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"What Do You Do With the Mad That You Feel?": A Philosophical Take on Self-Governance Rather Than Self-Dominance

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“WHAT DO YOU DO WITH THE MAD THAT YOU FEEL?”

- A PHILOSOPHICAL TAKE ON SELF-GOVERNANCE

RATHER THAN SELF-DOMINANCE

By

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of my Honors Research Capstone is to delve into the problem of self-criticism and the mental processes that lie behind subconsciously harming our own self-esteem. This notion of self-domination, philosophically coined as “will to power,” pertains to philosopher Nietzsche and his writings, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, which consists of his theorizations on the concept that our basic human nature is to dominate. However, because of societal morals, often interlaced with religious undertones, we turn this domination onto ourselves. Through philosophical and psychological inquiry, I will argue that this is in fact the case, but not the whole case. Human nature cannot be explained through just one main component, but several. In addition to domination, we also learn from ancient Chinese philosopher Mencius that it is also our human nature to be morally good. By combining these two contradictory outlooks, I will make the claim that as long as we water that seed of goodness within us, we can redirect that instinct for dominance onto more abstract objects such as goals rather than people. This falls in accordance with the philosophical solutions I will offer to combat self-dominance, as introduced by Korsgaard, Jaworska, and Rogers, who advocate for self-governing, caring, and self-love, respectively. Through their discourse, and Kohlberg’s moral development model, I will show how the self-control that Nietzsche connects to self-domination can be tamed and redefined through Korsgaard’s mindfulness with the love and compassion Rogers and Mencius advocate for.

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INTRODUCTION:

The Problem of Self-Criticism

“Anything that’s human is mentionable, and anything that is mentionable can be more manageable. When we can talk about our feelings, they become less overwhelming, less upsetting, and less scary. The people we trust with that important talk can help us know that we’re not alone” (Rogers, 10).

These famous words, spoken by the late Mr. Fred Rogers, host of *Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood*, really hits the crux of the issue rampant in today’s world. Too often, we strive to play strong, indifferent, and stoic to the difficulties of life. Should we show emotions, or the reality of how these situations make us feel, we would see ourselves as weak. This is because people often mistake vulnerability, the showing of emotions and how one feels, as weakness. Strength is the ability to hide one’s feelings, to not let emotions get in the way of our rational thinking, and to analyze the situation as objectively as possible, so that other people may see us as credible thinkers.

Humans, however, do not work this way. We are emotional, social beings, and this is how we communicate with each other. And the act of emotionally stunting ourselves can only lead to less intimate relationships with family, friends, and lovers. Further, this could ultimately create feelings of perpetual loneliness, especially when we apply this pressure to ourselves.

I believe this is pertinent to my research because I hope to answer the age-old question of what entails living a full, happy life of purpose and meaning. Many people force themselves into careers, ideologies, and religions that they do not inherently contain any passion or true belief in, but engulf themselves in these anyway because they believe it will give them purpose in life, and thus make their lives worth living. However, I believe this outlook on life is much too bleak. You

need to make your life your own, and fill it with the sorts of values that you feel passionate about, and that make you happy.

All that being said, here are my thoughts: in the pursuit of happiness, we often compare this ideal to being monetarily comfortable and successful. There is definitely a lot to be said in terms of how worrying and stressful money issues can be. However, can happiness really be garnered this way? In terms of basic contemplations of happiness, there tends to be three criteria that are left out: self-awareness, self-cultivation, and self-reflection. We all know the famous lines by Socrates, “Know thyself,” but we do not know what it means to be truly self-reflective and self-cultivating. For instance, sometimes we can be so concerned with how we are perceived by others that we neglect to analyze how we truly perceive ourselves. After all, Socrates’s ideology, that “it’s the greatest good for a man to discuss virtue every day,” and that “the unexamined life isn’t worth living for a human being,” can be internalized as an absolutely crucial way to perceive your life (Plato, 38a/104). After all, these are words that I strive to live by almost every day of my life.

I myself often struggle with perfectionist tendencies, combined with negative self-talk. However, I believe self-criticism is counter-productive and negates the whole purpose of trying to better oneself. After all, in today’s culture, I’m not sure anyone can say that they are perfectly happy. In fact, it’s a very human quality to be unsatisfied the majority of the time, since we are always striving for something: for progression, for betterment. I believe that this, as a form of self-concern, can help us truly find our own personal purpose in life, and strive to be more confident and self-sufficient in our daily practices.

This is why, through this Capstone project, I wish to bring to light the problem mankind is afflicted with, that being this critical mindset toward ourselves and others, and to argue for the sort of solution we can implement into our daily lives to combat this. First off, we cannot begin this

journey to self-realization without allowing ourselves to be vulnerable. By doing so, we can figure out what sorts of situations make us feel certain ways, and through that knowledge we can be able to better adapt, grow, and ultimately become the sort of people we appreciate and strive to be. I think it's immensely important to have an image of oneself that you can visualize and progress towards. By being the sort of person we want to be, and knowing where we currently fall in that process, we can better appreciate ourselves and others and have more meaningful relationships.

Thus, with this Capstone project, I hope to prove my theory for the importance of self-awareness. Initially, I will begin this discussion with German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. According to his theories, we have a natural inherent instinct for domination. This "will to power," as a factor of our human nature, contributes to our negative mindsets. In addition to this instinct, as social beings, we must cooperate together to live together in a civilized society. However, due to this, we cannot exert this dominance onto other people, but as our instinct we must exert it somehow, so we turn onto ourselves. This is how self-domination occurs.

Despite this notion, human nature does not need to be all bad. In fact, as ancient Chinese philosopher Mencius (or Mengzi) conceptualizes, we are all born with this deep-seeded goodness that needs to be cultivated in the right way to grow and manifest within ourselves. This goodness, and natural inclination for compassion, may seem that it contradicts domination, but it is my claim that it is in fact this contrasting human nature that leaves us confused. While human beings are inclined to exacerbate the issue of holding people to too high of standards by being overly critical, we are also aware to some extent that this is not fruitful. It is also not just societal regulations that keep us from exerting dominance onto other people, but our own empathy and sympathy that inhibits us from even desiring to harm others. The problem, in no less certain terms, lies in the fact that we do not hold ourselves to this same merciful logic.

That is the area where Fred Rogers, from *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*, can embed his own philosophy into this narrative. As a children's television host deeply concerned with the visual consumption of his viewers, Rogers's teachings on self-love and compiling one's identity based on kindness for themselves and others can be deemed as something no short of radical. However, while his guidance was primarily meant for young children, I am of a mind to believe that his ideas are immensely important for adults as well. One way to see this more clearly would be to see how his thinkings fall in line with that of Korsgaard's.

Christine Korsgaard, a current American philosopher, argues much of this same ideology. As a student of Kant, she has been able to interpret his theories while at the same time delving more fully into them and compiling a more comprehensive standpoint, that is, the Practical Standpoint, by which we can better understand our own personal identities. This standpoint can better be defined through the theory of Normative Self-Governance, which basically entails that we have our own personal standard of morals, a sort of law that we hold ourselves to. I believe this personal law brings a consistent sense of comfort to an individual by giving one a deep sense of self-awareness by which one can know oneself better and be able to more clearly see who one wants to become. I also believe this creates a sense of self-control that is personal to you and is reflective of your own internal morals and values. After all, "self-knowledge, however, cannot be taught or given from without. It can only be evoked or awakened from within. Unless something begins to stir and come to life in each of us, no genuine understanding of the self will be possible" (Cernic and Longmire, 6).

Therefore, my purpose with my research is to re-define our problem of self-and-outer-domination. Nietzsche and Mencius bring forth the background and explanation surrounding our human nature, while Mr. Rogers unifies and reconciles how their theories apply to our perceptions

of ourselves. Korsgaard then shows us how we can reinterpret self-domination into self-governance instead, which can be done by exerting this instinct toward abstract ideals such as creativity and productivity rather than onto people.

SECTION 1:

Nietzsche's *Will to Power*

The first aspect of my overall theory includes German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's conception of human nature. In his renowned essay, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, he explains how our basic human instinct is to dominate. He puts it this way: "men were unwilling to refrain from making suffer and saw in it... a genuine seduction to life" (67). In this sense, as an impulse that we are naturally inclined for, we are also attracted to it, because it was so imperative for our survival. This need to dominate is so ingrained in us because it has been a means of self-preservation for so long. However, when we started living together in civilized societies, this exertion of dominance became looked down upon. Thus, when "all instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly turn inward," we became the objects of our own impulse (84). In this sense, since we have societal laws put in place to prohibit civilians from harming one another,

Outward discharge was *inhibited*. Those fearful bulwarks with which the political organization protected itself against the old instincts of freedom... brought about all those instincts of wild, free, prowling man turned backward *against man himself*. Hostility,

cruelty, joy in persecuting, in attacking, in change, in destruction – all this turned against the possessors of such instincts: *that* is the origin of the ‘bad conscience.’ (84-85)

Following this notion of the “bad conscience,” we can best infer from this through analyzing how Nietzsche perceives “guilt.” This guilt comes first, as an inclination that you are aware that your behavior deserves punishment. On the other hand, “bad conscience” is a very personal feeling of desert, wherein which you punish yourself. “The proud awareness of the extraordinary privilege of *responsibility*, the consciousness of this rare freedom, this power over oneself and over fate, has in his case penetrated to the profoundest depths and become instinct, the dominating instinct [...] this sovereign man calls it his *conscience*” (60). In this sense, you punish yourself because you failed to meet a personal standard of morals that you have set for yourself. By turning onto yourself in such a fashion, by self-dominating, you can also be led to believe that other people, even God, should believe you are guilty as well.

That will to self-tormenting, that repressed cruelty of the animal-man made inward and scared back into himself, the creature imprisoned in the ‘state’ so as to be tamed, who invented the bad conscience in order to hurt himself after the *more natural* vent for this desire to hurt had been blocked – this man of the bad conscience has seized upon the presupposition of religion so as to drive his self-torture to its most gruesome pitch of severity and rigor. (92)

To further understand Nietzsche’s thought-process, we must look at the outlooks of other authors. For example, as Henry Staten puts it, Nietzsche’s explanation for this outward judgment on the self is that, “consequently, it seems, he ceases to be the artist of the self, the man of ‘active’ bad

conscience, because ‘he ejects from himself all his denial of himself’ and projects it outward in the shape of the external reality of a God who condemns him” (p. 50).

In addition to this, Aaron Ridley takes this a step further when he defines the nature of conscience itself as “a mode of self-relation: one reflected upon oneself (have I done well? Badly?) with a view, potentially, to acting on oneself (for reinforcement or reform).” Whether or not one’s conscience is good or bad, by simply having one, any individual thus has the “potential to make oneself the object of one’s own will.” This ultimately becomes a combination between “a distinctive human capacity (reflexive consciousness) and a distinctive human possibility (self-transformation),” (15). Therefore, in this sense, the very act of possessing a conscience enables one to both reflect on their moral standing and adapt to these accordingly.

While Nietzsche’s views seem very negative, it’s important to note that this is because he is a skeptic, and the purpose of his essay is to analyze where morality came from. In the introduction of her translation of Nietzsche’s *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Maudemarie Clark explains the very nature of this title. “It treats morality as a phenomenon of life, as a purely natural phenomenon, one whose existence is to be explained without any reference to a world beyond nature, a supernatural or metaphysical world” (xxii). She notes that the purpose for his “attack on moralism” is not to discourage us from accepting “moral norms, e.g. norms against murder, lying, and stealing,” but “specifically *moral* reasons for obeying these norms, a denial that the reasons morality gives us for doing so are good reasons” (xvii). The purpose of his *Genealogy* thus is to analyze why we accept these norms as moral truth.

I believe there is a lot of warrant in Nietzsche’s theories surrounding instinctual domination and self-domination, but I think his argument drastically misses the good in people, and I don’t think his use of domination should be as negative as it is. For instance, as Richard

Schacht states in his several claims as to the nature of Nietzsche's pessimistic outlook, "his chief defense for this comes, I think, from the skeptical eye that he casts over the motives of the actions that moralists call good. Thus he points out the vanity that is behind many acts of 'kindness': the wish to create a good opinion in others by a kindly deed, so as to be able to buy this good opinion back from them" (11). I found the transactional aspect of this kindness absolutely striking. There is a lot of distrust in Nietzsche's conceptions of kindness, especially altruism. "Where moralists find altruism Nietzsche sees various kinds of egoism, self-mistrust, and fear: above all the desire to 'live abroad' with others rather than at home with oneself" (12). While there may be a layer of self-concern mixed in with such acts of altruism, does that necessarily have to be an immoral thing? Do all acts of altruism entail hidden nefarious intentions? I think not.

So how does this fit in with my overall theory? Well, firstly, I believe this concept of self-domination has a lot of merit. In terms of contemplating why we do the things we do, this innate instinct for domination does answer a lot. However, this outlook is very nihilistic, and leaves much to be desired. In fact, I believe it leaves out the good in people. And so, for the purposes of this essay, I want to redefine domination with the help of another factor of human nature. In the following section, an ancient Chinese philosopher by the name Mencius gives us more clarification on our human nature and how domination inhibits it.

SECTION 2:

Mencius's Compassionate Human Nature

This brings us to another factor of human nature, that being, goodness. Since the dawn of civilization, philosophers and thinkers have been pondering human nature and what it entails. While Nietzsche's outlook on human nature and morality itself can be deemed rather negative, Mencius, who lived in about 300 B.C.E., gives a much more refreshing recount on human nature. A student of Confucius, Mencius continued the teachings of the Dao and cultivation while implementing his own theories on human nature, while Confucius is not known to do so.

Confucius introduced self-cultivating theories surrounding the Zhou traditions, in particular, the Classic of Odes, which he believed we could learn the most from by memorizing and reciting. Through learning and studying, and through reflection, one could best practice self-cultivation. This practice is one that you would do if you were a gentleman (*junzi*), which is someone who is elite both descriptively and morally. "One who has attained this state of consummate mastery" of the Odes – otherwise known as a "gentleman" – is said to possess the supreme virtue of *ren*, 'Goodness'" (Ivanhoe and Van Norden, 2). In Confucius's *Analects*, we can see that a morally elite gentleman has such qualities such as virtue: "the superior man thinks of virtue; the small man thinks of comfort. The superior man thinks of the sanctions of law; the small man thinks of favours which he may receive" (4.11). In addition to this, "the Master said of the [*junzi*] that he had four of the characteristics of a superior man: - in his conduct of himself, he was humble; in serving his superiors, he was respectful; in nourishing the people, he was kind; in ordering the people, he was just" (5.15). If people concentrate on incorporating these ideologies, they can best contribute to a harmonious civilized state of living

It can be rather apparent why Mencius would have found these teachings attractive, and have implemented them into his own. However, Mencius takes these notions a step further by implementing a discussion of human nature into the mix. To put it simply: human nature is inherently good. He makes this point through an analogy: our hearts are like sprouts. When these sprouts are nurtured and cultivated in the correct environment, they can naturally grow into the tree they were naturally destined to become. In the same sense, we are naturally inclined toward becoming good people (Ivanhoe and Van Norden, 116).

Every person has exactly four sprouts, or hearts: “the feeling of compassion is the sprout of benevolence. The feeling of disdain is the sprout of righteousness. The feeling of deference is the sprout of propriety. The feeling of approval and disapproval is the sprout of wisdom” (*Mengzi*, 6.5/47). Out of all of these, the heart of compassion is the most relevant because benevolence is the height of virtue. An example he offers is a hypothetical one where we see a child fall into a well. He argues that anyone would “would have a feeling of alarm and compassion” for that child because of this sprout we all have (6.3/46).

By comparing our human nature to the sorts of plants we find in nature, he shows how inherent this instinct is. But we still have to cultivate ourselves as well, which involves thinking past our primary perceptions. Mencius explains this through an anecdote where, as a court advisor, he gave King Xuan some guidance in relation to a situation he heard about. The allegory is recounted as follows: a few servants passed in front the king, leading an ox to sacrifice it and “anoint a bell with its blood.” When King Xuan inquired about this, he told them to “spare it. I cannot bear its frightened appearance, like an innocent going to the execution ground.” However, after his attendant, Hu He, asked for clarification in whether or not they should anoint the bell or not, King Xuan replied, “How can that be dispensed with? Exchange it for a sheep” (7.4/8).

So what is the lesson implicit in this anecdote? Well, as Mencius analyzes the situation, he realizes that the problem did not lie in the fact that the king thought a sheep was less deserving of living than an ox was. No, the problem was simply just that he was not thinking far enough to be able to exert that same compassion for the sheep. “What you did was just a technique for (cultivating your) benevolence. You saw the ox but had not seen the sheep” (7.8/9). Mencius calls this process an extension, noting that “the king is already able to extend this heart to animals,” but failed to use his imagination to think further for an animal that he could not see, thus hindering him from feeling the same empathy for the sheep (7.10/11). “This is just the way benevolence works.... If they see them living, they cannot bear to see them die. If they hear their cries, they cannot bear to eat their flesh. Hence, gentlemen keep their distance from the kitchen” (Ivanhoe and Van Norden, 119-120).

While this is a good argument for the stance on human nature being good, some may still disagree. How can there be so many people in the world who actively engage in harmful behavior if we are supposed to be naturally good? This is how Xunzi, another student of Confucius, is more inclined to think. He believed that human nature is inherently bad, and consists of amorality that takes a lifetime to right. Rather than using an example composed of agriculture, Xunzi’s is more along the lines of craftsmanship. According to his theory, humans are like crafting material, like wood or clay. At first blush, this material might seem expendable, with no obviously apparent use: it is just an inanimate object. Even so, once someone else decides to apply work to this object, such as by wetting and bending the wood into a wheel, or by expertly molding the clay into the preferred shape, then can it permanently become something of value and purpose (Ivanhoe and Van Norden, 256). In this same sense, a human being cannot self-cultivate on our own, but must be taught by a sage, or a person of high moral standing, who can mold us into good people. This

molding is a lifelong journey, but once we officially become good late in life, we cannot retrogress. “Where does learning begin?... Its purpose begins with becoming a noble man, and ends with becoming a sage” (258). “If your disposition accords with ritual, and your understanding is just like your teacher’s understanding, then this is to be a sage” (265).

While I can see why this point of view might seem attractive, I believe it leaves much to be desired. Nevertheless, I do think that it lacks the sort of autonomy that comes with seeking out a mentor to teach you the ways of goodness. If we are inherently bad, then where does this motivation come from? For Mencius, it is readily apparent that one would seek out a mentor to be able to fully harness this instinct for good to use it in the right ways. After all, we can all make mistakes that, even though they come from good intentions, can still hurt others in the process. However, in Xunzi’s line of thinking, it would appear that we wouldn’t be able to make those assertions for ourselves, and I think our cognitive abilities to contemplate human morality deserve more credit than that. Morality is a very personal business. Mencius himself argues for this: “a gentleman steeps himself in the Way [Dao] because he wishes to find it in himself. When he finds it in himself, he will be at ease in it; when he is at ease in it, he can draw deeply upon it; when he can draw deeply upon it, he finds its source wherever he turns” (*Mencius*, 14/130). Furthermore, “you can never succeed in winning the allegiance of men by trying to dominate them through goodness” (16/130). If you were to teach someone the ways of goodness, they must be themselves open to it.

SECTION 3:

Mr. Rogers' Radical Self-Love

Now, up until now my research has composed of the background on what may constitute human nature, to explain the origin of our behaviors surrounding goodness and domination. However, I have not made it clear how human beings can have such opposing instincts. One might think that the very nature of goodness would inhibit any such instincts for domination, or that, by having a natural instinct to desire to dominate other people, we therefore cannot be good. However, I believe the very nature of self-domination comes from good intentions.

Here's why: as we can learn from American television host Fred Rogers's teachings in *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*, everyone has kindness within them. We've all heard the biblical phrase and golden rule, "Treat your neighbor as you would want to be treated," and Mr. Rogers, as an ordained minister, would have been doubly aware of it, as he incorporates that message of neighborly love in every episode. Nevertheless, I do believe we have an inclination toward overcompensating for that neighborly love by treating other people better than we treat ourselves.

We all probably know Mr. Rogers most for his famous phrase, "You've made this day a special day, by just your being you. There's no person in the whole world like you, and I like you just the way you are," by which he ended every single episode with (Edwards, 87). As adults, we generally forget his teachings, believing that they don't apply to us anymore. But they do. The way he taught these lessons were so powerful because one could say that our identities are a culmination of direct and indirect influences, such as those from our parents and teachers and friends, and what we see in the media is a large contributor of these influences. Rogers was more than aware of how he could be perceived by children and adults alike, and thus made it his purpose to present himself

as a “relaxed, understanding grown-up” who offered “an expression of care every day to a child, to help him realize that he is unique” (Edwards, 66; 87).

My intention with implementing Mr. Rogers’s philosophy into this discussion is for the very reason his teachings are radical in today’s culture. As a strong advocate for self-love, he can better show how these two contradictory aspects of human nature can be reconciled. The reason I claimed earlier that the very concept of self-domination comes from a place of good intentions is due to the simple fact that this activity of exerting dominance onto the self is the direct result of misguiding that dominance away from other people. Put more simply: we don’t want to hurt other people, but we don’t know what to do with our instinct for domination.

Here’s where my solution comes in: by identifying both factors of our human nature and utilizing our instincts in ways that unify them, we can better understand ourselves and use our instincts to our advantage by making the most with what we have. How can we do this? By implementing these three criteria of personal identity: self-awareness, self-reflection, and self-control. But we cannot begin that journey without a little bit of self-love.

In 1969, Mr. Rogers stood before the Senate Subcommittee of Communication to petition for the funding for PBS, where his television show was being broadcasted on, that former president Nixon wanted to cut the budget of. During his testimony, he earnestly entreats for what he believes to be a “meaningful expression of care.” As he strived to properly convey what his television show does for children, he quotes the following song to display “that good feeling of control, which... children need to know is there.”

Despite the childish simplicity of the lyrics, I believe there is a lot of relevant merit in such a song as “What Do You Do With the Mad That You Feel?”

What do you do with the mad that you feel
When you feel so mad you could bite?
When the whole wide world seems oh, so wrong...
And nothing you do seems very right?
What do you do? Do you punch a bag?
Do you pound some clay or some dough?
Do you round up friends for a game of tag?
Or see how fast you go?
It's great to be able to stop
When you've planned a thing that's wrong,
And be able to do something else instead
And think this song:
I can stop when I want to
Can stop when I wish
I can stop, stop, stop any time.
And what a good feeling to feel like this
And know that the feeling is really mine.
Know that there's something deep inside
That helps us become what we can.
For a girl can be someday a woman
And a boy can be someday a man. (*Neighborhood Archive*)

This notion of self-control, of being fully aware of the emotions we are feeling at any present moment, is one that he promotes more than any of his other messages, because this lies at

the core of self-love. “And I feel that if we in public television can only make it clear that feelings are mentionable and manageable, we will have done a great service for mental health” (Edwards, 85-88). Needless to say, he earned the funding.

This implementation of self-awareness is necessary when embracing and harnessing our instinct for domination because much of this instinct is contingent on our emotional state. In an unaired episode of the *Neighborhood* wherein which Mr. Rogers tried to cover such frightening topics like war and assassination in a way so that his young viewers could contextualize their fears, he gives us an example of domination being expended through the wrong means. “There are people in the world who are so sad, or so angry, that they sometimes hurt other people.... Well, the people who are doing these terrible things are making a lot of other people sad and angry. But when we get sad and angry, you and I, we know what to do with our feelings, so we don’t have to hurt other people” (“Violence & Conflict”). This bonding and unifying between himself and the viewer helps us realize how human these feelings in reality are. To reflect back on Mencius: these sad and angry people are failing to extend their hearts of compassion towards others, and are instead ignorantly and unrestrainedly causing others harm rather than dealing with their emotions in a productive manner toward self-betterment. After all, most people aren’t inherently amoral. Mr. Rogers learned from his mother to “‘always look for the helpers. There will always be helpers – just on the sidelines....’ If you look for the helpers, you’ll know that there’s hope.” As Gavin Edwards puts it so eloquently: “In a few sentences, Mister Rogers not only offered solace: he helped turn despair into action” (1-2). And action hope is indeed.

On the other hand, here’s what he has to say for self-domination:

Did you know the toughest thing to do is to love somebody who has been mean to you?

Especially when that somebody has been yourself? Have you ever done anything mean to

yourself? Well, it's very important to look inside yourself and find that loving part of you. That's the part that you must take good care of and never be mean to. Because that's the part of you that allows you to love your neighbor. And your neighbor is anyone you happen to be with, at any time of your life. Respecting and loving your neighbor can give everybody a good feeling. ("Love")

In other words: you have to love yourself first in order to really know what it is to love everyone else. By being able to identify this inner heart of compassion and allowing yourself the same sort of respect you charitably give other people, you can better use your instincts for good to lift yourself and others up. So while self-domination can come from a place of not wanting to hurt other people, it is still hurting you, and that is of an equal crime.

Although his teachings were for children, as a preventative measure to prepare them for the sorts of fears and hardships they would encounter in the future, I believe, without a shadow of a doubt, that his wisdom is still beyond applicable for adults. I believe that it is extremely important to be okay with who you are as an individual, at your core. "Each person in the world is a unique human being, and each has unique human potential. One of the important tasks of growing is the *discovery* of this uniqueness: the discovery of 'who I am' in each of us – of 'who I am' in relation to all those whom I meet" (Rogers, 9).

To harken back to my earlier point: what does this incorporation of self-control entail? And how does one truly and practically implement such simple ideas in today's world? Life is far from simple: there are so many convoluted factors and expectations that complicate our self-perceptions and perceptions of others. This is why I wish to apply Mr. Rogers's advice through Korsgaard's practical philosophy.

SECTION 4:

Korsgaard's Normative Self-Governance

Although Fred Rogers, as a children's television host, cannot contextualize his theories around self-control for adults, Korsgaard can pick up those pieces for us. In her article on *Personal Identity and the Unity of Agency*, Christine Korsgaard, an American philosopher knowledgeable in Kant's rhetoric, theorizes around the concept of autonomy, agency, and self-governance. One can think of her philosophy as reforming Kant's theories on personal identity by creating a more in-depth and easier-to-understand translation. In her writings, she clarifies Kant's notions on each individual possessing a personal standard of morals. Korsgaard is also of the same impression that we have our own moral standards that we hold ourselves to, but hers is much more cohesively laid out for us to dissect through the *Practical Standpoint*:

The second element in the pragmatic unity is the unity implicit in the *standpoint* from which you deliberate and choose.... When you deliberate, it is as if there were something over and above all your desires, something that is *you*, and that *chooses* which one to act on.... This means that there is some principle or way choosing that you regard as being expressive of *yourself*, and which provides reasons that regulate your choices among your desires. To identify with such a principle or way of choosing is to be a 'law to yourself' and to be unified as such. This does not require that your agency be located in a separately existing entity or involve a deep metaphysical fact. Instead, it is a practical necessity imposed upon you by the nature of the deliberative standpoint. (9-10)

In this sense, one can incorporate this feeling of being in control of your feelings and values by figuring out and maintaining this practical rationality that allows you to be autonomous through unifying yourself. This also includes her theory of *Normative Self-Governance*, which entails the “capacity to be governed by thoughts about what you *ought* to do or to believe” (*Personhood, Animals, and the Law*, 2). Through these means, you can analyze your intentions and motivations behind your beliefs for what you feel obligated to do. This applies to all aspects of our lives, “in choosing our careers, and pursuing our friendships and family lives, we both presuppose and construct a continuity of identity and of agency.” Therefore, “it is practical reason that requires me to construct an identity for myself” (*Personal Identity* 11).

This practical standpoint of moral standards that you hold yourself to does directly correlate with Mencius’s theory. If your human nature is good, and you were brought up in a good nourishing environment, then these standards of self-cultivation can come from within yourself, as it is, after all, a “law to yourself.” It also seems to critique the negative nature of Nietzsche’s theory of domination, since your moral standard would forbid you from harming others, not just external factors. After all, guilt is a personal emotion.

However, while Korsgaard gives a coherent analysis of what personal identity entails, Agnieszka Jaworska takes this discussion a step further by implementing the notion of caring. She notes that when we care about something or someone, “this object, as a steady focus of emotional attunement, conceptually connects all the components to one another and gives the ensuing complex emotion its structure. The complex emotion is, as a result, *about* the object, for example, a caring about Mom.” (484) Therefore, your personal identity does not just consist of how you personally feel about yourself, but also the way other people make you feel in relation to them as well. As they become the objects of your affection, your identity becomes increasingly unified by

your capacity to care about them. Since “carings forge a network of rational and referential connections that support the agent’s identity and cohesion over time,” they “are tied to our sense of self more closely than other attitudes – they are more strongly our own.” Therefore, through this unity within oneself, one can further “possess a sense of self” (493).

All that being said, this *Normative Self-Governance* seems to me to be an efficient unity of self-love and self-domination through self-control. I am also of a mind to affirm that self-government is of the utmost importance in providing that sense of comfort in being fully aware and knowledgeable of ourselves. After all, in a world where we are constantly struggling to find our purpose in life and who we are in terms of our identity, it would seem that morality plays a big part in our conceptualizations of ourselves. This, of course, starts from a very young age, when we are first being taught about morals and the ways that we should consider what we “ought” to do.

Now, one might ask, “Well, if you have to teach children empathy, then how can they be morally good from birth?” My argument for this would be to just try to remember how it felt to be a child. There’s a lot that you don’t understand, and confusion is stressful for anyone, especially when you’re so small and aware that people who are bigger than you know more than you do. I believe this directly correlates with Mencius’s theory that sometimes you need to actively contemplate past your initial perceptions to extend your heart, and this entails more advanced cognitive capabilities than a small toddler can fathom.

I mentioned earlier that I brought Mr. Rogers’ ideas into this discussion because, although he is not a renowned philosopher in the sense that Nietzsche and Korsgaard are, his notions are still incredibly applicable because they put these sort of abstract concepts of personal identity into more layman terms that anyone could understand. For these same reasons, I believe showing a model through the lens of psychology will further deepen our understanding surrounding these

same theories around morals. According to child psychologist Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development Model, there are 6 steps in a child's mental progression of morality:

STAGE 1. Action is motivated by avoidance of punishment, and 'conscience' is irrational fear of punishment [...] / STAGE 2. Action is motivated by desire for reward or benefit. Possible guilt reactions are ignored and punishment viewed in a pragmatic manner [...] / STAGE 3. Action is motivated by anticipation of disapproval of others, actual or imagined hypothetical [...] / STAGE 4. Action is motivated by anticipation of dishonor; that is, institutionalized blame for failures of duty and by guilt over concrete harm done to others [...] / STAGE 5. There is concern about maintaining respect of equals and of the community [...] There is also concern about own self-respect; that is, to avoid judging self as irrational, inconsistent, nonpurposive [...] / STAGE 6. There is concern about self-condemnation for violating one's own principles. (Kohlberg, 121-122)

As we can see, in the latter two stages of moral development, our relationship with morals verges from that of externality to a much more personal conception. In the 5th stage, there is an overlap in worrying about your peers' perceptions of you, and the beginnings of your own self-scrutinization. By the final stage, we have internalized our own "law" and standard of morals that we hold ourselves to. Through experience, trial and error, and validation for what we personally know to be true about morals for ourselves, we can begin self-governing ourselves through a combination of self-love, self-reflection, and self-cultivation by even early stages in adolescence.

CONCLUSION:

The Implications of the Solution

So with all that said and done, what does this mean? What does this self-governance, mixed with self-love, entail for this pursuit of happiness in how we should live our lives? So far, my discussion surrounding these topics has been rather vague. However, our human nature is contradictory and convoluted, so my solutions and suggestions might not be applicable for everyone. Nevertheless, here are some basic guidelines:

In terms of self-awareness: when you find yourself in a situation that makes you feel uncomfortable, taking a step back to analyze exactly what it is about the situation that is doing so is the first step to rationalizing the problem and solving it. If you find the reason is actually avoidable, then be sure to set boundaries for it. For self-reflection, partaking in mindfulness exercises is equally crucial as a second step in self-realization. The act of noting down your emotions in a journal is one such way of doing this. Thirdly, you can practice self-governance by visualizing the sort of person with high moral standing you want to be, and striving to become the sort of person you believe you “ought” to be. And lastly, in terms of self-love, allowing yourself the grace to make mistakes and grow from them, and the benefit of the doubt in relation to your intentions are an unnegotiable factor to bettering oneself. I believe that progressing through your life with this sort of purpose in mind will guarantee a life well-lived.

In conclusion of my research: human beings are plagued with this harsh self-criticism and negative self-talk. Through Nietzsche’s theory that domination is a basic human instinct, and Mencius’s philosophy of compassionate human nature, we can see how the combination of these contradictory impulses can inherently cause confusion. Mr. Rogers’s propensity for self-love, unified with Korsgaard’s self-governance, give us insight as to how self-awareness mixed with

self-control can lead us becoming kinder and more understanding people. “And what a good feeling to feel like this / And know that the feeling is really mine” (*Neighborhood Archive*).

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