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How Relative Economic Advantage Affects Agential Reasoning

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Philosophy

by

Deborah Nelson

September 2022

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

How Relative Economic Advantage Affects Agential Reasoning

by

Deborah Nelson

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Philosophy
University of California, Riverside, September 2022
Dr. Eric Schwitzgebel, Chairperson

In the philosophical literature on practical reasoning, much emphasis has been placed on ideals related to consistency and stability, from Rawls' rational life plan to Michael Bratman's focus on the stable intentions of self-governing agents. However, as I aim to show in my dissertation, this emphasis may be the result of theorists centering their own experience rather than an illustration of what is universally true of good agency. -Centric thinking is the tendency to center one's experiences in how one learns and thinks about the world. Centering one's experience is, on the one hand, perfectly natural and can be innocuous. On the other hand, however, doing so without noticing this role, and theorizing in a way that is meant to cover other agents' experiences has the potential to enact harm. I identify two characteristics of harmful -centric thinking, the tendency to frame differences which result from circumstances as deficits and the potential to mask important contributions or skills among those who are different from the baseline. I then argue the aforementioned focus on stability may display a class-specific form of -centric thinking. Not only does a focus on stability assume that agents are themselves working

under stable circumstances, it also may not be desirable or effective for all agents. I

further argue that our theories of practical reasoning ought to have more flexibility in

which norms are appropriate for different reasoners, and that an information-gathering

stage for analyzing complexity would be a step in the right direction.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

I.   What is the Project of This Dissertation?

In this dissertation, I will be examining a small portion of philosophical literature through the lens of economic disadvantage. To this end, I'll discuss the phenomenon of -centric thinking, more particularly the class-based version of it. The overarching argument I will present is that the literature of practical reasoning tends to prioritize the reasoning tendencies of agents who are economically advantaged, and that moving to incorporate more flexibility in accounts of practical reasoning would result in a more equitable literature. I first explore the notion of -centric thinking broadly, then discuss examples of class-centrism specifically. My focus closes in on Michael Bratman's view of diachronic self-governance as a paradigm of the practical literature reasoning and examines whether he displays this tendency. Ultimately, there is some support for class-centrism, but Bratman is certainly not expressly providing a biased view. I then move on to discuss a theory which promises to move away from class-centric thinking but, as I suggest, could be improved through some small adjustments in its conceptualizations of habit and its implicit assumption that agents tend to occupy only one ecology at a time. Before getting into this wide-ranging argument, however, I'd like to, in this introduction, address some issues that I will not be directly discussing throughout the dissertation, and to provide an overview of what's to come.

II.   Why Economic Disadvantage?

It might be surprising that I focus on economic disadvantage instead of poverty specifically. Economic disadvantage is an admittedly broad, and arguably vague, term to use to capture tendencies of experience and reasoning. Poverty might sound, at first, like a more promising term, since the boundaries of what counts as poverty would set the terms for the discussion in a clear way. There are several literatures, however, which argue about the definition of poverty, posit the several root causes of poverty, and examine the effects of poverty upon reasoning. And among these several debates is a significant amount of disagreement about how these boundaries should be set. Some argue that a notion like absolute poverty, defined in terms of survival on $1.25 or less of US currency (in the 1990s), is important because it is the most stark and life-threatening condition, and arguably the largest source of suffering in the world (Singer 192). Others feel focusing on a numerical amount of resources removes important contextual details from the issue of poverty, such as the social exclusion, shame, vulnerability to control and violence, and a lack of ability to fully participate in society, to name a few (Lister 15). Still others focus on a purely relative notion of poverty, understanding especially needs deprivation as something which shifts in response to the prevalent standard of living where the people in question occupy (Townsend 31). Ultimately, the lack of consensus in and proliferation of debates around it indicate that poverty is multidimensional, and what counts as impoverished according to a particular group tends to vary in response to the purpose(s) the definition is meant to serve.

My purpose in discussing economic disadvantage is incredibly broad; I am appealing most directly to the way that generally economically privileged people theorize in forging the philosophical literature, but I also have in mind common social attitudes about people who are economically disadvantaged, namely the tendency to criticize choices made by people who have less. And these social attitudes have a wide range of who counts as criticizable. At the more extreme end, criticisms are sometimes made of the choices of the unhoused population, claiming that if they simply applied themselves or made better choices in life, they would not be unhoused. Yet, similar criticisms, varying only in degree, are made of those who choose to purchase coffee at ubiquitous coffee shops rather than make it at home when they have difficulty reaching higher levels of social mobility. Although the coffee-purchaser would no doubt be unlikely to count as impoverished, they are still on the receiving end of criticisms about their choices. And these criticisms set the contextual background against which the philosophical theories of practical reasoning have emerged in the half a century or so.

In choosing to discuss economic disadvantage instead, though, I can import one important move from the debates about what counts as poverty in recent years into the ensuing discussion. This is the idea that, although there is a core notion of poverty, expressed best in terms of the absolute terms mentioned above, most of the ways in which poverty instantiates will themselves be *relative* and contextual. One of the more famous proponents of a theory of poverty that recognizes the importance of a level of relativity is Amartya Sen. Sen argues that we should retain elements of an idea of absolute poverty while retaining the contextual ones offered by relative definitions. To

this end, he offers a primarily relativist view, where the presence of significant needs deprivation represents the 'absolutist core' of the definition and peoples' relative disadvantage in comparison to the general quality of life represents the rest (Sen 159). In a simplified encapsulation, he is absolutist regarding capabilities and relativist for commodities and characteristics (161). So when a person is unable to meet their needs because the standards for meeting needs differ as a result of the different technologies or goods available, they are experiencing a failure of capabilities but that failure is a result of the contingently available commodities (162). Commodities and characteristics are essentially the means to achieve the capabilities. And this framing for poverty is also meant to do justice to Adam Smith's focus on commodities as a means to avoiding shame. For Sen, the avoidance of shame is a capability of the person, which for Smith is enabled by being able to afford leather shoes, a staple of eighteenth century England (162). The feeling of shame in the absence of this commodity, however, is the key indicator of deprivation on this view.

And it is this focus on the felt aspects of deprivation on which I am in turn focusing. So, rather than setting strict terms that identify the line between advantage and disadvantage in this discussion, I will be focusing more on what is *felt* by the parties involved. That is to say, I am committed to the idea that, although absolute notions of disadvantage might be relevant, there is enough consistency in how this relative notion works that we can meaningfully discuss how people are affected by differences in just this dimension. Rather than getting caught up in the question of whether certain individuals *count* as economically disadvantaged, I want to focus on how relative

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economic and disadvantage and the perceptions thereof make an impact on people as reasoners.

And even without solid boundaries defining the range of what counts as economic disadvantage, the experience of it has a profound effect on individuals. According to psychologist Keith Payne, inequality **itself** reliably affects people, and that effect often extends its disadvantages to the entire population experiencing inequality. For example, at both the country-level[1] and U.S. state-level, those which experience the most significant inequalities of wealth, also have the worst health outcomes, the highest homicide rates, and the shortest life expectancies (Payne 48-52). He further notes that, physiologically, the effects of *feeling* economically disadvantaged are the same whether or not the person actually *is* (14). Reasoning, also, is affected by these perceptions. Thus, although it may matter for policy reasons, for example, where we draw the line on who counts for assistance and support needs, what matters for our purposes is that people are affected just as strongly by their perceptions of disadvantage and their position in regards to inequality as by the reality. Some of the research I will discuss, however, *will* be focused on poverty–this has more often than not been the focus of study, likely because it can in theory be measured much more reliably than peoples' opinions about their own relative economic advantage. Hopefully, the reader can accept, for the sake of argument, that any focus on poverty represents an elevated level of the general trends for which I am trying to account.

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[1] An important caveat here is that this trend holds for economically-developed countries, not necessarily for developing ones.

I should also acknowledge that the majority of the research I will be discussing, and the intended scope of my audience generally, will be Western-centric. This is primarily because of the domination of the Western world in modern philosophical literature but is also a result of my own personal experiences as a student in U.S. institutions, which inspired the project in the first place. Mary O'Hara has also suggested that the U.S. and U.K. also have a unique but similar treatment of the economically disadvantaged populations in these countries as well (O'Hara 7). Although the experiences of people experiencing economic advantage outside of these countries are certainly relevant to the overall project, if it is already difficult to find theoretical representation of the thinking of economically disadvantaged people *within* Western countries in the present scope of the literature, it will be even more difficult to do so for parts of the world already being excluded from the canon of philosophical literature. Hopefully, progress made toward theories which include those experiencing economic disadvantage in the Western world may aid progress in including others as well, but that will be the task of future work to determine.

III.   Aren't There Intersectional Concerns Relevant to Discussing Economic Disadvantage?

Yes, and it is important that these are examined in moving past the project of this dissertation. Ever since Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term 'intersectionality' in the late 1980s, it has represented a hermeneutical device by which people can understand their experiences, especially of discrimination. The term itself is a metaphor for, roughly,

vulnerability to discrimination, implying that there are multiple directions from which people who belong to multiple marginalized groups could receive discrimination, and that there is often an amplifying effect of these several avenues for this treatment (Crenshaw 140). Intersectionality means that there are several dimensions of analysis possible for the experience of people who belong to multiple categories of difference and that any attempt at analyzing needs to be carefully sensitive to these.

This means that, in order to thoroughly discuss the reasoning of economically disadvantaged people, this dissertation would focus on several of these layers of the experiences of various groups within the broad category of 'economically-disadvantaged.' However, this is not quite the focus of this work. I am instead simply trying to raise awareness of the general phenomenon of relative economic advantage and how it affects reasoning and the theories thereof which people find convincing. I also suspect that, before a thorough intersectional analysis is even possible, a concerted, collective effort to theoretically represent multiple viewpoints on the topic is needed. In the interest of not skimming over intersectional concerns *entirely*, however, I want to discuss, briefly, two such concerns of economic disadvantage and categories of difference.

In the late 1970's Diana Pearce coined the term 'the feminization of poverty' to name the state of affairs in which women were quickly coming to represent the majority of impoverished people in the U.S. (Fraser 103). This didn't quite occur as a result of women suddenly becoming poorer, however, since the overall poverty rate in the U.S. was on the decline. It reflected women making up a larger proportion of the

economically disadvantaged at the time, despite that women had been increasingly

represented in the ranks of the employed over the last couple decades (McLanahan and

Kelly 137-38). Not only were women increasingly becoming the primary beneficiaries of

the social-welfare system at the time Fraser was writing, they also represented the largest

portion of the population providing the care within the social-welfare system, meaning

their livelihoods depend on that system continuing to be funded (Fraser 107). This same

system tends to treat women as dependent clients in contrast to men as rights-bearing

beneficiaries (113). Thus, although women are to some extent helped by the existence of

the social-welfare system, they are made less independent and autonomous as agents

through it. This state of affairs, of women being more likely to be impoverished than

men, has continued more or less to present day, with some recent gains having been made

in that, as of 2018, only 12.9% of women were below the poverty line (compared with

10.6% of men) and the gender pay gap was only $.82 that women make in comparison to

$1 for men as of that same year (Semega).[2] As long as it remains true that there is a

statistically significant difference between levels of men and women below the poverty

line in the U.S., gender will remain a significant factor in a comprehensive analysis of

cultural attitudes toward economically disadvantaged people.

In addition to issues involving gender and economic disadvantage, there are also

ways in which people belonging to other categories of difference have been relegated to

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[2] These gains were reported prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, unfortunately, which is
likely to have set women back disproportionately given trends toward women being more
set back career-wise because of their care responsibilities during the extended quarantine
(see Power).

lower socioeconomic classes. One of the more well-represented examples of this is through practices such as land and wealth seizures, redlining, contract homeownership, and other exclusionary policies that have kept people of color, primarily those of African American descent, from attaining intergenerational wealth in the U.S (Coates). This has resulted in some stark disparities. For example, Black families are over 16 times more likely than their white counterparts to experience poverty over three generations (Winship et al. 2). And Laura T. Hamilton and Kelly Nielsen argue that we can at least partially credit neoliberal ideologies and austerity policies, as well as the long-lasting legacy of Jim Crow laws for the statistic that the median Black household of the current generation holds only one twentieth of the wealth of the median white household (Hamilton and Nielsen 9). However, this is far from the only group who has been met with discriminatory practices. Similar, albeit not identical, discussions could be had for the ways that immigrants,[3] people with disabilities,[4] Native Americans,[5] and many other populations have been prevented from realizing the kind of prosperity that is encompassed by the broad idea of The American Dream. This is to ignore completely other practices which have harmed these populations, which themselves are unlikely to be able to be easily extricated from wealth-related discriminatory practices.

These intersectional concerns matter not just because they create contextual circumstances in which people who belong to certain categories of difference are

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[3] See, for example, Capps et al.

[4] See, for example, Stapleton et al.

[5] See, for example, Sarche and Spicer.

disadvantaged but also in that lingering discriminatory attitudes affect how people in these groups are treated. It is impossible to extrapolate out the discriminatory attitudes toward people who fit these marginalized groups from the discriminatory attitudes that prevail in regards to economic disadvantage. For example, racist and sexist attitudes may affect how economically disadvantaged people are perceived. In the other direction, however, when the people who belong to these categories of difference are also overrepresented among the economically disadvantaged, this can exacerbate discriminatory attitudes about those categories of difference as well. This is only one concern among many potential issues regarding intersectionality but it hopefully draws out some of the need for intersectional analysis in attempting to address concerns regarding economic inequality moving forward.

Throughout this dissertation, I will, in the interest of brevity, be appealing to examples or generalizations of peoples' experiences that will not be representative of the whole set of economically-disadvantaged people in the Western world. Hopefully these will not amount to caricatures, but will instead be approximations of as many peoples' experiences under these conditions as possible. Failures to represent different layers and textures of these experiences are ultimately my own, but are made in the interest of moving the conversation forward. I hope that these gestures at intersectional concerns and the initial work I am doing in this project of bringing class-centrism to light can help to open the door for further work towards economic distribution and how it affects, or can affect, future theorizing so that progress can be made away from repeating and reinforcing injustices based on aspects of peoples' identities.

IV.   Why Should This Project Matter to Philosophy?

One reason this project matters for higher education at large is related to the

recent work done on the socioeconomic backgrounds of faculty members across

disciplines. In a recent study of faculty members across eight academic disciplines,

tenure-track or higher in career path, researchers found that the self-reports of faculty

members reflected a tendency towards the higher end of the socioeconomic spectrum.

On average, faculty members reported growing up in areas where the reported median

income was about 23% higher than the national average median income.[6] One of the

more striking results in this study, though, is the finding that tenure-track faculty across

the disciplines investigated were up to 25 times more likely to have a parent with a Ph.D.

than the general population; that is, roughly 22% of tenure-track faculty surveyed has at

least one parent with a Ph.D. (Morgan et al. 4). And this is even more striking when

compared with the general population of Ph.D. recipients per year. Although only 11.8%

of Ph.D. recipients, on average, have Ph.D. parents, those who do are thus

overwhelmingly more likely to find tenure-track positions if they go on the academic job

market (4). Another study focused specifically on economics Ph.D.s, but which also

looked at Humanities generally determined that 55% of all U.S. born Humanities Ph.D.

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[6] I must express here some reservations about the method by which Morgan et al.
gathered this data. It is based entirely on the zip code at which the subjects reported
growing up. The researchers determined the average income attached to the zip code
during the estimated Although this measurement is a decent approximation for families
making roughly median income for their area, it does not account for outliers. It also
does not account for people who had to relocate more frequently as a result of financial
difficulties. Morgan et al. acknowledge these limitations and express the need for better
metrics in future work (8-9).

recipients between 2010 and 2018 had at least one parent with a graduate degree (Schultz and Stansbury 67). There is a general disconnect, then, between the socioeconomic backgrounds of professors in academia and the increasing numbers of diverse students in universities. And this disconnect may affect whether at least some students believe the academic path is right for them. In a profession which has been criticized as being an 'ivory tower,' attempting to have faculty members who represent the demographics of their students, and who can relate to those students' experiences, seems desirable.

And, although this recent trend in investigating the socioeconomic backgrounds of people in higher education has not yet been researched extensively in Philosophy,[7] some attention has been paid to other aspects of the backgrounds of philosophers. Specifically, in the last 20 years, a fair amount of focus has been put on what's been loosely called the Pipeline Problem in Academic Philosophy. The demographics of note for this problem are usually identified as race, gender, and ethnicity, but given the previously-cited research about academia at large, we can infer that there is likely a similar representation problem for people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds as well (Schwitzgebel et al.). The general idea is that, although in introductory level philosophy courses, there is a fairly representative proportion of at least some underserved populations (Calhoun 216), once you examine the demographics of more

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[7] There have been some surveys taken which indicate that the majority (roughly 68%) of philosophy graduate students identify as middle and upper-middle class, though (see, for example, Jennings and Dayer). It seems likely that fewer of the lower income graduate students become tenure-track or higher career status professors in the same way that fewer Ph.D. recipients without Ph.D. parents achieve these positions, although this would be a task for empirical interrogation.

advanced scholarship in philosophy, ranging from graduate school all the way up to full

professorships, philosophy becomes much more homogenized as a white male profession.

There are simply fewer people of diverse backgrounds at higher steps on the career path

in philosophy.[8] Not only is the statistical representation overall lower, but this is

exacerbated in the rates of articles published by top journals (see Haslanger and

Leuschner). Much of the focus in this recent literature has been on the role of implicit

bias and mismatched schemas, where the paradigm understanding of the profession is in

conflict with the characteristics of underserved populations, in creating this problem (see

Haslanger and Calhoun for examples). Anna Leuschner has suggested that we can also

look to the indirect (in addition to direct) effects of social biases to understand its origin

(Leuschner 231). And Leslie and colleagues have suggested that leaky pipelines are

endemic to professions which emphasize brilliance among their practitioners (Leslie et al.

262)

Regardless of the proposed origins of the problem, implicit in the leaky pipeline

metaphor is the notion that, if we merely increase the number of practicing women and

people of color in philosophy, we may eliminate the representation problem, but some

theorists have pushed back against this idea. For example, Anna Dodds and Eliza

Goddard suggest that discussing the issue as a pipeline problem implies a neutral

background, that we can simply expect some leakage along the way and a steadier stream

of candidates will fix the issue (Dodds and Goddard 148). Instead, they suggest raising

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[8] For some central discussions of this phenomenon, see Haslanger, Calhoun, Botts et al. and Schwitzgebel et al.

awareness of these issues, normalizing women practicing philosophy and the ways in which that may differ from the dominant methodologies, and considering more carefully how philosophy is taught (157). And Cheshire Calhoun claims that, in order to solve the problem of lower representation of women in higher prestige positions, we will have to also *degender* philosophy in order to address the pipeline (Calhoun 221).

Some progress has been made in recent years toward increasing the diversity of students and faculty in Philosophy (see especially Schwitzgebel et al), but this does not mean that all of the issues which have led to the Pipeline Problem have been resolved. We should take seriously work done which identifies problems with the culture in the discipline which creates an unappealing, and sometimes even hostile, environment for what Kristie Dotson dubs diverse practitioners, or philosophers who are diverse in terms of their divergence from the dominant ways of thinking in the profession (Dotson 403). Alternative work toward this, especially through criticisms offered by Dotson about philosophical gatekeeping and the need to create an environment which is accepting toward those who offer different perspectives.

I mean for this project to be in line with these alternative suggestions toward addressing the Pipeline Problem, through addressing the problem of the culture of philosophy. One aspect of the culture that needs revising is the way that particular perspectives, specifically those which occupy privileged places in Western society, take up space in our theorizing. This is all to say that this project matters because it provides an additional way, beyond simply increasing the representation in terms of numbers, to address this Pipeline Problem. I am suggesting that part of the reason we have this leaky

pipeline is because the theories we put forth may be unfamiliar to or even exclude the perspective of those who are already socially disadvantaged for one reason or another. Even if, upon a deep examination, we can demonstrate that certain views are *not* guilty of class-centric reasoning, we also need to consider how they may appear to be so to those who are entering the profession from disadvantaged backgrounds.

V.   What Are the Individual Chapters About?

In the 2nd chapter, I introduce a precedent for the kind of argument I intend to make throughout the rest of the project from the feminist epistemology literature. To this end, I introduce ontological tyranny as a problematic aspect of theorizing about objectivity and suggest that the notion can be partially attributed to androcentrism in theorizing. Further, androcentrism is a specific example of problematic -centric reasoning, which reliably portrays two characteristics which are harmful to people outside of the group being centered, identifying differences as deficiencies and masking contributions and strengths. I further propose that there is an analogous notion of -centric thinking in relation to economic advantage, class-centric thinking.

In Chapter 3, I discuss one famous example of psychological research which demonstrates class-centrism. Walter Mischel's famous Marshmallow Tests were a great resource for understanding the development of gratification delay in some children, but some design flaws and the too-quick longitudinal interpretation of gratification delay as a predictor of success are an example of specifically *class*-centrism. Further research on delayed gratification indicates that, when experiments are done on a more representative

sample of children, the correlation between delaying gratification and future success is diluted, and related research implies that economic background is more likely to cause future success than virtuous traits of the children.

In the 4th chapter, I examine Michael Bratman's use of stability in various parts of his Planning Theory of Intention, and, more recently Diachronic Self-Governance. I spend much of this chapter focusing on recreating Bratman's view itself, but I also dwell upon stability as itself a notion which may import class-centrism. Since there are many ways that stability can be arrived at in an agent, a heavy reliance on this trait without acknowledging the various conditions which may prevent them from developing this trait may indicate some implicit class-centrism in the view.

In chapter 5, I consider how extensive a notion of normative identity Bratman is proposing in order for an agent to be self-governing. On a minimal notion of normative identity, Bratman avoids class-centrism, but appears to lose some of the superlative nature implicit in the term 'self-governance.' On a richer notion, however, Bratman risks giving a class-centric notion along the lines of what Margaret Urban Walker calls a 'Career-Self View.' Acknowledging first that Bratman likely means to represent a moderate account along this spectrum, I explore ways in which his view does imply a richer notion of normative identity and may not appear fit for people who do not adhere to lifestyles which lack long term plans and consistent traits.

In the 6th chapter, I examine Jennifer Morton's Ecological Theory of Rationality as a view which incorporates some flexibility, as opposed to stability, in the norms which govern our individual instances of deliberation. I suggest that, although Morton's theory

does better in claiming that different norms apply to agents in different ecologies, defined as a compilation of the circumstances under which an agent normally functions and their capacities, it relies on a narrow understanding of habit as justifying an individual's habitual norms of reasoning. I suggest that, with a more expansive understanding of habit, we can leave room for the agent to discern relevantly different situations in which they need to alter their norms to better fit the situations in which they find themselves reasoning.

In the 7th chapter, I explore the way that Morton's theory, in claiming that different ecologies are governed by different norms of reasoning, gives us a path toward an even more expansive understanding of. It does this because of the possibility of agents belonging to multiple ecologies at once. When agents are pulled in different directions by their participation in multiple communities, their circumstances also increase in complexity. I argue that complexity is common in the lives of economically disadvantaged people and that this can in fact give them an advantage while reasoning in complex circumstances. And the practical reasoning literature's failure to identify and acknowledge this strength of reasoning both acts as evidence for class-centrism in the literature as well as provides us with a clear path forward for mitigating this tendency. Improving our understanding of these little-known strengths of reasoning are one way we can work towards a more egalitarian literature. The 8th chapter simply comments upon what I have attempted to do in this project and indicates some promising future avenues of inquiry.

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Chapter 2: Lessons to Draw From Feminist Epistemology

I. **Problematizing objectivity**

My overall project is concerned with how theories of practical reasoning address differences in reasoning which result from differences in agents' backgrounds, especially economic backgrounds. However, I want to suggest that there is precedent for my forthcoming argument in the preexisting literature on feminist epistemology, particularly as concerns criticisms of objectivity and the prevalence of androcentric thinking. In this chapter, I will discuss objectivity as a troubling ideal in the philosophical literature, one which has been used to hide the influence of androcentrism on research and theory-creation. I will then explain two specific issues in androcentric thinking, which I suggest are present in all other kinds of problematic -centric thinking, and offer a preliminary suggestion that a class-specific form of this thinking also occurs.

Objectivity, particularly in terms of objective knowledge, is a concept which tends to be valued highly in philosophical thought. The concept of objectivity itself, however, is notoriously slippery. Elisabeth Lloyd raises some important concerns about our appeals to objectivity, specifically as it is used in contrast with appeals to knowledge which is dependent on perspective. Since many of our knowledge claims are *held* subjectively (as a result of our learning processes occurring through our subjective selves), appeals to objectivity can call into question whether these claims in fact amount to knowledge. In the interest of preserving what should count as knowledge, we first need to be clear about what objective knowledge consists in. The term 'objectivity' can refer to several, often overlapping concepts, between which the philosophical literature

often does not disambiguate, as Lloyd is apt to point out. Although these terms tend to be closely related, it is important to note that they in fact make reference to different epistemological and ontological concepts.

The four conceptions that Lloyd discusses are 1) that what is objective is detached from and disinterested in any particular point of view (354); 2) that what is objective is publically available, as in it can be third-personally accessed, to any potential knower (355); 3) that objective things exist independently from individual perspectives (355), or 4) that whatever it is that is objective is 'Really Real,'or actually exists (356). The failure to differentiate between these notions in discussion objectivity has led to many philosophers assuming they are discussing the same thing when they appeal to objectivity while failing to note that they are implicitly taking on commitments in this notion of objectivity that are not as well-justified for the particular conception they mean to invoke. This has come together to form a sort of 'covering story' narrative of objectivity that imports problematic assumptions. Lloyd notes that what has emerged is a certain "*philosophical folk story* about *objectivity*" (353 emphasis in original) in which several of these distinct notions come together to form what she calls, 'ontological tyranny.'

Ontological tyranny is a particular conception of objectivity, which, despite its origins as a one method among many by which to obtain objective knowledge, has become implicitly touted as the *only* way to do so. This conception itself consists of three essential claims (Lloyd 356). The first of these, an ontological commitment, is that the objective world, in terms of whatever it is that counts as 'really real,' is independent from humans in an important way. It does not rely on us in any way for its existence and

would remain as it is, presumably, even if there were no knowers about to understand it. The rest of ontological tyranny, consisting of two necessities of epistemology, is based on what needs to be true in order for us to come to understand the world, the world which is independent of us. The second essential claim (and first epistemological necessity) is that the world must be in some way *publicly* knowable; if we are to have any epistemic access to this world at all, we all need to have the potential to access it in the same way. Experiences that can *only* be had individually, without a point of connection between them, are not considered candidates for objectivity. The final commitment of ontological tyranny is that we can gain this access to knowledge of the objective world *only* through a method which is characterized by detachment, or the distancing of oneself *qua* knower from the subjective experiences by, and aspects of, ourselves. Insofar as we allow our subjective selves into the quest for knowledge of the objective world, we restrict our own access. Although, as Lloyd notes, there are several philosophers that have resisted aspects of ontological tyranny,[9] this tyranny remains the prevailing understanding of how one can obtain objective knowledge. For the purpose of the forthcoming discussion, though, what is especially tyrannical about these commitments is their emphasis on a methodologically impartial and detached epistemic access to the world.

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[9] Those she discusses are Rudolph Carnap (365-6), John McDowell (366-8), Thomas Nagel (368-70), and John Searle (371-3).

II.   Objectivity as Androcentric Thinking

Although Lloyd does not explore in depth the *conditions* that have enabled the tyranny of objectivity, other theorists have also examined the dominant conception of objectivity, and have identified the detached methodology ideal as particularly pernicious. In other words, the aspect of ontological tyranny that enables the biggest problems is that achieving knowledge requires us to first detach from our own perspectives. Catherine MacKinnon was an early critic of this notion. She notes that, despite the belief that what it is to be objective is to not occupy any perspective in particular, this sense of objectivity is itself a gendered notion, highlighting that, "only a subject. . . gets to take the objective standpoint, the stance which is transparent to its object, the stance that is no stance" (MacKinnon 54). Given the way in which men have historically been identified as paradigm subjects, the criticism goes, there is a knee-jerk tendency for men to understand their own perspectives as privileged ones. Thus, any perspectives which differ, or any people who tend to be placed in an 'object' relation to this privileged perspective, will be less likely to be understood as capable of achieving the transparency of stance that is understood to be objective.

Presumably, what Mackinnon is criticizing here is the tendency for what is understood as 'objectivity' to reflect androcentrism. Although it is a contingent fact about the world that men tend to occupy the 'subject' position and thus be understood as more objective, the consistent tendency for that to be the default assumption throughout Western history links androcentrism and objectivity nearly inextricably. Androcentric thinking occurs when the male perspective is taken as the general standard without

justification for doing so. As Sandra Bem articulates it, "androcentrism is the privileging of male experience and the 'otherizing' of female experience; that is, males and male experience are treated as a neutral standard or norm for the culture or the species as a whole, and females and female experience are treated as a sex-specific deviation from that allegedly universal standard" (Bem 40-1). This is the primary way in which androcentrism functions to distort understanding; men are the reference point from which everything is judged, and women, as well as those who do not fit neatly into the gender binary, are understood primarily in terms of their differences from men. Androcentrism does not only apply to characterizations of gender, however; it also consists in *defining objects* from a male perspective. When men reason androcentrically, "they define everything they see in terms of its similarity to, or its dissimilarity from, themselves. They take their own being and experience to be the reference point or standard for the culture--or the species--as a whole, and they take everyone else's being and experience to be merely an inferior departure or deviation from the standard that they themselves set (Bem 42)."

A second way that androcentrism functions is by setting the terms of *significance* for particular objects of inquiry as a baseline for all reasoners. When understanding is sought from an androcentric perspective, everything is defined, "in terms of the meaning or functional significance that it has for them personally rather than defining it in its own terms (42)." Scientific research, for instance, has tended to be undertaken in a way that prioritizes the uses or significance the phenomena or objects hold for the dominant male perspective. Similarly, if something is not deemed useful or significant from this

perspective, it will be understood to **be** insignificant. Thus, aspects of experience understood to be important by men will be highlighted, where aspects that do not seem significant to men will be rendered unimportant. And, because the standards set by androcentric thinking will reflect this, what is unimportant to men will be rendered unimportant generally.

If androcentrism merely consisted of male centering without any evaluative or normative components, it might not ultimately be problematic. However, androcentrism is different from mere in-group preference because it is created and reinforced by informal social hierarchies, it promotes discrimination, and it tends to be resistant to evidence. Catherine Hundleby identifies androcentrism as a fallacy of reasoning, noting that it is yet another way that reasoning can misfire as a result of invalid 'moves' in reasoning. She explains that we can understand androcentrism to affect what is understood as common knowledge in a society. Information about topics that are typically understood to be gendered male in a patriarchal society is more likely to be common knowledge, but women-specific knowledge is not. Hundleby notes "how difficult it is to live in most parts of the world and not have some awareness of exclusively male sports leagues, and yet to be completely ignorant of women's sports even if one is a woman" (5). If the phenomenon were merely in-group preference, information about sports teams, for instance, would be specific to only some groups. It would either be exclusively sports fans who track this information, or perhaps the information would be expected to be known more broadly, and extend as common knowledge to the whole class of men. Yet this is not the case. General knowledge about

sports (and specifically the male leagues of them) tends to be expected to be on

everyone's radar, at least in the Western world, not just those who are tuned in. Although

the diversity of pop culture has shifted over the years to encompass a wider variety of

entertainment media, people are still met with surprise if they are unaware of, say, what

professional sports are in their play-off seasons at a given time. The sheer prevalence of

this as social knowledge demonstrates the role of androcentrism on social thinking. And

further, this implicit norm that people within a society ought to consider information

about this male-centered activity to be at least somewhat common knowledge indicates

that there is a power dynamic involved in the distinction between in-group preference and

-centric thinking (5).

A defense of the consideration of male sports as common knowledge is

sometimes made in terms of the relative athletic ability of men and women at the

particular sports.[10] For instance, the argument goes, the three major sports in the U.S.,

football, basketball, and baseball are all played better by men and at the same time, they

are the most exciting sports. So, for example, the finding in a 2019 study that, in the vast

selection of media coverage on sports reporting only around 5 or 6% of it is on women's

sports (Cooky et al. 352) would be explained because women simply underperform to

that extent; when women play the most popular sports, they don't do it as well and other

sports are simply not as entertaining. So, there are two parts to the argument; one part is

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[10] Thank you to Eric Schwitzgebel for pressing me to defend this example more
thoroughly.

that women aren't as good at sports, especially those that are most entertaining. And the other part is that the sports women *are* good at aren't as entertaining.

If we were to take this first part of the argument at face value, however, there would seem to be an awful lot of coincidences in the world of women's sports that would remain unexplained by this theory. For instance, in sports where women's teams *are* performing better than the men's equivalent, for example the U.S. Women's National Soccer team, it would be a coincidence that it took until 2016 for the revenue they generate from games to exceed the men's team (Kelly). Additionally, now that the team *is* generating more revenue, it would be a coincidence that they have to sue the USSF for their respective compensation per the rules which determine compensation in relation to the revenue generated (Bachman).

As for the sports that women excel at being less interesting, this ostensibly seems to be a matter of taste. However, a brief discussion of the sport of cheerleading might be instructive on this matter. Despite its beginnings in the late 19th century as a male-dominated activity (Schultz), female cheerleaders have become the mainstay of both the scholastic and professional divisions of the activity. When cheerleading is done in the service of other popular sports, it is celebrated and admired, often as much because of the flattering uniforms and attractive people involved as because of its display of athleticism. Regardless of the reasons for its popularity, there has been considerable push back against the idea that it ought to be considered a sport in its own right. Despite that sports such as synchronized swimming and gymnastics (both of which have distinct men's teams) have been part of the Olympics for several decades, cheerleading has only just, as

of 2021, been voted by the International Olympic Committee to be included in future

Olympic games (Peyser). Again, we could appeal to this protracted battle as another

coincidence, or we could perhaps believe that, as a sport which tends to have a majority

of women competing in it, it is considered less valuable in virtue of androcentric ideas

about what is valuable rather than by its own demerits. These issues in women's sports

have recently enjoyed more publicity, but the U.S. is far from eliminating the

androcentric attitude it has had toward sports thus far.

 Returning to Mackinnon's point about objectivity, we can also further examine

the social dominance and hierarchy that gets imported into androcentric thinking through

the way that men are understood as 'subjects.' Men, *qua* this role as subjects, are thus

perceived as better placed to make 'objective' judgments, which itself is a result of an

unequal, patriarchal society. This positioning reflects the social power which enables

them to count as 'subjects' instead of as 'objects.' Socially, in order to qualify as

someone capable of making appropriately 'objective' judgments, one must first occupy a

position in which one really counts as a person. In occupying this position, the person can

then claim to have knowledge that transcends *any* particular stance. Marianne Janack, in

a paper discussing the so-called paradoxes of objectivity, describes this criticism as that:

> [t]he ideal of objectivity as it has been lionized in philosophy and science
> has always been something oxymoronic in this way—it is just that people
> whose views have passed as the view of no-one-in-particular have not
> been aware that there might be other views that had been excluded. So, the
> argument goes, the view of some-people-in-particular has in fact passed as
> the view of no-one-in-particular (Janack 273).

Failing to recognize the role that one's perspective plays in identifying allegedly

objective (perspectivally-speaking) knowledge is problematic in that it risks making

serious mistakes. Two of these are that 1) claiming that a person is working with the view of 'no-one-in-particular' masks any bias the person may have (which is primarily an epistemic mistake), and 2) this risks silencing people who do not share that view (which is primarily a moral mistake, or an issue of justice). It prevents those who disagree from having authoritative opinions on information that is being presented as objectively true. It is rather easy to disregard a dissenting opinion when the person giving it can be interpreted as expressing an opinion distorted by perspective. The person who is affected by perspective, on this understanding, is reasoning more poorly than someone who does not allow perspective in. But, as I have been trying to argue, the prevalence of androcentric thinking should make us question whether anyone *is* in fact reasoning aperspectivally. Karen Jones notes that there are two further ways we can cash out criticisms of the pursuit of aperspectivity; we can interpret them as critical of our *ability* to be fully objective, or we could understand them to imply that we shouldn't place such value on objectivity to begin with.

Sally Haslanger takes the former interpretation. She focuses on MacKinnon's brief discussions of objectivity as problematic, and elucidates them further to determine whether objectivity is redeemable, if some level of conceptual reform can enable individuals to become objective in this apocryphal way. She notes that a significant part of MacKinnon's criticism of objectivity is a response to the tendency for the 'objective' standpoint to write into the objects it is perceiving the tendencies that it is wont to 'perceive.' Because this standpoint is only occupied by people in positions of power already, these alleged perceptions can become 'true' of their objects in virtue of that

social power held by subjects (66-67). Haslanger's argument is that what is criticizable about an objective standpoint is that it includes this 'transformation' from perception to reality. Were it the case that a reasoner occupying a position of power were to recognize the perspectival influence on their belief, and to be able to recognize that their belief may not be true because of this influence, it wouldn't be able to distort understanding in the way that this 'not fully objective' objectivity does. In allowing perception to pass as reality and the social power the person has to reinforce this idea, the objective stance takes on an insidious air. It gains the ability to essentially set the terms for understanding a concept based solely on the shared perceptions of those occupying a socially dominant position.[11]

And not only is the objective stance potentially harmful when it performs this transformation, it violates its own ideals. It fails to be truly aperspectival because the subjects occupying it include their opinions of the objects into their perceptions of them. It further fails to be neutral because no validation of the subject's social power could be (70). And it fails to be distant (where 'distant' refers to its being unconditioned by the subject's social position and not having any effect on the object) because the subject is involved in whatever characterization is in question (70). Androcentrism is even more pernicious in this respect, since the privileging of perspective is able to act as a self-fulfilling prophecy and enable the person claiming to be transparent the ability to 'decree'

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[11] We could perhaps understand this aspect of the objective stance as creating the conditions for the significance-setting ability of androcentrism mentioned previously.

that their opinion dictates what is true. Any bias masked by androcentrism in the way mentioned above is increasingly taken to reflect 'the way things are.'

However, Haslanger argues, this kind of interaction between subject and object is a contingency brought about by the assumption that the subject is in fact being aperspectival. As she puts it, this assumption of aperspectivity enables subjects to inhabit their social role *well* since they reinforce their own dominant position through transforming their beliefs into social reality, but the role could, in theory, be occupied without this problematic insertion of the subject (72-4). We could have objectivity without the biased perspective which distorts it aways from these three implicit norms. Ultimately, for Haslanger, the problem is that people assume they are being aperspectival when they are not. A better notion of objectivity would be one that succeeds in being truly aperspectival.

In contrast, Jones argues that in order to question objectivity to the extent MacKinnon seems to want we must demonstrate that objectivity is not itself as desirable an ideal as had beenthought. Not only is the insertion of perspective implicit in objectivity so entangled in the notion as to be nigh impossible to extricate, the idea that we should strive for aperspectivity in the first place is mistaken. Jones then briefly argues that, if objectivity were necessary for knowledge, consciousness-raising efforts, which examine the experiences of individuals to discover information often about oppressed groups, would be pointless (Jones 316). This is because the information discovered through consciousness-raising is uniquely tied to the experiences of people. The information discovered in this way is often of the type that the people experiencing

do not have the appropriate conceptual tools available for understanding.[12] However, consciousness-raising efforts have in fact led to people coming together to arrive at new knowledge as a result of expressing their experiences and finding that others share both these experiences and the internal responses to them.

For instance, women's experiences of sexual harassment were understood as only unwanted sexual advances before women were able to cooperatively identify that many of them had similar experiences but lacked the means to express it (Fricker 150). Internalizing norms of aperspectivity runs the risk of writing off the discomfort these women felt as a mere subjective feeling, when it was in fact a response to something for which we collectively lacked an articulate concept. The concepts and theories that we have available to us help to structure the experiences we have and the understanding we can form about them. Jones tries to demonstrate with her discussion of consciousness-raising that we ought to be questioning the role of objectivity if it would exclude this kind of inquiry, since the knowledge it elicits, at least before it becomes a matter of social concept, is only knowable to people who have experienced it. Objectivity which requires aperspectivity is likely to devalue personal narrative as a legitimate source of information. Even if Haslanger is right that we *can* achieve aperspectival objectivity, it is not obvious that it would be desirable. Prioritizing objectivity risks masking information which is only highlighted by understanding the world and our experiences perspectivally.

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[12] This can be due either to the peoples' inexperience with the concepts or a conceptual gap in the language/cultural knowledge, only the latter of which will be discussed shortly.

But, even if we side with Haslanger in wanting to reform our notion of objectivity such that it can be truly aperspectival, there is reason to doubt that we can in fact *achieve* aperspectivity in the first place. Much of the time, when people attempt to reflect on situations in ways that do not explicitly favor their own perspectives, parts of that perspective creep in nonetheless. For example, psychologists studying the role of implicit bias in hiring decisions discovered that, when subjects in experimental contexts were prompted to be 'objective,' gender biased decision-making actually increased (Uhlmann and Cohen 207). These findings are related to similar findings that people tend to have a 'bias blind spot' which prevents them from being cognizant about the ways that they themselves are affected by cognitive and motivational biases (see Pronin, Gilovich, and Ross). Uhlmann and Cohen further this idea by noting that peoples' social position can act as a further confirmation bias upon their belief that they make 'objective' decisions, dubbed 'personal objectivity' by the researchers. And this belief in one's personal objectivity can be especially buffeted by the occupying hierarchical positions, such as hiring committees (Uhlmann and Cohen 219). When the researchers primed subjects to reflect upon their own perceived objectivity, they found a greater level of gender-biased evaluations among subjects who held stereotypically-gendered beliefs (214). Surely from the perspectives of the individual subjects, though, each of them made appropriately unbiased evaluations of the candidates put before them. We can infer this because over 88% of the subjects in every version of this experiment self-identified as more objective than other people (209).

These results track with how pervasive our personal experiences are in the way we pick up information. Thus, it should be no surprise that it is difficult to separate what we know from what we've personally experienced. And given the importance placed on objectivity in conducting research and proposing philosophical theories, we should expect that those engaged in these activities are just as prone as anyone else to incorporating our own perspectives into our work.[13] Marriane Janack suggests that, often, failures of objectivity involve "the use of inappropriate and 'secret' criteria of evaluation, which enter the process of evaluation as hidden factors" (Janack 270). These secret criteria are the result of incorporating ideas which we've gained from our personal experiences/backgrounds and failing to notice that they've been taken up along the way. Despite our best efforts, the criticism goes, perspective may creep into our judgments and evaluations. And this is how fallacious thinking such as androcentrism and, I will argue, other types of -centric thinking, sneak onto the scene. In our attempts to be detached in the way required by objectivity, we fail to note these commitments having an impact on our evaluation at all. The semi-mythological argument discussed above, that men are able to occupy a perspective that is transparent to itself, is a particularly pernicious version of androcentric thinking affecting our norms. And the prevalence of this kind of error should itself give us reason to doubt our ability to be objective, especially insofar as that objectivity requires aperspectivity or detachment.

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[13] See Moss-Racusin et al. for an example of research into the gender biases demonstrated by science faculty in an experiment formulated around hiring students.

III.   Examples of Androcentrism

Objectivity is only one of many places in which androcentrism affects peoples'

judgment and perceptions. The prevalence of its influence on thinking further calls into

question whether we are *able* to reliably remove subjective aspects from our perspective

while trying to achieve objective reasoning. It also shows that there are several problems

that occur when we fail to acknowledge the influence of these perspectival elements. The

criticism of androcentrism is, at base, the criticism that men have placed themselves in

the middle of their worldviews while neither marking nor justifying that inclusion.

Because androcentrism is so pernicious, examples of it abound. One prominent

example has been revealed by medical research into heart disease. Until the early

1990s,[14] studies into the symptoms of heart disease were performed nigh exclusively on

male subjects. Coronary artery disease (CAD) had been primarily understood as a health

issue for men and so the research reflected a focus on its instantiation in them. (Beery

428). The most common symptom of a heart attack, gleaned from this research, is pain in

the chest, followed by the less common symptoms of shortness of breath, tingling in the

left arm, and indigestion or nausea. More recent studies, though, have shown that the

information gained through using male subjects is not fully adequate for identifying the

ways in which heart disease instantiates in the female population because women tend to

experience myocardial infarctions differently (Pathak et al. 535). Nearly half of female

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[14] In 1987, a Public Health Task Force set into place a requirement that studies either use
men and women equally in their research or give an explicit articulation of why doing so
is not necessary. This was slow to take effect, since there were no penalties for
noncompliance at first, but the discipline slowly adapted (433).

subjects in early research experienced no chest pain accompanying their cardiac episodes, but most (80%) did experience shortness of breath (Beery 428). Yet doctors working from the studies performed on male subjects used this information as representative of people in general. These misunderstandings about gender differences led to females with symptoms of cardiac issues being diagnosed with psychiatric problems instead (428). Even the diagnostic tests doctors use to determine whether a person is suffering from CAD have traditionally been designed with information from research on male subjects, leading to a proliferation of false-positive and -negative tests (430). This is especially troubling since the leading cause of death for women over 40 years of age is heart attack (427).[15] Women are also more likely to die during their first heart attack than their male counterparts (Pathak et al. 533). And, potentially as a result of the dearth of research on women,

This is a context in which some legitimate differences between sexes, particularly physiological ones, had to be *acknowledged* as significant before they were considered as objects of research. Because the male standard was automatically assumed to be representative of the species as a whole, people who lay outside this standard, namely biological females, were put at significant risk, both by the lack of appropriate

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[15] In fact, more recent studies, focused primarily in northern Sweden, researchers have discovered that there is a gender gap between improvements in outcomes for patients with CAD as well. Whereas for both genders, recurrent heart attacks have been declining over the past 20 years, only men have been experiencing a decrease in numbers for initial heart attacks (Lundblad et al. 4). It is unclear, however, whether this is a result of earlier studies being focused on men or whether there are differences in exposure to risk factors that explain this disparity.

information and by a tendency for doctors to not take female-given reports of symptoms seriously.[16] This failure of medical research because of a default tendency to prioritize the male perspective demonstrates one of the more dangerous contexts in which androcentrism can have effects. However, even in situations with lower stakes, we may risk significant injustice if we allow androcentrism to flourish.

One area in which androcentric policy has had, arguably, slightly less dire results, resulting in matters of injustice more frequently than life-or-death, is in the matter of providing job protections for people during pregnancy. In the 1970s, cases brought before the U.S. Supreme Court demonstrated that accommodations for pregnancy had not been protected under the equal protection clause of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Bem 74). Mothers could be terminated from their positions rather than allowed to return after giving birth because it did not clearly fall under the definition of sex discrimination provided by the Act. Since cis-men cannot become pregnant, providing accommodations for women who become pregnant was interpreted as compensating for a risk unique to women. Although these Supreme Court cases were decided against the plaintiffs, the dissenting opinions of some Supreme Court Justice, notably Thurgood Marshall, John Stevens, William Brennan, and William Douglass, highlighted that there are in fact protections in place that favor *men*, either solely or disproportionately, such as prostatectomies, circumcisions, and treatment for gout (cited in Bem 75-6). Ultimately, the issue was that the default human body understood to be protected by the Civil Rights

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[16] This latter point is representative of a problem which is not directly relevant to the point of inappropriate generalizations but was a hurdle in overcoming the influence of androcentrism on this medical issue.

Act had been a male one; since they do not become pregnant, protections for pregnancy were seen as extending a special benefit to people who are different from the norm. With the passing of the Pregnancy Discrimination Act in 1978, the U.S. made some progress toward amending androcentric policy, although there is still some room for improvement since pregnancy is deemed a temporary disability and companies are required to extend only such courtesies and protections for pregnant employees as they provide other temporarily disabled employees (see Vogel for a discussion of this).[17] The U.S. remains one of the only developed countries which does not federally protect paid maternity leave (Widiss 972), and one significant worry about changing this law is that it could cause further discrimination against women in their careers, as employers might choose to lay them off just prior to the time at which they would be eligible for these mandated benefits, or resist hiring women in the first place (976).

Regardless, the androcentrism in these cases is readily apparent to us because we have the benefit of hindsight. We can understand the research into CAD and the lack of job protection during and after pregnancy as androcentric once our attention has been drawn to the gaps left by androcentric practices. The implicit prioritizing of the male perspective tends to leave these kinds of gaps which can then be brought to the forefront by a different, perhaps female or nonbinary, perspective. When another perspective demonstrates that there is reason to find previously-ignored information significant, this is in turn a good reason to believe it had been overlooked as a result of the dominant

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[17]Also see Shapiro for a discussion of how, although it would be more preferable to have meaningful accommodations without having to be categorized as temporarily disabled, this may be the best for which pregnant people can get assistance when it is needed.

perspective driving the inquiry. Sometimes, as noted by Elizabeth Anderson, a

differently-framed model can be used to understand the same phenomena, enabling some

data to stand out that had been previously overlooked. We can either deliberately

privilege a gynocentric model or craft a model that privileges neither gender and

highlights experiences that are shared in common (Anderson 73). The information

revealed to be significant in this way will come about by means of a gestalt shift rather

than a reasoned argument that something is significant; it is nevertheless invaluable as an

approach to arrive at more well-rounded understandings of phenomena. The tendency to

set norms from a perspective which privileges male experience also reflects a failure to

justify the choice to set the norms in this way, specifically when these norms are

supposed to 'speak for' all genders.

In the next two short sub-sections of the chapter, I will discuss briefly two aspects

of androcentric reasoning that I believe to be universally present in problematic versions

of -centric thinking,[18] using examples described by other theorists to highlight the

androcentrism present and the way they exemplify these universal issues. I will then

argue that these problems are likely to appear when we engage in virtually any kind of -

centric thinking that is characteristic of people occupying a dominant social category of

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[18] What I mean here is that not all kinds of -centric thinking is obviously problematic.
Understanding the world from a perspective and inadvertently prioritizing that
perspective is a common way to 'go through the world.' But I am claiming that, when
this way of thinking leads to the emergence of these two issues, this type of -centric
thinking is morally problematic.

difference.[19] People who are not part of that dominant category are thus even further disadvantaged by -centric thinking which displays these two features. Next, I will suggest that class-centric thinking is an example of just this phenomenon and it causes these same problems for economically disadvantaged people.

Issue 1: Differences Understood as Deficiencies

One way that androcentrism problematically instantiates is by implying that differences, specifically those between genders, are deficiencies. Elizabeth Anderson notes that questions asked in biological and psychological research around apparent differences between men and women have tended to set up behaviors understood as feminine as deviant and in need of explanation (Anderson 70-1). When we ask, "Why are women more sensitive or less assertive than men?" we implicitly claim that the levels of sensitivity and assertiveness associated with men are normal and acceptable. Similarly, research which finds that there is difference in behavior between genders tends to devote more explanation to the female behavior, implying that this behavior is aberrant, while male behavior is normal and adaptive (Bailey et al. 312). Recent discussion of the phenomenon of "toxic masculinity" arguably highlights that the tendency to view male behavior as normal or better adapted can itself be questioned. It's not clear that the ways men tend to be socialized represent *better* functioning, especially

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[19] I am expressly **not** claiming that these issues exhaust the problems raised by androcentric thinking, or that other versions of -centric thinking can *only* suffer from these. I am, however, claiming that these issues will be likely to occur for any version of -centric thinking.

when this often results in stifling emotional responses, and praising assertive personality traits, which can lead to problematic, maladaptive behaviors in the future. Yet even the specification of these behaviors as 'toxic' implies that these should be understood as separate from 'normal,' or 'unproblematic' masculinity. There is an assumption of a neutral basis which sets the bar of what is acceptable.[20] Framing the behavior of women as something to be explained simply takes it for granted that typical ways that men act are healthy and/or not to be examined for problems. Not only does this approach lack justification, it presents a limited understanding of what it is like to be different.

Surely, there will be some deviations which *do* represent deficiencies. In the discussion of toxic masculinity, for instance, there is an implicit assumption that masculinity that is toxic deviates from some (perhaps as yet not-fully-outlined) ideal of masculinity that is not maladaptive or problematic. Similarly, there may be ways in which, if we were to be able to realize a world without androcentric ideals, women may tend to display some deficiencies in certain areas. Presumably, though, in those cases an argument can be made for *how* those ought to, in fact, count as deficiencies. Toxic masculinity is toxic because it is bad for the people who display it as well as the people who are affected by it.

One prominent example of the deficiency framing of apparent gendered differences in scientific research is in the inferences drawn by Charles Darwin regarding the evolutionary status of the sexes. Caroline Kennard, a prominent activist for women's

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[20] Some would disagree that there is such a bar; see, for example, John Stoltenberg's *The End of Manhood*.

rights from Massachusetts who was a contemporary of Darwin's, brought up the question of the intellectual ability of women in correspondence with the famous researcher. Darwin responded that he believes women to naturally be intellectually inferior to men and to have much to overcome in the way of laws of inheritance if they were to strive to achieve equal ability (Saini 14). He further added that, since the only way to strive to do so would be for women to experience the competition typical of men as breadwinners in society, too much damage to family structure would be done for it to be reasonable for women to try. The idea is that men have evolved as a result of the competition they experience in life, both in terms of the competition for sexual partners and for resources. Women, understood as merely passive choosers of sexual partners, have allegedly not had to experience the same 'trial by fire' which would determine that they are the best resultant versions of themselves (15-16). Here evolution is understood as the result of competition rather than a more expansive understanding of adaptation as responses to changes in the environment. Darwin perceived his research as *demonstrating* that women are inevitably evolutionarily inferior to men; he took this to be an implication of good scientific inquiry. However, unbeknownst to him (and as indicated by subsequent work), he instead began with an assumption that male behavior is what drives the evolution of the species, then formulated a theory that fits this narrative. Because women were understood to be societally *supplemental*, rather than essential, their roles in the theory were formulated as such.

We can further analyze this example to identify a more general problem here. Because male behavior is the behavior which is meant to be driving evolution and thus is

ostensibly the most important, behavior which does not conform to this model can also be understood as deficient simply because it is *perceived* as less important. But this ranking of importance also bleeds out into being understood as deficient in other, even more problematic ways. Women are thus not *only* less evolved on this theory, but other aspects of their socialized character can be seen as the result of this assumed lack of development. So, part of the justification for the appearance of women as less rational and more emotional would be traced back to this difference in levels of having their fittingness tested.[21] Androcentrism leads to those who act differently from the norms of behavior set by the average male base line being understood as deficient because of these differences. But this perception is itself unjustified and in this case, the deficiencies themselves represent distorted views. Of course, as previously mentioned, there are some respects in which deviating from accepted norms *does* represent problematic functioning. However, without any reasoned argumentation to establish that this is the case (which does not itself rely on androcentric bias) deviation itself should not amount to a deficiency. Thus, in an important respect, androcentrism puts a burden of proof or justification on those whose reasoning implicitly relies on it. Anderson notes that any theory which tailors itself on the behavior of one gender, then generalizes to the population at large is "straightforwardly empirically inadequate" (Anderson 74). What she means is that this failure to account for roughly half the population will lead to the theory inevitably failing, either to accurately represent or to explain the world (or both);

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[21] See Genevieve Lloyd's *Man of Reason* for other historical 'justifications' for this perception as well.

the theory will essentially "obscure actual empirical differences between men and women and between differently situated women" (74). And in the absence of a justification for prioritizing one part of the population in this way, the view should not be taken seriously.

Issue 2: Masking Contributions and Problems

Related to this failure in empirical adequacy is the second problem with androcentrism, the skewing of information deemed research-worthy toward what is of interest to male researchers, thereby masking the importance of other information that is off their radar. A prominent context in which this has occurred, also discussed by Anderson, is in the study of primatology where, until the 1970s, the field had consisted almost entirely of male researchers. As a result of this saturation, the role of female primates in their social order had long been considered merely the limiting factor of procreation. The general flourishing and survival of the troop has been identified as a function of the male primates' behaviors. The troop thrives when the males in dominant social roles are successful in reproducing and maintaining order, the narrative goes.

However, once female primatologists became more common in this field of research, more attention was given to the particular ways that female primates contribute to the troop's survival as well. They subsequently found that infant survival and educating the next generations were also significant factors in maintaining numbers, and that female sexual behavior contributed to the social order as well (Anderson 73). Taking the behavior of female primates into account in these studies ultimately provides a richer picture of the troops' behavior. There had been gaps in the understanding of primate

social life that were virtually invisible until there were researchers on the scene who did not share the assumption that male behavior was the most significant factor in determining group survival and flourishing. In recognizing female primates to have important roles, researchers better understand the factors that are significant for the surviving and thriving of these groups. As mentioned previously, one of the key indicators of androcentric reasoning is a considerable gap in knowledge, which results from the privileging of male perspectives. Once this androcentrism of primatology was highlighted, theorists have found it useful to deliberately create gynocentric models of primate behavior, along with models that emphasize shared behavior, as ways of recognizing the gaps in understanding that had come from the previous theorizing about elements of primate survival and thriving.

Androcentrism can also be identified in important contexts in lived social experience, not solely in fields of research. One way that it significantly impacts daily life is through our understanding of what makes it over the production boundary, i.e. what counts as labor. Historically, many of women's contributions have been unpaid and because of this, have counted as part of leisure when calculating the labor-leisure tradeoff in economic modeling (Anderson 71). But this framing of unpaid labor as a kind of leisure distorts the work that it in fact is. Anderson suggests that:

> [p]rofessional women often find much of their unpaid work to constitute a
> drudgery from which paid labor represents an escape with positive
> intrinsic value. Middle-class and working-class women who engage in
> paid labor and who cannot afford to hire others to perform their household
> tasks and child care are better represented as engaged in (sometimes
> involuntary) dual-career or double-shift labor than in trading off labor for
> leisure. Full-time mothers and homemakers often view what some

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consider to be their leisure activities as highly important work in its own
right, even if it is unpaid. (71)

Thus, categorizing responsibilities that women have had for their households[22] as strictly

leisure on the basis of the lack of compensation is at best misleading and more likely

false. The lumping in of what is overwhelmingly one gender's responsibilities without

recognizing the different ways that these responsibilities weigh on them, depending on

their social position and personal values, is also a distorting generalization. The unpaid

nature of the work has also led to its being *de facto* valued less. But this fails to

acknowledge its role as an enabling condition for other forms of work. Without the roles

which have historically been relegated to 'women's work,' such as child rearing,

cooking, and upkeep of the house, it would be much more difficult for those who perform

paid labor to devote as much time to doing so. Although these tasks are sometimes

performed for compensation, they are rarely acknowledged as the important contributions

to social life that they are (Harding 88). Women's work in developed countries is

undervalued and is left out of the equation in economic modeling, despite that the

productivity which *is* measured relies upon it.

This labor-leisure division is even less appropriate in developing countries

because there will be less labor that is monetarily compensated for overall. The solution

to this issue has been to include all men's work, whether paid or unpaid, as contributing

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[22] Admittedly, the division of labor among gender lines has shifted some in the last
several decades as a result of several factors such as shifting gender roles, more
representation of women in a wider variety of industries, etc. However, even if we had
eliminated the underrepresentation of women in workplaces as a society, women still
disproportionately perform the amorphous activities referred to as 'housework' upon
which productivity outside of the home depends (Brenan).

to the economy, but only women's work if it is of a type that men perform as well

(Anderson 71-2). The national income thus explicitly rules out women's work, despite

that in many countries in Africa, women do the majority of agricultural labor and

fuel/water collecting (72). Thus, legitimately productive work is passed over as a

contribution to the economy entirely on the basis of the gender performing it. These

incomplete understandings of the labor performed within developing countries has also

led to inappropriate attempts to provide aid to them, attempting to train men in

agricultural work that does not reflect their social place and women in 'home economics'

that does not help them improve their actual needed skills (74).

Today, women are responsible for roughly 75% of unpaid labor worldwide

(Power 67). Much of this labor, as Anderson implies above, consists of a 'Second Shift'

on top of their normal work day, as coined by Arlie Russell Hochschild, to represent the

additional workload women often need to take on after they arrive home from working

full-time jobs. Hochschild, at the time of writing her book, estimated this shift to usually

amount to an extra month's worth of round-the-clock labor every year (Hochschild 4).

The 2020 global COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the way that women's

contributions remain unseen or at least underacknowledged. A larger percentage of

women had their careers set back by having to balance increased responsibilities in the

home, responsibilities which had previously been supplemented through public education

and accessible child care, with their work duties. Kate Power, citing research done by the

UN, notes:

> as institutional and community childcare has not been accessible for many
> families during the lockdown, unpaid childcare provision has been falling

more heavily on women, which has constrained their ability to work. This care work will be done more often by women than men, partly because of the persistence of traditional gender roles and partly because of the structure of women's economic participation, which is more likely to be part-time, flexible, and less remunerative. (69)

Thus, an overwhelming impact of the pandemic on women, in addition to the general public health and economic impacts that have been the primary focus of discourse, was to exacerbate already-existing inequalities in the distribution of unpaid labor. And as long as the contribution that these efforts provide to the functioning of both the economy and society at large continues to be masked by androcentric understanding, injustice is added to the burden of responsibilities.

The masking problems of androcentrism are also not restricted solely to women. Since trans, intersex, and nonbinary people do not fit neatly into the dominant male perspective, their experiences also tend to be ignored by androcentric theory creation and the general widespread acceptance of a gender binary. The prevalence of heteronormative thinking further exacerbates this erasure. Full treatment of these issues would take me far afield of my focus in this dissertation, but suffice it to say that before true egalitarianism can be achieved, research and theory-making will need to represent, or at least be consistent with the experiences from, each of the perspectives whose distinctions make a difference to whether these theoretical pursuits are effective.

Furthermore, the masking involved in this injustice in turn leads to a de facto *silencing* of non-cis-hetero-male perspectives. Not only have these perspectives been underrepresented historically in research, but establishing that these perspectives would be valuable has often been an uphill battle. This is because the information diverse

perspectives have presented has often been viewed as not significant in the first place.

Kristie Dotson describes the process of not taking peoples' testimony seriously as a result

of their demographics as an epistemic form of violence. She explains that, when

testimony is ignored, even if inadvertently, as a result of ignorance resulting from a

consistent and/or reliable epistemic gap that, in these circumstances, is harmful, we

should understand that as epistemic violence (Dotson 238-9). It demonstrates a lack of

the reciprocity that we rely on, and in fact *need* to rely on, in order to communicate

successfully (238). She further explains that this violence tends to produce practices of

silencing some people, which is an especially problematic form of epistemic injustice.

When people are discouraged from contributing as a result of the already-unjust

circumstances that have led to their input not being taken seriously, they are doubly-

harmed.

IV.   Drawing out Generalizations

In drawing out each of these problems with androcentrism, I mean to build a case

for different problematic versions of -centric thinking sharing these issues. Although it is

certainly true that there will be many differences in precisely how these problems arise, I

believe that these problems (and others) will emerge from other problematic forms of -

centric thinking. It's likely true that *everyone's* thinking is influenced in part by our

different identities and experiences; this seems to be an inevitable result of the way our

minds work. We contextualize our knowledge primarily on the basis of our own

experiences and prior understanding. To that end, our default approach to the world is to

center our own experience. And this tendency by itself is not inherently problematic. It is when we are unreflective about this influence that we risk making these mistakes in our own thinking. Those mistakes can have serious consequences, especially when the - centric thinking of a dominant group affects those with less power. So, we need to be careful about attributions of objectivity as well as to be vigilant about ways in which our own experiences influence our theory-making.

These mistakes may be, and sometimes are, recreated when theorizing about & evaluating the reasoning of low SES people. However, we should first note that there are a couple of differences between class and other demographics that can complicate this picture.[23] One issue is that class tends to be less clearly delineated than other categories of difference.[24] Because of this, the examples demonstrating class-centric thinking tend to be less obvious. Another complication arises because of the tendency for other categories of difference to intersect with class, specifically those of race and gender. Through practices like slavery, redlining, and funding public school districts through property taxes, intergenerational wealth has usually been withheld from communities of color (see, for example, Hardy and Logan). And, especially since the 1970s, women have made up a disproportionate percentage of the economically disadvantaged population (see, for example, McLanahan and Kelly). This means that most people of

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[23] As noted in the introduction, this project will unfortunately not do justice to intersectionality. My comments here are brief, but the intersectional complications and implications are certainly worth pursuing.

[24] This is not to say that the lines drawn for other categories are perfectly drawn and clear, only to claim that whatever lines do exist for class divisions are **especially** murky.

low SES will also belong to another category of difference that will impact their experience and potentially be a source of oppression. We cannot completely isolate issues of class from any which arise from other demographics. However, given that we are looking to identify problems that result from class-centric theorizing, I will focus on problems which *primarily* result from class difference rather than these other categories of difference.

The project of establishing that class-centric reasoning is prevalent, both in everyday thinking and in the philosophical literature, will be carried out in the forthcoming chapters. For our current purposes, let me examine three aspects of the understanding of reasoning that belie some -centric tendencies, one which is representative of the perspective-prioritizing in which -centric thinking consists, and two which highlight the universal issues of problematic -centric thinking. First is a behavior we prioritize as demonstrating particularly skilled reasoning, delaying gratification. The inverse of this point is that to fail to practice gratification delay demonstrates a lack of self control. And finally, that we place emphasis on how individuals reason in isolation from both other people and other aspects of their situations.

Delayed gratification is often considered to be the gold standard for practical deliberation. If an agent is in a situation in which waiting longer garners a higher reward, it is considered preferable to wait. It is praised as a practice in self control to be able to put off rewards in order to gain more overall. As far as paradigms go, however, this one is especially well-suited to people from backgrounds in which there is an excess of resources (in whatever form these may be, but most frequently, money) with which to

'invest' in this way. People from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, however, tend to be less likely to delay gratification. To this end, they are seen as lacking self control and patience. It is also far more likely for people with uncertain futures to be able to rely on/trust that their patience will in fact pay off. And in these uncertain conditions, waiting for a payoff is often not a realistic option. In fact, waiting for larger future benefits if one is barely scraping by is an *unwise* choice. This is demonstrative of the most straightforward way in which -centric thinking instantiates, when a group's experiences are unreflectively placed at the center of the theory, as a paradigm to be strived for universally. The privileging of one type of perspective demonstrated by this focus on delaying gratification is indicative of -centric thinking.

Furthermore, when an unreasonable reasoning paradigm is endorsed to people for whom it is not an option, those people are both relegated to a lesser role and alienated by a theory that does not apply to them. This is not to say that we *should* be understanding the reasoning of economically disadvantaged people entirely negatively, though. To do so is to fall victim to the first universal problem of -centric thinking, where differences are understood to be deficiencies. We need not understand the tendency of people of low SES to focus more on immediate results as a problem with their reasoning--it can also be reasonably viewed as an adaptation.

And the ways in which reasoning under limited resources shapes peoples' reasoning represents an unacknowledged contribution by people of low SES. There are strengths to be gained from learning to reason in the way people of low SES often do, and these strengths tend to be masked by 'deficit model' framing. This failure to understand

strengths of reasoning that often come about from living in poverty reflects the second universal issue of problematic -centric thinking. These strengths are further masked by the emphasis placed by the philosophical literature on individual reasoning while deemphasizing outside factors. Sure, outside factors can be *accommodated*, but when they are an afterthought, this implies that reasoning 'ought to be done' without hindrances, which prioritizes the situations of people who are advantaged by their situations, not necessarily their superior reasoning abilities.

In the next chapter, I will expand on this discussion of gratification delay by discussing an example of class-centrism in the psychological literature, using an example of research which has sometimes been taken up in the practical reasoning literature, namely Walter Mischel's marshmallow tests. Through these tests we can understand how the -centric thinking found in the popular interpretation of these tests demonstrates both of the characteristics of problematic -centric thinking, that of framing differences in reasoners as deficiencies and that the focus on delaying gratification as universally beneficial masks positive characteristics that children can gain from backgrounds which do not favor the delay of gratification.

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Chapter 3: Example of Class-Centrism: The Marshmallow Tests

In this chapter, I'll be examining a series of psychological experiments and arguing that they demonstrate the same kind of problematic -centric thinking discussed in the previous chapter on androcentrism. This version of -centric thinking, though, is class-rather than andro-centric. The early versions of the experiments both implied that people who failed to display the researched characteristic were operating deficiently as well as masking some strengths displayed by those framed deficiently (who tend to be lower-income individuals). This case will also feature in my later argument that the practical reasoning literature risks doing the same.

The experiments we are concerned with here are commonly referred to as the Marshmallow Tests;[25] they were conducted by Walter Mischel and colleagues in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the tests, children were left alone in a room with a treat, either covered or uncovered, and told that if they can wait until the researcher returns (a maximum of 15-20 minutes, depending on the particular experiment), they would receive two of the treat (Mischel, Shoda, and Peake 689). The children were instructed to ring a bell if they chose to take the single treat before the researcher returned and were observed in the interim. In certain versions of the test, the children were encouraged to relay their thought processes to a recording device, decorated to look like a clown face, which periodically gave them notes of encouragement by way of an attached microphone (Mischel 201-02). Sometimes the children were given various strategies to aid them in

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[25] This is a bit of a misnomer, as the rewards from which the title is drawn ranged from marshmallows, to cookies, to pretzels (Mischel 199), but I will use the common name regardless.

delaying taking the single treat, but the most telling results came from versions of the experiment in which the children relied upon their own spontaneous strategies for delaying (202-03). Because of the several different versions of the test, it is difficult to give a summary which comprehensively covers the results, but for iterations in which the reward was covered, the average wait time was 11 minutes, whereas the average wait time when the reward was exposed was only a few minutes by comparison (201). Only about 25% of the children were able to wait the full length of time and the average wait was just under 6 minutes (Kidd et al. 109). The most effective strategies the children who were successful in waiting used distracted them from the treat at hand.

And, according to these early versions of the Marshmallow tests, the benefits of waiting extended beyond simply receiving more treats. Although the focus of the original experiments was to analyze the 'mechanisms' by which people learn to delay gratification, the Marshmallow Tests have become more well-known because of results identified through longitudinal data analysis. When the results of the original tests were compared with subjects' performance on evaluations such as SAT test scores later in life, researchers found that the children who were most successful in waiting also demonstrated higher aptitude on these later assessments.[26] The inference drawn from these results is that there is a connection between the early development of the ability to

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[26] Interestingly, this correlation was identified only for children who had delayed longer under the exposed reward condition; when the reward was covered (and subsequently, children were more successful at delaying), the later test scores did not demonstrate the same pattern of correlation (Shoda, Mischel, and Peake 983).

delay gratification and success later in life.[27] As the reasoning goes, the children able to

wait for a larger reward are demonstrating a life skill learned best by successful people.

However, more recent research has called this straightforward narrative about the

predictive ability of delaying gratification into question. Follow up experiments and

variations on these tests weaken this link between delaying gratification and success.

Ultimately, there are two design flaws in these early experiments which call into question

their validity. First, the population sample represented by the original tests was not one

representative of a wide spectrum of economic levels and tests which have included

larger, more expansive sample sizes have not demonstrated the same longitudinal results,

implying that there is more to the story than a sheer identification of a valuable skill set.

The children's inclination to wait may be more closely correlated with income level than

individual virtues. Further research has also revealed that higher income by itself can

predict a child's later success in life given the current U.S. education system. This

implies that circumstances may have more of an impact on children's later success than

their individual talents. And, secondly, there's evidence to suggest that what explains the

different test results among children of different economic backgrounds has more to do

with different worldviews/perspectives than that economically privileged children simply

possessed higher levels of certain skills. Thus, the children who failed to wait weren't

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[27] Mischel himself did not arrive at this as the sole explanation for the results. He
considers that both of the results might have a common (perhaps environmental) cause
(Mischel 212). However, it does seem that the understanding which people brought forth
from these results is that the early results demonstrated the development of an ability
important to success and the later results confirmed it.

necessarily lacking in this important life skill; they may have been displaying other, equally-important life skills. I expand on these points below.

I.   First Issue: Representation of Sample/Line of Causation

There is reason to believe that economic advantage played a role in the striking longitudinal results from Mischel's studies. The original experiments were performed on an unrepresentative sample of children, creating a class-based selection bias. The original study was performed solely on children going to preschool on Stanford's campus (Mischel 210). We can assume that this means that many of the children had parents who were faculty and students at the school. Even assuming that some of the children's parents were staff on campus, few of the children would likely qualify as having economically disadvantaged backgrounds. When researchers from NYU and UC Irvine held their own version of the experiments, deliberately testing children from a more expansive range of demographic backgrounds and shortening the required wait time from 15-20 minutes to only 7 minutes, the experimental results differed from Mischel's significantly. The analysis of these more recent experiments is primarily concerned with the children of women who did not complete a college degree. The researchers provide two reasons for this choice: it allows for direct investigation of whether the results from the original sample size, which consisted of children from a more privileged background, were generalizable to other populations; secondly, they cite empirical issues[28] that

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[28] There are indications in the paper that the concern was over the sample of children of college-educated mothers not being a representative sample of the general population (e.g. 91% of the children were white and for over half of the children, the reported

affected whether the researchers believed the data taken from the children of college-educated women was reliable and informative (Watts et al. 1160).

Although the researchers did find a statistically significant correlation between children who were able to delay gratification and later performance on the SATs, the correlation was much weaker, roughly half the size of the original one reported by Mischel et al. (a .28 correlation overall in this more recent study compared with a .57 and a .42 for math and verbal scores on the SAT, respectively) (Watts et al. 1167 & 1172). Although there is still a correlation, its weakening on the basis of a more representative sample is telling. And we have further reason to doubt whether the presumed direction of causation, that delaying gratification directly causes later success, in fact holds true. The researchers also found that the correlation with later success did not appear to be stronger with the difference of wait time, meaning that waiting longer was not linked with a higher rate of success; children who had waited 20 seconds or more showed roughly the same amount of measurable success as those who waited the entire time (1172). This conflicts with what one might expect given the working theory about why children who delayed gratification demonstrate greater success. If it is the development of an important life skill that children are showing by waiting, the amount that they are willing to wait would seem likely to correlate with *levels* of success later in life as well, i.e. the more patient the child, the more successful the adult. The ability to wait, among children whose mothers

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household income was over four times above the poverty line) (1162). They also found that the shorter wait time than the original study used had a *significantly* higher level of success among children whose mothers had graduated college, which may have also contributed to any worry about the reliability of the results.

did not have college degrees, also appeared to increase somewhat regularly with household income; children from higher income households were able to delay gratification more successfully (1166). When the results were adjusted to control for these kinds of external factors to success, the correlation weakened even further, to a .1 (1167).

The difference in backgrounds of the children used as subjects is the most significant difference between Mischel's original tests and these ones. It seems likely that the children in the early experiments were already subject to some privilege in life. If nothing else, any educational elements incorporated into the childcare provided on the Stanford University campus was likely of excellent quality. Even without these, we can imagine the children going to preschool there had opportunities, stemming from the opportunities present for their parents, within their early lifespans that not every child would. Children from a wider range of backgrounds would be unlikely to enjoy a comparable level of success later in life *regardless* of their ability to wait at a young age; they will have more external factors interfering with their ability to achieve success along the way. The ability to delay gratification may well aid a child in future success, but if so, it is further enabled by an absence of financial disadvantages.

The relative comfort and later success of children from privileged backgrounds and higher household income more generally are also consistent with recent findings about educational outcomes relative to socioeconomic status. In 2019, Georgetown

University released a report on this demonstrating that children from high SES[29] backgrounds who score among the *lowest* in mathematical ability on standardized tests are nevertheless more likely to enjoy higher financial success later in life than their low SES counterparts that score among the *highest* on those same tests. The former have a 7 in 10 chance of having high socioeconomic status later in life compared to a 3 in 10 chance for the latter (Carnevale et al. 5). So, even the children who show the *most academic promise* from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are less than half as likely to experience financial success in comparison to economically advantaged children who show less promise. This implies that socioeconomic background is better able to secure financial success than a child's apparent talent. The researchers take their data to show that the way that development is nurtured in students is more important than whatever facility they have with a particular skill. And it just so happens that children who come from more well-off families are often better placed to foster these abilities and suffer less from setbacks that do inevitably occur (2-3).

This doesn't mean that economically disadvantaged students have *no* chance at success, but it does imply that there will be more working against these students' success than for their more economically advantaged counterparts. The researchers at Georgetown also note that there is a tendency for economically privileged students to achieve at rates more closely tied to their abilities. Thus, "[w]ithout intervention, a student's class status will predict his or her test scores, and innate ability will reliably

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[29] SES stands for socioeconomic status; although this is not an *identical* measure to whether someone is economically advantaged or disadvantaged, economic level is a *component* of SES, so there should be enough overlap for the findings to be consistent.

translate into developed ability for the affluent, but not for the poor. Only with intervention can all students' innate abilities shine through" (4). The issue demonstrated by the perceived achievement gap between children of disadvantaged backgrounds is less that the children lack academic talent, and more that this talent is hindered by external factors, which interventions are meant to mitigate. This is consistent with Mischel's early tests on privileged children seeming to indicate a connection between delaying gratification and success, yet the same correlation not being present in tests with children from less privileged backgrounds. The researchers also note that the way that funding of schools tends to be closely tied to property taxes means that children who are from lower socioeconomic areas, who stand to gain the most from educational interventions, tend to be located where the economic resources needed to enact them are not available (13). Assuming that the point of education is to help students develop their abilities in preparation for future success, this tendency for success to track socioeconomic background better than their abilities reflects a failure to match the purpose with the results. And since education is framed as one of the more reliable routes to upward social mobility, we ought to be troubled by this inconsistency. We live in a society that prides itself on providing opportunity for everyone willing and able to work hard to succeed. But if success depends more on circumstances than these factors, these meritocratic ideals are not entirely grounded in reality.

II.   Second Issue: Different Skills

The early experiments also failed to consider that some of the children who did not wait may have been assessing the situations *well* in light of their previous experiences. Some related research suggests that children who fail to wait might be responding reasonably to conditions above and beyond the simple task of waiting for a higher reward. Researchers from the University of Rochester explored the possibility that, in fact, children choosing to take the immediate reward may be making a considered choice and not demonstrating a character flaw. More specifically, the experiment was adjusted to test this common hypothesis against a different one, that the children were in fact responding to their environments (Kidd et al. 110). In this version of the experiment, twenty-eight subjects were faced with evidence prior to the waiting task that indicated either that their experimenter was reliable, or unreliable (111).[30] Children in the reliable condition waited roughly four times as long to eat their marshmallow (12 minutes) than children in the unreliable condition (3 minutes), on average. In a related study in which children did not receive evidence of the experimenter's reliability, the average wait time was six minutes, implying that providing evidence about reliability in either direction affected the wait times of *each* group (113). Furthermore, only one of the fourteen children in the unreliable condition made it the full fifteen minutes until the experimenter returned with the extra marshmallow.[31] Nine of the fourteen children in the reliable

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[30] This was demonstrated by the experimenter failing to return on two occasions with 'upgraded' art supplies for the child.

[31] Although, at the end of the experiment, each participant received three extra marshmallows (111).

conditions waited the full fifteen minutes (112). The researchers took these results to

mean that the children involved were actually engaging in a quite-rational process of

gauging their expectations on the basis of the particular scenario and that similar factors

of real-world decision-making such as previous experience with unreliability would

likely have effects on the children's reasoning processes long-term (113).

This altered version of the experiment highlights the role of a child's perspective

in the task of waiting for improved rewards. Here, in apparently failing to wait in tests

with the unreliable condition, the children are in fact making a *reasonable choice* to not

wait, informed by the circumstances. Although its small sample size means that the test

was far from conclusive in determining whether children who took the more immediate

reward were demonstrating poor self control or responding to the environment, this at

least preliminarily indicates that the conditions under which children make choices *can*

significantly affect which choice they make. This experiment does not establish that this

accurately describes those who did not wait in the original tests--we have no way of

knowing whether they were responding to background conditions without further

experimentation, of course. But it does provide a reasonable alternative explanation for

why some children, especially any that had unstable family lives, may not have waited.

The classic philosophical move here is to note that, if they were responding to

conditions outside of the experimental conditions, children who did not wait in the

marshmallow test were failing to keep the relevant circumstances fixed. Technically this

is true. However, the way in which some children are aided by their backgrounds, then,

could be viewed as similarly problematic. If subjects of an experiment are not supposed

to take their negative previous life experiences into account in deciding whether to wait, positive life experiences are just as irrelevant to the experimental conditions. And yet it is doubtful both that anyone will be formulating experiments in a way that reliably screens out this possibility and that anyone will finger-wag at children who bring in beneficial background circumstances to the same degree.

Although it may be true that the children from the early tests who waited *were* developing a valuable life skill, this skill is not obviously helpful across all backgrounds. What the tests more plausibly demonstrate is that being able to depend upon circumstances to work out in one's favor is helpful for children's development. A child from a privileged background, in terms of having more resources with which to procure treats and other promised goods, is more likely to have experiences which fulfill his or her wants, giving him or her confidence in waiting to receive these goods, where a child from a less privileged background is more likely to have experience having these wants left unsatisfied, especially when he or she has to wait to receive these goods. And children from economically-privileged backgrounds also tend to enjoy more stability in their home lives, which further enables them to develop the kinds of middle-class life skills that society endorses (McCoy and Raver 2).

It is again not clear that it would be productive for an underprivileged child whose environment is less stable to hold fixed the belief that future rewards will always come through. When children live in circumstances in which taking an adult's word for what will happen in the future is reliably disappointing, asking them to keep the reasoning circumstances fixed is itself an unreasonable request; it's asking them to be worse

reasoners than experience has taught them to be. If we want our theories of practical reasoning to be applicable to agents' reasoning in the world, it is a weakness of the theory if it only applies, or applies most usefully, to those reasoning in ideal circumstances (i.e. those in which the circumstances *can* be fixed, rather than unreliable ones). It also reflects -centric thinking.

In the next chapter, I will turn to the philosophical literature on practical reasoning to examine its tendency to reflect class-centrism. In particular, I focus on stability, using Michael Bratman's two conditions for Diachronic Self-Governance as an example of the emphasis on this notion. Stability is relied on throughout Bratman's view as an enabling condition for agency over time in a way that may stray into the territory of class-centrism. Before we can adjudicate this, however, we need to get clearer on the several roles stability is playing throughout his theory and whether any of them invite class-centric thinking.

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Chapter 4: Examining Stability as a Source of Class-Centrism

In this chapter, I will be examining the prominence of the notion of stability in the practical reasoning literature and suggesting that the extent to which it is emphasized may imply, or at least leave room for, some class-centrism. Stability is frequently valued as an important characteristic of a rational agent, and I believe this valuing, to the exclusion of a balancing ideal such as flexibility, may amount to a problem for theories which place it at the center. This is because the means by which agents achieve this norm of stability are often enabled by economic advantage. And although *some* level of stability is likely helpful for following through with intentions, agents need not demonstrate it to the extent that the literature implies. One issue with the reliance on stability throughout the practical reasoning literature is that it fails to acknowledge financially-based reasons that some agents may not demonstrate as much stability as others in their reasoning. When these occur, economically disadvantaged agents might appear less stable due to a distinction that does not amount to a difference in reasoning ability; it in fact may represent good reasoning.[32] Another issue is that, emphasizing stability to the extent that alternatives are not also given 'air time' sets up an implicit comparison between stability and alternatives whereby stability represents an ideal or paradigm and the alternatives are deficient.[33]

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[32] Chapters 6 and 7 will be concerned with Ecological Rationality, a view which prominently features this latter point.

[33] The case for this implicit ideal will be made more extensively in Chapter 5.

Establishing these points, however, requires a clearer idea of when and how theorists are appealing to the notion of 'stability.' We need to examine both how stability is being appealed to in a theory as well as whether the means for becoming stable in the relevant sense matters in order to understand whether class-centrism is taking place. In some areas, the means for attaining stability will be less dependent on relative economic advantage, and so its use will not be explicitly class-centric. In other areas, however, it may be heavily dependent on economic privilege whether an agent demonstrates the requisite stability, and if this is the case, we should carefully consider whether the theory reflects class-centrism in virtue of this. Thus, my first task in this chapter is to suggest conditions under which agents could develop or demonstrate stability. Then, I will discuss Michael Bratman's theory as a major example of a theory which relies on stability, describing the several places in which he appeals to the idea and considering whether any of these places may imply some class-centrism. Although some uses of stability are innocuous, some others, in not appearing to leave space for the difference between failing to be stable as a result of poor decision-making, or perhaps poor character, and conditions which inhibit *the ability* (or perhaps even desire) to be stable, may import class-centrism.

As previously mentioned, stability has had a prominent place in philosophical discussion of practical reasoning, namely that it is one of the key 'virtues' of a rational agent. I assume that for an agent to be stable, they must demonstrate a kind of reliability. Being reliable, though, is itself a placeholder for observable 'outcomes' of the agent. There are many reasons for and methods by which an agent could display stability and

most of these variations are not entertained in theories which discuss the term. Let's briefly examine a few suggestions for which enabling conditions, or characteristics, could bring about stability in an agent.

First, however, I want to set aside one use of the term 'stability.' It could be used in a way that appeals to the circumstances in which an agent is deliberating, or the norms which apply when they are in stable circumstances. These are important ideas (and could sometimes be pulling weight in theories of practical reasoning), but ones which, for the time being, I will be setting aside. This is because I am concerned primarily with theories that discuss stability as something attributable to the agent or their intentions and actions. Discussion of stable norms and circumstances will still be relevant to the ensuing discussion though, especially since most theories of practical reason take these conditions more or less for granted. For instance, in the common imperative to keep circumstances fixed across deliberative contexts, there is an assumption that agents are operating in relatively stable circumstances (a point made more explicitly than usual in Cheshire Calhoun's "What Good is Commitment?" paper). Similarly, when a theorist offers a view which fixes norms across circumstances, there is an implicit assumption that virtually all agents *can* in fact appeal to these norms to their benefit. At the end of the day, were more theories to be responsive to variations in circumstances and norms, my project would be less relevant to the current state of the philosophical literature. Ultimately, though, I am examining stability as an aspect of agential decision-making, so I'll be concerned with conditions and reasons for which agents may or may not display it.

So, generally speaking, we will be concerned with agents behaving stably. What this will often cash out as is that, when an agent chooses a course of action, they will follow through with it. Similarly, a stable agent will be consistent in what they desire and value. Stability implies a kind of stick-to-it-ive-ness as a characteristic of the agent overall. We will get more specific once we examine a particular view, but for now, hopefully this vague gesture will do. What I am concerned with in this chapter, though, is ways in which an agent develops or displays stability. If agents who are economically privileged have a distinctive advantage in becoming stable in the right ways, and theories of practical reasoning put stability on a pedestal as representative of good reasoning across the board, failing to acknowledge reasons of disadvantage which prevent it in some, there may be -centric thinking behind the view. But first we must examine some of these means for displaying or developing stability. It should be noted that these means I am listing may overlap with one another somewhat. My purpose in attempting to separate them out, though, is to draw attention to how each means by which agents develop or display stability has a different relationship to economic privilege. In the next four short sections I will motivate four in theory separable means by which agents can display stability.

I. Four Means to Stability

A. Stability as Epistemic Resilience

One means by which an agent could display stability is as a demonstration of the agent's epistemic resilience. This term is drawn from Jennifer Morton and Sarah Paul's

work on 'grit,' or the strength of character often demonstrated by people who are successful at overcoming obstacles. They claim that gritty agents tend to display a level of epistemic resilience, in terms of a resistance to counterevidence. Although common understandings of epistemic responsibility on the part of agents tend to endorse being *responsive* to evidence that undermines one's success, Morton and Paul claim that epistemic resilience in the face of difficult tasks is both practically and epistemically rational. They explain that there are plenty of real-life cases in which we should expect reasoners to vary in what they believe counts as enough evidence to accept a conclusion as true (which itself requires us to accept a form of permissivism about belief, i.e. the idea that, in at least some situations, two agents in full possession of relevant information about a situation may disagree about what to believe in and be rational in doing so)[34].

And, when the conclusion of practical reasoning is about whether an agent will be successful in their endeavors, these standards may shift in response to how invested the agent is in the success of this action. Sometimes it will be important for the agent to become less responsive to evidence of a potential failure as a strategy to not give up when their actions are difficult to successfully complete. Morton and Paul claim that, "in the relevant cases, in which the horizon for achieving one's end is distant and flexible, there will normally be latitude for rational disagreement about when the evidence is compelling enough to conclude that success is highly unlikely" (193). Thus, the principles which govern different agent's evidential thresholds for believing that they will be successful in

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[34] See Miriam Schoenfield's "Permission to Believe" for an explanation of this specific variation of permissivism.

protracted, difficult endeavors will reasonably vary. And, in response to differences in circumstances, the latitude which enables acceptance of different principles will apply to a single agent's different circumstances over time as well. On this understanding, then, an agent demonstrates stability as a matter of adjusting their epistemic threshold in order to resist being too responsive to undermining information about the possibility of succeeding.

Epistemic resilience gives agents the means to display stability in their resoluteness in reaching difficult goals, and this epistemic resilience is a central component of grit, which is itself frequently understood as a *trait* of particularly effective agents. And this understanding of stability as a trait of good agency implies that we can perhaps understand stability as coming about directly because of traits the agent possesses. Insofar as we are exploring stability as something which is relevant to agents in the practical reasoning literature, perhaps we should also consider what it means for stability to come about as a display of virtuous characteristics.

B. Stability as Patience

A common way to understand stability as demonstrating a virtuous character trait is as a corollary of the virtue of patience. There is a lot of support in the economic literature for stability as a demonstration of patience--in economics, patience is identified as an agent's rate of time preference. One way this has been measured is by determining, in a choice between a fixed amount immediately and a higher amount at some point in the future, what amount is required in order to convince an agent to wait to receive it

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(Dohmen et al 8-9). Agents who are willing to wait for an amount which is marginally higher than the fixed amount are patient, while agents who prefer the smaller amount immediately unless there is a significant difference between the two amounts are impatient. One way of understanding patience is in terms of, "the extent that his actions are motivated by future consequences. Hence, a person is not patient if he has the ability to see long-term consequences, while being unable[35] to take these consequences into consideration when he decides how to act (Skog 207)." When people significantly discount the future in their deliberation, they fail to demonstrate patience. Here, stability, is understood as sticking with the goal of pursuing some reward, comes about as a result of a patient character.

There remains something to be said here about a more colloquial sense of patience, where it doesn't just reflect time preference but also reflects a stronger virtuous character trait. This is, unfortunately, not a distinction that the economics literature in particular makes. We can understand this notion as potentially contained within the idea of patience as a rate of time preference, but these ideas can come apart. And the commonsense understanding of patience is more in line with patience as a virtue than as merely describing a temporal horizon. Short of bringing in the whole rich literature on virtues, though, it is difficult to succinctly identify what it means to possess this trait.

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[35] The 'unable' in this quote is interesting and indicative of a general trend in the economic literature to ignore differences between an agent who is not *disposed* to wait (who will sometimes be displaying a character flaw), and one whose circumstances prevent them from being able to wait. This will be relevant in my later discussion of this notion, but it is an issue that warrants far more examination than I will be able to engage in within this work.

Hopefully, for our purposes, it is enough to note that there is this richer sense of patience as a virtue of character, and to acknowledge the inadequacy of this current discussion.[36] Of note, though, is that on some accounts, virtues are a matter of habituation. So patience as a virtue is related to both time preference and potentially habits of character, discussed in the next section, as well.

C. Stability as a Habit

Another means for stability, one which may, but need not, rely on attributable traits of character, is that the agent acts stably as a matter of habit, consistently approaching circumstances which are similar in the same way. An agent who is stable as the result of habit is a person who tends to create routines and stick with them. The question of what to do in various circumstances will thus rarely need to be reflected upon, because the agent has habits which can generalize for a variety of circumstances. One of the most notable historical treatments of habits is found in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, in which he argues that we can only become virtuous through a process of habituation (see especially Book II). He claims that by practicing behaving with moral virtue, we acquire the right kinds of emotional responses and dispositions that will lead us to behaving morally seemingly by nature. It is through consistent, habitual practice that we become good people. Part of the reason habits enable us to develop good characters is that, as habits are adopted, they become less effortful to perform (Carlisle

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[36] I will, however, have a little more to say about patience as a character trait when I discuss it in relation to Bratman's view below.

102). Thus, a person who is in the early stages of attempting to build a good character might feel tempted by a situation in which they could perform a morally suspect action to their own great benefit, while a person who has already developed a good character would not even consider the morally suspect action. In habituation, the habit becomes taken up into the person's perspective so much that conformity to habit is virtually automatic; they are oriented *around* these deeply entrenched habits. So understood, an agent's tendency towards stability would reflect the extent to which they have habituated good reasoning.

D. Stability as Upholding Normative Commitments

The final means we will discuss for an agent to display stability is that they may be adhering to their normative commitments, where normative commitments are those obligations we choose to give ourselves toward values and principles we believe to be important. According to Cheshire Calhoun, normative commitments are the basis of our stable, unified, normative identities as agents and thus, making these commitments is a central aspect of demonstrating ourselves to be effective agents (Calhoun 629). She claims, "[u]nified agency is a matter of making up one's mind what one values and what one's evaluative priorities are so that one can establish for oneself practical principles and their rank ordering, action on which will count as leading one's life rather than having a life happen to one" (629). This is, essentially, what it means to make, and be guided by, our normative commitments. Stability as enabled by normative commitments, then,

would be to consistently be guided by our normative commitments and to let them speak for who we are as people in this pursuit.

In summary, there are several ways that an agent can develop stability. So far, I have only briefly summarized these out of context from the practical reasoning literature. The next task, then, is to put this idea of agential stability in the context of this literature. In the following, I will describe Michael Bratman's view as a central case of a theory which appeals to stability in the practical reasoning literature, and examine the different uses of stability and the way in which these uses are supported by these various means. I then consider whether these several uses reflect class-centric thinking in terms of implying these means, perhaps best understood as enabling conditions, for displaying stability.

II. Bratman's Diachronic Self-Governance

Michael Bratman proposes a planning theory of intention, in which intentions are framed as paradigmatically practical pro-attitudes. The general view relies on intentions as an essential part of the process which leads to agents making appropriate choices about how to act in their situations at the time of acting. In his more recent work, Bratman focuses more specifically on explicating a theory of self-governance which invokes a characterization of diachronic agency, or agency understood as extended over time. The central idea in this more recent work is that we need a uniquely diachronic norm of self-governance which serves as justification for the stability and consistency of an agent's intentions above and beyond whether the particular situation calls for it. In doing so, he

is both providing a justification for individual instances of stability for agents at a time as well as suggesting that part of what justifies stability at a particular point in time is that there are benefits to demonstrating a stable and unified character over time. This concern with diachronic norms is a response to his own dissatisfaction with his earlier reliance on a two-tier pragmatic justification for the synchronic norms of agency; if he can establish that there are genuinely diachronic norms which govern our agency over time, these norms can support an agent's sticking to their intentions even when it may seem advantageous to reconsider them when their evaluation of them has shifted. Throughout these endeavors, Bratman appeals to stability in several places, often with different roles within his theory.

As mentioned above, Bratman's turn to diachronic norms of stability in self-governance is an evolution of his attempts to ground the rational norms he has promoted throughout his career in something more substantial than mere pragmatics. His considered view is that an agent's normative identity can help to provide a deeper justification for these norms. To that end, if he is able to discover diachronic rational norms which provide agents concerned with self-governance with reasons to adhere to his suggested picture, the legitimacy of the norms he has previously argued for can be reinforced. His picture of diachronic self-governance, then, also contains the synchronic rational norms he has previously defended on primarily pragmatic grounds. These norms, specifically those of consistency among intentions, means-end coherence, and intention stability, are how an agent shows they are prone to guide their actions in accordance with their practical standpoint, or who they are as an agent. In other words, a

significant part of an agent being diachronically self-governing is that the agent will also be self-governing at particular moments in time, or synchronically. This is one of Bratman's two main requirements for diachronic self-governance. The second requirement of diachronic self-governance consists in being guided by a coherent and consistent structure of plan states ("Time" 145-46). This structure of plan states is partially constitutive of the agent's character over time because of the way that it settles where the agent stands, practically-speaking; it guides future actions; and it helps shape the agent's continuity *as* an agent (146). Both the previous set of established norms along with the structure of plan states constitute the justification for rational pressure for an agent to demonstrate stability of intentions over time.

Although Bratman's theory is directed at providing guidelines for diachronic self-governance for *all* persons, I would like to consider more closely some ways that people who enjoy economic privilege may be the implicit intended audience for this view. In order to suggest this, however, we will need to examine the several places that he emphasizes the importance of stability and examine the work that stability seems to be doing in each. In the rest of this chapter, I will discuss how stability plays roles in each of the two requirements of Bratman's theory of diachronic self-governance, examine these roles and discuss how the means by which agents typically display this stability may preclude economically disadvantaged agents.[37] I will then close with a brief overview of the assessment of stability in Bratman's view thus far.

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[37] To be clear, I am not generalizing the reasoning of *all* people in dire economic straits, only describing tendencies that have been identified in psychological research. Bratman's view will accurately and readily apply to the reasoning of *some* economically

A. Bratman's First Requirement: Synchronic Self-Governance

In order to be diachronically self-governing, Bratman explains, one must also be adequately synchronically self-governing as well. What this means is that the agent tends to act in conformity with their intentions, which themselves are governed by rational norms, in order to express their agency. Some theorists believe this is the only notion of agency we need, a so-called 'time-slice' view of agency,[38] with which we can understand agents as acting in a series of moments instead of appealing to their actions more holistically as part of the life of an agent extended over time. Bratman, however, believes the norms which govern synchronic self-governance are sources of rational pressure to both form and *keep* the appropriate intentions. Thus, we need to understand these rational norms as having pressure which extends beyond time-slices. In what follows, I will discuss three sources of rational pressure contained within Bratman's planning theory of intention, focusing in particular on the third, the pressure to maintain stable intentions. These norms are the main source of differentiation between intentions and more general 'pro-attitudes' or desires in Bratman's view. Although each of these norms is individually defeasible, under ordinary circumstances they help shape the acceptable limits and maintenance of an agent's intentions.

First, intentions must demonstrate consistency. This is a requirement shared by theorists who believe that intentions are closely tied to (or sometimes a particular form

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disadvantaged people, just as the tendencies I will be describing *can be* found among people who are economically privileged. These economic situations, however, enable certain differences of reasoning that tend to divide along class lines.

[38] See, for instance, Hedden and Moss.

of) belief,[39] despite that Bratman does not share this commitment (see, for example "Theoretical"). One idea within consistency is that, in the same way that an agent cannot rationally (fully) believe in two conflicting claims about facts, they also cannot intend to perform actions that conflict with their accepted factual claims. It would not be rational for someone to intend to walk through a wall if they do not believe it is possible for a person to pass through ostensibly solid objects. Not only must one's plans be consistent with the beliefs one holds, they also must be consistent with one another. This is another sense of the norm of consistency. An agent cannot rationally both intend to attend a show in a different city and to visit a relative in the hospital if they believe these activities are mutually exclusive. In order to conform to plan consistency, the agent could only choose one of these activities in a given time frame. Under ideal circumstances, Bratman claims, an agent should be able to successfully execute all of their intentions without conflict, assuming that the correspondent beliefs are true (*Plans* 31).

A second source of rational pressure comes from the norm of means-end coherence. Conformity to this requires an agent to intend the means necessary to achieve their ends. Bratman admits that we may proceed with a particular plan without all of the details filled in, but at some point along the way of executing the plan, parts of the plan, and the intentions which make up these parts, will need to be addressed. Means-end coherence plays the role of determining which intentions are needed in order to proceed effectively. Whatever *must* be done in order to achieve the chosen end ought to be something the agent intends to perform (or enact). It is of course possible that several

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[39] For examples of this type of view, see Harman, Velleman, and Wallace.

different paths will present themselves, making means-end coherence likely in practice to result in choices which must be made between equally promising but incommensurable paths. It is also possible that new information could present itself, resulting in the potential revisions of one's plans and interim intentions.

Regardless, in uncomplicated instances of proceeding with intentions, means-end coherence puts rational pressure on the agent to intend whichever means are necessary for following through with chosen ends. This is a wide-scope requirement, which means that the rationality of it is determined by appealing to the statement, "If I intend to perform action X, I ought to intend the necessary means to that action, M" as a whole. Thus, if an apparent conflict arises, where the agent does intend to X, but does not feel motivated to also intend M, means-end coherence can be fulfilled not only by intending M but also by abandoning the intention to X, or (often implausibly) by revising one's belief that the means are necessary for achieving the end ("Time" 136). For Bratman, these first two demands primarily place constraints on what intentions are rationally *permissible* once the agent has arrived at a partial plan (*Plans* 32). They also speak in favor of certain relevant interim intentions, specifically those which conform with them. When choosing among possible future actions, a self-governing agent will avoid those which are inconsistent with their existing intentions and tend toward the ones which fill in the means of fulfilling those intentions.

The last source of rational pressure, and the most important for our purposes, is intention stability, or the pressure to continue holding one's intentions; in practice, it works to discourage the reconsideration of intentions in the face of temptation and to

sustain intentions over time more generally. In contrast to the other rational norms, which set limits on what intentions are rationally permissible, this one governs the chosen intentions once the agent *settles* on what to do. Intention stability enables agents to coordinate their efforts, either intra- or interpersonally. Thus, according to Bratman, planning agency is a microcosm of coordinated efforts between agents in that we need to be able to rely on other agents when we work to carry out actions collectively. In the same way, we need to be able to rely on those different time slices of ourselves in order to carry out our individual plans as well (Bratman "Shared" 110). It also effectively reserves the agent's resources in terms of the mental energy and time required to undergo reconsideration.

To this end, intention stability, at least in Bratman's earlier work, is justified in terms of a two-tier model of pragmatic justification: 1) we benefit in terms of coordination and efficient use of mental resources from having policies of non-reconsideration and adherence to intentions over time, but 2) it will be important for agents to be receptive in particular instances to whether the policies are serving them ("Planning and Temptation" 305). The first tier encourages agents to stick with a general policy of intention stability while the second prevents agents from being too rigid in adhering to their prior plans by acknowledging that in some cases reconsideration would be justified.

This is, admittedly, a somewhat puzzling demand to fit in a discussion of *synchronic* rather than diachronic self-governance, since it involves an appeal to the duration of intentions, but it is important even to time-slice views to provide justification

that disfavors reconsidering ones intentions in the face of temptation. At the time at which an agent is tempted to abandon their intention, the synchronic norm recommends fidelity to the previously-decided path. The stability here should be understood as an 'at every moment' stability, rather than a continuous (i.e. extended-over-time) notion. Ultimately, stability will be relevant to both the synchronic as well as the diachronic aspects of the view. At this moment, though, it is playing a more minimal role, since the diachronic aspects of his view are meant to help *justify* intention stability as an important contribution to a self-governing agent's practical standpoint. We should note, though, that Bratman was concerned more with the stability of intentions at *particular moments* before he more recently turned to a more holistic idea of agency.

In his earlier work, Bratman relied on three general pragmatic reasons for believing intention stability is good for a planning agent to have (summarized on "Time" 133, but originally worked out in *Plans*). The first reason is what he calls the snowball effect; often, as an agent proceeds with a plan, their actions along these lines affect the world in a way that enables their plans to continue. For example, when an agent buys a plane ticket, schedules a pet sitter, and takes time off as part of a plan to go on vacation, each of these actions reinforces the original choice to go on that particular vacation. The second reason to keep intentions stable is that it takes time and energy to reconsider our intentions; were we to continually keep the question of what to do open, not only would we be less likely to accomplish anything, we would exhaust ourselves in the process. There may also be further disruption on other settled intentions that rely upon the initial intention, which would heighten the resource drain of reconsidering. The third reason he

provides to generally stick with our intentions is that when we rely on strategies of retaining our intentions, we are more likely to be effective agents in terms of mental resource-management and coordination over time.

Bratman relies on stability in his synchronic picture of self-governance as a way to endorse that there is reason to stick with one's intentions in the face of temptation. Practical reasoning is primarily focused on providing explanations of and justifications for what agents ought to do. The subdiscipline would be remiss, however, if it did not also address why and how it is that we should *resist our impulses* to perform actions that are not in our best interest even when we feel a seemingly overpowering desire to do so. Bratman's appeal to stability here speaks in favor of resisting rather than reconsidering. And the synchronic view, understood independently of the diachronic view to be discussed later, is itself justified by the two-tier pragmatic justification, that not only is it generally good for an agent to abide by the three central norms laid out by Bratman, the individual circumstances usually support them as well.

Next let's examine the means for stability which seems to be implied by this rational pressure to keep intentions stable. Bratman does not ruminate upon how it is that intention stability represents an influence on agents and thus appears to be wholly neutral regarding how successful intentional stability comes about (i.e. he does not have an opinion about how agents display this form of stability). Thus, we are focused in this discussion on determining which of these means seems to *fit* with the different roles of stability rather than attempting to express Bratman's own position. But the way that certain of these means are limited by economic disadvantage does matter in determining

whether the view is class-centric. If the onus is upon agents to behave in ways that their circumstances limit, the view may restrict their ability to demonstrate what is perceived as good, self-governing agency.

Returning to the implied enabling conditions for intention stability, I don't believe that either normative commitments or habits would be entirely salient in this regard. The basic idea behind normative commitment fits, of course--of any number of normative commitments one could make, stability could be one of them. Consistently upholding one's normative commitments is part of what unifies us as agents. However, sticking with each of one's intentions is not clearly something that should be upheld to this degree. Since we are discussing a norm that is meant to, *ceteris paribus*, speak in favor of the stability of each individual intention an agent may make, elevating it to the importance of a normative commitment, especially in terms of forging an agent's identity, is surely too strong. Staying with *some* intentions may be important for demonstrating unified agency, but the norm of intention stability is intended to bear some rational weight on every intention an agent makes. Not every intention we form will help constitute our normative identity, or agential standpoint, no matter how unified an agent we are. In a similar way, expressing intention stability developing from a habit of reasoning would not quite fit, either. Bratman does, however, discuss the stability of particular plans as being, "grounded in various general habits and propensities, habits and propensities whose reasonableness we may assess in a broadly consequentialist way" (*Plans* 66). He means that we can determine the acceptability of those habits and propensities on the general basis of their reasonableness, later cashed out in terms of

whether those habits are "normal for people like us" (70). So it may be that intention

stability is simply a habit that self-governing agents tend to form when it is reasonable for

them to do so. At this point in his theorizing, Bratman also treats intention stability as a

kind of *disposition* which favors keeping one's intentions (Bratman "Plan" 518), instead

of as an attribute to be developed by a particular agent, which is closer to its role in his

more considered view.

While habits and dispositions may be a reasonable interpretation of Bratman's

earlier view of intentional stability, we may not want to hold him to it too closely,

especially since his later view strays away from this locution. I suspect that Bratman

moves away from this framing because it seems to resemble claiming that the existence

of this habit, in terms of a reasonable habit of nonreconsideration, can exert rational

pressure on the agent to not reconsider their intentions. This sounds dangerously close to

the bootstrapping territory which he is expressly trying to avoid in constructing his

planning theory of intentions.[40] So, there is something to consider regarding habits as a

basis for intention stability, but it might not be charitable o hold Bratman to this earlier

view.

Of the various means for stability summarized above, epistemic resilience &

patience seem to be the best candidates for the means to display this synchronic norm of

intention stability. While Bratman doesn't expressly discuss intention stability as

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[40] To provide a small amount of context, Bratman is critical of what he calls
bootstrapping reasons for intending, where the sheer existence of an agent's having made
an intention is supposed to provide the agent with *additional* reason to follow through
with that intention. Bratman is critical of this practice in several places, see for example
Plans 24-26.

stemming from epistemic thresholds or a trait like patience, these are plausible candidates

for what might keep us on track toward following through with our original intentions.

Since intention stability in the synchronic picture is more concerned with instances of

resisting temptation, these two senses of stability fit smoothly. Whether each represents

class-centric thinking will depend on how the development of each depends on

economic-advantage-relevant information. I will examine each in turn below.

Intention stability may be best represented as stemming from epistemic resilience.

Bratman, then, would be recommending that agents be less sensitive to counter evidence

in pursuing their goals. In originally committing to an intention, the agent also commits

to raising the threshold for evidence of their possible failure in following through with the

intention. Once committed to a particular plan of action, the agent raises their epistemic

threshold for failure in the plan, thus resisting too-readily revising their intentions. So, if

Jesse were intending to secure a position in a top law firm, the knowledge that the firm

usually only hires from the top 5 law schools in the country coupled with knowledge of

Jesse's law degree coming from a slightly less well-renowned school will not be enough

to convince them to revise their intention to secure the job. Short of discouraging

interactions which would preclude their chances to be hired, they will remain steadfast in

their intention and their belief that they can achieve this. Although Bratman is not

presenting a strong cognitivist view as some other theorists do, where intentions are

themselves a form of belief, he still means for belief to be *relevant* to an agent's

intentions; this is an essential part of maintaining intention consistency. Intention stability

which persists because of epistemic resilience, then, would be effective because the agent

would continue pursuing their goals even if they receive evidence that they will be unsuccessful.

But, if intention stability *is* meant to stem from epistemic resilience, there would arguably be a level of privilege written into the view. Morton and Paul note that, for socially marginalized and economically disadvantaged agents, epistemic resilience is not necessarily a reasonable option. This is because it is often more likely for disadvantaged agents that resisting evidence which implies that they will be unsuccessful in their endeavors will have especially poor consequences. Sticking to a plan to retire at 60 in the face of diminishing social security outcomes, for instance, would leave low income earners potentially unable to adequately meet their own needs after leaving their positions, for instance. The same goes for agents disadvantaged in other ways. People facing racist microagressions in their pursuit of higher education, for instance, would do well to pay attention to the environments that enable these attitudes and consider either how they may address the issues or the possibility of relocating their interests into healthier ones (either location- or discipline-wise), rather than resist being influenced by these harms. The opportunity cost of being disadvantaged leaves less room for this kind of resilience. Morton and Paul explain:

> [f]or agents who regularly operate in unsupportive or even discriminatory contexts, or for whom failure would be catastrophic, grit can lead to the investment of more effort than is effective or healthy. Consequently, it may be that agents in contexts of severe material and emotional scarcity ought not to have an evidential policy that enables grit at the expense of caution and self-protectiveness. This is not to claim that they should give up on pursuing difficult long-term goals altogether, but merely to say that they should at the same time remain highly responsive to evidence that pure effort will not be enough. (Morton and Paul 202)

Being less vigilant about counterevidence will be far more potentially harmful for these agents than for those who are less disadvantaged generally. So yet another disadvantage experienced by socially marginalized people is that it is less often a good idea for them to demonstrate the kind of resilience implied when we discuss grit.[41] If a theory of practical reasoning were to rely heavily on intention stability stemming from epistemic resilience, there would be a case to be made for its class-centrism. Whether an agent would benefit from being resilient in this way will be significantly impacted by whether their lives are conducive to this strategy. If Bratman believes agents should be raising their epistemic threshold for evidence of their potential failure when they commit to a particular intention, he is endorsing an option which is not readily available to agents with significant social disadvantages.

This interpretation, however, is not necessarily the best option for understanding Bratman's view. Epistemic resilience may not be in line with Bratman's view because it may wind up resembling a form of stubbornness, to which Bratman does not want stability to amount. Of the specifically diachronic version of the intention stability norm in his later writings, Bratman notes that:

> [w]e cannot simply say that there is a rational demand not to change your prior intentions: diachronic intention rationality is not stubbornness. What we want, rather, is the idea that an intention at which you have sensibly and confidently arrived earlier is a rational default, though a default that is normally overridden if—perhaps by way of new information—you newly come to take your grounds,

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[41] Morton and Paul further suggest that this point should be taken into consideration by programs that attempt to bridge achievement gaps observed in marginalized groups. Aid programs that attempt to help children by trying to instill them with grit are training children with strategies that have only been established as helpful in upper- and middle-class children. Because of differences in circumstance, these same strategies may not be effective for children from more disadvantaged backgrounds (203).

as specified by your practical standpoint, strictly to favor an incompatible
alternative. ("Sociality" 127)

This may be even more true of the synchronic norm than the diachronic one, since the

synchronic justification was originally so rooted in pragmatics. It is also worth noting

that epistemic resilience is similarly not meant to be stubbornness. It is possible,

however, that it might resemble stubbornness from an outside perspective. Morton and

Paul admit that an impartial observer who does not share the agent's commitment will

reason differently about the situation. They explain that "the observer has no need to

respond to the evidence in a way that guards against premature despair, and this should

be reflected in his evidential policies," (Morton and Paul 195) thus resulting in the

revision of expectations for success to occur more readily for the observer than for the

gritty agent. The higher evidential threshold is understood to be rational for the agent to

adopt, both epistemically and pragmatically, but the standards that apply to the agent

need not apply to others. So, an accusation of stubbornness without an understanding of

why the agent has different standards may be *unfair*, but is at least understandable.

Alternatively, perhaps a better candidate for a means to intention stability is

patience. As noted previously, the economics literature tends to describe patience solely

in terms of an agent's being willing to wait. This idea does not separate out two potential

notions of patience as describing merely an agent's relationship with time, or their

temporal horizon, and their development of the more colloquial understanding of patience

as a virtuous character trait.[42] On the temporal horizon understanding of patience, the

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[42] Thank you to Luca Ferrero for encouraging me to discuss this point.

agent sticks with their intention because their temporal horizon enables them to wait for success or to delay the rewards they will eventually receive. Patience as a virtue, on the other hand, would imply that the agent likely needs to act with self-control in either carrying out their temporally-extended plans or resisting the pull of temptation. It is the kind of virtue that most people believe eventually pays off, and the payoff described by this theory would be that it enables effective agency. Those who are willing to patiently adhere to their intentions will be rewarded through the successful completion of their plans. And those who give in to temptation too willingly are in turn demonstrating impatience.

It's unclear whether Bratman would be more likely to align with stability stemming from a long temporal horizon or as a virtuous character trait. There are times in the diachronic view in which he implies that stability is itself a character trait of self-governing agents, but he also notes the importance of a temporal framing for notions of agency through his more considered view of diachronic agency. If Bratman *were* to be endorsing intention stability as developed from patience in terms of a character attribute, though, that would imply some class-centrism. Equating agents who display stability with those manifesting the virtue of patience is one of the more economic advantage-relevant notions. This is primarily because the idea fails to distinguish someone *willing* to wait from someone *able* to wait without space for differentiating the two. The class-centrism contained in this notion can be made especially clear by examining the implication that those who fail to keep their intentions are impatient. This is similar to

the previously-discussed error made in the psychological literature about gratification delay in children.

The issue is that we can observe a mere failure to wait for something and interpret it in at least two ways. On one understanding, not waiting is the result of a measured decision to take what is offered immediately instead of what is promised in the future. This would be the case if the children involved in marshmallow tests who did not wait for the second treat simply assessed that it was more important to them to take the immediate treat and they simply never formed the intention to wait. On another understanding, not waiting reflects a character flaw. This understanding would assess children who failed to wait for their second treat in the marshmallow test as violating intention stability, demonstrating the character flaw of impatience. They either reconsidered, or simply abandoned, their intentions to wait for the second treat in the face of temptation. Under this way of thinking, we might be tempted to assess the children who failed to wait as falling short of the pressures of rationality, thus demonstrating impatience. In contrast to the children who failed to delay gratification, a straightforward application of Bratman's view would evaluate the children who *waited* as having kept their relevant intentions stable, as patient children. They demonstrated self-governance over themselves in the experimental situations, and thus reaped the benefits of their reasoning. And this interpretation makes it easy to connect later success in life for children who did wait as a further demonstration of their patience.

Popular assessment of the longitudinal results is that the children who were both able to wait and to perform well on tests later in life consistently prioritized long term

goals over immediate rewards and this virtue of character paid off. This coheres with Bratman's view that sticking with one's plans enables effective agency and fits with those who take this data to show that developing the ability to delay gratification is directly related to success later in life. The children who formed intentions to wait then failed to do so, then, would be perceived as impatient, and their failure to keep their intentions stable set them up for fewer successes in life. Thus, given this framing, the children who waited were displaying a valuable life skill while the children who failed to wait demonstrated a lack of that skill.

However, this understanding of the stability of intentions could also amount to a kind of rigidity or stubbornness, depending on the circumstances. When situations change drastically, patience won't always in fact be rewarded. The agent who recognizes when shifts in plans need to occur will perform better when circumstances change. What we are calling patience could amount to stubbornness in an agent who resists these important shifts in circumstance. Not only does Bratman not want to endorse stubbornness, he also leaves space for charity in this interpretation. Although Bratman frames intention stability as a central norm in the synchronic version of his planning theory of intention, he also, in this earlier framing, gives it the gloss of a dispositional attribute of an agent, in which case there will be variation in how much influence it will have upon different agents. As he notes:

> [m]y disposition to refrain from reconsidering my prior plan may be rather minimal: I might be inclined to reconsider it given only a slight divergence between the way I find the world when I come to act and the way I expected it to be when I first settled on my plan. Or my disposition may involve substantial rigidity, as when I would only reconsider it in the face of some extreme divergence from my expectations. (*Plans* 65)

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Under this framing, Bratman is neutral to the idea that agents functioning in circumstances which do not promote intention stability, such as with limited economic resources, may be less inclined to stick to their original intentions. It also means that revising intentions need not amount to impatience.

Perhaps, then, Bratman's view is meant to apply to a more restricted audience than I have been assuming. If this is true, the forms of planning agency he is focusing on are more relevant to agents who are disposed to remain stable than others, and those agents will likely themselves come from backgrounds which foster these dispositions. Some psychological research has indicated that some of the disparities in development experienced by children in low-income households are a result of less stable living situations than their higher-income contemporaries (see, for example, Lareau and McCoy & Raver). This clarification implies that Bratman is not claiming that people who are less disposed toward stability are doing something **wrong**.

The requirement of synchronic self-governance that Bratman suggests is partially constitutive of diachronic self-governance is surely not *explicitly* class-centric; but upon reflection, two plausible means by which agents would reliably demonstrate intention stability, may reflect economic advantages. As I have attempted to show, the more economically-advantaged parts of the population have advantages in developing epistemic resilience and, on one interpretation, patience than their disadvantaged counterparts. Yet neither of these cases need to represent faulty *reasoning* on the part of economically-disadvantaged people. If short term rather than long term thinking is recommended by an individual's circumstances, Bratman's view may simply not apply

and thus be limited in its applicability, which seems to run counter to some of his efforts

to be expansive. In a world with significant economic inequality, in which around 10%

of the global population lives in poverty, a theory which applies best to those who are in

positions of social privilege is overwhelmingly likely to perpetuate privilege, even if this

result is unintended. In terms of the first requirement of diachronic self-governance,

Bratman's view, while attempting to be applicable to virtually all reasoners, may fail to

be satisfactory for some.

B. Bratman's Second Requirement: Structure of plan states

The other main component of diachronic self-governing agency is that the agent is

guided by a structure of plan states which partially constitutes their practical standpoint.

According to Bratman, this structure will contain:

> issue-settling, cross-referring plans [that] will frame much of one's
> practical thought and action over time: [these plans] will pose problems of
> means and preliminary steps in filling in one's so-far partial plans as time
> goes by and in ways that, taken together, mesh; and they will filter options
> that are potential solutions to those problems. In playing these roles these
> plans will induce forms of psychological connectedness and continuity of
> intention and plan that are in the spirit of broadly Lockean models of
> personal identity over time. ("Planning Agent's" 227)

This structure provides the agent with the kind of agential authority that sets their

practical standpoint and aids the agent in making future decisions by streamlining the

reasoning process in favor of the agent's settled positions. The plans contained within

will also be arranged in a rough hierarchy in accordance with the agent's values ("Three

Theories" 233). The help in deliberating that the structure provides additionally aids the

agent in avoiding a particular kind of mistake in reasoning, what he calls 'brute-

shuffling.' An agent who is a brute shuffler will frequently change their mind, seemingly arbitrarily. Although Bratman acknowledges that some amount of reassessing and adjusting one's plans is compatible with a self-governing agent, doing so too frequently can undermine the idea that an agent in fact possesses a unified character or practical standpoint at all. An agent who shuffles too often will seemingly fail to have a practical identity; instead of the agent demonstrating who they are by their actions and choices, they will fail to demonstrate a standpoint at all. Through possessing this structure of plan states, self-governing agents will have some practical matters settled in advance, leaving them room to focus energy on other, perhaps more pressing or novel issues ("Time" 144-45).

As for the structure itself, not only does it contain straightforward plans, it also contains intentions, sub-plans, policies, quasi-policies, values, etc. and norms of reasoning which support the overall rationality of diachronic self-governance. For the sake of space, I will lump these components into the broad categories of plans, policies, and norms. For Bratman, plans concern how an agent will approach the carrying out of a particular course of action in the future. Plans require the time-extended coordination of a series of intentions, organized thematically by their contribution to said overarching plan. In carrying out a given plan, the agent will often have to settle specific *parts* of these plans, which we should interpret as intentions to perform specific actions and sub-plans. These actions and sub-plans are part of the larger plan but involve a more complicated course of action than intentions. Policies on the other hand are generally commitments to act in a certain manner in specific types of circumstances. Quasi-

policies are similar to policies, but they are less-worked out versions of them, committing

the agent only to the striving toward a particular ideal, not constrained by the same norms

of consistency and coherence as full-blown policies ("Temporally" 43). Then, the most

important policies for understanding this structure of plan states are self-governing

policies. These are policies about how to weigh different concerns in future deliberation.

Instead of covering particular courses of action, they are concerned with how important

different *factors* are to the agent in making decisions. And finally, the specifically-

diachronic norms which inform what courses of action the agent will find appropriate to

choose in future deliberation. Although much could be said about the different parts of

this structure of plan states, the two most central ideas for our purposes are self-

governing policies and the basic norms of diachronic self-governance. I will explain each

of these in more detail below.

Policies and quasi-policies, especially self-governing ones, provide the whole

structure of plan states with a foundational level of stability. By fixing the relative

weights of considerations for the agent in reasoning, the agent will themself demonstrate

the kind of stability of character that enables the structure of plan states to speak for the

agent's practical identity. Self-governing policies both set the organizational hierarchy of

the structure of plan states and constitute the Lockean continuity that this structure

represents for self-governing agents by communicating where the agent stands in relation

to a value or ideal. This role is accomplished by means of cross-temporally organizing

the agent's various states such that they can be recognized as a unified agent. The

policies:

> help organize the practical life of the agent; they help organize, over time, The agent's practical thinking (including forms of deliberation and planning), the agent's activity, and the complex interrelations between such thought and action; they help constitute and support a temporally extended, interwoven, interlocking structure of coordinated practical thought and action. ("Three Theories" 245)

Self-governing policies do this by providing a kind of characteristic stability to the agent's decisions. They determine how substantial a role certain considerations will make in an agent's practical reasoning, which in turn sets the previously-mentioned hierarchy. They need not correlate precisely with the agent's conscious evaluative judgments, but there will often be a significant amount of overlap ("Three Theories" 239). Self-governing policies, roughly, set the weight of a consideration within a particular agent's deliberation. They provide additional premises in practical reasoning which comment on the importance of other premises (240).

For example, if someone has a self-governing policy along the lines of "*ceteris paribus* always choose to help family" and they are deliberating whether to rescue their wife or a stranger from drowning, the premise added by this policy would comment on the importance of the wife's significance as a family member and set the weight in favor of saving her much higher than the general consideration of the importance of saving lives in general. Presumably, in many given decision-making scenarios, there will be several relevant self-governing policies which will come together and/or conflict along the way of deliberation. This is part of the reason the policies will need to be roughly hierarchically-arranged in the structure--if there were not a way of ranking the relative importance of the agent's concerns, having self-governing policies would not be a helpful heuristic at all. Self-governing policies both make decision-making processes more

efficient and personalize the decisions which come out of them. And they help to

constitute the agent's practical standpoint by consistently identifying the relative

significance of the concerns upon which the policies are focused. Precisely which self-

governing policies an agent has, though, will vary significantly depending on what their

particular concerns are, how thoroughly the agent has settled on their

viewpoints/opinions, and other considerations.

Bratman also includes in this picture the idea that self-governing agents are held

to two uniquely diachronic norms of self-governing agency which are themselves

relevant to how the hierarchical structure of plan states is arranged. The structure needs

to represent plan states which are semantically interconnected and relatively stable over

time ("Time" 145). Although not strictly *part* of the structure themselves, they dictate

what choices are appropriate for the agent to make given the person that they are,

practically-speaking. These norms function similarly to the previously-discussed norms

of means-end coherence and intention stability, but they are meant to be characteristically

diachronic versions of them. Bratman extends them in this way by means of a

'transmission' principle, roughly of the form, "a reason for X induces a reason for a

necessary constitutive element of X so long as X is attainable by the agent" ("Time"

138). Since means-end coherence and intention stability are discussed above, I will focus

primarily on the transmission principle, making some brief remarks about how it extends

the synchronic norms into diachronic ones.

The basic idea is that most agents like ourselves are interested in governing

ourselves and so, for any agents who are both interested in doing so, and capable of doing

so, these combine to induce a normative reason for self-governance (138). Bratman admits that there may be agents who are completely unconcerned with self-governance, but sets them aside as not the target of his argument. He notes, plausibly, that desiring to be self-governing is a familiar enough picture that agents who are uninterested in doing so need not be a primary focus. He puts the version of this principle which is concerned with diachronic self-governance as that, "[i]f relevant self-governance over time is attainable, there is a practical, pro tanto reason of self-governance to conform to [diachronic rational norms]" (147). The *ability* to be self-governing, plus the desire to be self-governing, thus provides the agent with reason to be concerned with self-governance.

Since these norms are attainable & will, generally speaking, be in the interest of the agent, a self-governing agent ought to adopt them. Because part of being self-governing is to be means-end coherent and to keep intentions and plan states stably organized, each of these principles is established as a diachronic norm in virtue of this transmission principle. And each governs the acceptable maintenance of the structure of plan states which provides an agent with their practical standpoint. Bratman leaves the exact details of the hierarchical structure of plan states, particularly in terms of the self-governing policies, open to interpretation as well as how the diachronic norms govern the structure. Presumably, this is because there is such a wide variety of agents, each prioritizing different policies, plans, sub-plans, and values, and Bratman is trying to leave space for each.

More can be said about precisely how thoroughly-formed this notion of a normative identity is meant to be in Bratman's view and examining this will be, in part,

the topic of the next chapter. In the mean-time, however, we are concerned with what roles stability is playing in this second requirement and what means for stability are implied by these roles. To my mind, stability is playing at least three roles in this second requirement, two of which are unique to this particular requirement. First, it is an explicit diachronic norm governing the structure itself. In this role stability functions largely in the same way as the synchronic norm of intention stability with a bit more of an appeal to its importance for character. The transmission principle appealed to by Bratman implies that, for those of us who are capable of and interested in self-governance, we have good reason to adhere to this diachronic norm (at least more often than not). Since I have already discussed intention stability at length, and the diachronic version of it is somewhat similar, I will focus on the second and third roles exclusively. The second role stability plays is that it is a characteristic of the structure of plan states itself. Self-governing policies primarily drive this role and through the stability they provide to the agent, they partially enable the structure to forge the normative identity of the agent. By forming and maintaining this structure, the agent demonstrates a considered point of view and stands for something as a person. Finally, stability is also a characteristic attributable to the self-governing agent in virtue of the possession of this hierarchical structure. Through possessing this structure and thus demonstrating stability, the agent avoids brute-shuffling and demonstrates a practical standpoint. Because the conditions which enable each of these roles will presumably vary widely, I will discuss each in turn.

As a Characteristic of the Structure of Plan-States

The enabling means for stability that best fits with its structural role in the hierarchical structure of plan states is that of upholding normative commitments. Upholding a normative commitment is a matter of demonstrating values through action, essentially. Normative commitments are those which are important to an agent to the extent that they represent the person in a meaningful way. Surely, there needs to be some leeway for the normative commitments one makes shifting and changing over time, but generally speaking, stability as upholding normative commitments will be partially representative of the character of the agent themself. And this fits with the way that self-governing policies are supposed to form a substantial part of an agent's normative identity.

Normative commitments also track rather well what Bratman means in suggesting this structure of plan states alongside a discussion of Frankfurtian wholeheartedness (see, for example, "Practical Rationality" and "Consistency").[43] To this end, this structure is supposed to relate to what we as individuals identify with and it also helps to provide a meaningful depth to our characters. And as Calhoun notes in her discussion of normative commitments, many of the more plausible arguments to be made for the importance of commitment in an individual's life depend on an appeal to these important types of

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[43] Admittedly, Bratman does not want to inherit *all* of Frankfurt's account of wholeheartedness, believing instead that a 'thoughtful and reasonable stability' can do much of the work without needing to commit to the strongest aspect of wholeheartedness, that it commits one to volitional necessities ("Thoughtful" 89). However, Bratman certainly does want his account to be largely friendly with Frankfurt's.

commitments (Calhoun 629). Normative commitments demonstrate what we value deeply, or as she puts it, 'prize' (637).[44] And what is more, I don't believe this notion of a unified self on the basis of stably-held policies itself risks class-centrism. People from a wide variety of walks of life would benefit from choosing and upholding normative commitments. As long as there is latitude among agents for which particular policies are adopted and how they may permissibly arrange their hierarchies, attaining this does not in itself seem to be less available for agents who are otherwise disadvantaged. Sometimes circumstances can work against an agent *realizing* these commitments, but the possession of them, in itself, does seem worthwhile.

Part of Calhoun's point in discussing specifically normative commitments, though, is to caution that they are more restricted in application than some theorists realize. A structure foundationally based on normative commitments will be a relatively minimal structure. She notes that much of what keeps reasoners seemingly stable in their decision-making is in fact derived from the circumstances in which they're making these decisions. Thus, the inertia of making intentions, and the so-called snowball effect which comes from making progress on carrying out those intentions on the way, along with the rarity of encountering reasons to reconsider even provisional plans can carry most reasoners through plenty of circumstances in which they carry out their plans, seemingly as a result of commitment, when the reality is that there was relatively little resistance

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[44] To claim that prizing is merely to value deeply doesn't quite get at the whole of Calhoun's picture. Specifically, prizing is to find something to be valuable, "but also special in a way that cannot be fully accounted for by showing what makes the thing, person, or activity valuable (637). I hope that the brevity with which I discuss the notion above does not diminish the notion.

(Calhoun 626). When reasoners *do* encounter more hurdles to carrying out their plans,

presumably their tendency or need to make adjustments or to abandon plans altogether

should not be understood solely as a flaw in their thinking so much as a matter of

circumstantial luck at times Much of what we are identifying as stability within

reasoners, then, might be better framed as stability in circumstances. And while it is true

that making normative commitments will usually also add to the ostensive stability an

agent demonstrates,[45] the amount that these normative commitments will trigger

substantive commitments is minimal in comparison to the many intentions agents form

and carry out. Were you to choose a self-governing policy based on a normative

commitment to valuing family over material goods, for instance, this will perhaps trigger

substantive commitments such as where you choose to work, but will hardly need to play

a part in more daily intentions such as choosing to arrive late to work to make sure your

child makes it to school safely. You may be able to appeal to the commitment in

explaining the situation to your boss, but it is unlikely that the policy in fact shaped your

intention in this case. Ultimately, relatively few plans and intentions stem from deep

normative commitments.

Calhoun also notes that, although normative commitments are attractive and

valuable, we do not need to structure our theorizing of good reasoning on them to the

sheer extent that we do. The reliance on them can largely be chalked up, she argues, to

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[45] Calhoun mentions that there are exceptions to this rule in that an agent might make a
normative commitment to being the kind of person who is uncommitted, or whose
normative commitments would be in conflict with making the kind of substantive
commitments which would demonstrate stability in action (629-30).

matters of preferences and normative styles (637). We could instead accomplish much of what we set out to do in terms of mere intentions and provisional planning.[46] Short of writing into our normative commitments much more substantive content (another matter of preference rather than either necessity or better reasoning), we simply cannot get everything needed to make weightier arguments for the necessity of more than a few stable normative commitments as the basis for a normative identity. So, although normative commitments themselves are unproblematic and of real value, they wind up only covering a minimal framework in Bratman's view.

As an Attribute of Self-Governing Agent

Let's move on to the final role of stability in the diachronic version of Bratman's view, as a characteristic attributable to the self-governing agent. This can be glossed as a stability which stems from developing the right sorts of habits. As mentioned previously, Aristotle believes that, in order for a person to display a moral character, they need to first have habituated themself into having internalized positive traits. However, not every theorist has as positive a gloss on the notion of habits as Aristotle. According to, for example Kant and Spinoza, habits undermine our moral worth and lead us astray from reaching our potential. These conflicting characterizations imply that the term 'habit' can have a positive or a negative valence, depending on how we conceive of it. So there are at least two ways we could interpret diachronic stability as stemming from habit, as what I will call a default behavior, or as a *practice* (the latter of these terms, and the general

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[46] I will pick up a similar suggestion in the next chapter.

distinction here, is drawn from Clare Carlisle's book *On Habit*). Although default

behaviors and practices seem like widely varying human activity, both demonstrate the

characteristics of habit, both in how they are formed and in the effects they have on

agents, sensation- and effort-wise. They both tend to develop as a result of repetition

and, consequently, repeating the activities tends to result in them requiring less effort and

conscious thought in order to engage in them in the future (Carlisle 104). When a habit is

a default, though, the agent who has acquired it may not even view the action as fully

chosen; their habit supersedes conscious thought about which action they ought to take.

This is often the connotation implied when we mention that we performed an action 'out

of habit.' These unreflective habits are often acquired passively and are more likely to be

'triggered' by circumstances than to reflect a deliberative process on the part of the agent.

These kinds of habits may also house characteristically irrational behavior. On an

understanding of habit as a default, Josefa Toribio argues that actions which result from

our implicit biases stem from a particular type of habit, specifically the types of habits

that we fall into reflexively and that are largely automatic, yet still controllable (Toribio

5). This means that, although people do not consciously allow their implicit biases to

influence their actions, and the actions themselves display markers of automaticity, they

can still be held socially responsible for breaking themselves of these unhealthy habits.

And other theorists, such as Helen Ngo and Celine Lebeuof, argue further that the

attitudes which *underlie* these actions, racism and implicit bias, are acquired habitually,

as a matter of bodily orientation (Ngo 848) and social conditioning (LeBoeuf 41). They

are embodied insofar as they are held by us in an ongoing, continuous way and they

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shape how we go about in the world, "active and continually *activated*" (Ngo 864 emphasis in original). Furthermore, these attitudinal habits are acquired as a result of interacting with a world that reflects them to us, and they become sedimented in us to the extent that we no longer take note of our possession of them (Leboeuf 47). And since we live in a world with social structures rife with encoded biases, the conditioning of these habits will tend to be largely unnoticed unless the social structures change, breaking the feedback loop between cultural and individual attitudes (50). To the end that implicit biases and racism are accurately categorized as habits, they are deeply-ingrained in us enough that we tend to actively uphold them without even recognizing that they are occurrent.   Habits so construed are arguably threats to our reasoning well, and we should certainly question a reliance on stability if it could prove to be as harmful, unreasonable, and biased as these examples.

It is unlikely, though, that Bratman would endorse that agents demonstrate stability as a matter of default behavior. One reason is that it could simply amount to rule worship, which Bratman explicitly wants to avoid (see, for example, "Practical Rationality" 84). While useful for limited agents like ourselves, the rules themselves would have to simply be taken for granted rather than justified--not only would there be occasions upon which the norms would not be beneficial, simply failing to reflect on them could reflect a level of laziness. Another reason Bratman would be unlikely to endorse this basis for stability is that it is unlikely that this form of habit could meaningfully represent an agent's normative agency, as a representation of where they stand. An agent who does not reflect on whether to be stable, but who simply behaves in

that manner unthinkingly, seems to be less involved in their life than Bratman's picture of a self-governing agent.

However, we may build a better case for habituation, based on the idea of practice. Here, habits are framed as reflective and they are chosen, developed, and adapted by the agent. An agent who demonstrates habitual stability as a practice, then, would arrive at the norms which structure their reasoning on the basis of considered reflection and as a reasonable response to the (presumably stable) circumstances under which they tend to reason. Practice can be understood as an elevation of the notion of habit, consisting of a more cultivated activity or behavior, one which enables the development of skills and discernment in their endeavors (Carlisle 83). In cultivating stability in one's structure of plan states as a practice, the agent would be attending to the various plan states which make up the structure and mindfully applying it to the current reasoning circumstances. In the grip of sedimented practice, the agent need not struggle with choosing what is the appropriate choice for them, but will likely feel it is a virtually inevitable outcome of their reasoning, as a result of their deep commitments. This stability will itself resemble upholding a normative commitment, one which the agent would not, in the moment, need to reflect on consciously in order to keep their intentions, plans, and goals steady. Habits of reasoning, according to Jennifer Morton & Sarah Paul, stem from a kind of epistemic humility, where an agent recognizes their own cognitive limitations & does not continually reflect on the norms because we are fallible, and likely to misread the situation in the moment (549). Agents who adopt reasoning habits as a practice are carefully developing their thinking such that there will be little need to

reconsider once they've chosen their paths so that their cognitive energy may be directed elsewhere. Steadiness of character and effort would likely be exemplified by an agent who is habitually steady. And to get to this level of habituation, where questions rarely need to be reopened once resolved, the average agent will have to put in significant amounts of effort over prolonged periods of time, and we should acknowledge this as an admirable pursuit for agents in whom this process is realized.

We will still need to be careful in how much work this admirable notion does in our theorizing, however. Although stability stemming from a practice seems much more worthwhile than either a default one, or an understanding along the lines of patience, there is still the matter of enabling conditions by which an agent may develop this habit. Since Bratman is concerned with a more descriptive than normative account of reasoning, he would not be claiming that agents *ought* to develop this habit, but in framing self-governing agents as desirable for anyone who is capable and interested in self-governing, he implies that most people who fail to live up to the standards of self-governance are doing something wrong (or irrational). Yet it will ultimately be an empirical matter whether a habit of stability will benefit individual agents. As I've been emphasizing, the circumstances under which agents reason will differ significantly. For agents whose circumstances tend to be less stable, not only would it be difficult to *adopt* a habit of intention stability, it will sometimes not be advisable for the agent to adopt it in the first place. Keeping plans fixed when the circumstances put the reasoner at a disadvantage might draw them away from success in their endeavors.

For this reason, Jennifer Morton suggests that we take a more ecological approach to norms of reasoning, and suggests that the norms which are appropriate to agents should be different when the circumstances in which they habitually reason favor short term efficacy instead of delayed gratification (Morton 544). Morton implies that, although reasoning habitually is a good pursuit in general, we cannot expect agents to adopt habits of reasoning which *conflict* with what is effective in their usual circumstances and so we should allow for variations among the norms we apply to them. The habit of intention stability we've been discussing would be unlikely to be universally beneficial to agents. I will take Morton's view up in more detail in the 6th chapter, but for the present purpose of responding to a habit of stability, this seems correct. Again, this *hints* at class-centrism more than directly indicates it, but the continuing trend of not addressing alternative ways that agents could be, and lack of explanation *for* possible variations leaves the account somewhat open for a class-centric interpretation.

III.   Findings Thus Far

Although Bratman is not himself appealing to class-centric ideas in his diachronic theory of agential self-governance, he may leave the door open for some in that he does not distinguish between the various means by which agents demonstrate stability. The synchronic norm of intention stability, which is most readily understood as coming about by agents demonstrating patience, is ultimately the aspect which more readily invites class-centrism in his view thus far. This is primarily so because of the failure to distinguish between the opportunity and the motivation to keep intentions stable. This

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may leave the view vulnerable to the criticism of centering the experience of economically-advantaged reasoners, since they may have fewer opportunities to stick with their intentions. And furthermore, even when agents lack the motivation, rather than opportunity, there may be circumstantial reasons that make stability less attractive to them. Although it is clear that Bratman is interested in presenting a generalizable view which describes more than it proscribes, in the later arguments, self-governing agency resembles more of an ideal than a description.

Sometimes, however, we need to be cognizant not only of the spirit in which a theory is given, but also in what it communicates to its audience. In the next chapter, I'll examine a more big-picture understanding of this understanding of the diachronic norms of self-governance, focusing on how especially the structure of plan states which partly constitutes an agent's normative identity may stray into presenting a limited ideal, one which excludes people without the opportunity, or perhaps even the desire, to live up to it.

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Chapter 5: Structure of Plan States as Potentially Class-centric

I.   Structure of Plan States Revisited

In the last chapter, I focused on various impetuses for stability, examining them to determine whether there is class-centrism implied by Bratman's view and arriving at inconclusive results. In this chapter, I'll take a wider perspective on this theory and discuss a specific way that Bratman's presentation of diachronic agency may stray into class-centric thinking. In particular, I'll be examining the implications of the structure of plan states which partially constitutes an agent's normative identity. Insofar as the structure of plan states is able to help demonstrate who the agent is, or where they stand, it is the most demonstrative component of the big picture of Bratman's view of diachronic agency. And, although Bratman is concerned with presenting a primarily *descriptive* account, the focus on self-governance as a central component of diachronic agency may amount to inadvertently presenting an *ideal* rather than simply one picture out of many possible, equally valuable, versions of agency.

I should note, however, that, this is certainly not the impression Bratman intends his view to give; his view of diachronic self-governance is meant to describe a particular sort of agent, one who is in control of their actions in a calculated way and whose actions often reflect who they are in a meaningful way. Bratman means to be leaving open the possibility of different forms of agency and, to that end, he does not *criticize* alternative possibilities. Moreover, in presenting self-governing agents as possessing a hierarchical structure of plan states, Bratman is also not dictating that everyone's structure of plan states needs to look like his own. Instead, there will be a significant amount of

divergence in the content of each agent's structure of plan states. Bratman is at pains to enable his depiction of structures of plan state to encompass reasonable pluralism about what people value ("Three Theories" 235-6). Since people can, upon reflection, reasonably commit themselves to different values, there will be just as much divergence in how they organize their reasoning (237).   And Bratman emphasizes this feature of his view, noting that:

> [t]here is, I suppose, a common human tendency to move in thought from 'this is where I stand' to 'standing elsewhere is unreasonable.' But our job here is not to pretend that self-government in the face of the recognition of reasonable pluralism is easy. Rather, our job here is, in part, to provide a theory of our agency that is compatible with, and sheds light on, such self-government." (252)

So Bratman intends to give a descriptive account of one particular type of agency rather than to dictate a normative account of what we should all strive for. Not only will structures of plan states look different among the majority of agents, he leaves it open that there are agents who may not have these structures at all. And Bratman's view is not meant to adjudicate between variations to determine which is best. In discussing the agential authority angle of diachronic self-governance, or the notion that the way that an agent reasons and acts over time can be said to represent the central standpoint of that agent, he notes that, "the problem . . . is a problem about the metaphysics of certain forms of agency; it is not . . . a problem about what kind of agency is most desirable ("Three Theories" 249)."

Bratman does, however, mean to be describing how *most* people function. He appeals repeatedly to a Strawsonian grounding for self-governance, claiming that it is not entirely 'up to us' individually whether we are self-governing agents and that it is

"organically interwoven into the fabric of our lives, both individual and social." (46).

This should mean that, barring perhaps some social outliers, most people in fact self-govern in the way he describes. Additionally, the notion of Gricean creature construction which he uses to frame increasingly sophisticated manners of reasoning also implies that he believes a self-governing agent to represent a kind of culmination of reasoning ability (see, for example, "Valuing and the Will"). This framing is ambiguous, though, between self-governance as a skill characteristic of persons which sets us apart from other creatures with less reasoning ability, and as a representation of the highest forms of reasoning *among* persons. An implication of the latter sense is that there could be persons who do not self-govern and they would be worse reasoners because of this. As I will further discuss, when we consider agents from a wider variety of economic backgrounds than Bratman often does, it's not clear that a carefully-constructed structure of plan states, and thus the achievement of self-governance, will be equally achievable for all agents.

All of this will depend, however, on how well-formed a structure of plan states Bratman means to be describing. The level to which this structure is constructed, as well as how reliably it needs to play a role in a self-governing agents' reasoning, will affect how well this structure of plan states captures the reasoning of most people and, if it turns out that economically disadvantaged agents are less often self-governing in virtue of this, this should give us reason to suspect class-centrism. There is also a sense in which Bratman is *prioritizing* one specific version of agency, one that evokes ideals of self-control and strategic planning. The only alternative version of agency that Bratman

discusses is that of animal agency, in which animals display traits of agency but do not generally display self-governance.

Bratman suggests, however, that "we" are agents who do display self-governance (see, for example "Instrumental Rationality" 49). Given cultural tendencies to describe the economically disadvantaged as lacking in self-control or as poor planners, his focus on these virtues as ideals may evoke for some these same stereotyped criticisms. If there are people who should count as "we" but who do not fit the model, this implies that they have not realized the ideal that 'the rest of us' have. In the same way that the research into coronary heart disease, discussed in the second chapter, was performed only on male subjects, focusing on a particular kind of agent to the exclusion of alternatives implies that this is the one that is important (and that the information gained is meant to be instructive for the entire population).

In order to examine the broader picture for class-centrism, however, we need to get clearer on how substantive a notion this structure of plan states is. Bratman does not explain how much an individual's structure of plan states may reasonably vary and still contribute to an agent's normative identity, specifically in terms of *how much* structure there needs to be. Is it enough to simply have *anything* hierarchically arranged in this structure of plan states, or does partly constituting an agent's normative identity require a certain amount of content in this structure? I take it that there is a whole spectrum of possibility for how substantive this structure is meant to be and I will proceed by first laying out the two more extreme ends of this spectrum.

On one end of the spectrum, the interpretation of a hierarchically-ordered structure of plan states would be understood quite loosely, and an agent could amount to being a self-governing one by simply making virtually any principled decisions. At this end of the spectrum, in order for an agent's policies and quasi-policies to be providing the hierarchical structure, there would simply need to be considerations at play in an agent's decision-making procedures, which would need only periodically determine what the agent does. An agent could perhaps have one commitment that frames most of their decision-making, and that would be enough to create the required hierarchy. Alternatively, at a low level of development for the structure of plan states, an agent could have a smorgasbord of commitments, loosely- and not especially consistently-arranged, and still have what counts as a structure. This would make any commitments made by the agent tenuous and overridable, but as long as there are some policies and quasi-policies which help inform the agent's choices, the structure could be maintained. This end of the spectrum would not risk class-centrism, as it only minimally requires an agent to make principled choices. It would, however, be difficult for any reasoning creature to fall short of this model. Animal agency, for instance, is often led by instinctual drives–if a chipmunk gathering acorns and other food for supplies for the winter would count as self-governing on this account, Bratman likely would not have discussed animal agency as something other than self-governance. Furthermore, it is unlikely that this is the picture Bratman had in mind, as an appeal to self-governance has connotations of a lofty ideal which would not seem to favor just any considerations appearing in the agent's reasoning processes. On a commonsense understanding of self-

governance, a self-governing agent evokes ideals of discipline and self-determination. So an agent's merely having *some* consistency in their plans, or *some* reasoning behind their choices about what to do would be unlikely to reflect what Bratman implies with the phrase 'self governance.'

On the other end of the spectrum would be a particularly strict understanding of what counts as a hierarchically-arranged structure of plan states. Here, we imagine a rather principled person who has a very clear idea of themself and makes all decisions purely on the basis of the commitments they have set for themself. This person would be self-governed to the point of rigidity, seeming to need a policy in place in order to make any substantial decision. They would also likely demonstrate such a unified perspective that it would seemingly eliminate the need to deliberate in a situation to begin with. This highly-structured ideal of plan-states would stray into class-centrism because reaching this level of reflection and unification tends to both represent the culmination of middle- to upper-class values and to be enabled by privilege. Someone having the reflective space to figure themself and their values out to this degree usually requires the space, either in terms of leisure or cultivation, to do so.[47]

For example, a recent study of college admissions essays suggests that the kind of holistic thinking about oneself and one's experiences required by these admissions prompts are something that applicants from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to excel at (Alvero et al. 6-7). In fact, despite the recent focus on SAT scores as

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[47] Not everyone with the leisure or environment conducive to cultivation *does* do this, of course, but this is beside the point at hand.

unfairly skewed toward higher socioeconomic background applicants, the researchers

combing through admissions essays of all nine University of California campuses found a

stronger link between the correlated topic modeling[48] and linguistic inquiry word count[49]

of these essays and household income (4). College essays, of course, are a rather

rudimentary stand-in for this ideal of a completely-figured-out character. Yet they do

capture a semblance of the extreme level of reflection such a thoroughly worked-out

normative identity might require. We could also understand self-governance in this

respect as resembling the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs pyramid. On this picture,

only once an individual's lower needs are met are they able to self-actualize. And this

may ultimately be an attractive ideal, but certainly not for everyone, and even if it were

attractive to everyone, it is unlikely to be realized for people who need to focus more on

their survival than achieving self-actualization. And the mental tidiness required to arrive

at this level of structure within one's structure of plan states may also be something

people of lower social class would resist.

In studies performed in the U.K., researchers have found that people of working

class backgrounds were more likely than their upper class counterparts to have used

prescription medication to treat issues with their mental well-being, but less likely to have

undergone any form of talking treatment for the same issues (Holman 531-32). Daniel

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[48] This is a form of analysis that examines the content of the essay for its semantic cohesion in terms of (3).

[49] This is the more common form of data analysis of essays, which examines the sophistication of the vocabulary used in the essay as well as and an overall evaluation of the number of punctuation marks, sentence structures, and narrative content (3-4)

Holman suggests that we understand this resistance toward therapy as stemming from social structure conditioning factors from these subjects' backgrounds, including, "few opportunities to build the verbalising and introspecting skills required for talking treatments" (543). Although therapy is hardly required to have a hierarchical structure of plan states, this reticence to discuss problems or attempt thought work can likely be extended to other reflective practices as well. There is often a bit of a cultural stigma against conforming to educational contexts among people of working class backgrounds as well (see, for example Willis 11-22). Having a high level of structure within this hierarchical arrangement of plan-states might be a luxury that not all can afford, and that some would resist on principle.

Now, we can assume that Bratman does not intend for his view to amount to either of these extremes. Given his concern with an even-handed presentation of a descriptive account, and one which a given person could deem irrelevant to/inappropriate for them, we should interpret him as not intending to give either an account which removes the positive connotations of self-governance nor one which has especially privileged ideals. However, given that we are concerned with examining class-centrism, we also ought to be concerned with how the view impacts those from disadvantaged backgrounds as well. It is certainly not the case that people who androcentrically engaged in research had ill intentions towards women and others who do not fit the gender binary. Nevertheless, the androcentric focus of research has had ill effects, and thus we should be concerned with not just the intentions behind a particular line of inquiry but also how the view may end up excluding people who do not fit so easily in it. And although Bratman

claims there are other equally-acceptable forms of agency, he does not address them beyond mentioning animal agency, which is significantly less sophisticated. This implicitly raises the value of self-governance to that of exclusivity and also implies that his view falls on the stricter end of the spectrum of structures of plan states.

Part of the reason his view appears to be presenting a more substantive notion of the structure of plan states is that there is a shift in how he presents his theory of agency once he moves on to diachronic agency. For instance, many of Bratman's earlier choices of examples, such as sticking with a one-drink policy or taking a bicycle route home that is conducive to stopping by the bookstore on the way, seem carefully broad enough to encompass peoples' experiences from many walks of life. These are scenarios that, even if a person lacks the particular experiences thereof, as long as they are a part of what is commonly referred to as Western culture, they will likely be familiar enough with the circumstances that they will be able to relate to it in some sense. Who hasn't meant to run some kind of mundane errand on their way home but has lost track of this plan and realized too late that they didn't take the correct route to see it through? Once Bratman moves on to diachronic self-governance, however, the examples are a bit less generally recognizable. In one, he describes a law student choosing whether to practice criminal or tort law ("Planning Agent's" 228). In another, he describes building a house as a paradigmatically diachronic effort which requires coordination among agents over time ("Time" 132)[50]. The lack of focus on, say, finishing high school, or raising well-adjusted

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[50] Admittedly, this one could be interpreted such that the agent is not the homeowner having the house built but the contractor doing the work, which makes it a little less obviously reflective of class bias, but there is still some elevation within this example.

children despite financial difficulties likely says more about the landscape of Bratman's difficulties than about whom he is trying to represent through his theorizing. Still, his primary examples seem to reflect the lives of already-successful individuals, perhaps for simplicity's sake. This prioritizes simplified examples of these ambitious projects when the points of accomplishing difficult, temporally extended projects could also be addressed using cases which seem uncomplicated from a privileged perspective but are themselves complex projects from a limited-resources point of view. In framing his view this way, Bratman fails to acknowledge that these markers of success may be far less likely to appear achievable to some of his audience. Through this slide toward 'more successful' examples, the diachronically self-governing agent seems to be a more sophisticated and unified agent than is reflected by the discussions of synchronic self-governance.

If this is correct, in order to count as a self-governing agent, the agent may need to display a high level of development within their structure, coordinating more intricate plans which demonstrate strictly-held values and a semi-rigid hierarchy of policies and quasi-policies. This would stray into the territory of a class-centric view, and this is ultimately the worry I would like to present for the big-picture view of Bratman's account of diachronic self-governance. Even if it is not intended to present a particularly substantive version of a structure or plan states, it can be interpreted as presenting a limited ideal of what agency ought to look like. And, as Alisa Bierria convincingly argues, there is a social dimension to agency such that the contexts in which people act also affect the apparent intentionality of actions.

As a part of the dialogic nature of information, it is possible to either 'socially read' or 'socially author' information, where in the first case, the interpreter is merely assessing the situation accurately, whereas in the latter, they are imputing information which is not in the 'original.' Bierria largely focuses on when social authoring of activity casts the intention of marginalized populations as more sinister than their disadvantaged counterparts, as when newspaper captioning of young Black man retrieving supplies from a grocery store refers to his actions as 'looting' these supplies when a similarly-situated white couple is glossed as 'finding' theirs (129-30). Bierria describes this mismatch as a "fundamental corruption of the process of good faith translation" (131). Here, we could argue about the accuracy of this framing in the particular examples, i.e. whether interpreting this view as expressing class-centrism is a case of social reading or social authoring. However, the more important issue is that, regardless of accuracy, how issues are framed *does* affect how they are interpreted, socially.[51] Whether intended or not, the emphasis on examples which are curated to represent more advantaged populations as well as the overall depiction of a self-governing agent can be understood as implying the social exclusion of less advantaged populations.

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[51] It may seem odd to leverage an argument along the lines of what is generally understood to be an unjust practice. However, the larger idea is just that what others impute to someone's intentions matters. In the same way that credibility deficits and excesses could in theory apply to anyone, but tend to work such that excesses apply to those who belong to socially-advantaged groups, while deficits apply to socially-disadvantaged groups (Fricker 18-19), the same can hold for social authoring; what is 'written' could be either positive or negative. So, as long as the phenomenon continues to occur, anyone could be benefitted or disadvantaged by it. Those already at social disadvantage, however, are likely to be disproportionately harmed when it does disadvantage them.

II.   Walker's Career Selves

In order to explain this point more clearly, let's consider Margaret Urban Walker's presentation of a career self ideal. Walker describes the notion of a career self as, "a culturally embedded and socially situated ideal of character, a richly normative self-conception that certain selves in particular places at specific times find intimately familiar and personally compelling" (Walker 138). The idea is roughly that there are several places in the philosophical literature in which the ideal agent is portrayed as an individual who is subject to a career-like trajectory. And this ideal is informed by theorists' understanding of their own lives as demonstrating a similar pattern.

Walker discusses career self views as instantiated by John Rawls, Bernard Williams, and Charles Taylor, each of whom presents a distinct version of a career self. Rawls gives perhaps the most straightforward version of a career self in his discussion of having a rational life plan. For Rawls, the life of a rational agent is constructed around a narrative, or life plan, which aims at a single trajectory over the course of that whole life. Williams and Taylor present career self views that do not restrict the narrative to a *single* trajectory but which nevertheless have organizational principles that make sense of the agent's life from within the lifespan (as opposed to making sense of it retrospectively). Williams discusses constitutive projects, which are organized around the desires which provide agents with meaning for their lives and, without any of these projects, an agent would be left lacking having a particular character (146). In contrast, Taylor presents a career self by relying on strong evaluation, or the evaluative framework that enables individuals to understand themselves and their lives as better or worse (150).

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Walker is drawing attention to this way of constructing ideals so that theorists can be more cognizant of how much they are importing into them. She's not necessarily claiming that having a career self view is problematic on its own. The practice can *become* problematic however, if they, "present[] it as if it were a kind of culturally transcendent constitutive fact about being a "person" or "agent" or "moral subject" at all, as if it were just 'our nature,' instead of something some people had learned, perhaps by an arduous and restricted apprenticeship, to try to be. (138) She means that, insofar as a theorist is putting forth a picture of a career self as an ideal, and one that everyone ought to strive for, they are unreflectively placing their familiar and personally compelling ideals at the center of the view. There is also a mistake insofar as these theorists, in understanding these ideals as natural, are implying that these ideals are *achievable* by all agents who do not display significant flaws. This fails, however, to acknowledge that apparent individual success, at least in the Western world, tends to rely on often-unacknowledged unequal interpersonal relations. In a particularly economically unequal society, as the Western world finds itself today, the achievement of ambitious plans and goals often comes at the expense of portions of the population that are underprivileged.

Walker acknowledges the role of hegemony in these constructed ideals through appealing to 'dominant common understandings' (155) as what enables theorists to be so unreflective about the ideals they are positing. She notes that, "[t]he point about these dominant common understandings—e.g., of what 'people' are like—is not that they are true, but that they are dominant. They are a "public" face of a social world that its members recognize as theirs. This means that dominant identities are not well understood

as something 'had' or 'done' by the (often) select group of people to whom they are standardly attributed" (155-6). Thus, because the theorizing is being done from the top of a hegemonic structure, the theorists are able to appeal to dominant common understandings as the *default* understanding, not one which is attributable only as a result of unequal power structures. This argument should sound familiar at this point, as it is another way of approaching -centric thinking, one which emphasizes the theorists' tendencies to unreflectively center their experience without marking that their views are experience-dependent at all.

On an understanding of Bratman's structure of plan states which strays farther into the substantive end of the spectrum, insofar as this structure is meant to indicate a unified agential standpoint and to partially constitute the normative identity of agents, the view may seem to also unreflectively put forth a personal ideal as a more or less universal one. People who experience economic privilege are likely to benefit from adopting these norms, policies, etc. Presumably, as a professional philosopher at a prestigious university, Bratman fits the description of economically-privileged, and thus this stable and well-formed structure of plan states is ideal for him; and furthermore, his agential standpoint is likely well-staked out by the hierarchical arrangement of the several components within. His theory, at the very least, would not be an especially good one if it didn't plausibly apply to his own thinking. However, if we use a privileged perspective as the one which applies for all other agents, those who do not enjoy the same privileges may be incapable of either pursuing the same strategy, or even of benefitting from doing so.

And when we prioritize a particularly well-formed structure of plan states in this way we further imply that those who fail to do so are functioning poorly. Bratman appears to appeal to a goal which is less readily attainable by others and fails to differentiate between the roles of the agents and the roles of their circumstances in cultivating that mindset. Some failures to have a well-considered structure of plan states will be from a lack of opportunity to be reflective about oneself and circumstances which make integrity of character more difficult (or perhaps even counter-productive). When people are overwhelmingly concerned with meeting their needs, they will likely dwell on those needs more than they will focus on ideals.[52] There are further complicating factors in developing reflective tendencies for people from working-class backgrounds as well, such as the previously-mentioned resistance to therapy and cultural attitudes against educational practices. This hardly *justifies* a lack of reflection, of course, but insofar as we philosophers believe reflection is good for people in general, we are not bringing people over to our side when we express theories which cater primarily to the 'converted.' It is important for a good theory of reasoning to ensure that sheer differences in circumstances do not appear to be differences in abilities among agents.

In the fourth episode of the limited series *Little Fires Everywhere,* two of the main characters come into conflict as a result of the profound differences which stem from their disparate backgrounds. Upper middle class mother, Elena, criticizes lower class mother, Mia, for continually disrupting her daughter's life by moving around and

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[52] This idea is closely related to research on scarcity which describes agents in scarcity as having taxed mental bandwidth. I explain this research more thoroughly in the next chapter.

scraping by to make ends meet. Elena claims these are poor choices on Mia's part,

implying a contrast with her own stable home life and ostensibly well-performing

children. Mia responds, "You didn't *make* good choices, you HAD good choices;

options that being rich and white and entitled gave you" ("The Spider Web" 39:53-

40:01). What Mia is emphasizing here is Elena's failure to recognize the structural

support she had in accomplishing her goals, and thus the extreme amount of

circumstantial luck that enabled her success. She may have made good choices within

the range of those that were available to her, but the fact that they were available is

something that 'but for the grace of God' she might not have. Furthermore, any setbacks

that occurred as a result of her choices (and the show displays some of these), could be

recovered from. Mia, on the other hand, has had a smaller range of available choices and,

sometimes despite choosing what seems to be the best of available options, she is left

struggling in the aftermath of them. Often, the extensive planning and subsequent

stability promoted by the ideal of a structure of plan states will be frustrated by an agent

having to make decisions with limited resources. Bratman's central example of a

decision to practice criminal law ("Planning Agent's" 228), for instance, will be much

more easily disrupted for an agent with limited financial resources by upheavals in the

industry, or a medical emergency, or the ending of a domestic partnership.

And, for people who are economically disadvantaged, a larger number of the

extended plans they engage in will be precarious than for those who have fallback

resources which will enable them to effectively carry out their plans despite setbacks.

Failing to carry through on these plans, or to always uphold one's values, need not

represent an issue with the agent's reasoning, and often any revisions an economically-disadvantaged agent makes preserve some amount of what is of value to the agent, or will at least minimize overall damage. They may have to sacrifice some of their ideals along the way, but this will not necessarily reflect a lack of some amount of structure–it would be more likely to imply limited opportunities to realize as many of their values. The challenges presented by the outside world are by no means *exclusive* to the economically disadvantaged, but the halting force of them can certainly be more devastating among this portion of the population. A well-formed and more rigid structure of plan states may simply require luxuries not always available to those who are economically disadvantaged.

Some theorists might concede this empirical point about the way planning is limited for economically-disadvantaged agents by the limitations of what is achievable by them. They would submit that the limited options make the situation different only in degree, not in kind. They would suggest that the agents be realistic about what options *are* available, and formulate their hierarchical structure accordingly, but still approach these with the same methods as if there were several (mainly by choosing one and sticking with it). Though the range of options will tend to be limited, and the ultimate payoff of consistently reasoning in accordance with the structure of plan states will likely be much lower than were this opportunity range wider, they may suggest that ,agents will still be served better, especially in endeavors that require coordination among agents by having the structure and sticking to it. Attempting to pursue multiple ends, or changing plans when one is looking a bit less promising (but not definitively so) is demonstrative

of a failure to pursue plans in a stable manner. Even economically disadvantaged agents should want to avoid shuffling in their planning, according to this reasoning.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, brute shuffling is arguably the main issue Bratman wants to avoid in his account of diachronic self-governance. A brute shuffler is an agent who seemingly changes their mind arbitrarily–they have not internalized their intentions to the extent that they lead to action and instead, because of repeated back-and-forth changes, ultimately accomplish nothing. Bratman also entertains the possibility that "one accomplishes a bit with respect to each of several incompatible projects as one brute-shuffles from one to another. Still," Bratman continues, "we have reason to think that such brute-shuffling stands in the way of self-governance over time" (Bratman "Time" 146). The issue is that, when an agent constantly goes back on what they've decided to do, they degrade their normative identity somewhat. In this respect, a brute shuffler seems to lack even this important component of self-governing agency, they don't seem to *stand* for anything.

One of Bratman's central example of this kind of agent is taken from the work of John Brunero. Brunero writes:

> Candice decides to go to the post office this afternoon to send out some mailings, but on the way there, she gives up on this end and decides to go buy groceries instead. But on the way to the market, she yet again trades in this end for another: going to hang out with her friend David. But on the way to David's house, she once more changes her mind and intends to spend a relaxing afternoon at home, but by the time she gets home the afternoon is gone and she's accomplished nothing. (quoted in "Time" 146)

For Bratman's purposes (in implying that we have reason to avoid a brute shuffle life), we need to imagine that this kind of day is typical of Candice, and this constant changing

of her mind prevents her from really standing for or accomplishing anything in her life. And intuitively, were Candice to live this way, she *would* seem open to criticism. We could imagine her friends and family trying to get through to her that they really want her to be happy and live a fulfilling life, and this constant shifting back and forth will simply keep getting in the way of her happiness or sense of accomplishment in her life. As Bratman notes, situations like these "stand[] in the way of self-governance over time" (146) for an agent.

There are two interrelated points I'd like to make about this example, and brute shuffling more generally. The first is that, although we can somewhat imagine this agent, it would be difficult to identify a real-life example of this. For one thing, there will be a severely limited range of circumstances that could conceivably enable this kind of lifestyle. And, even if we were able to find some people who did resemble Candice regularly, as in not just on a particularly bad day, I find it unlikely that their psychology would support this bare outline of actions which are apparently done without reason. A person who, on the surface, appeared to be brute shuffling would likely be able to give reasons for each change in direction they took. Perhaps Candice suffers from generalized anxiety disorder. In her attempt to go to the post office, she remembers that she forgot to pick up her new prescription for anxiety medication. So, she heads to the grocery store for that prescription pickup, only to remember that she missed her friend David's birthday the week before and his house is on the way. So she decides to stop by his house, but begins to feel especially anxious on the way over, because she's beginning to

feel like a bad friend, and ultimately begins to feel a panic attack coming on, which leads to her deciding to go home.

In this built up explanation, Candice changes her mind the same number of times, but once we understand her thinking, it's a lot harder to believe her behavior is irrational, in the sense that her reasoning is poor. Someone who is committed to mental health concerns amounting to irrationality will still be critical, but I believe most people would think that, at the end of the day, Candice might have been better off returning home. She certainly changed her mind a lot, and did not achieve anything, but this example would then reflect a personal struggle rather than a flawed reasoner. I would even go so far as to say that we should be able to trust Candice to know her own limits enough to make the decision that is best for her circumstances and capacities. We need not make this situation about mental health, either.

If Candice were instead presented with new information that led to the series of plan revisions, we could easily make sense of the same string of events. It might be that Candice remembers on the way to the post office that she ran out of baby food that morning and her child will need it when he gets home from daycare. Then, on the way, her 'friend' David, who is in fact her romantic partner, calls her and starts an argument, which is why she pivots to intending to go to his house. However, their argument ends in a break up over the phone, so she turns the car around & abandons her plans for the day to mourn the occasion. In this scenario, she'll perhaps have to place a delivery order for the baby food she needs (assuming Candice has the money for this service & we're thought-experimenting a world with something like Instacart), but again, this is a rough

day rather than a rational failure. The plausibility of the examples of brute shufflers lies

entirely in the lack of explanation for what the agent does. It is overwhelmingly rare,

though, that agents make decisions without at least an explanation of why. Without that

explanation, we are just stacking the deck in favor of an irrationality charge.

And Bratman would likely claim, in for these scenarios with detailed

explanations, that although it's possible some of the individual changes of mind Candice

goes through are based on only sufficient reason to change her mind (meaning they are

only a bit rationally criticizable) we aren't discussing a brute shuffler per se, just

someone who is not demonstrating much in the way of stability. Sarah Paul tries to make

the reasoning of a shuffling agent more comprehensible by appealing to an agent,

Katherine, who is torn between accepting an important political position with the

potential to influence important policy decisions and declining the position in order to

remain available to care for her special needs child (Paul "Diachronic" 342-3). Katherine

originally decides to decline the position, but ends up with free time while trapped in an

elevator and uses that time to reconsider the decision, changing her mind twice more

before finally being able to leave the elevator. Paul is still trying to present an agent who

not only shuffles but seems to do so without any new information or any other

extenuating circumstances which would make the reconsideration seem reasonable. But

we are still meant to find her waffling in some respect criticizable. Paul notes

specifically that Bratman would identify the failure here as a failure to demonstrate

diachronic self-governance (344). And, admittedly, an agent who waffles over *every*

decision in this manner would not be efficiently using their cognitive resources, but not

only is this not the case for Katherine, she is dwelling upon an important decision regarding the future use of her time. Some waffling seems perfectly acceptable for something that will have such a profound effect on her life and is so imbued with values that are important to her.

The way that criticism in these cases can be softened by more consideration of the positions these agents are in brings us to the second point, that requiring people who are functioning out of the norm on the basis of disadvantaged circumstances to essentially provide evidence that they are not behaving irrationally across the board hints at class-centric thinking. It would be better to assume that most people have reasons for behaving in the manner that they do than to assume first that behavior that appears out of place is based on flawed reasoning. Theories that criticize first and ask questions later are more likely to start with misunderstandings.

Furthermore, when a subdiscipline tends to frame agency seemingly along a Goofus and Gallant[53] model, with brute shufflers and self-governing agents in their respective roles, it's possible that some people will find either their own behavior or that of their loved ones, to resemble the former more than the latter. When this occurs, even though the person who resembles a shuffler will likely not reach the extremes of brute shuffling, the literature appears to be implicitly criticizing this person. And even these sorts of unintentional criticisms can contribute to the social exclusion of people from underrepresented backgrounds in the profession.

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[53] For the uninitiated, Goofus and Gallant were comic strip panels that were intended to teach children social norms that were included in *Highlights for Kids* magazine. Goofus was inelegantly traversing social scenarios, whereas Gallant was thoughtful and polite.

Against a purely neutral background, where there isn't already social stigma about 'reasoning while poor,' this dual framing might not itself have a socially exclusionary effect. But Bratman is in fact writing from within a society that already negatively views the reasoning of people of low income. Mary O'Hara covers this topic extensively, referring to this tendency to attribute desert to those in poverty as the toxic poverty narrative. According to this narrative, poverty "is the fault of the individual and is the result of personal flaws or 'bad life decisions' rather than policy choices or economic inequality. If only people worked harder, if only they 'pulled themselves up by their bootstraps,' or 'got on their bikes', . . . they too could find a job, they too could 'make it', the story goes." (O'Hara 1-2). This narrative, in tending to dominate how the economically-disadvantaged are perceived as a group, produces a lot of shame in those who do need temporary assistance, and the stigma and dehumanization attached to this assistance, or worry about being looked down on by their fellow citizens prevents some people from seeking it out entirely (Lister 112-13). At the same time, long term economic security has become more difficult to procure in recent years (Social Mobility Commission, as cited in O'Hara 6). Depictions of reasoning which imply this narrative can continue even further reinforcement of this narrative.

Take a different example, Rowan has had a series of jobs over the last few years, none of which lasted longer than a couple months.[54] They started working first in various aspects of building; as a plasterer, painter, plumber, a framer, and even dabbling in some

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[54] The details of this example are loosely drawn from the 2019 Ken Loach film, *Sorry We Missed You,* about a gig economy worker in the UK.

masonry work. However, the strict overhead of the contractors under which they worked

was unsatisfactory, which inspired each of these (arguably) lateral shifts in position.

Then, they moved on to working in landscaping, which was better in terms of a freer

work environment, but they found it upsetting that their coworkers were not as self-

motivated as themself (and they felt that they were taking on the brunt of the work) and

so they decide to seek different work. They continue to seek what meager work they can,

refusing to go 'on the dole' for help. After hearing from friends of their success working

in the gig economy as package delivery people, they seek non-contracted work with that.

However, because the work arrangement is an owner-driver franchise, the

position requires many front-loaded expenses, the most expensive of which is that they

need to commit to a loan for a vehicle in which to transport the packages. And, the labor

is just as back-breaking, and virtually as filled with oversight in the form of an electronic

tracker for the packages as the undesirable work in building. Rowan feels virtually

trapped in the position because of the debt incurred in the initial investment of beginning

this work and the temptation of it as the route out of poverty remains convincing.

However, it significantly deteriorates their relationship with their family, as they are

unable to be there for their loved ones during the grueling and long shifts required to

make the excess income in order to achieve financial solvency.

This example is interesting because we could imagine an interpretation of it which

amounts to a kind of redemption case for a brute shuffler. Rowan had been continually

changing their mind about what they wanted to do, which led to them not really making

progress in any direction, and eventually, they found something and stuck with it. To this

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end, we could claim that they finally avoid shuffling and begin to be self-governing. However, this is clearly not the correct interpretation of this example. Surely the position Rowan settles on is not the result of a choice which represents the culmination of their decision-making in line with their normative identity. Some might refer to Rowan's remaining in the position as falling victim to the sunk cost fallacy. And we can only hope that this is a temporary stop on the journey to bigger and better things. However, we can also imagine a future in which Rowan experiences enough setbacks in life, or begins to derive enough enjoyment out of the position, that this becomes their lifelong trajectory. Most likely, this would be viewed as a kind of tragic outcome, a failure of a person to realize their potential. But, on the understanding that Rowan could eventually choose to embrace this line of work, we need to be careful about how we frame their initial choice.

From how the case is originally described, it is unlikely that Bratman would describe Rowan choosing to continue working as a delivery driver as a triumph of self-governance. Perhaps he would identify the sacrifices of other valuable aspects of Rowan's life as where self-governance goes awry. Rowan is essentially eroding the hierarchical structure of their normative identity by repeatedly treating his family as the priority that they ostensibly occupy in the structure. Alternatively, Bratman might agree with Rowan that the position is only a temporary rough spot on an extended plan to better his family's financial situation, and at some point in the foreseeable future, Rowan will be glad they stuck through with the plan, despite its difficulty. On this interpretation, diachronic self-governance would speak in favor of this choice, despite that it would in some way be better if Rowan had other, less difficult options available.

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Ultimately, we can interpret this agent as ending up living in this way because they have fewer economic resources with which to build their future, leading them to suffer from a lack of ambition. In this case, the agent may lack imagination, but not necessarily reasoning ability. If the early efforts of our agent is identified as shuffling on the basis of circumstance, this alleged deficiency can be traced to what is at its base a social problem, that of having fewer resources and often experiencing limited opportunities as a result of this, rather than because of any flaws in reasoning ability. In the same way that research shows that economic advantages prepare children better for going through school, the same factors can seemingly prepare people better for success in other areas of life. But the social and economic issues that plague our public school systems are also present throughout society. Those who demonstrate less success need not have anything wrong with them or how they go about life. Some will have made poor decisions, and some will have made perfectly good decisions that circumstances have prevented from being effective. When we frame a theory of practical reasoning around an ideal that is encoded with social myths about people who are economically advantaged deserving the privilege they enjoy, we end up giving more credit than is due. And this limitation in perspective, and valuation of an attending ideal, can be to the detriment of those who are unfairly perceived as lacking in this ideal.

Walker is clear that what is problematic about it is the robust idea of what a life should look like that is written into these neutral-presenting accounts. She discusses her overarching criticism as that:

> "[i]t is not only that people are seen as being open over the course of their
> whole lives to appraisal of their actions or characters. Nor is it that a

> Conclusive appraisal cannot be made until the results of a whole life are in. Of course these selves will have to account for what they do and have done. But Rawls, Williams, and Taylor seem particularly insistent on having them account for their life's work of reflective self-monitoring itself, for that seems to be really what their required plans, projects, and plots show about them. These selves are threatened with fundamental forms of reproach, bordering on disqualification as selves, if they cannot demonstrate their continual watchfulness over their running of their lives, to prove this kind of self-conscious stewardship by showing how deliberately, mindfully, or artfully the lives are planned, projected, or plotted. (158)

The ostensible reliance on markers of outward success here in order to evaluate the person are what is ultimately the problem with these views. If an agent does not appear to be successful along the socially-accepted dimensions alluded to by these theories, the quality of the agent may be called into question. And, although Rawls, Williams, and Taylor no doubt mean for this assessment to thus be linked to the efforts made by individuals, structural problems outside of individual control make it the case that these theories essentially inherit societal problems and risk making fundamental attribution errors in doing so. People who are economically disadvantaged are much less in control of whether their endeavors even can be successful than their advantaged counterparts. Having a career self view also ignores the enabling conditions (often in terms of labor and care work) which make the success of economically advantaged people possible. Walker notes that career self theorists, "each impose a test on persons—indeed of human beings' being persons— of a whole life under *conscientiously conscious self-superintendence* of a verifiable kind." (emphasis in original 158). This belief that we can evaluate entire populations based on theories formed from positions of privilege, and from the assumption that circumstances permit the same kind of unhindered reasoning

and choosing as are available from those positions, is where the possibility of problematic -centric thinking emerges.

A substantive structure of plan states may resemble a career self requirement in that it would present self-governance as a particular sort of life plan, an organizing principle around which the best kinds of lives are lived. This takes the singularity of Rawls' life plan ideal and combines it with the character-conferring of Williams' constitutive projects. Bratman would appear to be claiming that the only kind of practical self worth considering is the kind partially constituted by stable adherence to the norms of self-governance. The worry here is not that self-governing agents are living in an unappealing way. Instead, I want to point out that the ideal is not appealing to everyone,[55] and that it tends to be more achievable by people in certain social positions. Some people live in ways that appear to violate the norms of self-governance and they are not necessarily living poorly.

In discussing the viability of Bratman's view as establishing the importance of diachronic self-governance, Sarah Paul notes that self-governance may be just *one* value an agent has of many. If circumstances don't align, or if the agent has other priorities, or if they have already met some minimum threshold of self-governance, they may in fact have no normative reason to be self-governing with respect to particular situations (Paul 345). Even for an agent who values self-governance, they need not be concerned with *perfect* self-governance (345). At most, Braman may have established that, at times, an

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[55] In the next section, I provide a sketch of an alternative to self-governance in the form of a seriatim self.

agent will have normative pressure to be self-governing, but this won't amount to more than a vague policy (346). Bratman *does* allow for the possibility that an agent will have other priorities or will not be motivated to be consistently self-governing, of course, but his silence regarding these alternatives leaves room for interpretation of his as presenting a career self view. It further may be the case that alternatives to self-governance tend to be chosen as a result of circumstances rather than a free choice from among a wide variety of options, but this does not rule out the possibility that some people prefer, or are at least well-suited to, these alternative lifestyles. In the next short section, I will unpack this idea more thoroughly.

III.   Seriatim Selves

In order to provide a contrast class to Bratman's self-governing agent, allow me to make use of a class of people who have been suggested as a contrast to career selves, those whom Jamie Nelson, following Hilde Lindemann, has identified as "living life seriatim" (Nelson 122). For seriatim selves, life doesn't easily fit into the comfortable narrative structure of a career self; instead, they engage in different projects, potentially in short bursts, and revisit and reframe their activities and overall life trajectory frequently enough to be described best as living in a "series of fits and starts" (122). As Nelson claims, "the seriatim self may see her life as made up of many jobs, lots of them quite big enough, thank you, but none necessarily life-defining, nor especially valued for the particular role they play in contributing to the achievement of a 'rational plan' for the whole" (123). We can imagine a seriatim self as holding a series of different positions,

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none of which is necessarily meant to build to something more. This is the person, often these days understood to be part of the millennial generation, working a series of side gigs rather than pursuing a dedicated career. Our gig economist from the previous section, might fit this description if they continued switching jobs. And the prevalence of gig economy workers in the modern era would arguably reflect some level of demand for highly flexible positions that likely would be appealing for seriatim selves.[56] Presumably, a seriatim self would have some values and preferences, but these may tend to be somewhat inconsistent or at least have yet to settle into any kind of ordered hierarchy. This seriatim self would also be unlikely to have much in the way of Williamsonian constitutive projects; they are just drifting along somewhat aimlessly.

I want to suggest further that a seriatim self sounds a lot like some economically-disadvantaged people (as well as some other marginalized people in the U.S.).[57] For instance, especially in employment terms, families below a certain threshold of income will often have to change jobs more frequently than upper- and middle class families. This is because eventualities such as the loss of a functioning car or the need to relocate for a higher-paid spouse to be transferred to a position at a different location can lead to

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[56] There are other, less charitable interpretations of the prevalence of these positions, but surely at least some people who voted in favor of Prop 22 in the 2020 California election, which granted app-based drivers the classification of 'independent contractors' rather than 'employees,' were people who wanted to preserve the flexibility of the positions.

[57] I should also note that there are 'rich playboy' tropes that arguably fit this description as well. However, as far as social criticism goes, people with money who flit about in an unfocused manner tend to get fewer sustained criticisms about their choices. This reflects an apparent asymmetry of social attitudes dependent on one's economic status that could be the focus of a whole different body of work.

drastic shifts in how the family manages itself. There was also a whole subculture in the

late nineteenth and early twentieth century United States of people, usually men, who

would travel around the country, working various odd jobs just to get by before feeling

the itch to move on to another town. Usually identified as hobos,[58] they had various

motivations for their travels. Some sought the freedom of being able to leave undesirable

work environments, some sought to find their fortune in the next promising venture, and

some simply did not prefer to stay in one place for long (Pimpare 69-71).

Even in more recent times, people who are disadvantaged by social circumstances

will also be more likely to seek more varied and less traditional ways of supporting

themselves and their families, often in the form of foraging and scavenging or turning to

less socially-acceptable and/or lawful forms of support. Not only will tight

circumstances for families often result in having to make difficult choices, when

opportunities present themselves, economically disadvantaged people may be more likely

to engage in risk taking as a potential way to either alleviate money troubles or perhaps

just to feel like they are doing what they can to help. Keith Payne discusses this

phenomenon as people from humble backgrounds tending to engage in a "nothing to

lose" attitude; the general idea is that, because there is less to be gained from safe

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[58] Realistically, there was a whole loose taxonomy of tramps, hobos, bums, vagrants, etc.
I am focusing in particular on the 'hobo' designation because it most reliably identifies
people who traveled and worked, as other designations often implied criminal behavior or
begging (Pimpare 67).

behavior, economically-disadvantaged people are less careful and willing to risk the little they have in order to gain potentially more than they could hope to have (Payne 72).[59]

Additionally, economically disadvantaged people will often seek multiple and more creative methods of supplementing any income they receive through methods like gardening, foraging, bartering, and labor which is not consistent enough to count as traditional employment. This represents a flexibility to their understanding of making a living as well as to a wider variety of methods by which they make up for the often-insecure individual methods by which they are traditionally employed. Robert Chambers describes this as a tendency for impoverished individuals and families to use a 'fox' rather than a 'hedgehog' approach to their survival and thriving. According to the old proverb, "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing" (Berlin 1).

Although Chambers admits there are people in poverty with 'hedgehog' approaches, he notes that even in pursuits we would imagine tend toward 'hedgehog' approaches, such as subsistence farming, the ability for people in poverty to in fact stick with one-note approaches and thrive is becoming increasingly rare (Chambers *Reality* 163). He explains that fox-like strategies are "improvised and sustained through their livelihood capabilities, through tangible assets in the form of stores and resources, and through intangible assets in the form of claims and access" (Chambers "Livelihoods" 92).

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[59] There is admittedly an added wrinkle to this approach to risk-taking in that most people who engage in risky behavior in fact only end up in small-game positions, which do not allow the opportunity to gain much more than working low-level jobs (Payne 72). But the live possibility that they may be able to luck into potentially dangerous positions from which they could gain a significantly larger amount of wealth is enough of a promise to encourage most to continue.

Even if they would prefer to make a living in hedgehog fashion, varied and diverse

approaches are often a matter of necessity for people in poverty in order to ensure success

under often unpredictable circumstances (Chambers "Paradigms" 344). Having fewer

resources tends to induce more scattered, less clearly focused approaches, especially

when we are considering impoverished members of developing countries. And this likely

means that seriatim selves tend to also emerge among the disadvantaged more generally.

Does Bratman have the resources to convincingly argue that the structure of plan

states does not commit him to a criticism of seriatim selves? Perhaps. Bratman might

find enough consistency in this agent over time, perhaps by identifying what values *do*

remain fixed, to claim that there is nothing criticizable in their character. Most of the

examples I have mentioned only focus on the 'providing for themselves and their

families' aspect of agent's lives, which is only one facet of someone's life, if perhaps a

looming one when times are tough. We could perhaps imagine that at least some of these

agents who approach employment in a seriatim way, however, also demonstrate this same

lack of commitment in other areas of their life, though. In this case, perhaps instead of

full-blown plans and intentions, Bratman would claim that these seriatim selves are

working with 'settled objectives' instead of explicit intentional plans.[60] Although settled

objectives do not amount to fully fleshed out intentions, Bratman does think they have a

place in a planning agent's reasoning. Although the structure of a seriatim self may look

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[60] For Bratman, settled objectives differ from intentions in that they do not require the
same level of consistency among them. In a sense, settled objectives predate intentions in
that they are more along the lines of 'things to aim for' than 'how to get from A to B'
("Instrumental Rationality" 57).

vastly different from someone who identifies at a young age what they want their later life to look like and pursues it in a more careful manner, the seriatim self would seem here to still count as legitimately self-governing. They may lack the characteristic stability, but we have no explicit reason to believe, just on the evidence that they change jobs frequently and may lack a defined plan for their lives, that they are less self-governing.

It is unclear, though, that Bratman could easily categorize them as such. This seriatim self *does* seem to resemble the brute shuffler that Bratman was careful to rule out in his discussion of the need for a structure of plan states in order to streamline some of the decision-making processes that agents undergo. It seems likely that a seriatim self would be criticizable in the same way as the brute shuffler, for not demonstrating a unified practical standpoint. And Bratman's overall view of diachronic self-governance does seem to fit better with the ideals of people who enjoy economic advantages, especially in terms of the types of futures well-off parents conceive of for their children.

A second way of interpreting seriatim selves who are economically disadvantaged is to note that they are *capable* of self-governing, but they simply have not adopted the end of self-governance. Bratman himself claims that this 'move' tends to be pro tanto irrational, but it may be that he could argue that for economically-disadvantaged agents that irrationality is excused and/or the pro tanto irrationality is outweighed by extenuating circumstances. This would avoid framing economically-disadvantaged seriatim selves as deficient, but it would also seem to frame them as more 'poor unfortunate souls' than active, self-governing agents. It would be preferable altogether if the view could simply

accommodate the agents as they are without habitually excusing them as outliers. Giving agents more credit for their agency is generally a better policy than simply writing off alleged mistakes as 'not their fault.'

Another interpretation is to claim that although economically disadvantaged seriatim selves are *capable* of self-governance (and so the norms do apply), they simply fall short of meeting the rational demands more frequently than other agents. This is a better response, but it is clearly a class-centric one on the terms we have been discussing, specifically in that the agents would be continually labeled deficient for failing to live up to the rational standards which are outlined from a stance in which conforming to them is generally easier. Presumably then economically-disadvantaged seriatim selves would be understood to be frequently means-end incoherent, because they are capable of being self-governing and so have the end of self-governance but frequently don't live up to it. Bratman would have an uncomfortable time fitting seriatim selves into his understanding of self-governance because of how much he favors stable forms of agency.

While Bratman is in fact attempting to provide more of a descriptive account than a normative one, it would be easy to understand his view as instead suggesting that the rational agent is a self-governing one. When people do not fit this ideal for whatever reason, perhaps because attaining this kind of character is ruled out by circumstances or because it doesn't appeal to them, this would be a potential basis for criticism of the agent under this interpretation. And if the structure of plan states is interpreted as requiring a high level of structure, agents who manage their lives in ways that seem to not fit this narrow ideal may appear criticizable, even if how they reason is conducive to their

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own temperaments or circumstances. We can easily imagine someone who simply

delights in novelty over consistency, or someone who is so used to having to revise their

plans because of a controlling influence in their lives that they no longer bother

attempting to make plans in the first place. Importantly, neither of these cases need

represent any deficiencies in reasoning on the part of the agent. Since Bratman's view

implies a structure of plan-states on the strict end of interpretation, and does not directly

address the possibility of alternatives, he seems to adjudicate the limits of self-

governance on the basis of the picture with which he is most comfortable.

I'd like to suggest now that we turn to a complementary notion, that of flexibility

in reasoning, in order to examine promising ways to bring our ideas forward. In the next

chapter, I'll be exploring moves in the practical reasoning literature that endorse more

flexibility in which norms guide our practical reasoning. Although some progress has

been made in incorporating flexibility into theorizing about rational norms of practical

reasoning, I want to suggest that we take the idea even further than has been suggested.

Were we to strike a balance between stability and flexibility within the practical

reasoning literature, this could perhaps mitigate worries about class-centrism.

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Chapter 6: Flexibility in Practical Reasoning

    I.   Morton's Ecological Rationality

        The focus I've had on the practical reasoning literature thus far has been on the tendency to prioritize stability in reasoning and the possibility that this tendency is based on class-centric thinking. In this chapter, I will turn to an important move in this literature towards flexibility regarding the norms of practical reasoning. Jennifer Morton's theory of Ecological Rationality, partially modeled on research of the regular effects of scarcity on reasoning, moves the literature in the right direction by creating space for different norms to apply to different reasoners depending on the details of their circumstances and abilities. Morton's view argues explicitly that the circumstances under which agents reason *set* which norms it is appropriate for them to be guided by. As I will argue, however, this view isn't fully satisfactory when circumstances have abruptly significantly changed. Morton's view doesn't satisfy the intuition agents operating under abrupt change will need to adjust their reasoning immediately in response to their new circumstances. However, Morton does have room to accommodate this state of affairs, because she frames the appropriate rational norms for different agents as emerging from the circumstances in which agents habitually reason. Since the agents' habits drive their reasoning, this gives her the space, I argue, to allow for agents to discern when their circumstances are significantly different. Reasoners who develop a practice-like habit of reasoning will be more responsive to changes in their circumstances and thus more able to adapt appropriately. And this is an important skill for some reasoners to foster.

In the psychological literature, increasing attention has been paid in recent years to legitimate variations which exist among reasoners. In particular, recent efforts have been made to explain differences among the reasoning of economic classes. Economically disadvantaged agents tend to undergo different reasoning processes and have different behavior patterns than their economically advantaged counterparts. Sendhil Mullainathan and Eldar Shafir have proposed that we can understand these differences as reactions to the resource scarcity in which these agents find themselves. They find that, when people reason in situations of scarcity, i.e. in which they perceive the resources at hand as insufficient to their needs (Mullainathan and Shafir 4), they tend to behave in consistent ways.[61] One important aspect of the definition of scarcity is that it is *perceived* rather than absolute; whether agents are in fact experiencing scarcity in comparison with others is less important than whether they perceive their circumstances as scarce. Their reasoning is affected simply because the situations feel scarce. In the face of increasing income equality, for example, people who are in a position of wealth in comparison to the people of the world experiencing absolute poverty,[62] yet who are economically disadvantaged in the United States are likely to experience their financial

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[61] An important commitment of theirs is that several, if not all, versions of scarcity have virtually the same effect on agents (60-2). I am focused only on financial scarcity, although this is admittedly skimming over that people from all walks of life experience scarcity.

[62] Absolute poverty is defined in terms of a person or family's inability to meet their own basic needs (Singer 192). This is in opposition to a notion of relative poverty, which relies upon a comparison with one's fellow citizens. Scarcity is similar to the relative notion of poverty in that it relies upon a comparison but is perhaps even more subjective a notion because of its reliance on being *felt*.

situations as scarce (Payne 28-9). This is because scarcity is ultimately a comparative

notion, and agents will lack resources in comparison to their fellow citizens. This in turn

affects how they approach the situations which highlight this apparent scarcity.

One of the most prominent effects of scarcity on reasoning is that the agents tend

to display an apparent further "scarcity"[63] of a cognitive resource which Mullainathan

and Shafir dub 'mental bandwidth.' Mental bandwidth is a blanket term which is meant

to encompass both an agent's cognitive capacity and his or her executive control (41-2).

Agents experiencing scarcity tend to test lower on measurements of these in comparison

to their counterparts experiencing less resource scarcity. Mullainathan and Shafir suggest

that these results can be explained as the result of 'tunneling,' in which agents focus so

much of their attention on the resource in which they are scarce that they are unable to

devote their cognitive resources on what lies outside 'the tunnel' (29). They explain that

there is a tendency to address only urgent matters, while neglecting other, merely

important, ones (117).

However, rather than demonstrating diminished *capacity,* the researchers argue,

scarce agents' bandwidth is being taxed. They need to direct their cognitive resources on

the resources in which they are experiencing scarcity, which leaves little bandwidth

available for other matters. Mullainathan and Shafir further explain that this taxed

bandwidth is the result of a lack of what they call 'slack' in the scarce resources (73).

Slack is the researchers' term for the excess amount of a resource upon which people can

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[63] The scare quotes here are in response to this not being the most accurate framing of the
phenomena, as should become clear later in this paragraph.

typically rely when issues arise. For the researchers' purposes, they use the term in financial circumstances specifically to refer to unbudgeted amounts of leftover financial resources; essentially, slack is a feature of being in abundance, where not every eventuality needs to be covered in advance (74). The general idea of slack is that, for an agent not experiencing extreme scarcity, they will have some amount of slack that will enable them to take unexpected jolts to their resources in stride.

And when agents do not feel they have adequate slack, they will respond in demonstrably similar ways. Mental bandwidth appears to be taxed when attention is merely drawn to the perceived scarcity in an agent's circumstances. In one experiment, shoppers in a mall were asked to respond to a hypothetical scenario eliciting their reasoning in response to a need for car repair (Mullainathan and Shafir 49-51 & 54-6). There were two versions of this scenario, the only difference between them in the amount of money the repair would cost. After responding to the scenario, a graduate student tasked with surveying subjects asked them to complete either a Raven's Progressive Matrices test, which tests subjects on their ability to identify the image which fits with a progressingly complicated pattern, or a test of their quick-response time, in which they need to quickly but accurately respond differently to two types of stimuli. Subjects with the higher cost scenario were more likely to score lower on these measures of both response time and accuracy (50-1 & 55-6). But what is especially telling about this experiment is that the *only* subjects who tested lower were also those who were relatively

low on the socioeconomic spectrum.[64] When given the lower cost scenario, people of both high and low socioeconomic status (SES) performed similarly on their subsequent test. Mullainathan and Shafir take this to demonstrate that priming people of low SES with a reminder of their scarcity can cause them to pivot their mental resources toward their own scarcity, and away from the task at hand. And this makes rational sense as well, since presumably the completion of a task in experimental circumstances will be of lower priority to the subjects than the financial issues which likely profoundly affect their lives.

In order to demonstrate further that these results show the regular *effects* of scarcity rather than acting as 'proof' that people who do not have money have earned their low SES as a result of poor decision-making, Mullainathan and Shafir found a population of people who experience both scarcity and abundance in turn. Sugar cane farmers[65] tend to struggle financially immediately before their harvest, while enjoying an excess of money shortly after. Mullainathan and Shafir also tested these farmers on fluid intelligence and executive control and found that the same farmers had very different results depending on the point in their harvest cycle they were at. Prior to harvest, when they were suffering the most financially, the farmers received lower test scores than they

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[64] The researchers are careful to note that they measured socioeconomic status loosely and that they did not control for other kinds of scarcity present in the subjects' lives.

[65] This particular crop was chosen because it is somewhat unique in being harvested at different times of year by different farmers. This allowed the researchers to reduce the likelihood of external factors corrupting their data, e.g. if the farmers had all been harvesting at the same time, there could be seasonal effects relevant to the experiment in addition to harvest-specific factors (57).

did shortly after receiving payment for their crop (58). The focus on sugar cane farmers helps to demonstrate that it is more likely that conditions of scarcity lead to lower measures of these cognitive resources and they suggest that this direction of causation is endemic to other situations of scarcity as well. The appearance of diminished capacities that agents display while struggling is a feature of the agents' contexts, rather than actual characteristics. This illusion dissolves once the farmers are no longer operating under the pressure of limited funds. So with a wider view than one-off measurements of executive control and the circumstances in fact appear to affect their reasoning more than their reasoning affects their circumstances.

This research represents an attempt to avoid a deficiency framing of economically disadvantaged reasoners because what the theorists are concerned to demonstrate is that scarcity *itself* causes the agents to have fewer free cognitive resources to dedicate to executive control and cognitive capacity. Thus, it would be wholly inaccurate to claim that people who experience financial scarcity are *incapable* of reasoning well--the scarce conditions limit them from *demonstrating* their capacity to reason well. And scarcity in most, if not all of its forms will have these effects on people, regardless of how well-developed this reasoning capacity is. This is a good point to focus on in this research; it would certainly be better if economically disadvantaged people did not *have to* reason in a way that ties up their mental resources. But this also need not imply that we should consider people reasoning in situations of financial scarcity purely as victims of their circumstances. As I will discuss briefly in the next chapter, there are advantages to be gained from reasoning under financial scarcity as well.

Jennifer Morton has appealed to this same scarcity research in order to present an approach to practical reasoning which reflects the findings about the influence of scarce circumstances. Instead of framing her view around this concept of mental bandwidth, however, she suggests that we interpret the scarce circumstances as altering the *entire structure* by which the agents reason. So reasoners who reliably experience scarcity are usually being appropriately responsive to their reasoning circumstances, even if their reasoning does not at first glance appear to fit with the typical models of reasoning given by other theorists. Because different agents experience vastly different circumstances, she claims, different norms of rationality will apply to them. Responding to the arguments of practical reasoning theorists before her, she has two desiderata for a worthwhile theory; it must 1) leave room for agents to reason poorly (implying that *some* norms must apply), and 2) in order for reasoning norms to be appropriate for limited creatures such as ourselves they must not always be up for debate (Morton "Scarcity" 546).

But, Morton argues, "although it is true that all agents are necessarily subject to norms of rationality in deliberating, it is not true that all agents are subject to the same norms" (544). Specifically, when the circumstances vary in significant ways, the norms which apply to different agents will vary in relation to those circumstances. Thus, the norms which are relevant for moderate scarcity and shape the deliberation of agents in it will differ from those which apply to agents in extreme scarcity. The norms appealed to frequently in the pre-existing philosophical literature, which Morton refers to as those of 'ideal' rationality, describe those which apply to agents in only moderate scarcity (544).

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When scarcity is ubiquitous in agents' lives, the norms which govern their reasoning will have different areas of focus from their moderately-scarce counterparts.

Morton agrees with contemporary theorists that we need *some* norms of practical rationality to function in the background of our reasoning, but she diverges from them in that she claims that these norms will be different for agents in varying circumstances (546). In this point of agreement with the prevailing views she concedes, "[i]f we are to play a game well, we must accept some rules while we play a particular iteration without bringing them up for reconsideration" (546). However, this need for *some* rules in a particular game need not extend to agents playing different games; other games will have their own rules. Although the prevailing theories are based on the idea that there is some set of norms that is appropriate for all agents, Morton argues, "there are no norms that can fulfil[sic] this function in the deliberation of human agents with limited cognitive capacities, like us, and lead us to reliably reach the conclusion to intend that which we have most reason to do in any context" (553). So at least some significant differences in context will amount to different norms.

The previously-cited research on scarcity implies that variations in levels of scarcity represent one dimension of significant differences and Morton appeals to it to illustrate how these differences in norms may appear. Creating scarcity in one resource has reliable effects on reasoning relevant to that resource, and the shifts will share the characteristics of those that occur in response to scarcity of any other resource and the agents often make these shifts nearly seamlessly in a way that does not imply some kind

of deliberative gymnastics.[66] In multi-round games in which subjects are given different amounts of 'tries' at a goal, subjects who are given fewer resources are more efficient at using those 'tries' but will also focus less on later rounds. This future-discounting can be highlighted by giving the subjects the ability to borrow tries from future rounds in order to ensure successful completion of the round at hand (548). Subjects with fewer attempts reliably borrow more against future rounds, despite the knowledge that this will lead to difficulty in accruing points later on. Morton establishes the reliability of the phenomenon, then considers four different competing explanations of it, rejecting each in turn. After eliminating these possibilities, she is left with the explanation that agents reason similarly under scarce circumstances because these circumstances set the terms by which they reason.

Proponents of ideal rationality tend to take one of two strategies to accommodate these regular changes in reasoning. One approach is to claim that the circumstances enter the 'equation' of figuring out what to do as additional premises in reasoning which eventually give the right results. The other is that the reasoners are led by unfortunate circumstances to reason in a way that is less than ideal. In some ways, this is the approach that the scarcity research itself takes. Morton, however, takes a different approach and argues that, because of their regular conditions of scarcity, economically disadvantaged people are guided by different norms, ones which prioritize short term

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[66]Sendhil and Mullainathan note that loneliness represents a slightly different case than other versions of scarcity since there are no resources to borrow against and no way to 'save up' for it (140), but since we are primarily concerned with financial scarcity, this is hopefully not a huge caveat.

efficiency over long term payoffs. The rationale for this is that norms of reasoning are meant to help agents arrive most efficiently at what they have *most reason* to do (553). Agents reasoning under scarcity will often *need* to make decisions that prioritize the short term results over a long term payoff, or to put it in terms of the previously-cited research, they are rightfully prioritizing the *urgent* over the important. If they were to use models of reasoning premised on only moderate scarcity, economically disadvantaged agents would either need to engage in overly-complicated reasoning processes which span several additional premises that do not ostensibly resemble the actual process of reasoning as experienced by the agent, or by being held to inappropriate, long-term-focused, norms that would reliably lead them to make the wrong choices given their circumstances if they were to adhere to them (554). Morton's alternative suggestion is to understand the norms of practical reasoning as relative to the context of the situations in which the agent habitually reasons.

This argument is a specific application of Morton's theory of Ecological Rationality. Ecological Rationality claims that, "[a]n agent A should deliberate using those norms that allow her to reliably achieve her ends E, given her cognitive capacities, in those contexts C in which she regularly finds herself" (554). The norms of deliberation appropriate to an agent on this view will at least partially depend on the agent's cognitive capacities and the context in which they find themself. Each of these factors will affect the strategy by which they will be able to achieve their ends. Thus, agents experiencing frequent scarcity ought to use norms which are appropriate for their circumstances, which often amount to focusing on the short term over the long term

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outcomes. Agents in extreme scarcity, then, correctly prioritize the urgent over the important. There will be some situations in which this way of thinking will have nonideal results, such as when people neglect to purchase insurance, because they cannot afford the premium, then experience disaster. But overall, the short term approach will be beneficial in their circumstances; and Morton notes, deliberation is never a perfectly reliable system (553). The view is valuable because it takes seriously the role that environment, sociality, and an agent's particular abilities play in adjudicating how an agent will get around in the world.

Morton's view works to draw together existing arguments which state that practical deliberation needs to be structured on *some* norms, and the empirical evidence that different agents will need to operate differently in response to the huge variations in circumstances under which these different agents reason. She acknowledges the importance of norms remaining largely stable for individual agents, both because of the drain on intellectual resources that constant reconsideration of norms would represent as well as arguments which demonstrate that the norms of reasoning themselves structure 'the game' of deliberation, meaning that if we question them, we risk an infinite regress (546). Having some reliable, if perhaps fallible, norms to rely on in our reasoning would overall be better than leaving these processes undefined. Yet, in contrast to other views, these norms will not be the same across all reasoners–they will vary in response to differences in circumstances.

A nice example of differences in norms among these differently-situated agents is displayed by the season one episode of the show *Atlanta*, entitled "The Streisand Effect."

Earn, short for Earnest, needs money for his daughter and has his cousin's friend Darius

drive him to a pawn shop so that he may pawn his phone for some immediate cash. At

the pawn shop, Darius encourages Earn to instead use the amount the pawn shop owner is

willing to give him for his phone to instead 'trade up' to purchasing a sword, which

Darius claims he can leverage to get some 'real money.' After a mysterious exchange in

a warehouse, Earn and Darius end up at a barn in a rural area outside the city with a

purebred Cane Corso dog. At this point, Darius explains that they are at their end game,

bringing the dog to be a stud for another purebred dog. Once the puppies are sold, Earn

will receive $2,000-$4,000, Darius explains, quite pleased with the outcome.

Earn is much less pleased, however, because he needs the money immediately

and, from his perspective, he just pawned his phone for an investment which won't pay

off for a couple of months.[67] As he exclaims, "poor people don't have time for

investments, because poor people are too busy trying not to be poor" ("The Streisand

Effect" 20:48). The difference here, Morton would explain, can be perceived simply by

examining each agent's financial circumstances. Earn is in extreme scarcity at this point

in the show, so he habitually needs to stretch each dollar he has as far as it will go. And

his need for money is immediate; he does not have time to wait for a large payoff.

Darius, on the other hand, is at least not hurting for money (although the show doesn't

dwell much on his precise financial circumstances). Poverty, as some researchers have

noted, is itself quite an expensive state of affairs (see, for example Bowen, Brenton, and

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[67] In a nice turn of events, Earn does receive $4,000 from this exchange in the second
season of the show, albeit at a time in which he is in not quite so dire need ("Sportin'
Waves" 11:18).

Eliot; Desmond and Wilmers; and Martin et al.). So the circumstances under which Earn

habitually reasons (at this point in the show, anyhow) favor norms of reasoning focused

on short-term efficiency whereas Darius is accustomed to being able to delay gratification

for higher overall profits. The comedic, if also bleak, mismatch here is between the

ecological environments of the reasoners involved, as Morton's account cleanly explains.

Thus, Morton's account does represent a step forward in framing reasoning

performed under scarcity as an acceptable alternative to ideal rationality views (Morton

"Scarcity" 543-44). As I briefly mentioned, Morton is claiming that views of 'ideal'

rationality are only appropriate for agents who habitually operate in situations of

moderate, not severe, scarcity (544); this is itself is an appeal to the Humean argument

that our conventions of justice arise only out of circumstances of moderate resource

scarcity as well as moderate beneficence among people. The emphasis on determining

the norms of reasoning based on the situations in which a reasoner frequently finds

themself can help to redeem reasoners when they behave in ways that appear unsuitable

or irrational from an outside perspective. However, Morton's reliance on habit as

grounding an agents' reasoning leads her to a tricky spot when it comes to some

circumstances which differ from an agent's usual ones. To return to the *Atlanta* example,

Morton's account wouldn't necessarily find Darius criticizable for applying his norms too

widely; Darius' failure to recognize how different Earn's immediate needs aren't

necessarily something with which we can find fault. Reasoners are justified in appealing

to the norms under which they habitually reason. Despite that we are examining a

fictional and darkly comedic example, I want to argue that there is something legitimately

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criticizable in it–in fact, this is precisely why we are meant to find it humorous. The

reason is that it demonstrates the narrow understanding of habits that seems to be

appealed to in the current state of Morton's view.

II.   Morton's Treatment of Habit

Of course, we should first pause to acknowledge how Morton's view is an

improvement in terms of the differences among norms which apply to different agents'

reasoning. Prior to her contribution, practical reasoning theorists tended to believe that a

single set of reasoning norms ought to cover all reasoners. With Ecological Rationality,

we can more appropriately assess a wider variety of norms that are reasonable for agents

to deliberate with and to frame actions. When people in less-than-ideal circumstances are

able to adapt such that they can reliably meet their needs and accomplish their goals,

Ecological Rationality appropriately identifies that the reasoner is using the right norms

for their circumstances. When reasoners appeal to norms that fail to enable them to

accomplish most of their goals, and perhaps to not even meet their basic needs, the norms

are faulty because they are maladaptive. So, we aren't expecting any particular set of

norms to be appropriate for and thus apply to every agent.

In some circumstances, however, Morton's discussion of habitual thinking may

end up amounting to essentially an excuse for some reasoners, specifically when they are

in circumstances which differ from those to which they are accustomed. As long as the

norms by which an agent reasons work globally, Morton claims, it matters much less

whether they work locally. I would argue, however, that cases in which the

circumstances are relevantly different, such as the dispute between Earn and Darius for example, *should* require agents to shift their norms quickly. Despite that Darius' reasoning tends to work for his own circumstances, good reasoners are able to identify when a situation is not 'business as usual.' According to Morton, even if an agent is in different circumstances from which they habitually reason, they are still justified if they continue to reason in their habitual ways (555). It would also be acceptable for them to adopt new norms (556), but not required. Although Morton admits that when agents enter different circumstances, this will eventually lead to different norms as well, she believes this change will occur gradually, in response to the accumulation of experience in the new circumstance. So, because Darius habitually reasons in circumstances in which long term norms are appropriate, it is appropriate for him to apply those same norms in this particular case. I think, though, that this is the wrong outcome.

There is some argumentative space for Morton to escape this criticism in the specific case that I have been considering, however. In this example, Darius is reasoning on *someone else'*s behalf, which doesn't reflect standard circumstances in which agents reason. Morton could perhaps appeal to the need to be familiar with and responsive enough to the agent's circumstances to be able to provide advice about how they ought to reason. In an earlier development of Ecological Rationality, she appeals to the difference between the standards by which an individual agent ought to reason in a particular instance and the standards by which this reasoning may be assessed globally (Morton "Toward" 569). This situation seems analogous to this difference between *standards for* a reasoner versus the ones by which they can be assessed. Under this understanding, we

would be attempting to evaluate Darius' standards as a whole by the standards by which a *different* individual ought to reason at the moment. This is essentially a double error, we are both ignoring the distinction made between individual situational norms and the more holistic one and trying to evaluate their use on a different person. So perhaps this exact case ought not be used to criticize the view so directly.

So let's instead consider an example which only appears to a singular agent and which seems perhaps open to criticism. Suppose Riley has always had a trust fund available to cover their basic needs, with around $2,000 leftover discretionary spending money every month, which they usually donate to various charities.[68] Now, imagine Riley loses access to that trust fund; say, the fund runs out. If Riley, during the month of the final payout, continues to contribute the money to charity rather than adjusting their expenses to ensure they are able to eat and pay money toward their more mundane expenses, criticism of this behavior seems apt. In real life, it's likely that Riley could fall back on some safety net like a good credit score. However, for the purposes of illustration, let's stipulate that Riley has no such safety net. Morton can and does say that, when there is a regular change to the agent's circumstances, their norms also ought to shift to reflect this (Morton "Scarcity" 556). She explains, "when there is a sustained change in context (or cognitive capacity), the theory implies that those norms should also

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[68] This is perhaps not the best formulation of the example, but what I want to preserve for this example is the long-term, rather than short-term, thinking in the use of the money (without appealing to something like an investment that Riley could presumably dip into when times are tough).

change" (557). So, after some unspecified amount of time, even Morton's account would find Riley to be criticizable for not adjusting to their circumstances.

I don't find this response fully satisfactory, though. I agree with the idea that the norms appropriate to an agent can shift over time, but I think that, in a situation in which someone's life has been so vastly disrupted, they ought to be able to recognize that circumstances are different from what they are used to and to proceed more cautiously. Morton makes the stipulation of an adjustment period specifically to allow some leeway for people coming *out* of scarcity to perhaps continue to appeal to short term norms despite their shift in circumstances. And I suspect that when an agent finds themself suddenly *out* of scarcity, it may take longer for the reality of the situation to sink in, and so we may be reticent to pass judgment in those circumstances. However, we could make it the case in the example just mentioned that Riley was reasonably sure that they could find a way to restore their usual circumstances in a month or two and yet, by not adjusting their approach even temporarily, Riley still appears to be making an error. Let's say that the disruption in finances was caused not by the fund running out but with Riley falling out of favor with a rich grandparent with whom they are sure they will be able to mend their differences at some point in the future. The change in circumstances is now temporary and so arguably Morton's account would claim that the circumstances under which Riley habitually reasons will remain more or less the same with a brief hiccup, but Riley still seems criticizable for not reacting to the change in circumstances accordingly. We can assume that, without some form of safety net, the dire

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circumstances in which they find themself should inspire some change, or at least some caution, in their reasoning.

Morton could perhaps claim here that the stakes matter in determining the amount of time allowed for habits to change. So, Riley is operating in particularly high stakes, where their very wellbeing is at stake if they don't change their habits. Assuming this response, it might be that Morton could then address a temporary shift in circumstances as still passing the threshold for habitual circumstances. Yet this is still not a fully satisfactory response. In Morton's framing, habits require some amount of time and repetition to adopt. In order for these new circumstances to count as the ones under which Riley habitually reasons, we'd need to still allow for at least a few days for the adjustment to take place. Yet intuitively Riley should be making changes in how they orient to the situation *immediately*, not after some reasonable amount of time to adjust. What I mean to demonstrate with this example is that part of being an epistemically responsible[69] agent is that we ought to recognize when circumstances change significantly.

Furthermore, even in the research that Morton cites in developing her theory, shifts *do* occur immediately in how agents approach situations once scarcity is introduced. Mullainathan and Shafir found that even agents who **do not** habitually reason in scarce circumstances can be made to act similarly to agents who are

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[69] Appealing to epistemic responsibility tends to invoke an internalist conception of epistemic justification. So, it is possible here for externalists to reject this argument on the basis of disagreement with this commitment. However, at least some externalists will agree that agents should gather information about their circumstances, especially if, for instance, doing so is part of a reliable epistemic process.

accustomed to scarcity. Subjects who normally operated in only moderately scarce circumstances, when given only a few tries at the computer game, still borrowed against their future tries at the game even though it would hurt their future chances at success. All of this pressure on habits is to say that it's not clear that Morton's treatment of them as structuring reasoning has satisfactorily addressed the phenomenon of the scarcity mindset yet. It doesn't address situations in which an agent's norms might need to change drastically, but either only for very short periods, or before they can develop habits which adequately reflect those changes. And it doesn't address the way that people in fact *do* seem to adjust their reasoning when faced with scarce resources, even if only for a short period of time. The theory would be improved if it were able to identify when people are reasoning well under a variety of circumstances, not only those they are used to.

Another way that Morton might respond to this pressure on habit is by appealing to the imperfections in agential reasoning. She notes that, even if we reason with the appropriate norms for our circumstances, we will sometimes end up performing the wrong action. However, she claims this is a result of deliberation as an imperfect enterprise (578). And, while she is correct about this, it's again not a fully satisfactory response. We can require agents to be more fine-grained in their approaches to circumstances outside of what counts as 'normal' for them without accepting defeat in these rather common situations, where the circumstances change out from under the agent's feet. As I'll argue in the next chapter, some deliberative circumstances are so

outside of an agents' areas of expertise as to not have clear solutions at the time of action, but this doesn't mean our deliberative prescriptions can't help us move forward.

However, we don't need to abandon the important work of Morton's theory in order to make progress on this issue. We can accommodate these changing circumstances, in fact, by appealing to the habits structure that Morton is giving us. Appealing to habitual norms of reasoning is a great option when the circumstances remain stable. An agent who *reliably* experiences resource scarcity will often have good reason to reason habitually in the same way as a person who experiences only moderate scarcity in financial resources will also often be able to reason in the same way across contexts. Each agent's reliable circumstances will enable this kind of stability in their reasoning processes. But when circumstances shift significantly, seemingly from underneath agents, relying purely on habitual reasoning will no longer do. However, what habits *can* do is enable us to determine when we need to adjust our approach.

By focusing more closely on the characteristics of habits, we can make some headway into an improved version of Morton's theory. In the fourth chapter, we examined habits as often being interpreted in two different ways, as a default behavior or as a practice. Admittedly, Morton's account does not give us information that enables us to adjudicate which valence is appropriate for her understanding of habit. However, I suspect that she would prefer the practice interpretation of habit. Given Carlisle's treatment of a practice as a "shift in the focus and quality of attention [which] transform[s] the effects of repetition to engender a heightening of experience rather than a diminution of feeling" (Carlisle 82) and amounts to an "elevation of habit" (83), this

would be a favorable interpretation to fit reasoning. And default behavior habits are those with a somewhat negative valence; they are accumulated more passively and tend to become entrenched, such that when an agent tries to break these habits, they encounter much more resistance (31). They are "marked by a decline in sensation and a flattening of experience" (82). So habitual reasoning undertaken as a practice would amount to a much more positive view of the reasoning norms which emerge from these habits. If it is correct that Morton would want habits of reasoning to amount to a practice rather than a default behavior, though, she is missing one of the important positive effects of engaging in reasoning as a practice.

This can be expressed most clearly if we first consider the 'double law of habit.' The double law of habit recognizes that adopting a habit has contrasting effects on the actions or behaviors involved versus the sensations associated with those actions (Carlisle 27). In repeating particular behaviors, the behavior itself is strengthened while the effect of engaging in the behavior on the agent is lessened. And while sensation associated with the action or behavior decreases, this gives the agent the space for discernment. Xavier Bichat illustrates this space for discernment through an example of the various scents encountered in walking through a meadow. At first, he notes:

> they have been sensible of a general fragrance only, the confused assemblage of all the particular odours which are exhaled from each individual flower; but in a short time from habit this first sentiment is weakened, it is soon afterwards altogether effaced. They then may have distinguished the odour of each particular plant, and formed a judgment at first impossible. (Bichat 52)

Through repeated exposure, the person has become used to the scents that make up the 'odours' of the meadow, and has become able to distinguish the various fragrances from

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specific species. In the same way, through repeated exposure, an individual can become

just as familiar with the various components of the circumstances under which they

habitually reason and, importantly for our purposes, can recognize when differences

among them occur.

Drawing from this account as well as the previously-discussed differentiation

between default behaviors and practices, we can identify more fine-grained distinctions in

how agents engage with their habits. Default behaviors, insofar as they tend to be

passively-acquired and -maintained, are less likely to result in discernment. Default

behaviors are the kinds of habits that most paradigmatically dull the sensations, and we

are less likely to notice and appreciate the nuances in situations when we are engaged in

them. This is part of why we refer to the action as occurring 'out of habit.' This phrase

is usually appealed to as a kind of excuse; the action being discussed was more or less

thoughtless and didn't reflect extensive consideration by the agent. Practices, on the

other hand, are prime real estate for discernment. Those who develop a practice, and thus

more conscientiously and actively engage in the activity, will be better equipped to also

cultivate this discernment. Clare Carlisle discusses this idea in terms of Ravaisson's

example discussing the difference between someone who indiscriminately drinks wine

and a connoisseur. She notes:

> For the habitual drunk. . . it is passivity that dominates this particular
> experience: he is not paying much attention to drinking, perhaps because
> he is talking to the barman or watching the television, or perhaps because
> he is simply absent-minded. For the connoisseur, drinking is primarily
> active: he is attending to the sensations in his mouth and making
> judgements about the flavours he perceives. In this case, sensation
> becomes so pervaded by activity that it is intensified by repetition.
> (Carlisle 81)

The wine connoisseur delights in the process of tasting wine and thus is sensitive to more rich judgments about the particular wine being currently quaffed. This active attention and the resultant room for discernment can be cultivated in other activities engaged in as practices as well.

We need not appeal to examples which themselves may elicit some class-centrism[70] to make this point. We can observe a similar distinction between people who take extreme pride in their cooking and those who are less engaged in the process. People who take pride in cooking often attempt to tweak their recipes in order to improve them and are incredibly sensitive to these variations in recipe as well as the contributions of the various ingredients and how well the final dish comes out. A person who cooks more as a default behavior, perhaps mainly going through the motions, will likely stick closely to recipes as a way of simply producing a meal and will likely be less responsive to the small variations which occur in particular instantiations of a dish. Although this person may appreciate a skillfully-cooked meal, they are simply less invested in preparing one themself. Both of these ways of cooking are *acceptable*, of course, but the more engaged cook is arguably going to have more reliably excellent outcomes in their endeavors. And it will be rare that someone who is not highly concerned with the quality of their dishes will, for instance, be the winner on a competitive cooking show. So the practice approach to cooking also represents an approach to the activity which is rightfully lauded, even if it's not necessary in order to be considered a good cook. If

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[70] Thank you to Luca Ferrero for pressing me on this particular point.

Morton would prefer her account of the norms by which we habitually reason to land on the side of habit as practice, she can then leave open space for discernment in the view as well. Agents who have cultivated a practice of reasoning will be sensitive to important differences in their circumstances, and will respond more resiliently. And this sounds intuitively right to me. Although I can admit that there are surely plenty of agents who may reason primarily in terms of default behaviors, people who reason *well* often do so because they are conscientious about it, implying the cultivation of a practice.

I want to suggest briefly here as well that there is a need for economically disadvantaged people to more frequently cultivate reasoning as a practice than their economically advantaged counterparts as well. Exploring this idea in more depth, with the additional dimension of complexity will be the focus of the next chapter. Yet even without increased complexity, we can understand this to be true in virtue of the concept of slack introduced earlier. Because people operating under financial scarcity do not have much slack, where slack is what absorbs sudden jolts to resources, their situations are more likely to destabilize in response to these jolts. This raises the stakes of financially-based decision-making. A seemingly-easy choice about which groceries to buy at the store becomes a practice in trading off, for instance, springing for pre-cut fruit in order to incorporate more nutritious food into one's children's meals while under time constraints because of long work days might mean that a person will be unable to completely fill the gas tank for the week. Or, an emergency vet appointment might mean that the regular maintenance on the family car needs to be delayed yet another month. And, for agents who work hourly wages, a seasonal cut back in hours may exacerbate the

difficulty of decisions that weren't easy to begin with. Not only are these circumstantial setbacks potentially disruptive, any actual missteps in reasoning that financially-scarce agents undergo will usually have disproportionately negative effects as well. When these exaggerated effects are paired with negative social attitudes regarding poor reasoning among the economically disadvantaged, the disadvantaged are 'punished' for their mistakes at least twofold.

In the presence of a reasonable amount of slack, each of these hurdles would be easily overcome by dipping into savings, or by finding workaround solutions. But without a safety net, economically-disadvantaged reasoners will often need to use diverse and creative approaches in procuring resources and meeting their needs. Yet this need to be flexible and responsive to circumstances is by no means *exclusive* to economically-disadvantaged reasoners. Not only is destabilization possible for agents of virtually all backgrounds, some agents will also simply prefer a mix of approaches (as can be demonstrated by appealing to people who are seriatim selves not because they are forced to, but because they prefer to approach life in this manner). So for virtually any agent, the ability for discernment which emerges from reasoning as a practice-like habit will be beneficial. And this is a skill that is undervalued thus far in the practical reasoning literature. In the next chapter, I turn to an expanded discussion of the reasoning skills which emerge from reasoning while economically disadvantaged, specifically those which arise from reasoning in complex circumstances. Reasoning without adequate slack is one component of situations which can amount to complexity, and understanding how

complexity requires resourceful and resilient thinking can help us carry the literature

forward toward unmasking the skills which -centric thinking hides.

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Chapter 7: Reasoning and Complexity

In the last chapter, I discussed Jennifer Morton's Ecological Rationality model as a positive step forward in the practical reasoning literature, and suggested one minor adjustment to the treatment of habit. In this chapter I will begin by examining one aspect of the rational norms she suggests. Morton does not explicitly state the metaphysical status of the norms which apply to agents in different circumstances, and how these are defined will make a difference to how her theory is taken up. I entertain two possibilities in this regard. Morton could be suggesting that there are essentially no fixed norms of rationality, or her theory could instead rely on fixed norms which differ in relation to the ecologies in which agents operate. If the former is the correct interpretation, the norms resemble sheer relativism, but the latter implies that there are several norms, but , as I will argue, these norms will frequently come into conflict and sometimes even contradict one another. If the fixed but contradictory norms interpretation is correct, then, when agents occupy multiple ecologies, they will often be pulled in different directions by the norms which govern different aspects of their lives. Despite this, I suggest that the latter is the more fruitful route, because this option has three benefits; it 1) preserves the normative weight of the norms of reasoning, 2) gives a more realistic picture of the messiness of reasoning in real life and 3) leaves argumentative space for addressing complexity in our theories of practical reasoning.

In the rest of chapter, I will first discuss these two interpretations of the status of Morton's rational norms, and explain briefly that accepting the idea of fixed norms relative to different ecologies will likely be the more satisfying interpretation for

theorists. Then, I will discuss ways in which fixed but conflicting norms are both more accurate to real- life decision-making and conducive to an understanding of complexity. Finally, I will wrap up by suggesting that practical reasoning theories which leave space for complexity are better-poised to recognize that economically-disadvantaged agents often are skilled in reasoning under complex circumstances, feeling the pull of ecologies governed by conflicting norms.

I.   Revisiting Morton

As discussed in more detail in the previous chapter, Morton suggests Ecological Rationality as an alternative to what she calls ideal rationality views. The basic tenet of this view is, "[a]n agent A should deliberate using those norms that allow her to reliably achieve her ends E, given her cognitive capacities, in those contexts C in which she regularly finds herself" (Morton "Scarcity" 554). This means that the norms by which an agent ought to reason will depend on both the circumstances the agent is functioning within, as well as the agent's own ability within those circumstances. Morton suggests that we can only assess the validity of the norms that agents in fact appeal to on the basis of whether they are, in general, successful at aiding the agents in achieving their goals. The status of the norms themselves, though, is somewhat undefined, metaphysically. Morton never specifies from where the relevant rational norms originate. One option is to interpret these norms as emerging from the circumstances and the agent, in which case they are wholly contingently constructed. Another option is for the norms to exist prior to the circumstances and capacities of the agent, but to apply to the agent *in virtue of*

these circumstances and capacities? The option we choose will affect how these norms are interpreted and taken up.[71] Let me briefly examine each of these options in turn.

There is some support for the first interpretation, that rational norms emerge wholly from the decision-making circumstances and the capacities of the agent. For example, Morton takes herself to be in opposition to, "a large swath of recent literature [which] attempts to offer a justification for the norms of rational deliberation but sets aside the question of which particular norms are being justified, or merely presumes a particular fixed set of norms" (Morton "Toward" 561). Morton thus may be positioning herself to claim that there is not a fixed set of norms for practical reasoning. In this respect, the norms would be entirely contingent upon features of the agent and circumstances for their existence. This interpretation, however, leaves us with almost sheer relativism of rational norms. The only basis for the existence of the norms would be how the agent reasons in the first place, essentially being forged out of the habits of individuals. So, the reasoning the agent undergoes would come first, and the norms could only be identified retrospectively by the agent's habits. As Morton claims, "norms will vary depending on the agent's psychological capacities and environment. It follows from this that what the particular norms of rationality are for an agent is not something we can determine a priori" (Morton 567). Once the norms emerge, then, they would be subject to assessment on the basis of whether the agent reaches a certain threshold of success. Thus, there will varying levels of legitimacy for these norms, such that they will

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[71] Thank you to Coleen Macnamara for pressing me to get clearer on Morton's account in this respect.

be more or less appropriate for the agent. But these norms would also be especially

flimsy, i.e. they would carry very little normative weight as a directive for agents

generally. Since they would only arise as a result of agents' habits, they would also be

entirely contingent *upon* these habits. If Morton is implying that the circumstances and

capacities of the agent forge the norms by which they reason, the theory would likely be

unsatisfying and not especially action-guiding. After all, if there is no source of these

norms outside of their grounding in agents' habits, there would be little normative weight

to them, except in an ex-post-facto sense (i.e. by determining after the fact whether they

reliably led to success for the agent).

And this would not be an especially charitable interpretation, since Morton

frequently uses language which implies that what agents are doing in reasoning is more to

'pick out' norms than to forge them. For example, she claims, "context matters in

determining **which** norms a rational agent should use in reasoning" (Morton "Scarcity"

544, emphasis added). This phrasing implies that the agent effectively conforms with

pre-existing norms when making decisions, and the aptness of the norm determines

whether the agent does so rationally. To this end, the norms are implied to be

independent of agents, and would thus persist even if they are not in fact appealed to by

any existent agents. And this gives them a normative weight that would be lacking in the

previous characterization. So we should consider our second option more seriously.

On this second interpretive option, the view would be that there exists some

amount of norms, and the agent essentially appeals to some number of these in reasoning,

which will be better or worse for them on the basis of their capacities and circumstances.

Because of the two very different circumstances Morton relies on as her central example, the reasoning of people in moderate and extreme scarcity, we have to assume that these norms themselves may conflict, or even contradict each other. Thus, good reasoning will look different for agents either with significantly different capacities or who face significantly different reasoning circumstances. Even if agents are facing choices which, on the surface, look similar, they may have very different solutions for a problem and each be justified for the direction they would take.

In the interest of clarification, we can expand upon this idea by examining Morton's ecological framing a bit more closely. We can imagine the ecological framework as establishing that agents, on the basis of their circumstances and capacities, essentially occupy different ecologies. Because of these differences, the strategies that will work to the benefit of one agent in a particular ecology would be counterproductive for an agent occupying a very different one. As a very rough analogy, we can frame this as different strategic approaches for taking care of different pets. For fish in an aquarium, the care that is needed, above and beyond providing the fish with appropriate food, will amount to ensuring the water is clean, and ph-balanced appropriately, as well as regulated at the appropriate temperature. The requirements of a more mobile pet, say a cat, will be a lot less focused on the particular details of the environment for the cat and more with actual upkeep of the cat, ensuring, for example, that the cat is groomed when appropriate, reasonably stimulated, and has a clean litter box.[72] These pets occupy

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[72] This last point is arguably environmental upkeep but is done as *frequently* as it is more for the comfort of the owner than because it will harm the cat.

ecologies that are so different that the strategies needed for their care also differ.

Returning to Morton's view, we might think of it as claiming that agents tend to occupy their own ecologies, which likely have many characteristics but Morton only defines in terms of their relative resource scarcity, and their cognitive capacities.

Once we start to examine what it is that may set the terms of defining an ecology, however, it is difficult to stop at just these two features. In considering what types of features would determine the norms under which an agent reasons, we could also add to the ecology the types or levels of threat the agent faces, the formative experiences they have had throughout their life, perhaps even the values that they use, or attempt to use, to shape their life trajectories. It may be that these features are included in what Morton identifies as the circumstances under which the agent habitually reasons, of course, but since the only feature of the circumstances that she delves into is the agent's relative amount of scarcity, these formative parts of reasoning circumstances are left undefined.

If it is accurate to frame Morton's view as having norms tied to different ecologies, however, the view would also include an implicit assumption that, for the most part, people occupy singular ecologies, and thus do not need to worry about the possibility of conflict. In fact, if ecologies frequently came into conflict, agents wouldn't be able to *form* the habits of reasoning that represent the basis for Morton's view. For Morton, the rare occasions in which conflicts do arise represent a time in which reasoning habitually is permissible, but so is reasoning in the way that is more appropriate for the unfamiliar ecology. We can see this more clearly through a brief consideration of Morton's agent, Herb. In the first working of this example, Morton describes Herb as

someone who appears to fail the standards of ideal rationality theory by doing several short-term thinking moves such as buying coffee every day and not investing in insurance. This is ultimately a rational behavior for him on the basis of it conforming to the short-term norms which are recommended by his ecology in scarcity, or the circumstances in which he habitually reasons (554). Later, Morton considers how we could understand Herb's behavior if he began making his own coffee, which we could understand as a kind of digression into long-term thinking but one which makes more efficient use of his resources (556). She notes that, as long as this long-term thinking doesn't prevent Herb from effectively reasoning in the short term, "both modes of deliberation are rationally permissible" (556). Thus, there is priority given to the norms which are effective for Herb's ecology, but he may appeal to other norms as long as they do not 'break' his habits of reasoning.

When we consider this permissiveness, the option of pre-existing norms which may be in conflict with one another seems to be even clearer as the more plausible interpretation. If norms were emergent from the agent's habits, switching norms may appear to be *impermissible*, since the occasional benefit of appealing to different norms would not seem to be adequate reason for the agent to change their habitual approach entirely. Ultimately, though, this approach works best if agents can usually be understood to occupy only one stable ecology at once. I'd like to put pressure on this idea. I am not convinced that agents tend to belong to only one. What if we instead understand agents as often having ties to, and being pulled by, multiple ecologies, for example through the different communities and cultures they identify themselves with?

Morton is focused only on the relative amount of scarcity an agent experiences, but the reasoning of actual agents is complicated by many more factors than simply how much surplus they have. Agents can be pulled in different directions in their reasoning by the commitments and responsibilities they have to their communities and ideals, as well as by the limitations of opportunity they experience in virtue of their various identities.

Understanding rational norms as selected by different ecologies plus the understanding that in fact many agents do occupy multiple ecologies which can come into conflict, gives us room to understand agents as involved in more nuanced decision-making than previous theories often acknowledged. We can see the relevance of conflicting ecologies by examining Sarah Paul's central example illustrating the importance of taking contingency plans seriously. Paul is responding to theorists who frame an agent's contingency plans as on equal footing as their primary plans as not giving proper due to the agent's own priorities. Paul uses the example of Associate Justice of the Supreme Court Sonia Sotomayor to demonstrate an agent who was fully committed to her Plan A, becoming a Supreme Court Justice, but who had a lot of evidence that she may not be successful in her endeavors, largely on the basis of her gender and cultural/socioeconomic background. Because of this, it would have been perfectly reasonable for Sotomayor to have a backup plan. Were Sotomayor to have acted on a contingency plan to freeze some of her eggs in case she is not successful in securing a legal career, it would not have diminished her actual commitment to that career (Paul 6).

On Paul's retelling, Sotomayor was committed to the end J (becoming a Supreme Court Justice) as her primary plan, but this plan was itself conditioned on the very real possibility that she might fail. So her plan to freeze her eggs would be a goal of B (having children), only if not J. However, she was simultaneously fully committed to making it false that she succeeded at that backup plan (because the conditional would never trigger) (13). To put this in ecological terms, Sotomayor was striving for being a part of the ecology of living as a Supreme Court Justice, but was taking seriously the ecology of her background, growing up in the Bronx as the daughter of immigrants from Puerto Rico, from which the probability of success is lower than from someone occupying a different, more privileged ecology (1). The competing ecologies, of the ecology toward which she was striving as well as ecology of her background, which came into conflict for Sotomayor demonstrate how complicated the plans of real life agents often are. In striving to be upwardly mobile, agents belonging to disadvantaged ecologies as a part of their background commit themselves to more ambitious ecologies, but must also take seriously how this conflicts with their background ecology.[73] And there is no reason to believe that there would be only one of these conflicts present. The concept of intersectionality teaches us that there is no way of reducing categories of difference down such that we can identify a singular effect of disadvantaged identities.

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[73] Morton herself considers these very real conflicts in her book, *Moving Up Without Losing Your Way: The Ethical Costs of Upward Mobility*.

There are any number of factors which can in theory set the boundaries of an ecology,[74] and similarly any number of factors which can amount to a conflict between ecologies.

I want to suggest, further, that we understand disruptions to and conflicts between ecologies which agents experience as representing levels of complexity in their lives. The concept of complexity has been most thoroughly examined in scientific fields, but there is a burgeoning literature of it in the social sciences as well. Derived from chaos theory, complexity here refers to the characteristics of systems, such as the economy or social structures, as amounting to more than just a large compilation of linear factors and rules, and instead consisting of dynamic and often unpredictable interactions between a large number of seemingly simple factors (or subunits). Examining complexity, in the traditional and social sciences, requires leaving behind reductive analysis of static structures in favor of holistic analysis of dynamic perspectives which are sensitive to conditioning effects and context (Scoones et al. 10-11). Gökçe Sargut and Rita Gunther McGrath explain complex systems as deriving from high levels of three different properties: multiplicity, dependence, and diversity (Sargut and McGrath 2). Multiplicity represents the sheer number of interacting elements, interdependence refers to how interconnected these elements are with each other, and diversity refers to how heterogenous the elements are. As each of these properties increase, the complexity does as well.

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[74] There is also argumentative space to discuss these factors which 'set' ecologies further (and especially to discuss them as often tied to particular values, either of the agent themself or the groups to which they belong), and to push back against the assumption that these ecologies themselves are stable, but in the interest of pursuing the relationship of ecologies to complexity, I am setting this aside at present.

As Paul Hager and David Beckett frame their understanding of agency as needing to engage with complex human experiences, "our capacity to act, our sense of our agency, is. . . better regarded as a socioculturally significant phenomenon, within which individuals set out on their own aspirational, and normative, journeys" (19). The actions of agents, then, are themselves the result of complex interactions between agents, understood as socially connected but operating differently within modern society. A good theory of practical reasoning, then, will be able to represent agents as complex entities and to recognize the skills these entities use in forging their journeys.

So Morton's theory (perhaps inadvertently) gives us a basic framework for taking complexity seriously in agent's lives. To revisit her expanded example of Herb, who periodically conforms to long-term norms in order to more efficiently use his resources, Herb is demonstrating reasonable adaptations to the complexity in which he exists, where his primary ecology is that of resource scarcity, but he sometimes finds himself in an ecology that is more conducive to long-term reasoning. Morton's view gives us the framing by which we can *begin* to accommodate complexity, but the current view is only one step in this positive direction. In order to develop this idea more fully let's appeal to an existing framework for complexity that is meant to aid agents in decision-making under complexity.

II.   Cynefin Framework

The Cynefin framework was originally proposed by David Snowden in the early 2000s as a way to interpret decision-making contexts in order to strategically pursue

leadership decisions that reflect the addition of more confounding factors as situations become more and more complicated. It's based on a simplified understanding of complexity theory, where instead of being derived from the three properties of systems discussed above, complexity is roughly based on how complicated the cause and effect relationships are, on the basis of a commonsense understanding of causation. This means that the depiction of complexity given by the framework will be rudimentary. For our purposes, however, the importance of the Cynefin framework is in its ability to provide guidance about how agents can respond to increasing complexity and not in the *precision* of the framework's taxonomy.

The framework itself consists of five interpretive domains which represent increasingly complex cause and effect relationships, as well as decreasing levels of order within the situations; its main contribution is in suggesting how to go about problem-solving within each domain. In the most ordered of the domains, cause and effect is easily discernible, whereas in the least ordered of them the situations are so diverse and convoluted that precise lines of cause and effect are virtually impossible to ascertain. In proceeding, I will suggest that we understand each of these domains in terms of their relationship to the ecologies an agent finds themself in. Given that ecologies are themselves a combination of situational factors, this fits better with the amplification of multiplicity, interdependence, and diversity suggested by Sargut and McGrath. Significantly increased complexity results from deep conflicts between the norms that govern the various ecologies in which agents operate. To apply the Cynefin framework

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to decision-making circumstances, the reasoner must first determine which domain the situation belongs in, then proceed along the recommended course of action.

Order

'Order' here refers to a grouping of two domains, the clear and the complicated. These are the domains of best practices (Snowden and Boone 2) and experts (3), respectively. The clear domain consists of mundane straightforward casual pictures, where we might not even identify a need for deliberation in how to proceed. Because of the simplicity of this domain, the advice is simply to *sense*[75] the situation, *categorize* it, then *respond* with whatever the usual course of action is (Snowden and Boone 2). The problem-solving is done almost mathematically and examples abound in our most mundane practices. Solutions in the clear domain are straightforward and future-looking.

The complicated domain is only somewhat more complex than the clear. The lack of complete information in the circumstances, or full clarity about that information, makes it the case that not everyone will be able to agree about the details relevant to decision-making. Agents will need to gather information before choosing which among a selection of good (as opposed to best) practices would be most appropriate. Thus, the advice is to *sense* out the situation, *analyze* on the basis of expert information, then *respond* in a way that is appropriate (3). There will likely be a list of acceptable moves to be made and the task for the reasoner will be to decide which is preferable among them.

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[75] The italics throughout these explanations of the different strategies for the different domains indicate the terms Snowden & Boone themselves italicize in their own explanations.

Solutions are future-directed insofar as, once all of the relevant information is taken into account, choices from among what can be expected to come about as a result of the course of action are appropriate and encouraged.

In an ecological framework, these domains represent agents who are likely functioning within a single ecology, with perhaps some conflict between values and/or desires in the complicated domain. It may be that the choice from among good solutions will be made on the basis of what the agent most values, even though this will represent a setback in something else they believe to be important. The conflicts, however, are either internal to the agent or the ecology more generally.

These ordered domains are where most current theories of practical reasoning find purchase. The general idea is that, with the proper theory, an agent can almost mathematically combine theory and situation and generate a good, and ideally most rational, way to proceed. The clear domain consists of cases easily captured by practical syllogisms, in which a series of simple rules can be applied almost mechanically, and there is little room for consideration of alternative actions. The complicated domain is the one arguably best suited for guidance by a theory of practical reasoning. It is a problem solving realm in which simplifying assumptions can be unproblematically made in a way that leads to satisfactory results. The appeal to expert opinion can fruitfully lead someone who needs extra assistance in processing or understanding their circumstances to a best-case scenario.

<u>Complex</u>

With the complex domain, we leave behind 'ordered' circumstances and enter the 'un-ordered' realm. Whereas the ordered realm contains circumstances with future-oriented, tried-and-true solutions (sometimes of which there are many), in the unordered realm no more easily-ascertained, predictable solutions can be found (5). From the decision-maker's point of view, there are no specified, 'correct' methods by which to proceed. Here, in the ecological interpretation of these domains, we encounter conflicting ecologies in which the agent is operating, and usually this conflict will involve competing values which have significant pulls on the agents. What is necessary in the complex domain is to instead *probe* the situation in order to information-gather, *sense* how best to proceed, and then *respond* to the situation, as well as any issues that the intermediate actions raised (5). The phrasing here is admittedly vague, but this is in the spirit of indicating the importance of proceeding carefully and being responsive to any series of actions that are set in motion from these actions.

Snowden identifies this as the domain of emergence and this is important to note because it highlights the present-orientation of this domain (5). Emergence is a term used in organizing work and activism circles which indicates that in some situations, no satisfactory solutions will be discernible prior to the active pursuit of them. Acceptable solutions will only emerge once progress has been made toward them, often through consulting the various stakeholders in the situation and as a result of the relevant parties being willing to compromise. No individual reasoner will have the expertise to determine

what is right, nor even in what effects any particular line of action will result. Satisfactory solutions emerge as a result of the steps taken to pursue resolution.

Thus, in real-world circumstances of emergent strategizing within organizations, it is important for those involved to collectively participate in order to arrive at solutions which address the situation appropriately while minimizing any damage done. For individual decision-making, this likely consists of consulting others in the process as well as being open to adjusting both the plan and the process along the way of navigating a situation. As Adrienne Maree Brown puts it, "[e]mergence is beyond what the sum of its parts could even imagine" (Brown 15). In the complex domain, action will need to be taken, but careful consideration is requisite along the way. Instead of looking for solutions, we should be looking for the so-called 'next elegant step,' "one that is possible and strategic based on who is taking it and where they are trying to go" (178). To further elaborate, emergent strategy, "constitutes a fundamental rejection of the reductionism found in many types of natural and social science. The tendency to reduce, to seek the key explanation, at ever smaller units, whether individuals constituted as agents in social theory or genes in biological science, is rejected" (Walby 462). So the tendency to reduce situations into simplified versions, as is often the urge in philosophically discussing what the rational thing to do is, is explicitly ruled out in this domain. The path forward in complex situations can only emerge out of the situation itself, and often that path will rely on taking measured risks (Snowden and Boone 5).

Examples of the complex domain can be found in any circumstances which have structural causes, or causal factors that interact with each other. The cause and effect in a

given case is complex if it is difficult to parse out exactly how the situation came about. It also may be complex if it is especially difficult to arrive at a satisfactory solution for all affected parties, or to imagine what a solution to the problem would even look like. On the large scale, issues such as addressing climate change or structural racism are certainly complex. On a smaller, more individual scale, addressing cases of PTSD, or navigating fragile social situations can be examples of complex circumstances as well. Part of the difficulty of accurately classifying these cases is that even in seemingly mundane scenarios, there may be relevant information that is overlooked when perceived by someone unfamiliar with the situation. Another example of complex circumstances is discussed at length in Jennifer Morton's book *Moving Up Without Losing Your Way*, in which she examines the real conflicts students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds experience in their pursuit of social mobility. Although their successes should be celebrated, they are diminished somewhat by the sacrifices they must make in distancing themselves from these backgrounds in order to achieve them. Not only will these students not be able to help their families by being present to the extent they would if they did not seek academic success, they may also need to distance themselves from some of the values taught to them in their upbringing. Ideally, the striver will discover a way to occupy both of these ecologies, with minimal sacrifices, and without having to reduce, or stop entirely, their participation in one or the other.

In this domain the practical reasoning literature loses some of its relevance. The theories which typically dominate the literature fall on the ordered side of the domains, exemplifying the belief that there is a recognizable solution for any given problem. At

this level of complication, any guidance these theories attempt to give will be questionable. This is something Morton calls attention to in noting that deliberation is an imperfect process (Morton "Scarcity" 573), but what the Cynefin framework offers us beyond the existing philosophical literature is that, the issue is not just that deliberation is flawed, but that there is no satisfactory solution at the time of deliberation. The agent helps to forge a solution by carefully moving ahead despite the lack of a definite theoretical structure by which to proceed.

Chaotic

The chaotic domain is not only complex but also tends to elicit a sense of urgency such that immediate and decisive action is required by the situation. There isn't enough information available, though, in order to make a responsible or well-reasoned choice about how to act. This domain is the one of 'rapid response;' it is imperative to prioritize action which will minimize damage overall, to 'stanch the bleeding,' so to speak (Snowden and Boone 5). In leadership contexts, these represent 'make or break' moments for persons in charge, and regardless of context, the first thing that must be done is to *act* (6). Once the initial point of action is chosen, though, what is most important is for the person to pay attention to any further repercussions of their action and to be responsive to how it plays out. To that end, decision-makers must next *sense* the stable and unstable portions of the situation, and *respond* in ways that can help to mollify the situation down to a more manageable complexity. These follow-ups to the original action are, in a way, more important than said action.

The most obvious (and timely) examples from within the chaotic domain I can think of can be found in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. Because there was so little information at first, policymakers and individuals had to respond quickly to situations which were quickly spiraling out of control. And these responses themselves had to be monitored and any further issues that arose had to in turn be addressed. At the state level, governors had to make decisions about whether to call a state of emergency and what more fine-grained policies their response would entail. On more individual levels, people had to anticipate, then react to major disruptions in their day-to-day lives that led to major schedule changes and quite often interruptions in their working lives. Because of all of this occurring at once, the only way to proceed was to attempt to minimize damage as best as possible.

On an ecological interpretation, we can understand this as an amplification of the circumstances in the complex domain. Not only are there very deep conflicts between ecologies, perhaps several in which the agent finds themself, but also the range of options available for the agent to pursue are themselves limited. The chaotic domain, consisting of circumstances in which the agent has to focus on minimizing damages, is likely to represent circumstances in which the agent is faced with no good options.

Disorder

Disorder is less relevant for our concerns simply because of the sheer lack of something to *make sense of* within this domain. Once a situation has devolved into disorder, it is virtually impossible to address it in any effective, strategic manner because

the situation is too opaque to be understood. All that is to be done is to attempt to pull

apart factors within the situation in order to make some sense of it, then address those

facets separately within the domains in which they fit (4). This is because part of what it

is to be a disordered situation is that it is impossible to perceive how the various parts fit

together to make a situation (2). In pulling out a chaotic piece here, and a complex one

there, the agent is attempting to *impose* some sort of order on the situation until it

becomes orderly enough to address in a more systematized fashion. There is no dealing

with disorder *as* disorder; it can only be broken up into, for example, a complex factor

here, a chaotic one here. And each of these identified elements would be dealt with in

turn, with the goal of eventually creating order out of disorder.

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### III.	Initial Lessons to Draw from the Cynefin Framework

Before diving into the details of how I want to apply this framework to theorizing,

a quick note about the levels of subjectivity and objectivity involved in this assessment.

Part of why I am attempting to shift the insights of the domain to an ecological

framework is that the causal basis, in implying that there will be a strictly objective

assessment possible about how complex the situation is, is a bit unfortuitous for our

purposes. Cause and effect implies that, if we simply had omniscient access to the

circumstances, we would be able to turn any complex situation into a clear one. This

would diminish one of the more important insights of the framework for practical

reasoning, I believe. The shift I am suggesting toward understanding complexity as

consisting of conflicting ecologies is meant to preserve the intuition that some issues are

so deeply rooted in conflicting ends and circumstances that there will not be a solution available at the outset. Thus, we should err on the side of a subjective interpretation of the complexity of given circumstances, especially since the agent's capacities are themselves written into the ecology in which they are operating. We want an agent to proceed in the manner most appropriate to their own level of finesse in the circumstances.

An individual's adaptation to their familiar ecologies will likely be beneficial to them in proceeding, but it is unlikely that the multiple ecologies under which an agent tends to operate will be easily separated out and defined. It would be a mistake to believe we can only choose the right course of action if we have omniscient access to some metaphysical information. So, in focusing on complexity as a result of conflicting ecologies, we want to retain the idea that some situations will be legitimately more complicated than others, but that there may not be a singular perspective which identifies a *correct* assessment of complexity. What will be most important is that people remain sensitive to the possibility of complexity in circumstances. We are ultimately agents who occupy incomplete understandings of our surroundings, and we need to act in ways that work *within* these incomplete understandings more than we need to arrive at perfect knowledge. Thus, there may be a range of 'acceptable' assessments of complexity for a given situation relative to different agents' standpoints.

The way I read this framework, there are three broad but interrelated lessons we can draw from this framework. First, in virtue of their 'expertise,' agents will vary in their approach to different levels of complexity. For example, an expert will be able to provide clear guidance about how to proceed in a complicated situation, whereas

someone with less expertise will need to defer to the expert's advice. Similarly, someone who has faced similarly complex situations might be better prepared for them in the future. In this sense, the Cynefin framework draws attention to the idea that people who are most familiar with the circumstances will be best equipped to deal with them.

It may be that someone who has habituated themself to be especially sensitive to and aware of certain details, say someone who is quite familiar with social mores at formal dinner parties, can recognize more quickly than someone who is attending their first that the latter has made an affront to the host and that tensions in the room have risen accordingly. The sensitive person will assess the situation as complicated and will recognize that there are certain ways to proceed that would smooth the situation over efficiently. While we think it would be ideal for the less-sensitive person to recognize their actual mistake and to respond in the appropriate manner (i.e. to understand that the situation is complicated and to choose a good solution for it), it would also be appropriate for them to believe the situation has gone into complex territory (since they are insensitive to their faux pas that is leading to the sudden chilly treatment) and to respond accordingly in that direction. As virtually any situational comedy can attest, proceeding as if everything is fine & manageable when it is clearly falling apart is a recipe for disaster.

One point that this dinner party example draws out is that the dinner party guest who is more familiar is in a position of expertise in this situation, and is well-placed to offer advice about how to proceed. So, if the first-time dinner guest is paying attention to the sudden chilled affect in the room, and recognizes our sensitive diner for their

expertise, they could ask for advice and likely smooth over the situation. So, again, people will experience the same situations in different ways, and this framework is helpful for identifying this. This is perfectly consistent with Morton's theory of ecological rationality. Agents who are habituated to particular circumstances are likely well-poised to make good decisions about what to do in familiar situations. Even were the reasoning of an agent to look faulty from the outside, there are likely 'textures' to the situation to which the familiar person is attenuated.

The second lesson is that the Cynefin framework draws our attention to the need to be sensitive to our circumstances as well as to practice epistemic and practical humility. It would be a mistake for our dinner guest from the previous example to assume they are functioning in their normal circumstances and to not approach dinner with a bit of humility. As a general rule, in fact, it will be better for people, especially those without specialized knowledge in the relevant areas of inquiry, to assess situations as more on the complex than the simple side of things. So it is better for our less-sensitive agent in the last example to err on the side of caution in approaching the situation than to assume that the situation is clear or even complicated. This is because of the risk of what Snowden & Boone call 'entrained thinking,' where "people are blinded to new ways of thinking by the perspectives they acquired through past experience, training, and success" (Snowden and Boone 2).

This phenomenon both captures a worry I have about Morton's initial use of habit as well as re-creates mistakes made through -centric thinking. Entrained thinking is essentially the trap that default behavior habitual thinking may lead people into; they may

oversimplify situations more on the basis of unreflective habit and what their experience has prepared them for than on the basis of the particular aspects of the situation. Even experts can become insensitive to important information in assessing situations when their thinking becomes too entrained. Thus, operating with a default assumption that a situation may be more complex than it first appears is better than risking oversimplification. And this demonstrates that appropriate levels of epistemic humility on the part of average reasoners as well as experts will be beneficial in applying this framework.

This final lesson is that, at high levels of complexity, the Cynefin Framework provides the insight that no one, or at least no fallible agents with imperfect knowledge and reasoning capacities will be able to determine what the 'right' thing to do will be. Even a very good theory will be incapable of providing guidance that is fully satisfactory. There will be better and worse outcomes, but there will be no way to determine this from the moment of decision-making. This further emphasizes the need for humility in proceeding, as well as provides a recommendation to work with others where appropriate to arrive at satisfactory, but previously-unconceived-of solutions. The Cynefin framework ultimately endorses the need to recognize the limitations of our capacities and to carefully analyze the circumstances under which we are operating at the same time as we accept that we might not know precisely what to do.

IV.   Relating Complexity to Economically Disadvantaged Agents

Given these general lessons, we can now turn to how complexity affects agents' reasoning and lives more generally. There hasn't been direct research done on humans that can be used to demonstrate a connection between economic disadvantage and complexity, but we can explore this connection first by examining research on complex environments and the cognitive ability of rodents. Next, we'll turn to research which explores the role of economic backgrounds and stress on reasoning in humans. And lastly, I'll speculate upon the connections between economically disadvantaged backgrounds and complexity and suggest how Morton's view could be modified a bit further in order to accommodate complexity.

Researchers have learned that manipulating the experimental environments of animals can affect their apparent cognitive ability. They have found that enriching rodents' environments, by keeping them in communal living spaces and providing a variety of toys, in turn enhances the rodents' apparent ability to perform tasks which require complex cognitive functions (Sale, Berardi, & Maffei 234). Increasing the complexity of their environments helps to promote the development of the rodents' central nervous systems and also shows promise for reopening neural pathways with the visual cortex for some underdeveloped rodents (238). Now, establishing that this is the case for rodents is hardly proof that the same would be true for humans, of course, but it would be difficult to formulate an experiment that could retain similar habitats for humans. What these experiments *have* been taken to show, however, is the resilience of

plasticity on various physiological systems. It will be a matter of further research, though, whether the neuroplasticity of humans is as resilient as that of rodents.

As discussed in the previous chapter, a fair amount of research has also been done on the effects of low socioeconomic status on how people reason, as exemplified by the discussion of Sendhil Mullainathan and Eldar Shafir on scarcity. Unfortunately, much of the research on reasoning tends to take a deficit model bend, framing differences in terms of performing lower on some measures of ability such as language, inhibitory control, and working memory (Hackman and Farah 65). However, not all research retains this framing, and in recent years more attention has been paid to this deficit framing as well as considerations of how to move away from it. One such effort is suggested by Jennifer Sheehy-Skeffington, who argues that the characteristic behavior of people in lower socioeconomic classes should be reconceived as reflecting rational regulatory responses to their socioecology, not unlike a research-oriented take on Morton's theory. This means that even those perceived deficits may reflect more about the social expectations which arise from this uneven social positioning than it does anything about the reasoning of the individuals in these positions (Sheehy-Skeffington 186). And if this is correct, reasoning in line with those expectations, even if this means making ostensibly poor decisions, should also be understood as a positive and resilient adaptation.

And not all of these adaptations will bring about ostensibly poor decisions; some of these adaptations reflect *advantages* in reasoning, even if we don't consider the social environments to which they are adaptive. One such advantage is in procedural learning; researchers have found that the lower results on tests of executive function that

economically disadvantaged people appear to have in comparison to their more advantaged counterparts identified in the research by Mullainathan and Shafir rest primarily in the domain of working memory, which is utilized in each of the experiments they used to test cognitive control and fluid intelligence (Dang et al. 288). It is also an aspect of executive function which is easily overwhelmed by having to be spread over multiple tasks. In tasks focused around procedural learning and processes with sequential steps, people on the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum in fact *outperformed* their higher status counterparts after having their attention drawn to their financial needs (290). This implies that at least some of the ways in which limited financial circumstances affect agents are positive.

People in economically disadvantaged circumstances are also, in many ways, financially savvy. They of course have less buying power than people with more financial resources, but they are more attuned to economic dimensions of experience overall, perhaps as a result of the 'tunneling' phenomenon discussed in the scarcity research relayed in the previous chapter (Shah, Zhao, Mullainathan, Shafir 6). They also resist context-based value shifts, which researchers suggest may be the result of engaging in trade-off thinking, in which the subject considers what the cost in terms of both what is of equivalent value but more important and/or what they may have to give up in order to afford a particular purchase (Shah, Mullainathan, and Shafir 409-10). In the same vein, economically disadvantaged consumers are less susceptible to pricing tricks, where, for example, buying items in bulk does not offer price cuts (Binkley & Bejnarowicz 32). To this extent, economically disadvantaged shoppers appear to be more price conscious than

their counterparts. And even further research has determined that, "lower-income consumers do a better job of accounting for register taxes when making purchasing decisions" than their higher-income counterparts (Goldin and Homonoff 304).

And, as is particularly important for our purposes in considering the relationship between economic background and complexity, some research has also been performed to examine the relationship between economic hardship, stress, and cognitive ability. The general direction of the research is upon the effects of stressful environments on thinking, especially of the role this plays in human development. An underlying, and usually unexamined premise, of this research is that economic disadvantage tends to be connected with stressful environments. This research tends to focus on what are known as the specialization and sensitivity hypotheses (Ellis et al. 562). The specialization hypothesis suggests that individuals tend to adapt to stressful and unpredictable environments such that they demonstrate increased ability to cope in similar environments. In keeping with this hypothesis, Willem Frankenhuis and Carolyn deWeerth identify three positive adaptations may arise from these ostensibly adverse childhood conditions. Children from high stress, unstable backgrounds tend to be more perceptive of negatively-coded emotions in others (Frankenhuis and de Weerth 408), have better memories for threatening situations (409), and appear to reason better in adverse circumstances, as opposed to neutral experimental ones (410). Chiraag Mittal and colleagues have also found that individuals from unpredictable backgrounds demonstrate higher test results in tasks oriented around cognitive flexibility, specifically

task switching, under uncertain experimental conditions in comparison to subjects from predictable backgrounds (Mittal et al. 604).

The sensitization hypothesis is related to this last finding. It suggests that the experimental circumstances under which individuals raised in stressful, unstable environments are tested are especially important. This is because the subjects are less likely to display their environment-specific adaptations under neutral experimental conditions; their abilities are contextualized to the environments to which they are adapted (Ellis et al. 562). For example, despite that, as previously discussed, economic disadvantage is normally linked with lower results on tests of working memory in comparison with economically advantaged subjects, in studies which research the effect of predictable versus unpredictable environments in which subjects were raised, the opposite may be true. In experimental conditions which invite uncertainty in the subjects, subjects who grew up in unpredictable backgrounds performed those same tasks more accurately than their counterparts from stable backgrounds (Young et al. 898-99). With an adaptation-focused approach, the same people who are often stigmatized for their economically disadvantaged backgrounds can be "appreciated and respected for the skills [they] do have—and using these skills as building blocks for success—rather than being stigmatized for what [they] lack relative to others" (566).

All of the research regarding the adaptation of individuals to adverse environments support the idea that human beings are resilient creatures. And it is this resilience that leads us to be able to cope with complexity. It is hopefully not controversial to claim that people can adapt to a wide variety of circumstances and can

become exceptional at performing within them. Complex circumstances, although difficult to navigate, may represent just another condition under which people learn to function. We can look to people in high performance situations for some examples of people who become well-versed in complexity; for example, day traders who work in high pressure circumstances in which information can change quickly will likely be used to making decisions in the chaotic domain. What is more controversial is the idea that, in the same way day traders adapt to their complex environments, economically-disadvantaged people can also become similarly-well-versed in complexity. If operating under complexity becomes habitual for these agents, it's possible that they also gain an advantage in reasoning, by developing a practice of reasoning that is sensitive to overlaps in ecologies/increasing complexity. A theory that is able to acknowledge this facility with complexity moves forward in being able to unmask strengths of reasoning.

First, though, I need to further defend the idea that economic disadvantage tends to expose agents to complexity. An initial defense comes from developmental scholar Robert Chambers. Regarding the lives of impoverished people in developing nations, Chambers explains:

> [a] largely valid stereotype may be that to survive, to be more secure and less vulnerable, and to achieve a better livelihood and life depends for them on a committed and energetic search for opportunities, being aware of and sensitive to changing conditions, open to communication and learning, and adapting, improvising, diversifying, complicating and multiplying the activities and linkages in their livelihoods. And. . . their future is unpredictable." (Chambers 34)

Thus, adept functioning depends in part on being able to cope with and thrive under conditions of complexity. This lived reality of at least some economically disadvantaged

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people fits with the previous discussion of approaching habits of reasoning (under Morton's view) as a practice. Agents who are sensitive to their circumstances and who develop a practice of reasoning will, when appropriate, allocate cognitive resources to the complexity of their situations and respond appropriately to changing circumstances. I am suggesting that part of what makes an agent a responsible reasoner simply is to recognize significant differences and to respond accordingly. The space for recognition stems uniquely *from* their familiarity with their circumstances and their habituation to reasoning in a particular way. When there are intractable conflicts between ecologies representing increased complexity, the agent who has cultivated a *practice* of reasoning, as a connoisseur, that same agent will be able to note relevant differences and will be better prepared to proceed in a manner that reflects these differences.

And, in keeping with the insights provided by the Cynefin Framework, agents may have to proceed sometimes in a way that goes beyond simply choosing between priorities among different ecologies–they may have to forge an entirely new path forward. Being able to improvise solutions in these difficult circumstances will arguably be easier for agents who are accustomed to complex circumstances. In order to determine the *need* for an improvised solution, however, the agent will need to first analyze the situation's complexity and here we can return to the point about sensitivity to circumstances and epistemic humility from the lessons from the Cynefin Framework as well as to the understanding of reasoning as a practice rather than a default behavior from the previous chapter.

Although Morton is offering more of a descriptive theory of practical reasoning than a normative one, she does mention that there is a need for assessment standards for the norms by which an agent is guided (Morton "Toward" 569). She appeals generally to this assessment being based on how well or reliably those norms aid the agent in accomplishing their goals, or what they set out to do. The full statement of this idea is that, "[a]n agent A should deliberate using those norms that allow her to reliably achieve her ends E, given her cognitive capacities, in those contexts C in which she regularly finds herself" (Morton "Reasoning" 554). I'd like to suggest an additional clause, which acknowledges the agent's responsiveness to their circumstances, something like "or, norms which respond to significant changes in those contexts." This will amount to suggesting that agents include a small additional step in their deliberation of analyzing whether circumstances *are* what they are used to. Just as responsible theoretical reasoning requires agents to not completely ignore evidence to the contrary of what they believe, practical reasoning endorses a need to gather information about circumstances before proceeding. I mean for this addition to be somewhere in between supererogation and permission. Agents need not be responsive *every time* there is a shift in their circumstances, but when they are, the standards of assessment should be able to recognize that this represents skillful thinking and the epistemic humility of an agent who recognizes the need for epistemic humility; their tried-and-true way of proceeding will not always be the best or most appropriate.

This suggestion is also in line with the promotion of habitual reasoning as a *practice* rather than a default behavior. It would be a good idea for *any* agent to include

an information-gathering stage into their reasoning process, yet agents who adopt a practice orientation will be more able to quickly discern whether their circumstances relevantly resemble 'business as usual' or whether there are increased elements of complexity. If these agents are also well-versed in complexity, they may also be able to smoothly move forward in the situation. For agents less familiar with complexity, these increases should instead inspire caution. Good reasoning, then, may resemble more of a fact-finding mission, or trial and error, rather than boldly pursuing a previously-decided-on plan.

Yet this information-gathering stage need not be a cumbersome commitment. For reasoners operating in stable conditions, their information-gathering stage will be nearly imperceptible, and thus their reasoning will resemble that provided by theories of practical reasoning premised on moderate and consistent levels of scarcity. When reasoners approach increasingly complex circumstances, though, any assessments of the agent's reasoning should also shift in light of the breakdown of applicable theory to be applied. Both the agent's perspective, as well as the assessment standards, should accommodate that the 'correct' solution, or the ideal way for the agent to proceed, can only be arrived at retrospectively. Agents who are able to determine when they can proceed on the basis of their own established best practices or when it would be more appropriate to use caution in proceeding are demonstrating resilience in reasoning that should be acknowledged. One form that this could take is for the agent to already have contingency plans for the possibility that the world may not work out in their favor. Or

an agent who is well-versed in complexity may also find that improvising how to proceed serves them even better.

It will also sometimes be the case that the complication of revising norms in light of circumstances will outweigh the epistemic responsibility–this will be on a case-by-case basis. Reasoners who are already strained should not be expected to be perfect. But they are not automatically deficient, either. So, Morton is right to note that we should not automatically find agents who reason in their habitual manner in circumstances in which their habitual norms aren't appropriate to be deficient, but this is not because of the global justification of their norms in usually aiding them to accomplish their goals. Instead, we should understand them as having an exempting condition on the basis of admittedly limited cognitive resources. This admission of limitations need not count as a mark against their abilities, any agent will likely face similar limitations in their abilities at times. Thus, the need for epistemic humility along the way. The reasons to relax our evaluation of agents in the presence of circumstances which are themselves limiting are themselves practical ones, but no less important on that basis. And thus our evaluations will generally align with those which result from Morton's framing, but we retain the advantage that normally, when agents are not overly strained, they ought to be responsive to the situations in which they are reasoning.

Agents who are able to successfully shift back and forth between different norms relative to operating within conflicting ecologies and/or to function well in response to complexity are reasoning skillfully and this is something that previous theories have not explicitly acknowledged. If I am correct that economically-disadvantaged agents *do* tend

to develop these skills, this gap also implies there may be class-centrism in the literature at large. Even if this gap is not deliberate, it represents the second of the two aspects I identified back in Chapter 2 of problematic -centric thinking. While philosophers are not *responsible* for larger social circumstances, in which economically-disadvantaged people are viewed as often reasoning poorly and much attention is paid to cases in which people who grew up disadvantaged recreate this reasoning when their resources are no longer scarce, they are still operating in a society in which this is true. And if their theorizing essentially recreates justifications for these beliefs and similarly ignores the ways in which people gain benefits to reasoning because of their circumstances, they are recreating the same mistakes.

This chapter ultimately only represents two gestures at revisions for Morton's theory. One suggestion I have made is that adding the possibility for deep conflicts between ecologies adds an element of realism to real life decision-making and opens the door for addressing complexity. Complexity, and the possibility that circumstances could be so complex that there isn't a satisfactory solution to be arrived at a priori is something I have yet to see addressed in the practical reasoning literature. But with this addendum, Morton's theory is capable of this. And, the second suggestion is that, by adding a complexity-analysis step to the reasoning process, agents can be more sensitive to when these complex circumstances occur, and thus be better equipped to respond to complexity in an appropriately flexible manner. A theory that is able to acknowledge the skill involved in navigating complexity by anticipating and/or observing it, then responding

appropriately, represents progress away from class-centrism because the view unmasks important contributions which arise from admittedly disadvantaged circumstances.

People who adapt to complexity and become well-versed in operating under it demonstrate a resilience that, while it may not outweigh the disadvantages they experience, is still a beneficial trait for flexibly navigating their circumstances. It is just as important that an agent be able to cope with significant setbacks as to follow through with original plans when their motivation falters or they are tempted to switch paths. And any reasoner, even those who are used to reasoning in relatively clear circumstances, who is able to resist entrenched habits in response to increasing complexity should be acknowledged as doing something right. When a theory is able to acknowledge and emphasize this skill set, we unmask strengths that previous theories had hidden.

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Chapter 8: A Brief Conclusion; Toward a Culture of Praxis

In this dissertation, I have attempted to accomplish three main tasks. These are as follows:

1) I have discussed two characteristics present in problematic -centric thinking and suggested that some examples of class-centric thinking display these,

2) I have suggested that these characteristics may be present when we prioritize stability as a central trait of agents who are reasoning well, and

3) I have endorsed, with some suggested modifications, a theory which may be able to restore some balance between stability and flexibility in practical reasoning and suggested that we can at least partially remedy class-centric tendencies in this way.

I attempted to tackle the first task in the second and third chapters. In the second chapter, I discussed androcentrism as a paradigm case of problematic -centric thinking and argued that two features of it, the tendency to identify differences as deficiencies and to mask contributions from and strengths of those who do not occupy the socially-dominant positions, are endemic to this kind of thinking. In the third chapter, I took up the issue of demonstrating that there is a class-centric corollary to androcentrism, as exemplified by interpretations of the longitudinal results from Walter Mischel and colleagues' Marshmallow Tests.

I attempt the second task in the fourth and fifth chapters by examining Michael Bratman's theory of diachronic self-governance. In the fourth chapter, I focus on the

several uses of the idea of stability and suggest that, especially in the norm of intention stability, Bratman may invite some class-centrism. In Bratman's earlier view, he addresses intention stability as more of a disposition of some agents, but in his appeals to it as a component of diachronic self-governance, he appears to be raising it to a higher level of importance in his theory and leaving behind some of the neutrality in this earlier framing. He also fails to address that some agents may fail to retain their intentions because of their circumstances not being conducive to achieving their plans, he implies an conflation between failures of motivation and opportunity. I also discuss a more big picture criticism of this view–in promoting that agents have a stable structure of plan-states which expedite decision-making procedures and partially constitutes agents' normative identities, Bratman may appear to be promoting a sort of 'Career Self View' along the lines of Margaret Urban Walker's criticisms.

The third task is the focus of the sixth and seventh chapters. In these, I discuss Jennifer Morton's suggestion that we evaluate agential reasoning on the theory of Ecological Rationality, which determines the rationality of the norms which agents are guided by in virtue of their ability to reliably aid the agent in accomplishing their goals. Although I believe this theory brings in some much-needed flexibility to the practical reasoning literature, I believe some modifications could improve it even further. One suggestion I make is that, although Morton believes agents should reason according to norms which are adaptive for the circumstances in which they habitually reason, I believe this notion of habit can allow the agent to make adjustments to these norms as needed. Specifically, for agents who develop a *practice* of reasoning, when circumstances shift

significantly, they will quickly discern that circumstances are different and may require a different strategic approach. In a similar vein, this understanding of reasoning as a practice and agents as becoming skilled in the environments in which they habitually function may leave space for appreciating the facility some economically disadvantaged agents may experience in dealing with situations of heightened complexity.

Having attempted these three tasks, I am far from having provided a comprehensive list of all problems which arise from -centric thinking, nor have I exhausted the possible sources of class-centrism in the existing practical reasoning literature, and I have also not offered a fully-fleshed out theory which avoids class-centrism. Instead, I have attempted to move the literature forward in small ways by raising worries about class-centrism and working within one existing theory which begins to move away from class-centrism to explain how it can be enhanced as well as to suggest one way in which the reasoning of some economically-disadvantaged people can be rightly praised. To this end, I am also attempting to help to move towards philosophy as what Kristie Dotson calls a "culture of praxis" (Dotson 16).

Dotson suggests this as a way to move away from the exclusionary practices of philosophical gatekeeping which seems to often dominate the profession and often makes it appear hostile to people from underrepresented groups. A culture of praxis would help us move past the culture of justification which tends to create a difficult working environment for diverse practitioners (6). Cultures of justification require practitioners to conform to the dominant ideals in order to be given positive status or legitimacy (7-8). A culture of praxis, on the other hand, would foster an environment in which different types

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of contributions can be perceived as valuable and practitioners who do not currently 'fit the mold' can flourish. We achieve this culture by expanding the culture of philosophy to include the following:

> (1) Value placed on seeking issues and circumstances pertinent to our living, where one maintains a healthy appreciation for the differing issues that will emerge as pertinent among different populations and
> (2) Recognition and encouragement of multiple canons and multiple ways of understanding disciplinary validation. (Dotson 17)

I am hoping that the project of this dissertation is friendly to the realizing of a culture of praxis. It is at least strictly meant to satisfy the first requirement, of appreciating that different issues will appear for different populations. I spent most of the time throughout this project attempting to identify ways in which the current status of the literature does not allow space for different perspectives and, while modest, the suggestions I have made to enhance flexibility are in the interest of normalizing acceptance of these variations.

It is less clear whether I have satisfied the second requirement, however. I would like to think the interdisciplinary approach I have taken throughout this project at least resembles endorsing a different take on disciplinary validation. However, it still stands to be seen whether I have been successful in this endeavor. I probably have not demonstrated the use of multiple canons, but I have attempted to suggest directions of inquiry that would likely *require* the establishing of new canons. And it will ultimately take many more of these moves in the philosophical literature overall to shift the culture in these healthy ways suggested by Dotson. As a final thought, if this project can represent even a miniscule realization of these ideas, the time spent carrying it out will have been well worth it.

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