" in the classic face-to-face sense (Aristotle and the American Indians 38-39).
I want to focus on one aspect of the Debate, the discussion of Aristotelian natural slavery. The point is crucial, since Aristotelian philosophy was firmly embedded in the Catholic theology of the time (Aristotle and the American Indians 1): if the Indians could be shown to be natural slaves, they were not entitled to the conscientious treatment accorded Spaniards, and Indian liberty was certainly out of the question. Even worse for the Indians, if they were found to be natural slaves, then they "by nature d[id] not have the capacity to accept Christianity, [an argument which] push[es] in the direction of unrestrained violence because [it] invokes . . . the moral logic of dehumanization [emphasis added]" (Campbell). Aristotle, as interpreted by Catholic theologians, would thus support all the horror that had been meted out to the Indians and ensure that nothing would change. The natural slave is, surely, the ultimate Other.

Aristotle's theory of natural slavery was addressed in three of his works: Economics, Ethics, and Politics. In Hanke's view, the hypothesis is muddled and internally inconsistent, giving rise to multiple interpretations over the centuries and theoretical confusion in sixteenth century Spain (Aristotle and the American Indians 56-57). An example of Aristotle's poor analysis is this astounding bit of circular reasoning and illogic in Politics:

These considerations [a dubious economic argument which had attempted to draw an analogy between slaves and slavery on the one hand and craft, production and tools on the other] will have shown what are the nature and functions of the slave: any human being that by nature belongs not to himself but to another is by nature a slave; and a human being belongs to another whenever he is a piece of human property, that is a tool or instrument having a separate existence and useful for the purposes of living. (32)

Aristotle was adamant about the inferiority of the natural slave, notwithstanding the shaky conceptual underpinnings of the notion: "It is clear then that by nature some are free, others slaves, and that for these it is both right and expedient that they should serve as slaves" (34). He even suggested that it was permissible to hunt "not only . . .
wild animals but ... men whom nature intended for slavery but who refuse to be slaves*
(Edel 324). Perhaps Aristotle knew this was all ultimately unsupportable, as Thomas
Sinclair suggests in his Introduction to Politics:

All that [Aristotle] has to say on these matters is strongly coloured by ... his reluctance to be without a labour-force which was either the absolute property of the employer (slave-labour) or so economically dependent on him as to make their free status positively worthless. . . .

He was aware that previous thinkers had shown that the enslavement of human beings, especially of Greek by Greek, was contrary to nature. But he was sure that slaves were indispensable in creating the conditions for the life of culture which was the aim of the polis. He could not therefore reject slavery, but must endeavour to prove that after all it is not contrary to nature and that the slave though a human being is designed by nature to be as a beast of burden. Needless to say the attempt breaks down, as he himself must have been aware. Yet the arguments which he used were still in use among the defenders of slavery in the nineteenth century . . . (16-17)

Tellingly, Aristotle made the following provisions for some of his slaves in his will, provisions that run entirely contrary to his assertion that slaves are fit only for slavery:

Nicanor is also to take care of the slave Myrmex, so that he is conveyed in a fashion worthy of us to his own people, together with those of his belongings which we received. They are to free Ambracis and to give her, on the marriage of my daughter, five hundred drachmae. . . . Tycho is to be freed on the marriage of my daughter, as are Philo and Olympus and his child. Do not sell any of the slaves who have served me, but employ them, and when they come of age, set them free as they deserve. (Quoted in The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle 3)

What sort of life did many fifth and fourth century Greek slaves – almost forty per cent of the population (Sinclair, Democracy 200) – lead, apart from Aristotle's gently treated and ultimately liberated house slaves? The parallels to the lives (and deaths) of Indians enslaved in encomienda, labouring and dying in New World gold mines, are chilling: "The silver-mines, pumping out bullion which formed the coins which paid for the corn imports which kept Athenians alive, seem to have swallowed slave-workers insatiably" (Davies 101).
Aristotelian philosophy was such a strong influence in Catholic theology (Aristotle and the American Indians 1) that even Las Casas, in his passionate arguments supporting Indian liberty, did not suggest that the theory of natural slavery was wrong, notwithstanding the fact that back in 1519 he had denounced Aristotle as a "gentile burning in Hell, whose doctrine we do not need to follow except in so far as it conforms with Christian truth" (quoted in Aristotle and the American Indians 16). Perhaps he had mellowed over the intervening years, or perhaps he perceived that a frontal attack on Aristotle was a losing proposition. In any case, he instead argued – repeating arguments that he had made constantly for more than thirty years – that on the facts as he saw them, the Indians simply did not fulfil Aristotle's criteria for natural slavery.

Predictably enough, Sepúlveda's counterargument consisted largely of "evidence" that Indians met the criteria for natural slavery. They were "barbarians" (Alvira and Cruz 103), "homunculi in whom hardly a vestige of humanity remains", who were "like pigs with their eyes always fixed on the ground" (from Sepúlveda's The First Democrats (1527), quoted in Pagden xxviii), and "cannibals" (Pagden xxviii; Aristotle and the American Indians 46). They were "given over . . . to all kinds of passions and abominations", fought amongst themselves incessantly before European contact, ran away from Spanish soldiers "like women", and worshipped idols (Aristotle and the American Indians 46-47). In essence, Sepúlveda repeated the damning assertions of the colonists who supported encomienda and, in fact, they were his primary source since he had never been to the New World or met an Indian himself (48).

What, then, was the result of the Valladolid Debate? According to Pagden – nothing:

There was no outcome. . . . But then no outcome was expected. The purpose of the exercise was almost entirely ceremonial. Like the meetings (juntas) of theologians and jurists which the Crown frequently convened to discuss delicate political matters and which in so many ways
it resembled, the "debate" had allowed full and exact expression to be given to the views of both sides. (xxx)

Perhaps it did not matter that this had, after all, been an exercise in rhetoric rather than a search for viable New World policy. By this time the harm had been done.

The Spanish had irreversibly destroyed the Arawak and Carib cultures, along with almost all the Caribbean Indians themselves. Undeterred, they had by then replaced the Indians with another natural slave, a hardier slave, the kidnapped African.

**Conscience: The Spanish Crown, Las Casas, the Colonists, and Sepúlveda**

I turn now to a consideration of how conscience theory can illuminate the behaviour of the Spanish Crown, Las Casas, the colonists, and Sepúlveda, focusing particularly on the theories of the Scholastics, Butler, and Hume and Smith.

**The Spanish Crown**

Campbell relates that the "ostensible function of the Requirement [Requerimiento], which was promulgated by the Spanish Crown, "was to ensure that the conquest satisfied the demands of Christian conscience", a conscience which "was never quite comfortable". Pagden, in a similar vein, expands on the issue:

Las Casas was always able to play upon a deep moral unease within royal and ecclesiastical circles. The Spanish Crown had a long history of anxiety over the legitimacy of its military adventures and ever since the twelfth century Castilian monarchs had sought the advice of jurists and theologians as to how to conduct, or to seem to conduct, their affairs. They may not have always taken this advice too literally for, as the greatest of the Spanish theologians of the sixteenth century Francisco de Vitoria once observed, kings are necessarily pragmatic beings forced "to think from hand to mouth". But the Spanish monarchs, the self-styled champions of Christendom, lived in constant fear of finding themselves out of favour with their God. (xxiv)

The Spanish Crown, as I have pointed out, responded to this fear by issuing the benevolent, albeit paternalistic, *Instrucciones* to Columbus in 1493, setting up the
encomienda system with its humane intentions, enacting protective laws like the 
Requerimiento and the laws of Burgos and Valladolid, appointing the Jeronymite 
Interrogatory to research the nature of Indians, implementing several social experiments 
between 1508 and 1530 to test whether Indians could live free, and instituting the 
Valladolid Debate of Las Casas and Sepúlveda in 1550 and 1551 to address, amongst 
other things, whether Indians might be natural slaves. How are we to understand this 
conduct in terms of conscience theory?

As a starting point, one might simply point to the deep-seated Catholicism of 
early sixteenth century Spain (Aristotle and the American Indians 8) and propose a 
somewhat unidimensional royal conscience – informed and driven by a fear of God – in 
essence, Hill's "popular religious conception" of conscience as "God-given instinctual 
access to moral truth" (17) and Langston's stark characterization of Thomistic 
conscience as "the voice of God, [which] ought to be obeyed" (40).

There remained difficult questions of application – calling to mind the Greek 
ingredient of "practical wisdom" that runs through Scholasticism – and the Crown was 
nothing if not pragmatic. For both Aquinas and Bonaventure, the Crown would innately 
know the general – God-given – principle, "do not harm your neighbour", associated with 
potential conscience. What exactly was the voice of God, through the Church, saying 
about Indians? What is a "neighbour"? Does it include Indians? This is the difficult 
problem of interpreting and applying a general rule in specific circumstances, recognized 
in the Scholastic theory of applied conscience. As a thoroughly Catholic monarchy, one 
steeped in Scholasticism and as yet hardly touched by the Renaissance, the Crown 
looked to the Church for guidance. Unfortunately for the Crown, the Church spoke with 
conflicting voices. The sermon of Montesinos, a lifetime of activism by Las Casas, and 
the promulgation of the bull Sublimis Deus all insisted upon the rationality, the humanity, 
the souls of Indians. Yet the Church was growing wealthy in the New World with land
taken from Indians. It held that humans could be natural slaves and indeed possessed Indian slaves itself. Rivera-Pagán makes the point thus:

[T]he Church [was] guilty of complicity in the dispossession, misery, and agony of the autochthonous communities. . . . The Church [could not] reproach the conquistadores or encomenderos, if she [did] not deal with her own complicity in the oppression of the native peoples.

At a theoretical level, this ultimately came to a head, of course, in the Valladolid Debate — which left the question quite unresolved. Fittingly, this internal Church conflict reflected the disintegration of Scholastic thought after Aquinas and Bonaventure, a disintegration well under way by the time of Petrarch, the second half of the fourteenth century:

Where serious study survived, it continued and elaborated the tradition of Scholastic thought, in which philosophy and theology became immensely complexified, jargon-laden, accessible only to scholars, and often embroiled in ferocious technical disputes over minutiae of doctrine and dogma quite impenetrable by the ordinary man . . . (Grayling 88)

This provides one explanation, in Scholastic terms, for the Crown's moral agitation from early colonization until 1550 and perhaps beyond: its applied conscience could not be resolved for the reason that it was never clear whether Indians were covered by the neighbour principle of potential conscience. Scholasticism, or at least its ecclesiastical descendants, had become incapable of rendering a clear — or any — answer. This, ultimately, was the question which the inquiries and experiments of the sixteenth century were aimed at answering: if the Church could not take a coherent stance, as a matter of potential conscience, on whether Indians were human and thus neighbours of the Spanish, the Crown would try to resolve the issue empirically. In that respect, the applied conscience of the Crown was indeed constantly at work, with endless legislation, experimentation, research and debate bearing on the nature of Indians. The Crown was diligent in this regard, even single-minded. But by the 1550s it seemed content with, or at least resigned to, simply allowing debate to air issues rather
than taking decisive action – a retreat, perhaps, into infamous Spanish legalism, after almost 60 years of irresolution, not to mention the impending *de facto* elimination of Caribbean Indians and firm subjugation of other Central and South American Indians. Perhaps the Crown simply despaired of the Church ever resolving the issue as a matter of potential conscience, Valladolid being the last theological gasp for the time being, and also found itself unable to resolve the question as a matter of applied conscience.

The application of Scholastic conscience theory to the issue of Spanish Caribbean Indians indicates its limited utility as a practical moral guide. Does a determination of the nature of Indian rationality and souls fall more properly into potential conscience or applied conscience? As the foregoing discussion illustrates, that is far from clear. While the Church held at least two quite different theoretical views on the subject, consistent with it being an issue of potential conscience, the Crown took practical measures to try to determine the issue, suggesting it is a matter of applied conscience. It looked to the Church for guidance on the same issue, notably in the Valladolid Debate, which ultimately provided no guidance at all. The boundary between what was to be Church edict and what was to be determined by the moral agent was far from being a bright line.

Can we better understand the Crown's conduct in terms of Butler's procedural view of conscience? Can the Crown's highly rationalistic laws, inquiries and experiments be characterized as aspects of, as Butler put it, reflective moral judgment? While Butler assumed, without explaining, the existence of some sort of innate access to standards of right and wrong, perhaps God-given (though he is silent on the issue), for him conscience involved an intellectual process in which religious authorities are important, but not overriding, considerations. His focus was on psychology rather than theology, the personal rather than the divine, conscience being the mediator of conflict between self-interest and an instinct for benevolence. Yet, all of the Spanish Crown's laws,
inquiries, instructions, and debates had aims that can best be understood as attempts to
salve a Scholastic conscience, of ensuring the Crown's eternal salvation. The Spanish
Crown was not pursuing these measures in a Butlerian attempt to find the balance point
between its own self-interest in the New World and the well-being of the Indians. The
real aim was, rather, to somehow determine what God required – and do it.
Accomplishing that involved analyzing and ascertaining Indian nature – are they "us" or
Other? – then applying the appropriate cluster of moral rules. The focus was on the
good of the Crown, not the Indians, notwithstanding the superficially benevolent – albeit
paternalistic – patina of its New World activities and pronouncements.

The same might, of course, be said in applying the conscience theories of Hume
and Smith. The literature does not convey any sense of the Crown trying to morally
imagine the Indians and their plight. Rather, the Crown's conscience was driven by
concern for its own exposure to divine punishment. Any beneficial result for Indians was
only a secondary effect, not a primary feature of the royal attempt to deal with its
conscience.

Yet, there is something in the half century or more of the Spanish Crown's
intense inquiry into Indian nature that seems commendable, at least if one limits the
analysis to Scholastic conscience theory. The Crown's efforts to exercise applied
conscience, to avoid misinformed conscience – one might even say the early hints of
Renaissance attitude implied by its rational research, experimentation, and legislating –
were continual and strong-minded. But this conduct was hindered by the impulse to
comply with preconceived external authority, that is, the badly compromised and
inconsistent authority of the Church, a problem that might have been avoided had the

Another approach taken by the Spanish monarchy, which is beyond the scope of this paper,
was the attempt to apply the principle of "just war" to the Indians. This principle, for example,
gave rise to the *Requerimiento*, which can additionally be understood as an attempt to salve the
royal conscience.
Crown taken an approach to dealing with its conscience more in line with the theories of Butler, Hume and Smith. In the end, this far surpassed English conduct in the New World, where "very few Englishmen theorized concerning the Indians", giving rise to "one of the greatest contrasts between the Spanish and English moral decision-making in America" (First Social Experiments 55).

**Las Casas**

The analysis of Las Casas' conscience, like his factual New World moral history, is more complicated than that of the Crown. Although he was Christian – indeed a Dominican brother who extolled the "Holy Catholic Faith" in his will (Pagden xvii) – Las Casas was a transitional and dynamic figure, manifesting the thought of both Scholasticism and the Renaissance. Thus, while Las Casas was a "spiritual son of Thomas Aquinas", Benjamin Keen opines that by the end of his life, "[p]rogressive Renaissance elements . . . dominate the Lascasian ideology, and Las Casas may rightly be regarded as a Spanish representative of a Renaissance humanist type" who "revolt[ed] against abstract, Aristotelian modes of thought".

In this vein, Las Casas displayed the dynamic, rational conscience anticipated by Scholasticism and more fully articulated in Butlerian and subsequent theories. Upon his arrival in the New World, it will be recalled, Las Casas, with apparently untroubled conscience, took part in attacks on Indians, possessed his own encomienda, and was unoffended by the sermon of Montesinos. Then, if we accept his account, a reading of a scriptural passage about the sinfulness of taking of another person's bread and labour led to Las Casas' crisis of conscience, one that would dramatically change the course of his life.

In the best of Scholastic traditions, Las Casas said that he spent days contemplating the passage and the sermon of Montesinos. This self-report is entirely
what one would expect of someone with Las Casas' Scholastic background: one applies reason with the goal of understanding and conforming with religious authority, thus quieting the conscience. In this formulation, Las Casas' epiphany was his understanding and acceptance of Ecclesiasticus 34:21-22 and its application to Indians. The problem, of course, is that the Church's position on the issue was, in the world at large, not so clear, in fact not at all clear. While Butler's theory of conscience allows for different results in similarly situated persons because of its personal and rational nature and denial of any external authority as definitive, Scholastic theory provides for only one "right" answer, yet the Church had at least two positions.

We can think of Las Casas' conscience in other ways. Rivera-Pagan suggests that Las Casas' voluminous writing – including The Tears of the Indians, A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies, and his History of the Indies – was an attempt to "ease his profound agony . . ., to exorcise the stain of complicity in the atrocities performed". This calls to mind, even if this is not Rivera-Pagan's intention, the Kantian and Freudian conceptions of conscience as the emotional buzzer of conscience, as judge and tormentor. Similarly, Domingo de Betanos, another Dominican, suffered a painful Freudian epiphany on his deathbed, withdrawing his lifelong belief that "the Indians were as incapable as children" (Aristotle and the American Indians 23) and providing us with an interesting instance of Freud's assertion that duress sharpens the conscience.

More complex insights into Las Casas' moral behaviour can be drawn from the theories of Butler, Hume and Smith. In terms of Butlerian theory, Las Casas certainly held reason in high esteem. Thus, he held environmental, evolutionary views of culture (Keen), seeing Indians as primordial Europeans, not the perpetual subhumans, animals, or natural slaves of Aristotle-derived theological theory. He was an avid proponent of a sort of idealistic pragmatism. He argued for conversion by peaceful means, not by
military action. He refused to baptize Indians who had not received proper instruction and he decried the mass – irrational – conversions of unprepared Indians carried out by other priests.

As mentioned earlier, Butler held that the point of using one's reason in moral decision-making was to find the appropriate balance between self-interest and benevolence towards others. In the Butlerian sense, Las Casas' conscience seems to have inclined in the direction of his instinct for benevolence toward Indians, quite unlike the colonists, who were consumed by self-interest. On the other hand, it may well be that the controversy Las Casas stirred and the attention he gained with his pro-Indian activities served his self-interest in some sense of personal psychological need, rendering his conduct more understandable in those terms and satisfying both psychological imperatives posited by Butler.

What of the application of Hume's and Smith's theories of conscience? The stirring of Las Casas' conscience by the plight of the Indians, his empathy for them, was obvious. No doubt, in keeping with Smith's analysis, it was strengthened by his lengthy, deep and direct involvement in the New World. By comparison, the experience of the Crown and protagonists like Sepúlveda was vicarious and distant; they could not understand, much less develop a feel for, Indian life and suffering, certainly not in the powerful and realistic first-hand manner of Las Casas. While Smith asserted that it is possible for us to morally imagine the suffering of a person on the other side of the earth, in his case the Chinese, this requires constant effort – the effort to morally imagine The Other's suffering – and it is all the harder to accomplish when the sufferer is out of sight and, perhaps, has never been in sight at all.

Notwithstanding his rationality and his sympathy for the Indians, Las Casas' conscience also responded to the fear of punishment by God, and in this sense he kept one foot firmly in the Scholastic world. Thus, the sinking of ships and the ruining of cities
by storms were, for Las Casas, signs of God punishing Spanish immorality. This was a cogent reason to treat Indians benevolently, in addition to such treatment being the necessary outcome of Butlerian reasoning or Hume's and Smith's instinct for sympathy and moral imagination. Notwithstanding his post-Scholastic tendencies, however, Las Casas did not reject the theory of natural slavery at Valladolid, only arguing that the Indians did not fulfill its Aristotelian criteria. Nor did he ever argue for complete Indian liberty or object to papal distribution of Indian land. Even if Indians were not Other, they were not quite the equals of Europeans, either. Finally, and most tellingly, Las Casas had nothing to say about black slavery (Rivera-Pagán, note 76), which by the time of the Valladolid Debate had filled the void created by the genocide of the Indians. Indeed, he owned black slaves himself (Aristotle and the American Indians 9). Even if Indians were not Other, Africans were, and their suffering did not seem to trouble his conscience.

In the end, Keen's suggestion that Las Casas was neither fish nor fowl, that he was a child of Scholasticism displaying elements of Renaissance consciousness, is well made out, although I would argue that the Lascasian revolt against Scholasticism is somewhat overstated. Las Casas could be a deep rationalist, reflecting Butlerian moral qualities, and he could morally imagine the Indian in the sense of Hume and Smith. Yet he continued, ultimately, to be driven by a Thomistic fear of divine retribution and to accept oppressive Aristotelian elements of Catholic theology, like natural slavery, an acceptance reflected in his own participation in black slavery. It is difficult, if not impossible, to understand why his conscience could be stirred by Indian slavery so deeply that he devoted his life to eliminating it, yet he was apparently unmoved by black suffering. Unfortunately, nothing in Las Casas' own writings or in the literature casts any light on the mystery.
The Colonists

It is tempting to characterize the colonists as without conscience or, if they had consciences, unheeding of them. Not only did they ignore Montesinos' condemnation of their treatment of the Indians, they even sought a retraction and his deportation to Spain. Montesinos had claimed: "I am . . . the voice of Christ crying in the wilderness of this island, and therefore it behooves you to listen, not with careless attention, but with all your heart and senses" ("Indians and Spaniards" 15). So the disregard for the friar would, at least on the surface, appear to be a clear violation of conscience in the Scholastic sense, a refusal to respond to conscience by falling into line with the moral authority of the Church.

Yet it must be remembered that, balanced against Montesinos' railing and scripture like the passage in Ecclesiasticus that had so pricked Las Casas' conscience, there also appeared to be religious authorization for the plunder and enslavement of Indians, in that the theology of the period accommodated theories of Indian subhumanity, animality and natural slavery. Further, the Church itself was inconsistent on how Indians were to be characterized and treated, partaking itself in the plunder of the New World and the enslavement of its inhabitants. At a certain level, then, one can imagine how a colonist's conscience might not be activated, in the Scholastic sense, by encomienda and other colonial practices. One interpretation, surely, is that colonial behaviour simply tracked one stream of Church behaviour, a strong stream, and this stream was taken to be in line with what God wanted: the use of Indians as beasts of burden in carving civilization out of the Caribbean wilderness. Conscience in the Scholastic sense is unlikely to be activated if the moral agent believes that the Church represents God's word and he or she is simply doing what the Church apparently ordains – and is in fact doing itself. The tendency to follow this line of Church authority, rather than that of Montesinos and Las Casas, was strengthened by the fact that Indian
cultural practices seemed, or were constructed as, depraved, thus threatening to pollute the very moral authority, Christianity, which the colonists sought to follow. This justified not only their exploitation but punishment, all made more cogent by mainstream aspects of theology put forth by the wealth-accumulating, slave-owning New World Church.

From a Butlerian viewpoint, there is little or no evidence in the literature that the typical colonist applied reason to the circumstances of the New World in any exercise that could reasonably be characterized as reflective moral judgment. If one accepts the Butlerian theory that conscience mediates self-interest and the instinct for benevolence, any such mediation was almost entirely skewed towards self-interest. This points to a certain weakness in Butlerian theory, the assumption that we somehow just know what is right and what is wrong in performing this calculus. Why did almost all colonists think that it was not morally blameworthy to so lethally exploit the Indians of the Caribbean? The most obvious answer is a cultural one. The dominant religious authority seemed to favour – or at least had a theory that supported – Indian subhumanity, animality or natural slavery, notwithstanding lone voices in the moral wilderness like Las Casas and the pro forma baptisms conducted by some priests. The Crown was distant, groping for answers itself, and rather useless as any sort of moral guide. As a matter of human psychology, then, in the absence of some coherent and cogent authority to the contrary, self-interest was very likely to prevail over benevolent instincts in any Butlerian moral calculus a colonist might be inclined to carry out. That self-interest was also bound to overwhelm any inclination to morally imagine the suffering of the Indian, as posited by Hume and Smith. This was a selfish aspect of psychology recognized by Butler, Hume and Smith in theory, and by Las Casas in practice – he reported that many of the colonists "had become so anaesthetized to human suffering by their own greed and ambition that they had ceased to be men in any meaningful sense of the term" (A Short Account 3).
The colonists were, by and large, lower class farmers who had gone to the New World to become *caballeros* with Indian serfs on their neo-feudal estates, not to become members of some sixteenth century NGO delivering food and medicine or doing an air and water quality survey. The theory of natural slavery, accepted by the Church, neatly fit their economic motivations – the Indian slaves of Spanish gold mines could be modelled, courtesy of Aristotelian theory, on the barbarian slaves of Greek silver mines. Had the colonists been early cultural anthropologists whose sole purpose was the study of Indian life in its undisturbed state, the result of Butlerian moral calculus or the moral imagination of Adam Smith might well have been different – preservation, not destruction, of the Indian. That was not the case.

**Sepúlveda**

One apologist for the slavery of Indians, and a well-educated and apparently thoughtful one, was Sepúlveda. Yet, like the typically uneducated and unreflective colonist, he viewed the Indian as a natural slave, the "*homunculi*" of his *First Democrats*. What was the source of Sepúlveda's apparently detailed knowledge of Indians, a knowledge which he applied in the best of Scholastic and Butlerian rational procedures in arriving at his position? He never went to America – thus Las Casas delighted in mocking Sepúlveda's lack of firsthand information: "God had deprived him of any knowledge of the New World" (quoted in *Aristotle and the American Indians* 48). Sepúlveda therefore relied on the accounts of those who had directly observed Indians, but he did so selectively, ignoring the accounts of Las Casas, Montesinos, and their kind (48).

This selectivity cannot have been accidental. As Hanke relates: "The dogmatism of Sepúlveda's utterances is the more striking when one considers the amount of information then [1550] available in Spain" (48). In contrast to Sepúlveda, for example,
Francisco de Vitoria was a professor charged with study of the Indian problem, who also never left Spain. Relying on reports, he came to share many or most of Las Casas' opinions and, in an amazing demonstration of moral imagination – of putting himself in the place of the other person – he pointed out that "if a canoe full of Indians had somehow reached Spain and 'discovered' it, this fact would by no means justify Indian sovereignty over Spain" ("Indians and Spaniards" 5).

Like the colonists themselves, Sepúlveda had motivations of his own which skewed the operations of his conscience. Hanke points out that Sepúlveda had spent many years in Italy and, at the time of the Valladolid Debate, was trying to "prove up to the hilt his abounding patriotism", having been viewed upon his return to Spain as "somewhat of a foreigner" (Aristotle and the American Indians 48). Accusing the Crown and Church of complicity in wrongful treatment of Indians would not have served his rehabilitation, to say the least. Sepúlveda's inclination for wilful blindness, disingenuousness, or perhaps even deceit in favour of his pursuit of career advancement was already apparent in his praise of a 1527 Spanish military intervention in Rome. Hanke has Sepúlveda claiming that the "meekness and humanitarian sentiments of the Spanish soldiers there, whose first thought after victory was to save as many of the conquered people, are well known". Actually, according to Hanke, the Spanish involvement in Rome was notorious for its looting, drunkenness, raping of nuns, burning of Church property, and other outrages not dissimilar to the violence against Indians recorded by Las Casas. Thus, says Hanke, the "sack of Rome . . . was a particularly unconvincing example of the benevolence and other virtues which Sepúlveda claimed for the Spanish soldiers" (45).

Unsurprisingly, Sepúlveda's account of Spanish treatment of Indians is, likewise, disingenuous at best. The conquest amounted to, he claimed, "a great transfer of culture" from Spain to the Indians. For example, the transfer of iron to the New World
more than compensated for the gold and silver trifles of which the Indians had been relieved (52-53). The lucky Indians received wheat and goats too. Sepúlveda asked: "How . . . can the Indians ever adequately repay the kings of Spain, the noble benefactors to whom they are beholden?" (53). Of course, we now know that they can indeed never repay the Crown for the iron, wheat and goats – the Spanish took not only all their gold but all their lives.

In the end, of all the Spanish actors in this moral drama, the one clear case of deliberate transgression of conscience, on any of the theories of Bonaventure, Aquinas, Butler, Hume or Smith, is Sepúlveda. He very likely constructed, when information in his hands indicated that he was wrong, a public position on relations with Indians that cynically served only his personal agenda. He did not make a bona fide attempt to hear and comply with the voice of God, nor did he exercise reflective moral judgment aimed at resolving a conflict between self-interest and an instinct for benevolence towards Indians, and he certainly did not make any attempt to morally imagine the Indians and their suffering.

Conclusion: Conscience and Otherness in the Spanish Caribbean

Analysis of Spanish behaviour during the colonization of the Caribbean illustrates the usefulness of classic conscience theories in reaching for an understanding of how the Spanish came to obliterate the Arawak and Carib people. At the same time, it is clear that these theories have conceptual limitations, especially in the escape hatch that the potential characterization of the Indian as Other provides to all these models of conscience, a characterization in which the Indian is not a full human being to whom conscientious conduct need be accorded.

Scholastic conscience can misfire in a number of ways. First, potential conscience may remain opaque. Thus compliance is difficult or impossible, no matter
how much effort one makes in cultivating applied conscience, since the external moral
standard set by potential conscience cannot be known with any certainty. In the Spanish
Caribbean case, this standard was not only unclear but internally contradictory, even
incoherent, with Montesinos, Las Casas, and their likeminded brethren on one hand,
arguing for the humanity of Indians, and Sepúlveda and his intellectual kin supporting
theories of Indian animality, subhumanity or natural slavery on the other. It is
understandable that the typical colonist would perceive the latter position as "correct",
since the Church was itself busily enjoying Indian property and slavery in the New World.
The operations of applied conscience were thus inevitably obstructed.

Another drawback of the Scholastic approach is the unclear nature of the
boundary between potential and applied conscience. Is determining the nature of
Indians truly a matter of potential conscience to be articulated – decreed – by Church
authorities? Or is it a matter of applied conscience, to be worked out by the moral
agent? The latter view would be consistent with the fact of the Crown's persistent efforts
– through social experiments, the enactment of laws and orders, and the sponsoring of
the Valladolid Debate – to answer this question. In the end, the typical colonist is left
with conflicting alternatives – to choose one of two diametrically opposed Church
positions on the nature of Indians or to try to determine the question personally as a
matter of applied conscience.

In a similar vein, this case study illustrates the fallibility of the Butlerian model on
two bases. First, Butler does not explain the source of our innate understanding of good
and evil, nor is that source obvious. For Butler, the Church and Crown positions are only
factors to be considered, not absolute authorities. But in performing the Butlerian moral
calculus of balancing one's self-interest against one's instinct for benevolence, those
external factors can play a disproportionate role and, I would argue, this is certainly true
of the Church's colonial conduct. Second, psychological factors like greed can skew
one's deliberations and there is every indication that this was a potent factor for the typical Spanish-Caribbean neo-caballero. Thus Butlerian reflective moral judgment, such as it was, ended up distorted – almost entirely – in the direction of self-interest. Had the Church or Crown provided stronger, coherent, and consistent positions, that may have assisted the typical colonist come to a more balanced result in the process of reflective moral judgment. Even if they were not determinative, they would have been influential.

Another factor which interfered with conscience, this time in the sense of Hume's and Smith's moral imagination, was the cultural distance between the Spanish and the Indians. As Smith explained, I am much more likely to be concerned about the loss of my little finger than the death of hundreds of millions in an earthquake on the other side of the world. It takes effort to meaningfully imagine the suffering of those distant people. By reason of the many factors reviewed in this chapter, Indians were very distant from the Spanish in cultural terms – and distant in geographic terms from the Crown, the Church authorities in Europe, and Sepúlveda. They were variously seen as exotic, childlike, subhuman, beasts of burden or, ultimately, as depraved and threatening to the religion-based values of the colonists. The typical Spaniard, then, may have been unable to see things from the Indian point of view, in the sense of Hume and Smith, because he actually perceived the Indian as a threat, to be treated punitively rather than benevolently. These rationales and misfirings of conscience, and construction of Indian Otherness, supported the European occupation of American land and the enslavement of its inhabitants and, ultimately, the extinction of the Arawak and Carib Indians.
IV
ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

My thesis is that conscience, in any of its classic formulations, is evaded when moral agents see the object of their actions as Other rather than "one of us". When this happens, conscience is not triggered and no meaningful moral decision-making takes place. As I mentioned in the Introduction, Harris articulates a succinct example of this principle: a Nazi concentration camp guard could spend the evening in the loving company of his family, untroubled after a day of torturing and killing Jewish inmates, for the reason that his prisoners were simply not part of his "moral community" and therefore "not objects of his moral concern" (176). They were Other, incapable of engaging his conscience in the first place, let alone engaging and then defeating it.

How does this occur? How can it be avoided?

Although the Greek playwrights left unexplored the deeper origins of female and barbarian Otherness, there is no doubt that women and barbarians – indeed anyone other than the relatively few Greek men who were citizens – were Other. They were lesser human beings, wild, irrational, governed by passion rather than reason. Greece was thought to represent the pinnacle of civilization, to be protected from the hazards posed both within and without by such unruly creatures. Perhaps the most deficient Greek justification for such Otherness is Aristotle's self-interested, disingenuous and utterly illogical theory of natural slavery – and the slave is surely the ultimate Other.

Despite its glaring shortcomings, Aristotle's hypothesis was revived by the Scholastics and still had enough force in the sixteenth century to stand as one pillar of
Indian slavery's theoretical foundations. As I described in Chapter III, there were additional reasons for the acceptance of Indian slavery. Europeans were culturally prepared to view exotic-appearing New World inhabitants as fantastical "wild men". Indian customs – for example, their sexual practices (real or imagined), refusal to mine and farm voluntarily, and disinterest in accumulating material goods valuable in European eyes – were considered forms of degeneracy justifying not only subjugation but punishment. Theologically-based approaches to the natural world supported a view of Indians as subhumans and even animals, destined to act as beasts of burden in the service of Spanish farmers-turned-caballeros carving civilization out of the Caribbean wilderness. The Spanish even claimed that Indians were incapable of caring for themselves and that European supremacy therefore benefited them, an assertion repeated by Sepúlveda – ignoring the fact that Indians had cared for themselves quite well prior to the arrival of rapacious Spaniards. As a matter of psychology, Spanish greed was an impediment to the operation of Spanish moral imagination – seeing the Indian as a human being – and this was exacerbated by the unstable moral leadership of the Crown and Church, a Church which itself participated in slavery and the accumulation of wealth. All of these factors rendered the characterization of Indians as Other more likely than not. Thus could Spanish colonists set about marauding the Caribbean, unhindered by conscience in any of its classic formulations.

Notes on a Twentieth Century Genocide

Whereas Spanish-Caribbean colonists came to see Indians as Other and eliminated them within a few decades of contact, Germans of the Nazi period inherited a culture in which the Jew had coexisted as an elaborately constructed Other, both for better and for worse, for up to fifteen centuries. A brief review of how this Jewish
Otherness arose helps explain how critical thinking and moral imagination can be attenuated in different cultural settings.

The literature is vast. While his work is problematic and contentious in many ways,25 Daniel Goldhagen's summary of the origins and evolution of Jewish Otherness constitutes a version of historical anti-Judaism and anti-Jewish attitudes typical of those that the Nazis would build upon, to devastating effect. Goldhagen relates that, as early as the fourth century, some Christian theorists were demonizing Jews as Christ-killers. They thought Jews should have become Christians after the Crucifixion and Resurrection, since those events had rendered Judaism obsolete. Judaism's failure to dissolve itself into Christianity seemed illegitimate, obstinate and sinful, creating "fundamental moral antagonism" between Jews and Christians.26 By the Middle Ages, the "Christian world conceived of Jews as being in binary opposition to Christianity", a view which played itself out in periodic purges when Jews were implausibly blamed and punished for disasters like the Black Death. Thus, "attacks and expulsions of Jews were a staple of mediaeval history, so extensive that by the mid-1500s Christians had forcibly emptied most of western Europe of Jews" (Hitler's Willing Executioners 50-53).

In Germany, Goldhagen says, by the late nineteenth century "the underlying . . . cultural model of 'the Jew' (der Jude) encompassed three notions: that he was different from the German, that he was a binary opposite of the German, and that he was not just benignly different but malevolent and corrosive" (55). Notwithstanding the contentious

25 Goldhagen, amongst other demerits, characterizes the historical oppression of Jews as broad and unrelenting, thus failing to acknowledge Christian exceptionalism and periodic détente. But his account of the rise and development of European anti-Jewish attitudes, summarized here, is otherwise essentially consistent with the mainstream literature.

26 On the early history of antagonism between Christians and Jews, see also Freeman (92, 131-33, 212, 223-24, 255, 266, and 367n4). Freeman adverts to the "enormously contentious" nature of any debate about the relationship of (anti-)Judaism and Christianity, "particularly in light of the Holocaust". But he adds: "It was inevitable that Christians would draw and defend boundaries between themselves and orthodox Jews, and that Jews would do the same to a religion which rejected their Law" (367) and he describes some of the early oppression Jews and Judaism suffered at Christian hands. Of course, the more difficult question is whether the gas chambers of the 1940s were also an inevitable outcome of drawing such boundaries.
nature of such one-dimensional historical accounts, the Nazis were able to use them as
the foundations for an ideology of "the Jew as the sinister Other perpetually seeking to
destroy goodness root and branch, in the case of Germany the root being the German
Volk" (A Moral Reckoning 77). In the same vein, David Cesarini characterizes Adolf
Eichmann's view of Jews as "a racial-biological threat to the Aryan people . . . inherent in
every Jew" (367).

Jews were not only a threat, but a subhuman one and perhaps not even that.
They were completely absent from the Nazi hierarchy of the human race, with its
superior Nordic type, descending through western European, southern European, Slav,
and Asian types, and finally on to blacks, who rated just above primates (Hitler's Willing
Executioners 411). Thus, said a 1938 article in the prestigious Deutsche Justiz, the Jew
"should not be seen as having kinship even with 'inferior' races". They were
Untermensch, subhumans (411), right off bottom of the phylogenetic scale. Similarly, in
the popular press, the cover of a 1921 German magazine depicted an ugly Jewish man's
head on the body of an octopus, tentacles wrapped around a beautiful, helpless blond
maiden (A Moral Reckoning 80), perhaps "inspired" by an 1893 article in the journal
Civiltà cattolica characterizing the so-called "Jewish nation" as an octopus with tentacles
reaching malignantly into almost every sphere of commercial activity (79-80). In 1943,
an article in the newspaper Deutscher Wochendienst declared: "The Jews are no people
like other people, but a pseudo-people welded together by hereditary criminality", so
their "annihilation . . . is no loss to humanity" (quoted in Hitler's Willing Executioners
394).

By the 1940s, then, the Nazis were able to present a social construction of Jews
as subhuman, animals, indeed dangerous animals – unchristian, threatening,
degenerate and perhaps even malevolent – deserving of punishment.
The Nazi Failure of Moral Imagination

Thus did ideology deliver Jews to a place beyond Nazi moral imagination, again evoking the Spanish anti-humanist view of Indians. Those swayed by the anti-Jewish dogma described by Goldhagen, and amplified by the Nazis, participated in the polar opposite of moral imagination, a sort of moral anti-imagination in which, as moral agents, they pushed and held The Other outside their moral community. This is especially disconcerting in light of long, close and peaceful contact between German Jews and Gentiles and the deep Jewish participation in German life which had been a feature of early twentieth century German society, even including Jewish military service on the German side during the Great War.27 This kind of "thinking" is the antithesis of that of Adam Smith's Englishman, who struggled mightily to engender sympathy for distant, unseen Chinese earthquake victims. Just as the Spanish imagined blue, square-headed Indians, the Nazis adopted a "fantastical construction of Jewry" (Hitler's Willing Executioners 414) which predictably "removed Jews utterly from the purview of the ethical code that protected non-Jewish members of society" (397). While Goldhagen's conclusion is typically overdrawn, it is clear that Jews became significantly, if not utterly, incapable of engaging the Nazi conscience.

Yet, Nazis were not fundamentally different from most human beings, somehow innately predisposed to orchestrate genocide. Michael Schermer, for example, recounts studies of Nuremberg prisoners performed by psychologist C.M. Gilbert and psychiatrist Douglas Kelley. Gilbert found that the defendants were all intelligent, "well-cultured and highly educated" (74), while Kelley reported that "the Hitlers and the Görings, the Goebbels and all the rest of them were not special types". He continued that "their like could very easily be found in America" and opined that Himmler was not "unusual or

27 Goldhagen greatly underplays this, giving rise to criticism about the imbalance of his historical account and, therefore, doubt about the conclusions he ultimately draws.
unique but . . . in many ways quite ordinary, [and] . . . could have lived out his life as a chicken farmer" (74-75). Similarly, Hannah Arendt was taken aback by Eichmann's entirely normal appearance in the dock at Jerusalem: he was "medium-sized, slender, middle-aged, with receding hair, ill-fitting teeth, and nearsighted eyes, [and] throughout the trial [kept] craning his scraggy neck toward the bench" (5). She asserts that "everyone could see that this man was not a 'monster'" (54). Indeed, Arendt relates, "[a psychiatrist] found that his whole psychological outlook, his attitude towards his wife and children, mother and father, brothers and sisters, and friends, was 'not only normal but most desirable'" (25-26). On Nazis in general, she surmises: "The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that there were so many like him, and . . . they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal" (276).

Further, these Nazis were motivated in predictably human ways, enumerated yet problematically dismissed out of hand by Goldhagen: "external compulsion", obedience to orders, situational and peer pressure, self-interest like career advancement, and failure to appreciate the overall significance of personal actions remote from the final act of killing²⁸ (Hitler's Willing Executioners 379-85). Similarly I have argued that Aristotle's personal interest in maintaining Athens' economic status quo may have been a factor in his poor attempt to justify natural slavery. Spanish colonists' greed and Sepúlveda's desire to restore his credentials as a loyal Spaniard interfered with their critical thinking and moral imagination. If oppressing Jews will lead to promotion, help me fit in with my peers, or prevent me from disobeying a race law – all obvious human motivations even if Goldhagen seems to deny it – it is helpful to see Jews as Other, to in effect work at the very opposite of morally imagining them. Because they are then outside my moral

²⁸ An example would be designing a high temperature furnace, not knowing that it was destined for the crematorium of a concentration camp rather than a hospital.
community, my conscience will not stand in the way of any conflicting motivation to seek promotion, be at peace with my peers, or obey the law.

Arendt draws these issues of personal motivation and withered thinking together in describing Eichmann:

Except for an extraordinary diligence in looking out for his personal advancement, he had no motives at all. . . . [H]e certainly would never have murdered his superior in order to inherit his post. He merely . . . never realized what he was doing. . . . He was not stupid. It was sheer thoughtlessness – something by no means identical with stupidity – that predisposed him to become one of the greatest criminals of that period. . . . That such remoteness from reality and such thoughtlessness can wreak more havoc than all the evil instincts taken together which, perhaps, are inherent in man – that was, in fact, the lesson one could learn in Jerusalem. (287-88)

Eichmann's use of cliché, his formulaic way of expressing himself and "his almost total inability ever to look at anything from the other fellow's point of view" (47-48) again evoke Hume's and Smith's notion of sympathy. Not only did Eichmann fail to develop sympathy for Jews, he may in fact have been entirely incapable of it. As Arendt says: "The longer one listened to him, the more obvious it became that his inability to speak was closely connected with an inability to think" (49). Not only was he thoughtless, he seemed to have lost the very ability to be thoughtful.

In this vein, Bernard Bergen argues that the Nazi regime had a profound effect on the thinking ability of Germans generally in the 1930s and 1940s (4, 18-34). He contends that totalitarianism destabilizes moral meaning and thwarts moral reasoning, indeed reasoning in general. Loyalty, obedience to orders, acceptance of received wisdom, collective action and group solidarity replace thinking. Thus, by the 1940s, Eichmann and many others accepted Nazi racial ideology uncritically, as an extension or renewal of historic anti-Jewish attitudes. This ideology removed Jews from the Nazi moral community and made the Final Solution possible, even though it represented a massive inversion of the general prohibition against the age-old moral principle, "Thou
shall not kill". In essence, argues Bergen, the totalitarian nature of the Nazi state tended to deflate the capacity for thinking – and concomitantly for morally imagining Jews.

The unusual case of wartime Denmark highlights Bergen's point. Arendt contends that the experience of living in Denmark actually reactivated the moral imagination of Nazis stationed there, to the extent that they not only refused to take any action against Danish Jews but even assisted in their escape to Sweden. She says: "What [Himmler] did not reckon with was that – quite apart from Danish resistance – the German officials who had been living in the country for years were no longer the same" (172). The Nazi military commander, General von Hannecken, refused to order Jews to surrender for work, nor would he make soldiers available for search-and-arrest operations. Even SS units stationed in Denmark resisted anti-Jewish orders from Germany. Amazingly, they went so far as to ignore a high-ranking officer with a reputation for "ruthless toughness" sent by Eichmann to resolve the problems with the round-up. When fresh, untainted police units were finally sent directly from Germany to perform door-to-door searches and arrests, Dr. Werner Best, the Reich plenipotentiary in Denmark, tipped off Danish authorities a few days before their arrival, facilitating the escape of the vast majority of Danish Jews to Sweden (172-73). Arendt explains this rebirth of Nazi moral imagination, once out from under the thumb of totalitarian ideology, in the following terms:

Politically and psychologically, the most interesting aspect of this incident is perhaps the role played by the German authorities in Denmark, their obvious sabotage of orders from Berlin. It is the only case we know of in which the Nazis met with open native resistance, and the result seems to have been that those exposed to it changed their minds. They themselves apparently no longer looked upon extermination of a whole people as a matter of course. (175)
Rationality and Irrationality Revisited

The Nazi misuse of Jewish property, labour and lives has another theoretical and empirical parallel with the lethal sixteenth century oppression of Caribbean Indians. Like the Spanish extermination of the Arawaks, the Nazis' waste of the large, talented Jewish population, especially in wartime, seems so counter-productive to their own interests as to be utterly irrational, involving such activities as scrubbing streets with small brushes and acid while dressed in fine clothes (Hitler's Willing Executioners 286-87) and building walls, tearing them down overnight, then rebuilding them the next day (286). When death was inflicted, it tended to be cruelly administered in a way that, for example, the euthanasia of the mentally ill was not (398). This humiliation and brutality, according to Goldhagen, satisfied a Nazi emotional need to punish Jews for their perceived parasitism of the Volk (285). Taking these emotional constraints into account, the economics of Jewish war work takes on at least a patina of rationality (294). But such work was managed "in an absolutely irrational manner from the viewpoint of production" (296). Rather than maximizing the potential economic contribution of Jews, the Nazis succeeded only in "murderous, uneconomic action that casts still greater doubt on the notion that productive criteria guided" Nazi Jewish policy (300). Much the same might be said of the quickly depopulated, barren islands the Spanish left to be occupied by other European colonizers. In both cases, superficially rational theories supporting exploitation and punishment of The Other had practical results that were irrationally adverse to the moral agents' own material interests. *Sic transit ratio.*

Roles of Conscience and Otherness in the Holocaust: A Summary

What emerges from this brief survey, then, is an illustration, like those in Chapters II and III, of how conscience can be entirely evaded when objects of moral decision-making are seen as Other. Even more elaborately than the Spanish had
constructed Indian Otherness, Nazi ideology drew on fifteen centuries of anti-Judaism to construct a fantastical view of Jews as subhuman, animalistic, physically lazy, threatening, dangerously unchristian, injurious to the Volk, and deserving of cruel, punitive treatment and death. Many Nazis accepted this aggravated Otherness, their critical thinking hindered by totalitarianism and by motivational factors like compliance with authority, the law and peer pressure, desire for promotion, and failure to appreciate the greater significance of acts remote from actual killing. This Otherness had well-known and disastrous consequences for the Jews of Nazi Germany and was utterly irrational in its waste of potential resources for Nazi society.

The "Yellow Race": Otherness in Recent Canadian History

Venal administration in the Spanish Caribbean and totalitarianism in Nazi Germany promoted the atrophy of thoughtfulness and contributed to the exclusion of Indians and Jews from their potential moral communities. But neither factor is a necessary condition for the languishing of moral imagination. Otherness and its consequences can and do occur in liberal democracies. For example, a recent case of race-based Otherness in Canada was the concentration and internment of Japanese-Canadians during World War II. Adachi recalls how Japanese immigrants, poorly educated but hard working farmers and fishers, settled in enclaves on the West Coast during the early twentieth century (26, 50). Their insularity was both a result and an ongoing cause of isolation from mainstream Canadian society, involving factors like "common language, food and customs" (109), Japanese-Canadian Buddhism, and white prejudice. All of this was expressed in various forms of "implicit social segregation and actual political and economic segregation" (110).

The Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbour and Hong Kong in December 1941 signalled an ominous turn in the manifestation of this Japanese-Canadian Otherness.
Now, not only were they Other, but a threatening Other. Thus, Howard Green, MP for
Vancouver South, could announce that: "We should be protected from treachery, from a
stab in the back" (183, 199) and Kamloops City Council decreed, without a hint of irony:
"There is only one thing to do – what any civilized country does in the time of war –
intern them!" (199). The result was a round-up of all Japanese-Canadians, confiscation
of their homes and fishing boats, and their internment in labour camps, all duly reported
in a 1942 booklet of the federal Department of Labour, Removal of Japanese from
Protected Areas, and in the Department's 1947 closing report, Report on Re-
Establishment of Japanese in Canada, 1944-1946. While there were no gas chambers,
no piles of gold teeth, no warehouses full of human hair, more than twenty thousand
"Japanese" – of whom almost sixty per cent were born in Canada and another fourteen
per cent were naturalized (Re- Establishment 27, Table 6) – were subjected to arrest,
years of internment, and expropriation of property for which they were never fully
compensated.

Both Department of Labour reports make the claim that the internment was
necessary to ensure continental security in a time of war. Yet, even if security was a
rational political goal, it was pursued in an utterly irrational manner. There were no
investigations of individuals, no meaningful attempts to determine which, if any,
Japanese-Canadians actually were security threats. The RCMP simply arrested all
Japanese-Canadians on the assumption that some of them might be risks. The author
of Removal explained government policy this way:

[T]his group of people numbering over 23,000 were (sic) immediately
classified as "Alien". Here were represented Japanese who still retained
their natural loyalty to the land of their birth. Here also were the
indifferent, interested only in their physical and material well-being; and
others, Canadian born, torn between family ties and an appreciation of
this country which they had come to consider their own. There were also
others who were entirely uninfluenced by ties of parentage, real
Canadians, possessing that spirit of independence which they cherished
as their rightful heritage. This group of people of varied objectives,
conflicting loyalties and diverse aspirations were now the victims of the cruel action of their race. (2) [Emphasis added]

Astonishingly, then, the report's author displaced the responsibility for internment onto Japan, just as Creon blamed Antigone for her fate and Medea accused Jason of "forcing" her to kill their sons.

These failures of critical thinking and moral imagination continued well into the post-war period. Re-Establishment, for example, makes no apology even though it was published in 1947. Indeed, it expresses no doubts or second thoughts, simply repeating the mantra that "in December 1941, the immediate task was to remove approximately 21,000 people of Japanese origin from the Pacific coast area for security reasons" (5). A semi-official 1973 history of the RCMP, The Royal Canadian Mounted Police: A Century of History, does not even mention, let alone try to justify, the Force's central role in wartime arrests, seizures, and guarding of internment camps, though the chapter on World War II does recount such crucial events as the interim disbandment of the Musical Ride, the purchase of eleven radio-equipped patrol cars for Manitoba Mounties, and the issuing of a traffic ticket in the badlands near Brooks, Alberta (201).29

What emerges, then, is an oppression that, while not genocidal like the cases of the Arawaks and Jews, shares some of their essential features in its production of a threatening Japanese-Canadian Otherness. Thus, conscience in any of its classic formulations went largely untroubled in wartime Canada, and after. There is no evidence of applied conscience, no reflective moral judgment, no Kantian or Freudian torment on the part of secular authorities, churches or private citizens. As Adachi puts it: "Not one effective voice had been raised by white Canadians; even the CCF, for some

29 On a personal note, I went through RCMP basic training in 1980. The toughest academic course in the program was History of Policing, which involved voluminous reading and a mandatory pass mark of 100%. There was no mention whatsoever of the Force's role in the Japanese-Canadian internment.
years an uncompromising champion of citizenship rights for the Japanese, expressed itself in favour of the evacuation 'for reasons of defence". Some churches not only failed to protest the internal deportations, they even assisted in carrying them out (218-19). In short, whites seemed by and large unable to morally imagine the Japanese-Canadian. The only glimmer of sympathy in the official record is found in the words of the government author who allowed that the internment of loyal Canadians might perhaps be a form of victimization, although even that is coloured by self-exculpation and the ludicrous portrayal of the Japanese enemy as the real culprit who, impliedly, left the Canadian government with only one path. If this slim morsel is sympathy, it falls far short of the type contemplated by Hume and Smith. Ultimately, as with the events portrayed in the Greek tragedies, Spanish conduct in the Caribbean, and the Holocaust, there is a real question as to the rational self-interest of what occurred – many of those interred loyal Canadians who spent the war growing sugar beets might well have made fine military translators and intelligence officers in the Pacific theatre.

Onward: Mature Conscience and an Expanded Moral Community

In all these cases, more effective moral imagination might have mitigated oppression by drawing The Other into the moral agent's moral community and permitting conscience to operate. But the ability to morally imagine was constricted in disparate ways, both personal and general.

An overarching factor, especially likely to put moral imagination at risk, is allowing oneself to sink too deeply and easily into the dominant moral ethos of one's culture. Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides – and Socrates, Plato and Aristotle – were all deep thinkers seeking out the good. Yet, like their fellow citizens, none of them advocated the equality of women and barbarians or agitated against slavery. A dominant feature of the early Spanish Caribbean was the attempt to recreate feudalism
with Indians as serfs and Spaniards as lords. Few were the colonists who could envisage any other way of relating to Indians – prominently, only Montesinos and Las Casas. Finally, few white Canadians of the 1940s, not even churches and former champions of Japanese-Canadians like the CCF, could conceive of the "yellow race" – the vast majority born in Canada or naturalized Canadian citizens – as anything other than Other, morally anti-imagined into enemy status, who had to be imprisoned. If some of the internees were loyal Canadians, their collateral Otherness nonetheless doomed them.

**Thoughtfulness and the Mature Conscience**

All of these cases demonstrate a tendency to surrender to majoritarian norms rather than exercise independent moral imagination. In that sense, conscience may be distressingly Thomistic in much of its real world operations. If religious conscience is the voice of God and our role is simply to hear and obey it, have we done no more than replace the voice of God with other voices, secular fonts of moral "truth" which are similarly to be obeyed? Is it not only totalitarianism, but the particular moral tide of time and place, that can sweep us along and drown our moral imagination? Hart expresses the problem in these terms:

Thoughtlessness. Maybe another word for taking the easy way out, for surrendering to the party line, settling for conventional wisdom, the stereotypes and clichés and "expert commentary" that swirl ever more thickly about us. . . .

. . . [T]he burden of thinking weighs heavily; the moral demands thrust upon us as independent, rational individuals can seem too much to bear. . . . [H]ow tempting it is to let our minds shut down and simply join up – with some welcoming institution, bureaucracy, subculture, belief system. (96-97)
Thus – Clytemnestra, Antigone, Jason, the Spanish-Caribbean colonist, the German in the street, indeed the *Canadian* in the street.\textsuperscript{30}

Long ago, Adam Smith similarly pointed out that moral imagination is not an easy, artless activity. It requires attentiveness, intentionality and effort. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith wrote this in answer to the question of what ultimately moves us to consider "the greater interests of others":

It is not that soft power of humanity, it is not that feeble spark of benevolence which Nature has lighted up in the human heart . . . It is a stronger power, a more forcible motive, which exerts itself upon such occasions. It is reason, principle, conscience . . . (137)

[The moral agent] must consider all the misfortunes which may befal (sic) himself, his friends, his society, or his country, as necessary for the prosperity of the universe, and therefore as what he ought, not only to submit to with resignation, but as what he himself, if he had known all the connexions and dependencies of things, ought sincerely and devoutly to have wished for. (236-37)

In this, many Athenians, Spanish-Caribbean colonists, Nazis and white Canadians of the 1940s failed – and The Others of those times and places paid the price. Indeed, as I have argued, such failures of moral imagination were so irrational that moral agents acted even against their own self-interest by failing to include The Other in their moral communities.

The dean of twenty-first century philosophy, Jürgen Habermas, recently demonstrated effective moral imagination in the face of personal adversity. Richard Wolin explains how Habermas, "[u]ntil recently . . . known as a resolutely secular thinker" who rarely wrote about religious matters, gave a public lecture in late 2001 in which he "stressed the importance of mutual toleration between secular and religious approaches\textsuperscript{30}\textendash

\textsuperscript{30} Another strand of conscience theory addresses the translation of thought into action: how is it that a moral agent may consider an action wrong but carry it out nonetheless (or consider an action right yet fail to execute it)? This has roots in Aristotle’s concept of the will, later elaborated by such thinkers as St. Paul, Augustine, Aquinas, and voluntarists like Scotus (Langston 125-28). It is, however, beyond the scope of this paper, which focuses on situations in which the moral agent does not perceive the action in issue as wrong, i.e., the conscience is untroubled rather than activated and then resisted.
to life". He then entered "a high profile dialogue" with the future Pope Benedict XVI.

Demonstrating a countervailing lack of moral imagination – indeed what can only be termed an appalling example of anti-imagination, narrow-mindedness and even closed-mindedness – a "number of the philosopher's . . . friends and followers were taken aback by [Habermas'] willingness to have a dialogue with one of Europe's most conservative prelates". At a subsequent conference at Lodz University, Habermas explained his engagement with religious thinkers and religious thought in terms of "discourse ethics":

Not only must believers tolerate others' beliefs, including the credos and convictions of nonbelievers; it falls due to disbelieving secularists, similarly, to appreciate the convictions of religiously motivated fellow citizens. From the standpoint of Habermas's "theory of communicative action", this stipulation suggests that we assume the standpoint of the other.

. . . The criterion for religious belief systems that wish to have their moral recommendations felt and acknowledged is [similarly] the capacity to take the standpoint of the other.

Such discourse and "tak[ing] the standpoint of the other" were, more often than not, not to be found in the cases reviewed in this paper. Sepúlveda may have engaged Las Casas in discourse, but it is altogether unlikely that he assumed Las Casas' standpoint. He would never have had a discourse with Guarionex, king of Hispaniola (A Short Account 18), much less imagined himself in Guarionex' place.

Does this startling development in the thought of Habermas serve as a harbinger of retreat from the reductionism of the past hundred years – away from the bleakness of Freud's conscience as warning bell and Hunter's utter denial of its existence, back to the humanity of thinkers like Hume and Smith with their rich ideas about sympathy and moral imagination? While Habermas' discourse ethics does not explicitly revive the concept of conscience, that may in time be a collateral benefit of his fresh, liberated approach to moral dialogue. One recent development, the emergence of a theory of "mature conscience", proposed by John Cavanagh and others, suggests that a more
complex approach to conscience has a place in our thinking about moral decision-making:

The person with a mature conscience is one who, when confronted by difficult decisions in the ethical order, carefully evaluates, insofar as he can, all aspects of the matter. On this basis he comes to a practical judgment about what is right and what is wrong. Then he acts on the matter with a functional certitude — that is, without unreasonable fears and doubts.

Maturity of conscience gives great freedom of thought and activity because the mature person is not restricted by taboos, fears, obsessions, or ambivalence, or other restrictive forces. Such maturity gives an incentive to seek greater freedom, which gives even greater maturity. (384)

Thus, the mature conscience takes our journey towards personal liberty, individual responsibility and intellectual dynamism — started with Bonaventure, developed by Butler, Kant, Hume and Smith, and interrupted by Darwin, Marx and Freud — to its functional zenith. This approach to conscience dispenses with its more fragile formulations, like forcing one's moral beliefs into conformity with Church-decreed potential conscience or responding automatically to conscience in its guise as a purely affective aspect of the superego. It also moves firmly from the theoretical to the empirical; Langston, for example, emphasizes the pragmatic value of such a multidimensional, personal, learning-based approach to conscience:

[T]he main characteristic of mature conscience [is] practical insight. This insight is gained from training and experience. . . . [This] involves the willingness of the mature conscience to follow its own decisions even at the risk of condemnation by other good people or even by legitimate authority.

. . . The importance of viewing conscience as a positive source cannot be overemphasized. In a century that tends not to discuss the nature of conscience in depth, the portrayal of conscience as a positive, formative force is a major innovation. It differs markedly from the notion of conscience as a reactive punisher of misdeeds offered by Freud and taken for granted by many thinkers in the twentieth century. The positive view of conscience is tied to cultivation of the virtues, especially prudence (in the sense of practical wisdom). (118-19)
Ironically, many features of the mature conscience were contemplated over two millennia ago in the Aristotelian concept of "practical wisdom", reflected in the balanced notion of *sophrosyne*. If only more Greeks, Spaniards, Germans and Canadians had been able to cultivate mature conscience, had been on the alert for their own thoughtlessness, had worked at developing sympathy for The Other as Hume and Smith conceived it, they might well have turned aside the destructive (im)moral tides that rolled in and drowned barbarians, Arawaks, Jews and Japanese-Canadians.

The Other and the Moral Community of the Future

If our conceptions of conscience can be enriched by envisaging and nurturing the mature conscience, is it similarly possible to diminish the extent of Otherness? That is, can we somehow expand our moral community and come to see fewer and fewer others as Other, in conjunction with developing mature conscience?

Recent work in history, anthropology and evolutionary psychology suggests that not only is such a change in human values possible, it may well have been occurring for many thousands of years. These disciplines provide an interesting explanation of how social units – moral communities – have gradually grown over hundreds of millennia from small, mutually hostile bands to large, comparatively peaceful twenty-first century nations. Schermer sets out an account typical of the genre (31-40). From about 100,000 to ten thousand years ago, we lived in small hunter-gatherer groups, each numbering in the tens or low hundreds. About thirty-five thousand years ago "improved [our] tool kit dramatically" (33), resulting in a leap in the production and

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Schermer usefully reviews the literature on this point, demonstrating the significantly lower incidence of inter-group conflict in large contemporary states as compared to band and tribal societies (97-102). As one dimension of the analysis, the data he collates indicate a steady decline in death rates from warfare as the size of social units increases. Thus, for example, the death rate from warfare in twentieth century Europe and the USA was under two per cent despite two major and highly technological wars, whereas it was thirteen per cent in 4100 BCE Denmark and over thirty per cent in northern British Columbia between 1500 BCE and 500 CE.
complexity of cultural artifacts like clothing and dwellings. This was accompanied by the emergence of language and cultural practices – like burial – which signalled the emergence of abstract, symbolic thought. By thirteen thousand years ago, the use of language had become global. At about the ten thousand year mark, agriculture arose, in tandem with a significant increase in population and its eventual concentration in villages and towns. Accordingly, the size of social units came to number in the thousands.

This account contributes to an understanding of why we view some humans as Other. Schermer points to the principle of "evolutionary in-groupness", reflected in "the notion of 'God's chosen people'" (39). Drawing heavily on the work of Jared Diamond, he explains:

Social obligations . . . depend on human relationships. "Because a band or tribe contains only a few dozen or a few hundred individuals respectively, everyone in the band or tribe knows everyone else and their relationships. One owes different obligations to different blood relatives, to relatives by marriage, to members of one's own clan, and to fellow villagers belonging to a different clan". Conflicts are directly resolved within these small bands because everyone is related to one another or knows one another. Members of the band are distinctly different from nonmembers on all levels. "Should you happen to meet an unfamiliar person in the forest, of course you try to kill him or else run away; our modern custom of just saying hello and starting a friendly chat would be suicidal", Diamond reflected. (36)

Schermer suggests that the size of the typical in-group is about fifty to four hundred, with the mid-range being one hundred to two hundred and the "magic number" being 150. In support of his thesis, he points to research indicating that: (1) we usually know no more than 150 people well; (2) a Stone Age couple would produce about 150 descendants over four generations; (3) the population of the earliest agricultural communities was about 150; and (4) sociology suggests that shunning and similar informal processes do not function in groups of over two hundred (41-42). We persistently tend to see those outside this core, familiar group as The Other because we
are biologically prepared to do so – we left the band-tribe lifestyle only ten thousand years ago, a blink of the eye in evolutionary time. So, as Hart evocatively puts it:

[N]atural selection, like an outdated military strategy, has equipped us to fight the last war; our brain functions . . . are adapted to conditions of the past. We modern humans . . . are wonderfully attuned to cope with the threats and opportunities presented by life wandering the Stone Age African savannah. (65)

Thus, we instinctively fear lions and crocodiles but not vehicular traffic, a far greater hazard to humans in the twenty-first century. Fortunately, the ability to think abstractly enables us to take care around speeding cars as a matter of cultural learning, filling in the lacuna in our instincts.

This offers a clue as to how larger social groupings like tribes, villages and towns could begin and prosper in the first place. Obviously, such societies cannot survive if their members continually kill or run away from every human being other than the 150 or so they recognize. Schermer, reflecting mainstream theory, suggests that cultural innovation, in the form of religion-supported morality, set rules on how to treat strangers and mediated our biological drive for in-group affiliation. Seabright similarly contends that it is the human capacity for abstract, symbolic thought that makes social group expansion and all its comforts and benefits possible. An economist, he expresses this in terms of trust, arguing that an early expression of moral imagination was trade: "You give me meat from your mammoth in exchange for a promise of meat in the future . . . How can you be sure I will keep my promise?" (48) Somehow such trusting exchanges between strangers did start and The Other, initially a complete stranger who had previously evoked a "fight or flight" response, now entered the moral agent's moral community, to everyone's advantage:

Once bands were willing to make peaceful contact with other bands, they could exchange with them, thereby enormously expanding the kinds of foods, tools, and resources to which they had access. We have evidence of exchange between hunter-gatherers from many thousands of years before the foundation of agriculture, although their lifestyle must have
made such contacts sporadic and limited by comparison with the opportunities available to sedentary farmers in later millennia. (40)

Underlying all of this, argues Seabright, is the emergence of cognition, "a sophisticated capacity for psychological insight" and "social intelligence" (41) – which, I suggest, have clear links to the mature conscience described by Cavanagh and Langston. In contemporary society, these are expressed in ways that we now take for granted. We walk calmly down a city street full of strangers, who may be unknown to us but are not The Other as once they would have been (113) – to be killed or quickly put at a distance. We board a plane piloted by a complete stranger, surely a robust articulation of trust (17). Fifty thousand years ago, say evolutionary psychologists and anthropologists, my early Homo sapiens doppelganger would have done no such thing.

From a somewhat different perspective, Joel Kagan, a developmental psychologist, proposes five uniquely human, morality-related, abilities that flow from our ability to think abstractly:

(1) to infer the thoughts and feelings of others,
(2) to be self-aware,
(3) to apply the categories "good" and "bad" to events and to self,
(4) to reflect on past actions, and
(5) to know that a particular act could have been suppressed. (169)

Thus, says Kagan:

You will never see a guilty chimp. They can recognize another chimp in distress and perhaps appreciate in a primitive way that an action they initiated caused the distress. But they cannot reflect on that sequence and conclude that events could have been otherwise. (166)

Similarly, Rolston quotes Frans de Wall:

It is hard to believe that animals weigh their own interests against the rights of others, that they develop a vision of the greater good of society, or that they feel lifelong guilt about something they should not have done. (212)

In short, then, a unique feature of our species is the appearance and development of abstract, symbolic thought that is a central component of the richer
classical conceptions of conscience. The social control aspect of this cognitive ability—albeit a fallible one—involves moral awareness that seems distinctively human and incorporates the ability to interact in a trusting, peaceful way with people we have never met, to the benefit of all. In the early days of *Homo sapiens*, we treated as Other anyone other than the 150 people we recognized, who comprised the insular moral community of our family and band. Now, we live in moral communities numbering in the millions, by and large in peace and to our mutual benefit, albeit with the spectre of Otherness always lurking below the surface and occasionally bursting through it.

Schermer proposes a hopeful model he calls the Bio-Cultural Evolutionary Pyramid (47-50), in which he sketches the historical expansion of the moral community from family to extended family, through local community to ever expanding societies like city states, nations and commonwealths. He goes one hopeful step further, predicting that this long term trajectory will, or at least has the potential to, take us to a point at which the entire species and finally the biosphere enter our moral community, a state he calls "biophilia".  

A historical example of such an extension of moral imagination to the biosphere is traced by Thomas in *Man and the Natural World*. He points out that by 1800, as the study of natural history took hold of the English imagination, the easy assumption of human superiority that had prevailed in Elizabethan England dissipated. People started to realize—for example through the development of comparative anatomy—that the bright line between humans and animals is not so bright after all (122-31). One result was the emergence of compassion towards animals in the late 1700s, perhaps unsurprising in view of the work of Hume and Smith in that century. This fuelled the reconstruction of animals from beasts to "fellow mortals"—"companions, friends and

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32 As I mentioned in Chapter I, Adam Smith anticipated this notion in the eighteenth century when he wrote that our moral imagination is capable of "embracing" the immensity of the universe" (235).
brothers" in the poetry of Blake, Burns and Coleridge (172) – and even led to expressions of moral concern for such creatures as snakes, worms and flies. In time, this trend also bore fruit in the increasingly humane treatment of slaves, children, prisoners and the mentally ill (175), a sort of reverse moral vector.

To this day, however, we have not achieved consistent and robust moral imagination for other animals, not even for fellow primates. As Diamond points out in *The Third Chimpanzee*:

> At present we make a fundamental distinction between animals (including apes) and humans, and this distinction guides our ethical code and actions. For instance . . . it's considered acceptable to exhibit caged apes in zoos, but it's not acceptable to do the same with humans.

> . . . It's considered acceptable to subject apes, but not humans, without their consent to lethal experiments for purposes of medical research. The motive for doing so is precisely that apes are so similar to us genetically.

> (29)

So the promising trajectory towards biophilia has proven uneven. Although we have come a long way in the past thirty-five thousand years, we are still not able to include the biosphere, not even all of humanity, in our moral community. A twenty-first century example of the failure of moral imagination, red in tooth and claw, occurs in Africa, where members of the Movement for the Liberation of Congo "are known primarily for eating Pygmies". Their response to charges of murder and cannibalism could have rolled off the tongue of Spanish-Caribbean colonists and Nazi Germans: "Pygmies are subhuman" (Salopek 85). The inference is age-old. Pygmies are Other, not members of the Congolese moral community, not even human, so they may be killed and eaten without troubling the Congolese conscience.

If Schermer's sanguine view of the biosphere as moral community is to become a reality, we will have to doggedly "restrain by the slender threads of abstract reasoning the passions and resentments of the prehistoric tribe" (Seabright 47). Robert Sapolosky optimistically adds: "Humans may be hard-wired to get edgy around the Other, but our
views on who falls into that category are decidedly malleable. The cultivation of mature conscience offers one route to this objective, a destination in which attributions of Otherness diminish towards the vanishing point. The alternatives are, at best, maintaining our often thoughtless status quo and hoping it all turns out well for our heirs and, at worst, rolling the clock back thirty-five thousand years, neglecting our capacity for symbolic thought, and throwing stones at or turning our backs on anyone other than the 150 people we know.

We can do better.

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33 Recent brain imaging studies suggest that we have a biological propensity for xenophobia centered in the amygdala, but that it is easily overcome by cultural influence. Susan Fiske's experiments in this area indicate when one "subtly bias[es] the subject beforehand to think of people as individuals rather than a group . . . the amygdala does not budge" (Sapolosky). According to Sapolosky, a similar principle holds true outside the laboratory: "Test a person who has a lot of experiences with people of different races, and the amygdala does not activate".
BIBLIOGRAPHY


