

XI. PRAGMATIC DEFENSE OF THE CHARACTER STANCE

XI.0 Overview: Inventing and discovering the meaning of life

There is a half-truth: “You have to give meaning to your life.” This is only a half truth because being aware that you created an outlook giving meaning to your life does not remove, but exacerbates, anxiety that it is only a distraction from meaninglessness. Meaning has to be discovered; not invented. The whole truth is that we need to invent an outlook which gives significance to our lives and then discover the truth of the outlook. The role of pragmatic arguments is to justify opening ourselves to discovering the truth of outlooks we invent to give significance to our lives. The main goal of the chapter is giving a pragmatic defense of the character and parental stances. There is very little discussion of sexuality in this chapter. Pragmatic arguments are frequently linked to William James’ 1897 “The Will to Believe¹.” James’ essay which I read as a university freshman has ever since been a pervasive influence in all of my thinking. And, of course, Pascal’s famous wager defensive of believing is a pragmatic argument.

XI.1 Preliminary remarks on truth & belief

Existential outlooks, outlooks giving meaning to life, contain moral norms. Some verbal distinctions facilitate talking of the discovery of the truth of moral norms and holding true beliefs in moral norms. Can imperatives be true? Let us answer with some philosophical “hair splitting” which is too important to relegate to endnotes. I use ‘facilitate’ because I do not argue that verbal distinctions are a sure guide to distinctions in reality.

[Note to Layout: Subheading 2] XI.1.1 “discovery **of**” vs. “discovery **that**”

Discovering the truth of a belief is a discovering of reality being in accordance with our belief. In general, discovery of reality being in accordance with our belief is a contact with

reality which cannot be described with a thought that reality is a certain way. If we try to describe the contact we form a second belief. This second belief is a thought of contacting reality plus a thought that we properly matched reality with what our first belief says. Determining the truth of this second belief requires discovering of reality whether or not the first matching was proper. However, what is done to discover the truth of the second belief is what was done to discover truth of the first belief. Of course, simply being unable to describe the relation does not mean that we cannot stand in the relation between reality and beliefs, viz., the truth relation, and have indications that we are in the truth relation.

For instance, suppose the belief is that my heart is beating. To determine the truth of “My heart is beating” is what I would do to determine the truth of “My heart is beating matches reality” or “It is true that my heart is beating.”

The above is supported by what is sometimes called the “Redundancy Principle of Truth.” For any claim p , p is true if and only if p .

What has this to do with “discovery of” vs. “discovery that” and moral judgments? The phrase “discovery that” is followed by a noun clause. A noun clause expresses a complete thought. The phrase “discovery of” is followed by a noun phrase. Noun phrases refer to objects, situations etc., which are typically not truth claims. We have noted above that for there to be truth there needs to be discovery of a proper relation between a truth claim and reality. We have to say this is a discovery-of because what is discovered is not expressed in a further truth claim. So use of “discovery of” is fundamental for talking of truth. ***Believing beliefs are true extends true believing beyond believing truth claims!***

XI.1.1a Truth of moral imperatives

Use of “discovery of” facilitates talking of the truth of normative beliefs. For we can speak of discovering the truth of a norm even if moral norms are imperatives. For example, consider the norm “Thou shall not commit adultery!” Believing this commandment is not merely believing a statement of fact that adultery is morally forbidden. Such a statement of fact is no longer an imperative. Believing this commandment is being aware of being bound by it. We use a noun phrase, not a noun clause, to refer to being bound. There would be discovery of this situation of being bound. A belief in the norm “Thou shall not commit adultery” can be true with discovery in reality of the situation of people being so bound. More generally: *Discovering the truth of a moral imperative is discovery of the duty to obey the imperative.* Duties are in reality but they are not facts. (I am setting aside the ontology of one of my early favorite philosophy books: Ludwig Wittgenstein’s 1921 *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* which began.” The world is what is the case. The world is the totality of facts; not things.) Duties may be discovered in human normative thinking. So what is said here is compatible with what was said in my sixth chapter about morality being in human nature.

XI.1.1b “believing in” vs. “believing that”

More verbal facilitation for the above comes from using a distinction between “believing that” and “believing in.” When what is believed cannot be expressed as a truth claim we could use “believe in” rather than “believe that.” For instance, we could talk of believing in truth and believing in not committing adultery or better: believing in the duty of not committing adultery. Gravity provides a non-moral example. People have always believed in gravity. Now people believe that Newton’s law states the gravitational attraction between two bodies.

These distinctions have been made to ease talking of imperatives as true. However, use of “discover” and “belief” followed by “that” is most common and natural. So, I shall not be unduly

careful in using these words in accordance with the above distinctions. The distinctions can be re-made when challenged about talking of norms as true.

XI.2 Thinking to be true, professing, *Fides quaerens intellectum*

What is belief? “Belief” refers to what we say as well as to what we think. A paradigm of a thought which I call a belief is a factual claim about current events of which I am convinced although I concede that it is just barely possible that I could be mistaken. An example is: Obama is president of the USA in August 2013. I have no hesitation in professing such a belief. What I say I believe, what I profess, extends far beyond my paradigms of what I think is true.

Frequently, I profess a belief beyond what I firmly and clearly think to be true. Why? Both professing the belief and acting as if it were clearly true is important. I do not clearly understand what it is for the thought to be true. However, professing and acting as if the belief were true are crucial for coming to discover and vividly to think that the belief is true if it is true.

Consider an example from this same topic of belief. I profess that some thoughts are true. It is important to demand a distinction between truth and falsity. However, I do not understand what it is for a thought to be true. As argued above, I cannot express in a thought the relation between reality and a belief. I would like to agree with Aristotle that to speak the truth is to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not. Unfortunately, I do not understand clearly enough thought and being to understand, in general, thinking of what is and then saying it. Professing that norms as well as factual claims are true poses extra challenges to correspondence theories of truth. However, if I simply gave up talking about truth and trying to maintain sharp distinctions in language and logic between true and false, I would never discover that there is truth, if there is such.

XI.2.1 *Fides quaerens intellectum*, mathematics & pragmatic arguments

My belief in truth, my profession that there is truth, is a case of belief seeking understanding. In Anselm's formulation: *fides quaerens intellectum*. When we speak of faith seeking understanding it is best to interpret "belief" to mean profess instead of think to be true. What we are doing is professing a belief and then working at bringing ourselves to a stage at which we think it to be true as clearly and distinctly as our paradigms of true thoughts. In this chapter, my profession of the character stance is the crucial belief for which I seek understanding. Pragmatic arguments give permission to have faith while seeking understanding.

XI.2.2 *fides quaerens intellectum* in mathematics

As a philosophy professor dabbling in mathematical logic, I was at best a marginal mathematician. Still for many years I was a summarizer of articles in logic and model theory for *Mathematical Reviews* and *Zentralblatt für Mathematik und ihre Grenzgebiete*. My experiences with proofs, understanding and conviction indicate the need for pragmatic arguments in mathematics. I was supposed to teach proofs for some theorems. I concede that many, if not most, people who are exposed to mathematical proofs have little interest in understanding the theorems or being convinced of their truth. Their interest in the theorems lies only in using it to guide calculations. If the proof will not be covered on examinations, they ignore it. If the proof will be covered on the exam, they learn to replicate it. A taste for the highly praised mathematical certainty is definitely an acquired taste: Acquired far less than a taste for fine wines.

What is the plight of those with this taste? Those of us who are not brilliant mathematicians frequently have to struggle with proofs. We do not simply work through them once or twice and become convinced that the proof shows what it is like for the theorem to be true; let alone be true. Of course, we are not going to reject the theorem simply because we are too

dense to understand it quickly. We profess it; especially if we have to summarize an article proving the theorem, use the theorem or teach its proof. We have a faith in the theorem. But we want our profession of the theorem to be backed-up by insight and conviction. I have replicated in lecture, with a guilty anxiety, proofs I did not fully understand. So, from time-to-time over a period of months or even years we work through the proof again and again. Suddenly we are blessed with one of those “aha” moments and become convinced of what the proof shows and that it is correct. Our mathematical faith has found understanding and truth. I offer this long term pursuit of mathematical conviction as partial defense of long term pursuit of moral conviction proposed below. In both we believe before understanding and the mathematical case is clearly rational.

XI.2.3 Pragmatic permission to believe

The suggestion of believing prior to understanding raises the obvious question of under what conditions, if any, are we entitled to do this. For if a belief is not well understood, the evidence is probably not as strong as it would be if you clearly thought it to be true. This is the main problem for this chapter. What are the conditions for professing a belief prior to understanding it? Does belief in the character stance satisfy these conditions?

XI.3 Conditional arguments for obligations to believe

To begin the pragmatic argument it is helpful to examine a type of argument which seem close to pragmatic arguments. They are not pragmatic arguments. They are arguments which show that there is a conditional obligation to believe. Arguments for an obligation to believe are not nonsense when “belief” is understood as “profess.” Still, pragmatic arguments are for a permission; not an obligation.

XI.3.1 A conditional duty to believe in hell

Belief in hell has a special relation to belief in the character stance. Belief in the possibility of dying as a total failure to have proper character and thereby being an eternal failure at living is implicit in the character stance. We will see that the fact that the character stance involves belief in hell fulfills one of the conditions for giving a pragmatic defense for professing the character stance.

Professing belief in a hell in which some human beings are eternally tormented is embarrassing. This is especially so if it is taught that members of other religions are in hell primarily for belonging to those other religions. Some traditional and popular representations of hell, suggest that an allegedly loving God has prepared places for some that make Himmler's camps and Stalin's Gulag seem like recreational centers. I believe in hell but am loathe to profess this belief unless hearers are prepared to stay around to listen to a "long story" about what I mean. This book is an occasion to tell some of the story. More fundamental than interpreting my belief in hell is justifying holding such a belief in the first place. I hold that belief in hell is integral to the character stance. So, you ought to believe in some type of hell if you profess the character stance. Of course, the question arises: Why hold the character stance?

XI.3.2 Schema of integrity arguments

Let us see how arguments apparently telling people that they should hold a belief because it is integral to some more fundamental belief pose the problem of justifying the fundamental belief. I call these arguments for a conditional duty to believe: "integrity arguments." Consider a schema for integrity arguments.

- 1.The point of holding belief B is X.
- 2.If you do not hold belief B*, then X is not accomplished by holding B.
- 3.So, to avoid undercutting the point of holding B, you ought to hold B*.

The argument against artificial birth control was an integrity argument where B was the character stance.

XI.3 Douthat's integrity argument for the Christian duty to believe in hell

Ross Douthat, a New York Times columnist, cites the embarrassing features of a belief in hell.² He writes:

“Doing away with hell, then, is a natural way for pastors and theologians to make their God seem more humane. The problem is that this move also threatens to make human life less fully human.”

Ross Douthat, *New York Times* opinion column, April 25, 2011

Douthat admits that some people have no obligation to believe in hell. Only those who profess a belief in God are so bound. I interpret Douthat's belief in God as involving a religious version of the character stance.

“Atheists have license to scoff at damnation, but to believe in God and not in hell is ultimately to disbelieve in the reality of human choices. If there's no possibility of saying no to paradise then none of our no's have any real meaning either. They're like home runs or strikeouts in a children's game where nobody's keeping score.

The doctrine of hell, by contrast, assumes that our choices are real, and, indeed, that we are the choices that we make. The miser can become his greed, the murderer can lose himself inside his violence, and their freedom to turn and be forgiven is inseparable from their freedom not to do so.”

Douthat, *Ibid.*

Indeed, Douthat extends the previous connection between religion and a belief in hell to link it with Western humanism with which I have linked my secularized humanism of the previous chapter. Hell is integral to a belief in a significance for human life.

“As Anthony Esolen writes, in the introduction to his translation of Dante’s “Inferno,” the idea of hell is crucial to Western humanism. It’s a way of asserting that “things have meaning” — that earthly life is more than just a series of unimportant events, and that “the use of one man’s free will, at one moment, can mean life or death ... salvation or damnation.”

Duothat, *Ibid.*

Of course, the next question is what entitles us to profess that “earthly life is more than just a series of unimportant events?” It is a “happy thought” to think that earthly life is more than just a series of unimportant events. However, if it is satisfying to think that a condition holds when the evidence for the condition holding is far from compelling, there is a basis for worrying that professing the belief and working at becoming convinced of its truth is wishful thinking. So, any pragmatic defense of believing needs protection against being a defense of wishful thinking. Here we can note that the belief in hell being integral to a belief in the significance of life protects the belief in the character stance from the accusation of wishful thinking.

What, though, entitles us to profess a belief beyond evidence; especially in the character stance? This question reveals the pervasiveness of the character stance.

XI.4 Pervasiveness of a fragment of the character stance

Pragmatic justification of believing presupposes at least a fragment of the character stance. It is presupposed that our human rationality specifies conditions for controlling our tendencies to believe and disbelieve. A belief that our natures gives us norms for believing, an ethics of belief, is held by far more than those who think our natures give us proper norms for

our sexuality. Indeed anyone who takes my arguments seriously enough even to refute them is presupposing that there are right and wrong ways to control our believing and that I am proposing one of the wrong ways. Even those who argue that pursuit of “getting it right” is absurd are concerned to show that we are thinking rightly if we think that pursuit of right thinking is absurd. A full nihilist would accept that even our rationality is morally neutral and would concede that it does not matter what we think about truth and what we hold to be true.

XI.5 A working statement of the character stance and its rationale

A defense of professing and allowing ourselves to become convinced of the character stance requires a fairly clear statement of the stance. Profession requires statement and that requires full sentences. However, only a fairly clear statement is required. Why such a hedge? The character stance is a comprehensive position on what morality is and its significance in human life. Not only is such a vision too large to be fully expressed in a few sentences such visions are also “works in progress.” They are frequently revised and qualified for clearer articulation and perceived accuracy. I have been doing this with my remarks throughout this book about morality being founded in human nature. Since the character stance includes an assumption of free-will, one can appreciate that the clarifications and qualifications will go on indefinitely. Furthermore, if someone correctly points out that my character stance presupposes some claim not listed, I shall simply add that claim to the battery of beliefs to be defended pragmatically.

For an example outside moral philosophy, consider how one revises and qualifies a stance on the status of the mental in human life. As science progresses, those who identify in some way the mental with the physical constantly refine their stance.

XI.5.2 Some fundamental assumptions of character stance

For this pragmatic defense of assuming the character stance, I state the most important assumptions used in my case for the Paternal Principle: free-will, functional teleology for animal systems, morality as a system expressing various crucial systems on the proper way to use those systems. Statements of these assumptions are as follows.

- Nature, or evolution, has equipped humans with moral normative control mechanisms, for crucial systems of human behavior. Crucial systems are those inseparable from our being human, our humanity
- Human normative control mechanism involve our sentiments and thoughts which we can use to discover the crucial systems, the right ways to act and the right ways to develop ourselves so that we act rightly with respect to these crucial systems.

It is worth repeating that I am not assuming that nature as a whole, or evolution, gives us the proper moral rules. We have the capacity from nature to use our sentiments and thoughts in reasoning to set moral rules and to determine which are the correct ones. Our reasoning gives the correct moral rules if there are any.

Pragmatic arguments are not undertaken primarily to get true beliefs so that we have more correct information. They are undertaken to get convinced of beliefs the holding of which is supposed to make our lives better in some way. So, let us review how the character stance is supposed to make our lives better.

XI.6 The point of taking the character stance

If we take the character stance we are bound by moral rules on how to act with respect to crucial inclinations and how to develop our selves so that we control our crucial inclinations according to these rules. Under the character stance we have a goal for our whole being for our whole lives which we are required to pursue. The goal can be characterized as the Kantian moral

good of being people who do what is right because it is right regardless of inclinations to do otherwise. We live a life where much of what is most important to us matters because there are ways these things ought to be. Our lives have direction and significance. This is not a moralism which holds that the only thing in our lives that matter is moral behavior. Our lives matter because they are to be guided by moral rules and it matters whether or not we obey them. Our lives have significance because all that we do is significant by being done in accordance with the rules. If we did not engage in all sorts of morally neutral activity there would not be much in our life to be significant. For instance, in courtship there are thousands of activities and attitudes which by themselves are morally neutral. Even for success in courtship it does not matter which are performed. However, human courting contributes to the moral significance of our lives because it is governed by broad moral principles based on right ways for it to be conducted.

XI.6 The form of what is defended pragmatically

There will be actions A undertaken to bring about belief, in the sense of thinking to be true, a statement of the character stance which we will here label C. Put succinctly there is to be a pragmatic defense of doing A to bring about belief in C. My writing of a form for pragmatic defense should not mislead us to look for the defense as an argument which can be laid out with premises and a conclusion. Pragmatic defense is an on-going process of seeking justification and conviction. There are two intertwined phases: Seeking permission and exercising the permission. When the petition for permission is abstracted from exercising it, we can layout as specific steps items in the petition.

XI.6.1 The actions to be pragmatically defended

The actions A include acting as if C is true, promoting development of conviction from life experience and acknowledgement to oneself and others of acting as if C is true, professing C and using C in reasoning.

XI.6.2 Biases in evidence gathering for pragmatic defense

The acting as if the claim is true is not the legitimate scientific procedure of assuming a claim to be true in order to test it although the demands on negative evidence are high. Here acting as if the claim is true is taken as a first step towards becoming convinced of it.

Promoting development of conviction from life experience differs from gathering evidence for and against a claim. A focus on life experiences would be discounted as anecdotal evidence in a careful gathering of evidence. The pursuit has a strong bias for confirming experiences. There is a resolve to hold the belief and become convinced of its truth despite disconfirming experiences. There is no thought of what disconfirming life experiences would lead to giving up the project of seeking conviction. This is similar to a religious faith for which one might concede that life experiences could not only “shake” the faith but wipe it out. However, there is a determination to “keep the faith” through the most disheartening experiences.

Pragmatic defense is a sophisticated procedure for people who realize a need to believe beyond evidence but respect the ideals of human rationality for clarity of concept and cogency of proof for the natural and social sciences. When these requirements are to be set aside one needs to acknowledge this to those with whom one reasons, which includes oneself.

XI.6.3 Analogy between stance taking and religious believing

In stance taking some of the crucial claims are held more like religious beliefs than thoughts about what may or may not occur in the natural world. The claims need not be thought

to be more likely true than false. The taker of the stance need not have great confidence in them. I call them beliefs in the sense of “belief” as what one professes. Religious doctrines may be believed in this way. For instance, one who professes "I believe in the resurrection of the dead" may not be able to think clearly that it is more likely true than false because he does not understand it well enough to think about probabilities. He need not have great confidence in the claim because he is frequently tormented by the thought that death ends it all. However, his willingness to profess it Sunday after Sunday when the Creed is prayed along with his refusal ever to deny it entitles him to classify himself as one who has this belief. His profession is taking a stand on the resurrection along with other claims in the creed. This may be a weak sense of “religious belief” but it brings out an analogy between religious believing and some fundamental claims in a stance.

XI.7 Conditions for pragmatic justification³

These conditions can be considered as what I called above steps in the petition for permission. Conditions for pragmatic justification are adaptations of William James’ conditions given in his deservedly well-known “Will to Believe.” I will use some of James’s terminology. I have, though, no interest in offering an interpretation of James’ notions. Conditions for pragmatic defense are stated primarily for protecting ourselves from allowing efforts to develop and strengthen religious believing from superstition and fanaticism. For religious beliefs there are objects, processes and requirements far beyond those recognized in the study of nature and in human society. Theoretical foundations for a moral outlook do not require acceptance of much if anything beyond what we recognize in daily life. It is more a stance about how we look at the familiar. Still we cannot rely only on the methods of mathematics and natural science to justify this way of looking at things as the way they really are.

XI.7.1 Options as forced, momentous and live

James said that a claim to be pragmatically defended should be forced and momentous. What might “forced” and “momentous” mean in relation to treating nihilism? C needs to be a claim whose acceptance starts giving significance to our lives but whose dismissal leaves open the prospect of nihilism. Avoiding nihilism is *momentous*. A crucial move in my argument against the alternative stances focuses on the momentous condition. The character stance better fulfills the momentous condition which motivates pragmatic defending.

C should be *forced* in three ways. First, since pragmatic defending is acting, logic sets two opposed options: you start or you do not. Second, the claim C is fundamental. C is not to be defended as a necessary condition for holding some more fundamental position. In particular, C is not to be defended as a condition for maintaining identity in a group or as being an integral belief of some other belief. In the previous chapter, we saw that the character stance, by including the parental stance on sexuality, is one of four conflicting stances on sexuality and morality. I wish that I had been able to give a small number of exhaustive and incompatible alternative stances. So, if one is to take a stance on sexuality and morality, one is somewhat forced to take one of these stance. James also wrote that an option should be *live*. That C is presented to us human beings and not as members of a group or culture it is live for all of us.

How would believing in the character stance, with its parental stance, be forced, momentous and live? Let’s express the belief as: There is a right way for us to exercise our sexuality expressible in our reasoning and we can follow this right way. Here the forcing is logical between “There is a right way” vs. “There is no right way.” Trying to hold this belief helps us avoid the sexual alienation of trivialization and demonization of sexuality. By avoiding sexual alienation we protect ourselves from concluding that a large part of human life is not

really human life and thereby does not matter. We avoid sexual alienation by not having sexuality morally neutral. That is momentous. Just as there are right ways for us to act and to be there are right ways for us to be sexually. Of course, taking a stance on our sexuality is a live option for all of us once we start to develop sexually.

Here it should be mentioned again that the Paternal Principle reflects a principle under the assumption that male human sexuality is not morally neutral. Sexuality is not morally neutral in the sense that there are basic moral rules specific to sexuality. However, many sexual acts can be, and are, morally neutral. These morally neutral acts are significant human sexual acts because they are done in accordance with the specific rules for giving dignity to human sexuality.

XI.7.2 Options as open

If a claim is to be pragmatically justified, it cannot be settled by the methods of natural science. This interprets James's condition that a claim eligible for pragmatic justification should be *open*. The standard problems of philosophy can become very discouraging after the initial intellect enjoyment of articulating them and playing with the several unsatisfactory solutions. For instance, being unable to give a satisfactory model of personal identity does, at least in me, lead to discouragement about human intelligence. Natural science and mathematics along with technical achievements restore faith in the power of human intelligence. However, the needs for which we seek true beliefs extend beyond those for which we develop mathematics and science. We do have needs for understanding the significance of our lives. Support for this claim is provided by my efforts to induce a sense of nihilism and a sense of needing an antidote for it beyond distraction. If this effort has any effect, then there is some support for the claim that we seek truth beyond the reasons for which we seek truth in mathematics and natural science. The

insolvable problems of philosophy are a reminder that the methods of mathematics and natural science will not satisfy all our truth needs. The old logical positivists had a misleading way of putting this. They called the standard problems cognitively meaningless.

The positivists made a genuine contribution to philosophy by reminding us that metaphysical claims, moral claims and value claims in general are not established or refuted by methods of natural science when those methods are precisely characterized. I use this positivistic contribution to note that all of the stances need pragmatic defenses.

I submit that the statements of the character stance would be paradigms of cognitively meaningless metaphysics to positivists. I have no intention of interpreting Kant. I will, though, use another Kantian term to label the character stance a “Metaphysics of Morals.” They include claims of free will, moral truths and teleology in nature. The teleological claims do not conflict with natural science since they are not used for scientific purposes. The character stance proposes no research.

XI.7.3 Options as not corrupting scientific practice

I propose further conditions for pragmatic justification which are influenced by James’s conditions. But there is little point in the exegetical activity of trying to match them with James’s conditions. They are added to insure that pragmatic defense of the character stance does not lead to any corruption of our intellectual or moral character. Actions A for inducing belief must not corrupt methodology of natural science. As noted above the actions for inducing belief in C would not be acceptable in science or in much of common sense such as in legal contexts. Here on-going vigilance is required to guard ourselves from allowing the methods which support faith not leak over into other areas.

XI.7.4 Options as morally “conservative”

If I were writing about taking a stance on religion, I would add 'Claim C by itself should not subtract from morality.' I would be concerned about using religion to excuse fanatical behavior such as murdering non-believers. However, if a stance is to provide a theoretical framework for moral reasoning, the more careful reasoning done in this framework might yield obligations or grant permission which others reject. Or as the saying goes: The results of the reasoning may conflict with the moral intuitions of many others. However, pragmatic defenses should not lead to a large number of results which would not have been obtained without it. Pragmatic defenses are for getting one or two major principles to give significance to and guide our lives. They are not to justify radically new moralities. So pragmatic defenses should have a type of results conservatism.

With respect to a foundation claim for morality, the results conservatism conditions specifies that the stance supports reasoning which leads to moral claims more or less in agreement with some fairly widespread tradition. Individuals provide pragmatic justification of their framework beliefs. No individual is equipped to present a significantly different whole morality. Communities over centuries develop moralities. I think that there is no doubt that the morality supported by the character stance, amongst which is the male morality of the Paternal Principle is widely recognized even if not as well followed as some of us think it should be. I concede that the progressive and dualistic stances support sexual moralities which are widely held. The romantic stance on sexuality is basically aesthetic and amoral.

This condition of a type of moral conservatism also helps us appreciate a dimension of James' notion that an option to be pragmatically defended should be live. The sexual moralities supported by the various stances are actual moralities of people. If they try to make sense of their sexual morality by taking one of the stances, the stance is certainly a live option for them.

XI.7.5 Options as freely induced

The actions A for inducing belief must not by-pass appeals to thinking and feeling to change belief directly by physical means. Here I want to rule out use of chemicals and direct manipulation of the nervous system. Actually the requirement that we keep in mind that we are giving a pragmatic defense would render such techniques pointless. We would tell ourselves that we had not come to believe but that the belief arose in us. It is still not our belief until we come to it through some feeling and thinking processes. Stances are to be taken; not imposed on a person. Drugs etc., impose belief and override the person taking or rejecting the belief. I concede that radical progressives who deny that human nature sets any moral limits on how it is to be used, would have no, in principle, moral objection to formation of beliefs by direct action on the neural system.

XI.7.6 Options as cost/benefit washes

Finally, note that benefits we believe to receive if C is true are balanced by harms we might incur if C is true. This condition is to avoid wishful thinking. We have noted that integral to the character stance is some type of belief in hell.

XI.7.7 Plato's allegory of the cave and pragmatic defense

A contrast between pragmatic defense and Plato's allegory of the cave in Book VII of his *Republic* might be interesting for those familiar with that allegory. Plato used a theater within a cave to model the human condition with respect to getting the truth. In the theater shadows flit across a cave wall. The shadows are cast by figures behind the audience. Lights behind the figures cast the shadows on the wall. What people see on the wall represents the lowest level of knowledge. They see only shadows of models. Getting to see the figures casting the shadows gives a somewhat higher level of knowledge. People seeing the production of the imagery have

insight into what common sense takes to be reality. Still they do not contact what is real because they see only models for a show. Reality lies outside the theater or cave. For Plato people have to be forced first to turn away from accepting the shadows on the wall to realize they are seeing only a show. Second they must be forced to leave the theater or cave to confront reality outside the cave where reality is the world illuminated by the sun. Once people have become acquainted with the real world, they need to be forced to go back into the cave to rule those still viewing a show which they think is reality.

Those of us who find a need for pragmatic arguments appreciate that even when human reasoning, perceiving and feeling are refined to the highest degree we are still confined within our human nature. Our nature is analogous to Plato's cave except that we do not know that there is an exit. But no one has to force us to try to find out what lies outside. We want to find out from the outside that what we do inside is in conformity with the way things are. However, all that we know and all of our obligations are in this cave. We take it as an end-in-itself. So, we need permission to look for an exit or window to the outside while not abandoning what we had in the cave.

XI.8 Concluding remarks on pragmatic defense of character stance

I think that enough has been noted to conclude that people are justified in opening themselves, under the conditions for pragmatic defense, to allowing settled belief in the character stance to develop in them. While working to settle the belief we are allowed to profess the belief and let it guide our conduct and promotion of public policies. If challenged in the "open market of ideas" we should, if need be, admit that we are giving a pragmatic defense and specify how we are doing it. How we are conducting our pragmatic defense is open to consideration of all without religious assumptions. So the very stating of how we are conducting our pragmatic

defense can be part of our argument for the stance. Because both the elements of a pragmatic defense and the arguments from the principles based on what is pragmatically defended are secular, I have made my weak point that the Paternal Principle is fully entitled to be heard in a secular society.

The other stances need pragmatic arguments. But I think mine is strongest because overcoming nihilism is a legitimate goal for believing to understand and I have made a case that the character stance I advance is better for attaining the goal of having a secular antidote for nihilism.

So I have justified professing and struggling to obey the character stance and its accompanying Paternal Principle with a view to discovering its truth. What might we discover?

Take up your cross!

¹ An original source is *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (1897)

² From Ross Douthat, New York Times opinion column, April 25, 2011

³ I am adapting conditions for pragmatic justification from Chapter V of my book *Atheistic Despair*