Moral Argument Is Not Enough: The Persistence of Slavery and the Emergence of Abolition

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> It often happens that the universal belief of one age of Mankind—
> a belief from which no one was, nor without an extraordinary
> effort of genius and courage, could at that time be free—becomes
> to a subsequent age so palpable an absurdity, that the only diffi-
> culty then is to imagine how such a thing can ever have appeared
> credible.
>
> —*Mill, 1909*

> We should never forget that our whole economic, political and
> intellectual development presupposes a state of things in which
> slavery was as necessary as it was universally recognised.
>
> —*Engels, 1947*

ABSTRACT

Slavery seems to us to be a paradigm of a morally wrong institutionalized practice. And yet for most of its millennia-long historical existence it was typically accepted as a natural, necessary, and inevitable feature of the social world. This widespread normative consensus was only challenged toward the end of the eighteenth century.

Then, within a hundred years of the emergence of radical moral criticism of slavery, the existing practices had been dismantled and the institution itself "abolished." How do we explain such a "profound transformation in moral perception" (Davis 1975)? It may seem obvious that the moral agency and character of the leaders and activists of the abolition movement, their supporters, and their governmental representatives were the primary motors of change. That is to say, the various actors involved came to see, recognize, or acknowledge the true (morally evil) nature of slavery and were thereby motivated to act against it. This "commonsense," "moral explanation" is endorsed by most of the philosophers who have reflected on the morality of slavery. But despite the intuitiveness of thinking that it was the moral agency of the actors, pitted against the evil and injustice of slavery, that brought about the latter's downfall, I will endeavor to show that such thinking is inadequate both to the facts and to the explanatory desiderata. I contend that it was not ignorance of the supposedly inherent moral status of slavery that maintained people's complicity with it, but practical barriers to them conceiving it dispensable.

I. INTRODUCTION

Abraham Lincoln famously maintained that "if slavery is not wrong, then nothing is wrong." But for most of its millennia-long history, so far from being seen as a paradigm of wrongness, slavery was typically taken to be no more morally questionable than the institutional phenomenon of money is today. We learn from the historical literature that up to the middle of the eighteenth century, slavery had almost universally been accepted as simply a natural, necessary, and inevitable feature of the social world. But at that point, for the first time, the institutionalized practices of purchasing, trading, and owning slaves became subject to fundamental moral criticism. Within roughly one hundred years of its emergence, this criticism had issued in social movements for reform and abolition that successfully persuaded their governments to forcibly stop and dismantle the existing systems of slave trading and holding. Whereas for most of its historical existence the idea that slavery might be abolishable was almost unthinkable,[1] after abolition its *permissibility* became equally unthinkable.

How did such a "profound transformation in moral perception" (Davis 1975, 11) come about? It may seem obvious that the moral agency and character of the leaders and activists of the abolition movement, their supporters, and their governmental representatives were the primary determinants. That is to say, it seems obvious that the various actors involved came to see, recognize, or acknowledge the true (morally evil) nature of slavery and were thereby motivated to act in ways orientated to bringing about its downfall. Just this, "commonsense," explanation is the one endorsed by most philosophers who have reflected on the long persistence and eventual ending of slavery. But despite the intuitiveness of thinking that it was the

moral agency of the participants, pitted against the moral evil of the institutional-ized practices of slavery, that brought about the latter's downfall, I will endeavor to show that such thinking is inadequate both to the facts and to the explanatory desiderata. I do not deny that moral agency played a necessary role, but will argue that its overall explanatory significance is nevertheless limited. In order to reveal these limits I shall draw upon findings in social and perceptual psychology to explain why it took so long for the justness of slavery to become questionable, and then go on to examine the explanatory significance of the social and economic conditions in which abolition took place.

The means by which slavery was transformed from being seen as a natural, necessary, and inevitable feature of the social world to being seen as a palpably unjust social evil is clearly of intrinsic historical interest. But the case of slavery should be of more general interest to moral philosophers, for here we have the par-adigmatic case of radical moral criticism, which was successful to such an extent that not only were attitudes changed fundamentally, but the object of criticism itself abolished. My argument will be that to see properly the role of moral agency in bringing about such large-scale progressive social change we need to attend to the social, economic, and epistemic context in which that agency is located. I shall adopt a comparative and historically contextualized perspective in support of this argument.

II. MORAL IGNORANCE AND MORAL EXPLANATION

Philosophers have quite often been struck by the fact that slavery persisted—indeed thrived—without arousing any significant moral criticism from those who lived with it. Many have assumed that historical people's widespread normative accept-ance of slavery was the effect of their being ignorant either of the true moral status of the enslaved or of the obligation not to permit human beings to be treated in the way that slaves were. These philosophers then divide between those who argue that this putative (moral) ignorance is itself culpable, and those that argue that it is excusable because it was culturally conditioned. Of the former persuasion is Alexander Guerrero, who argues that because of the "moral seriousness" of the harms inflicted on slaves, and because it was not, he contends, "particularly compli-cated to figure out that slavery is morally wrong," anyone living complicitly with it who failed to figure out its wrongness was epistemically negligent and pragmati-cally reckless (2007, 73, 71). Michelle Moody-Adams likewise maintains that those who found slavery morally acceptable must have *affected* their ignorance of its wrongness. This kind of ignorance is culpable, she insists, because "it involves a choice not to know something that is morally important and that would be easy to know but for that choice" (1997, 102). On the other side, Gideon Rosen (2003, 66) counters that, "given the intellectual and cultural resources available to a second

millennium Hittite lord, it would have taken a moral genius to see through to the wrongness of chattel slavery." Neil Levy (2003, 156) argues, similarly, that it would have taken a prohibitively "great deal of time and effort" for a member of a slave-owning society to put their well-founded belief that slavery was justified to the test, and they were therefore blameless for holding that false belief.

Moody-Adams not only attributes affected ignorance to those who lived complicitly with slavery, she also claims it to be an *explanation* (indeed, "the best explanation" [1997, 105]) of the long persistence of slavery. Moody-Adams's explanation for the eventual abolition of slavery is that it was brought about by the moral criticism conveyed by slave narratives and testimonies, antislavery literature, and evangelical Protestantism, all of which "worked to stimulate moral imagination" (1997, 236 n. 20, 106). So slavery was eventually abolished when and because its wrongness was acknowledged. These explanations for the persistence and eventual abolition of slavery are forms of *moral explanation* (Sturgeon 1992; Leiter 2001). Moral explanations of beliefs, actions, and events are essentially "commonsense" explanations (albeit often formulated in an esoteric philosophical register) that function through the invocation of the "moral properties" of the object of belief, of the agent of the action, or of the events themselves. In the case of slavery, on Moody-Adams's view, people came to believe that it was wrong because the critical activities of abolitionists promoted them to see that it was wrong, and believing it thus thereby motivated morally good people to act against it. Prior to the rise of abolitionism, people did not believe that slavery was wrong because, motivated by the vice of self-interest, they chose not to attend to the obvious facts that constituted its wrongness.

Evidently, Moody-Adams's moral explanations latch onto the moral character of those who uncritically accepted slavery and those who campaigned against it. Other, more extensive, moral explanations accord a leading causal role to the nature and structure of the institutionalized practices themselves. Chief among these are the explanations of Nicholas Sturgeon (2007) and Joshua Cohen (1997). At the core of both Sturgeon's and Cohen's arguments is the claim not only that slavery was in fact an evil, unjust institution, but that its evil and injustice explains why some people came to believe it to be evil and unjust, which in turn explains why they acted against it: "there is an explanatory connection between the injustice of slavery and moral beliefs about it" (Cohen 1997, 124); "the opposition was due to slavery's really being an evil" (Sturgeon 1992, 100).

I do not want to get into the metaphysical issues raised by the philosophical debate on moral explanations (of which Sturgeon is the principal exponent), nor am I able to argue against the explanatory adequacy of moral explanation as such.[2] I am concerned just with the explanatory adequacy of the particular moral explanations of the persistence and ending of slavery that have been put forward by advocates of that mode of explanation.

The key conditions of adequacy for any explanation of the "profound transformation in moral perception" represented by the emergence of the antislavery

movement and the abolition of slavery are twofold. Explanations must: (i) explain why, for most of its millennia-long existence, slavery was accepted with virtually no fundamental moral criticism of it, and (ii) explain why abolitionism arose, and abolition occurred, when they did. Unless these desiderata are met it will seem accidental that abolitionism and abolition developed when they did and not before, or later, or even at all.[3] The existing moral explanations measure very badly against these requirements. Of the three moral explanations that I have presented, only Moody-Adams's attempts to explain why slavery persisted for so long with hardly any moral criticism of it, and only Sturgeon offers any explanation for the timing of abolition.

Moody-Adams maintains that people living in slave holding and trading societies would have seen the wrongness of slavery if only they had not chosen to "ignore the moral relevance of obvious facts" (1997, 102) about it. But because the ignorance that allegedly was affected had as its object "obvious facts" that were "easy to know," this is a very implausible explanation for why there was no moral criticism of slavery for so long (thousands of years). Why, on this explanation, should it have taken until the late eighteenth century for any serious moral criticism to develop? In the face of "obvious facts" manifesting the wrongness of slavery that were "easy to know," it is as hard to explain the persistence of affected ignorance as it is to explain the persistence of slavery itself.

Cohen offers no explanation for why slavery persisted as long as it did, other than to assert vaguely that the unjust social relations that constituted it ensured that it had "limited viability." The concept of "limited viability" equivocates over how it lasted as long as it did (it had a certain amount of *viability*), or why it eventually came to an end (it was doomed, by its *limited* viability, to expire at some time). Cohen seems to intend the latter usage. He says that slavery came to an end "because it was unjust, because that injustice was recognised, and that recognition motivated opposition" (1997, 123). But he does not say why it took so long for this recognition to occur, nor why it occurred *when* it did. Indeed, if, as Cohen says, "moral reasoning mandates the conclusion that slavery is unjust" (1997, 130), then there is no reason why that conclusion could not have been arrived at long before it was, at any point during the historical existence of slavery.

Sturgeon does, however, squarely address the task of explaining why abolitionism arose when it did. His answer, which he claims to be the "standard answer" in the historical literature, is that southern United States and British colonial slavery "was much *worse* than previous forms of slavery," and that United States slavery "became a more oppressive institution" after the American revolution (2007, 346). The idea, presumably (Sturgeon does not elaborate), is that it was the heightened badness and oppressiveness of the practices constituting American and British slavery that made "the evil of that institution" (1992, 98) fully apparent and enabled abolitionists to recognize it. Conversely, presumably, the evil or injustice of all previous instantiations of slavery would have been hidden, obscured, or rendered ambiguous by a lack of flagrant badness or oppressiveness. This explanation, as

Sturgeon points out, turns on what he calls the "moral facts" of slavery. But it is unclear whether he means that the *badness* and *oppressiveness* of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American and British slavery are moral facts, or that the *heightened* badness and oppressiveness of these instantiations of slavery, compared to previous varieties, is a moral fact. Sturgeon concedes that these claims on badness and oppressiveness are "controversial" (despite also—implausibly—describing them as the "standard explanations" [2007, 346] in the historical literature), but it is strange that his source is a work published in 1947 (Tannenbaum 1947) when he also acknowledges that the claims are disputed by Davis (1966). Davis is probably the leading historical authority on slavery and abolition, and has recently reiterated his criticism of the idea that American and British slavery can be "sharply differentiat[ed]" from "all previous forms of servitude" in virtue of being "more inhumane and oppressive" (1998). The idea that this was the case, Davis argues, can be traced to the (entirely laudable) politically motivated exaggerations of the abolitionists. But continuing to repeat the myth today, apart from its historical inaccuracy, has the deleterious consequence of "romanticizing" all previous forms of slavery.

Each of the foregoing explanations of the persistence and ending of slavery attribute to the institutionalized practices that constituted it the inherent moral status of injustice and social evil, but differ on the ease or difficulty of discovering or recognizing that status for those who lived with it. Guerrero, Rosen, and Levy seek only to explain why those who lived complicitly with slavery failed to perceive its true moral status, whereas Moody-Adams, Cohen, and Sturgeon endeavor to explain how slavery persisted for so long and how it was brought to an end. However, while I certainly do not doubt that slavery is unjust and a social evil, I will go on to show that this focus on the discoverability of its supposedly inherent moral status is anachronistic and misleading for the purposes of explanation. What is needed is careful attention to the psychological and epistemic conditions under which people are required to form and maintain judgments on the permissibility and justness of their society's institutionalized practices. In particular, I will argue that it was not ignorance of the inherent moral status of slavery that maintained people's complicity with it, but practical barriers to conceiving its dispensability.

III. THE HISTORY AND STRUCTURE OF ATTITUDES TOWARD SLAVERY

As previously noted, it is a striking historical fact, on which historians agree, that for most of its millennia-long existence, up to the late eighteenth century, there was no serious moral criticism of slavery. Its moral legitimacy was just taken for granted. There was, however, *some* criticism of it, even in the ancient world. For example, Aristotle's motivation for his notorious justification of slavery evidently derives from the fact, to which he adverts, that some ancient Greeks had denied that

slavery is a condition to which any human being is befitted by nature and who concluded that it was therefore an unjust imposition.[4] Such criticism as there was, though, was rare and invariably took a markedly limited form. It was abstract, theoretical, irresolute and, above all, inconsequential. The critics themselves were typically of marginal social status,[5] which was a consequence of their views constituting a tiny minority and the object of their criticism being an integral feature of the social world.

Nevertheless, the fact that there had always been *some* criticism is highly significant, for it casts doubt on the suggestion that the intellectual and conceptual resources required for criticizing slavery were unavailable to premodern and ancient people (as claimed, for example, by Rosen, Levy, and Kraut 1994). It also presents a problem for deterministic theses on these people being culturally or socially prevented, or disabled, from developing a critical perspective on slavery.[6] Moreover, in spite of the conventional acceptance of slavery, people were not generally unaware that the practices and relations in which slaves were enmeshed inflicted pain, suffering, and untimely death on them.[7] But any concern for the plight of slaves, from the ancient to the (pre-eighteenth-century) modern world, was typically limited to what Haskell calls "passive sympathy" (1998, 300). What he means by this term is that those who did sympathize looked upon the plight of slaves rather as most of us now look upon the world's starving: registering the badness of their situation while regretting that there is nothing that *we* can do about it.[8] It is one thing to think or say "starvation and malnutrition should be eradicated," or "no one deserves to suffer the condition of slavery," but quite another to commit oneself to actually bringing about their eradication. Without the latter, expressions of sympathy or compassion for the plight of the starving, the malnourished, or the enslaved remain "passive" and "abstract."

The following generalizations can be made about the structure of pre-eighteenth-century attitudes toward slavery:

   i. Passive compassion and sympathy for slaves qua individuals was not unusual (though indifference was probably the norm, and passive sympathy is compatible with believing slaves to be a naturally inferior class of human beings).
   ii. Criticism of slavery qua institution was rare, its expression usually circumscribed in particular (abstract) forms, and had no social credibility.
   iii. Where there was criticism of slavery qua institution it was invariably leveled at abuse *within* the practice, not at the *existence* of the practice. It consisted mainly in exhortations for masters to treat their slaves more humanely, and was usually directed at slaves' spiritual, rather than their bodily, well-being (Brown 2006, 55–75). Even after the emergence of substantial antislavery criticism toward the end of the eighteenth century, early activism was oriented toward amelioration and reform rather than

abolition, aiming to "make slavery more humane or more Christian, not to liberate the enslaved" (Brown 2006, 28).

iv. Those who had passive sympathy for the suffering of slaves qua individuals still usually took for granted that slavery qua institution was morally acceptable.

One might well agree with Haskell's (1987, 849) observation that the "moral perspective, which recognized that slaves suffered and acknowledged that it was bad for people to suffer and yet tolerated slavery, seems alien to us." When formulated explicitly this perspective does indeed seem to consist in a contradictory conjunction of beliefs that betoken either a callous or an obtuse moral sensibility. Yet equivalents of this conjunction of beliefs is also constitutive of the predominant attitude toward some widely accepted institutionalized practices in our modern-day society. Take the case of animal exploitation,[9] consisting mainly in the institutionalized practices of breeding, killing, and vivisecting animals for food production and knowledge accumulation. These practices have an even longer history than that of slavery, and economic functions as deeply entrenched. Just like slavery, for most of their history these practices have simply been taken for granted as a natural, necessary, and inevitable feature of the social world, and yet they too have always been subject to *some* sporadic moral criticism, dating back to the ancient world (see Sorabji 1993). As with slavery again, this criticism was invariably abstract, shallow, and sentimental; it was not taken seriously and the critics were derided as eccentric fools.

A radically critical social movement that campaigns for the abolition of the institutionalized practices of animal exploitation emerged in the 1970s. This movement has grown in size, prominence, and respectability, though its radical aims remain the cause only of a very small minority. But what may aptly be called "passive sympathy" for the subjects of animal exploitation qua individuals is quite widespread and, starting in the Victorian era, there has been and is still considerable public concern for abuse within the practices and the more flagrantly cruel modes of treating animals in agriculture, vivisection, and sport. Many people today would surely admit that the truncated lives of laboratory science and factory farm animals are, in the words that Williams (1993) uses to describe the conditions endured by ancient Greek slaves, "intensely unpleasant." Hardly anyone would deny that these creatures possess the physiological capacities in virtue of which they suffer severe pain and distress under these practices. Quite a few would support measures to make the practices as "humane" as possible by removing any "unnecessary" cruelty.[10] But very few of these would countenance anything more radical than mild reform of the practices (making the cages a little bigger, as abolitionist critics of animal "welfarism" disdainfully put it).

Thus the predominant attitude toward the practices of animal exploitation is one in which (mostly passive) sympathy for the suffering of animals sits alongside an unshakable belief in the naturalness, necessity, and justness of the practices

themselves. This is structurally the same as the predominant attitudes toward slaves and slavery for most of the history of slavery. So the latter attitudes, far from being what Haskell describes as an "alien moral perspective," are really quite familiar to us.

IV. NECESSITY AND INDISPENSABILITY

Normative acceptance of slavery and animal exploitation, that is, either believing that these practices are justified or not believing that they are unjust,[11] has, then, gone hand in glove with an awareness that they inflict pain, suffering, and death on the individuals whom they exploit. Guerrero and Moody-Adams, however, infer from the fact that the pain and suffering that slavery generated was palpable and common knowledge that no one could have innocently failed to see that it was a morally wrong institution. But the case of animal exploitation shows that it is commonplace in our current-day society to know that an institutionalized practice inflicts severe harm, pain, and suffering on innocent victims, and yet not believe that the practice is morally wrong. There is also the following, even more widespread and pervasive, variety of the phenomenon. Virtually everyone is aware that there are large numbers of people in the world who will die miserable and untimely deaths for want of nutritious food, clean water, and basic medicines. No one believes that these people do not suffer grievously, and hardly anyone believes that such suffering and premature death is deserved, and yet very few believe that their own failure to contribute significant amounts of money to aid the destitute is an unjust omission.[12] I would even go so far as to say that perhaps *everyone* (including moral philosophers) believes, of *some* institutionalized practice or other in their society, that it is not unjust even though it causes or allows innocent victims to suffer pain, harm, and untimely death.

These observations suggest either that it is not unreasonable to hold such a conjunction of beliefs, or that the large proportion of people in current-day society that holds it are, like their predecessors, culpably unreasonable. Guerrero's and Moody-Adams's insistence on the palpable wrongness of slavery implies the latter attribution, whereas I favor the former.[13] In my view, the sheer number and proportion of people who have held and do hold this conjunction of beliefs in relation to an institutionalized practice in their society is suggestive of it not being an unreasonable epistemic stance. I take it that when a very large proportion of people believes X and Y, that fact in itself is largely constitutive of the reasonableness of believing X and Y.[14] This is because the reasons that one has for believing X and Y are widely accepted by most other people of whom one knows and whose judgment one has good reason to trust. One has good reason to trust these other people's judgment on X and Y because these people include those who are widely accredited as people of good character and morals, and people with pertinent knowledge, expertise, and authority on, and experience of, matters concerning X

and Y. This is not to say that being in a large majority that also believes X and Y thereby *justifies* one believing X and Y, but it does at least provide a good *excuse* for it if one turns out to have been wrong about X and Y.

What are the reasons that support the belief that an institutionalized practice which inflicts suffering and death on the individuals that it exploits is nevertheless not morally wrong (aside from the fact that most other people believe this too)? The primary reason, I contend, derives from the perceived *necessity* of the practice. The role of necessity in relation to institutionalized practices is similar to that of duress or coercion in standard philosophical accounts of individual moral responsibility. If an individual is coerced into performing a wrongful act that they do not want to perform they may be exonerated from moral responsibility for its consequences. Suppose, for example, that someone is ordered either to kill another innocent person or to suffer being killed themselves. While it is not the case that this individual literally could do no other than to perform that act, still it would be unreasonable to expect them to resist the force acting upon them. Someone who did resist such a force should be regarded as having done so supererogatorily.

The perception of necessity has a somewhat similar function in relation to judgment on the justness of one's institutionalized practices. Thus, if an institutionalized practice is necessary for a people to sustain a decent way of life, then even though it inflicts suffering or death on the individuals whom it exploits, those people should not be blamed for not thinking it unjust. Suppose, for example, that it is necessary to eat meat for good health and a full life (perhaps people brought up on a meat-free diet would not normally live beyond thirty years). In that case, it would not be reasonable to expect anyone to give up eating meat even when it is acknowledged that animals' lives have some significant degree of intrinsic value and that food production causes them considerable suffering. "Ordinary morality" does not require that magnitude of self-sacrifice. Alternatively, imagine that fruitarians are right about the intrinsic value of plants' lives, or their capacity to experience pain. Then, even though most people would have to revise their beliefs on the moral status of living plants, they still could not reasonably be expected to follow the moral injunction to eat nothing but fruits and nuts that can be gathered without killing the parent plant. Some people, moved by the pain, suffering, and untimely deaths that their consumption practices impose on animals and plants, might decide that morality requires them to change their diet and accept the sacrifice of health, quality of life, and longevity that would ensue. But this course of action is one that can really only be taken by moral saints, not ordinarily decent people. In slogan form, then, the injunction that one "ought" to do without an institutionalized practice implies that one "can" do without it (at not too great a personal cost).

Moody-Adams denies that belief in the necessity of slavery explains why members of slaveholding and trading societies failed to think it morally wrong, and denies that this belief could excuse their failure. This is not because she claims that they should have seen slavery to be wrong *despite* believing it necessary for a decent

way of life. Rather, she maintains that they did not really believe that it was necessary, or that they did believe that it was necessary but could, and therefore should, have believed otherwise (her concept of affected ignorance is ambiguous over these two possibilities). "What," she asks rhetorically, "could count as evidence that the Greeks were *unable* to … imagine alternative ways of life and thus recognise the wrongness of slavery[?]" (1997, 100).[15] Thus it was affected ignorance, not the belief that slavery was necessary, that explains their failure to think it morally wrong. Moody-Adams's stance on the perception of necessity follows from her universally generalized claim that "every [linguistically competent] human being has the capacity to question existing practices, and to imagine that one's social world might be other than it is" (1997, 100). In other words, no responsible person is entitled to think that any institutionalized practice in their actual social world is really necessary for its viability, no matter how longstanding, established, and functional it might be.

This concept of social necessity is unrealistically thin and unreasonably demanding. It requires that the Greeks (and all other members of slave holding and trading societies) should have been prepared to give up slavery even if they believed that doing so would severely diminish the quality and viability of their society's way of life. But merely being able to imagine a world without slavery does not thereby generate sufficient reason to judge it dispensable. Most people today presumably could *imagine* a world without wage labor or without money. But being able to perform this mental act surely does not entail that one should therefore accept that these practices are *actually* dispensable. The content of the imagined world without wage labor or money is likely to be one in which social order itself has broken down (see Davis [1975, 260, 266, 345] for similar concerns about the predicted consequences of doing away with slavery). Insisting that people should acknowledge that a practice is not necessary despite believing that its abolition would incur a severe loss of security, well-being, or utility is rather like insisting that someone who is ordered at gunpoint to hand over their money remains free not to do so. What is required, I suggest, before people can judge that an institutionalized practice is not necessary is that there be a plausible alternative to it that is already available and which would not make them much worse off. Of course, when it comes to judging the necessity of a currently existing institutionalized practice one cannot have recourse to its actual necessity and can only draw upon hypotheses about how things would be if it were replaced with an alternative. So the excuse of necessity is inevitably grounded in people *believing* that an institutionalized practice is necessary. The genuineness of the excuse therefore depends on whether it was reasonable for them to have believed the practice necessary. But this applies just as much to cases of individual responsibility, where in the example given earlier, for the excuse to be genuine it must be judged that the agent reasonably believed that their life was at risk (and not that the threat was idle or a prank).

The pertinent questions to ask of those who lived complicitly with slavery are not was it *actually* necessary for them, nor were they *able* to imagine an alternative

way of life without it, but how *difficult* would it have been for them to conclude that it was not necessary and what factors militated against this conclusion? In answer to these questions and to Moody-Adams's challenge ("what could count as evidence …"), I will outline what I take to be strong evidence and reasons in support of my contention that reasonable people may find it insuperably difficult to doubt the necessity of an institutionalized practice that is widely regarded in their society as indispensable. I will focus on two conditions that serve to support the perception of a practice's indispensability.

Firstly, there are the *social* conditions under which individual agents inescapably must form their judgment on an institutionalized practice's dispensability. As has been noted, it is beyond contention that for most of its historical existence the moral acceptability of slavery was just taken for granted by the majority of those who lived with it. When only a few, excluding the society's recognized epistemic authorities, challenge the perceived naturalness and inevitability of an institutionalized practice it will be hard to form a judgment that dissents from the majority and the epistemically accredited.[16] This is disputed by Guerrero, who asserts that "it is not clear that being part of a group most members of which accept some proposition *p* thereby makes it more difficult to correctly evaluate whether *p* is true" (2007, 72). But there is abundant evidence, gathered by social and perceptual psychologists, that contradicts his assertion.

The most famously dramatic study on the effects of group membership on an individual's capacity to form independent judgments is Solomon Asch's (1955) experiment on "visual judgment." Subjects were asked to discriminate the lengths of lines printed on cards in a group setting. Roughly 75 percent of subjects gave the wrong answer when all the other members of their group had already given that answer, even though the correct answer was "a clear and simple fact." Still more (in)famous is Stanley Milgram's (1974) study on the effects of epistemic and institutional authority on an individual's ability to act in accordance with their own basic moral values against inflicting harm on another person. As is well known, Milgram found that around 65 percent of his subjects were prepared to administer what they believed to be painful and potentially dangerous or lethal electric shocks to an immobilized co-subject. Variations on these themes have been repeated many times, and there are a multitude of other psychological studies that demonstrate the powerful effects that group membership imposes on the individual's perception and judgment.[17] What such evidence shows is that it can be *very difficult* for individuals to judge and act in a manner that goes against the standard set by the majority or by epistemic authority,[18] even in cases where what the correct judgment or action should be is perfectly clear to anyone outside the group situation. Moreover, in naturalistic settings outside of the psychologist's contrivance, most people have no awareness of the powerful influences on their judgment posed by majority opinion or epistemic authority.

One might think that these studies merely reveal how depressingly large is the number of individuals who have a "conformist" or "authoritarian" personality. The reasonable stance then would be that taken by the few who go against the majority

and epistemic authority. But this tempting assumption is not supported by a careful review of the literature (see Doris 2005). The striking meta-finding to be taken from the situationist paradigm is just how widespread and pervasive is the phenomenon of group and authoritative influence on individual judgment and action. We are *all* highly susceptible, often unknowingly, to the force of majority opinion and expert authority on our belief formation and maintenance. And, it seems, there are no "conformist" or "authoritarian" personalities; those who conform or comply in one situation may well resist in another and vice versa (see Doris's [2005, 24–25] discussion of the lack of cross-situational personality trait consistency). There is, however, a deeper point to be made, namely, that the inherent tendency of individuals to form judgments in line with group and authoritative opinion is constitutive of *sound*, as well as *mistaken*, judgment. Thomas Kuhn has argued that the very essence of scientific rationality consists in perceiving and judging in conformity with the community of specialists, and that the novice has to learn from this group that his or her own scientifically untutored perception and judgment is not to be trusted.[19] And indeed, those who came to believe that slavery was eradicable did not do so on their own, independently of group influence. That belief required group inspiration, nurture, and support, as will be discussed in the next section.

The perceptual and practical judgment of subjects under conditions engineered by social psychologists is not an exact analogy for people judging the dispensability of an institutionalized practice in their wider society. A basic premise of the psychology experiments is that everyone external to the experimental scenario knows how those who are in it *should* judge and act. Asch's and Milgram's experiments were designed to create a conflict between what the outside observer knows to be subjects' spontaneous sense of the correct judgment and action, and social and authoritative pressures that push them into judging and acting contrary to their personal disposition. The whole point of such experiments is to examine how social and situational conditions distort and impede how subjects *should* judge, that is, how they *would* judge outside of those conditions. With regard to the necessity of institutionalized practices, however, social and authoritative forces do not simply distort how people would judge outside that context, for there is no external standpoint available to them. The only outside perspective is the retrospective historical one that comes after the demise or abolition of an institutionalized practice. (One might think that the few mavericks who opposed a practice shows that there was an external perspective, but my point is that there was no perspective external both to the mavericks and to the majority from which to see the correct judgment.) But the disanalogy between judment under experimental conditions and naturalistically judging the necessity of one's society's institutionalized practices only serves to strengthen the edificatory force of the experimental evidence: social and authoritative influence will be all the more pervasively formative and constraining on judgment when no external perspective is available.

The second condition that supports the perception that an institutionalized practice is indispensable is the structure of *institutionality* itself, in relation to human beings' inherent psychological attachment to familiarity, continuity, and

normality.[20] Institutionalized practices are legally sanctioned, guaranteed, and regulated. Those who participate in them enjoy legal protection in their rights to acquire, trade, own, use, and consume the items of property in which the practice deals (slaves and animals, for example). In virtue of a practice's institutionalization, most of those who live or have lived in societies that host it will have been born into, and socialized in, a world that already contains it as a normalized way of doing things. Extensive relations of mediation, hence distanciation, usually insulate most of a society's members from direct perceptual contact with the actual suffering of an institutionalized practice's victims.

It is institutionalization that leads to the practices of slavery and animal exploitation being seen as a quasi *natural* feature of the social world to those who live in societies that host them. This taken-for-grantedness can be brought to light by comparing the different ways in which we first learn about these practices today. Because the wrongness of slavery today has the status of an established fact, one does not first learn or teach "value-neutrally" what kind of socioeconomic practice it is and then learn or teach that there are also reasons for believing it to be morally wrong. Rather, one learns or teaches that slavery is morally wrong simultaneously to learning what kind of socioeconomic practice it is. With animal exploitation it is the other way around. Most people learn about meat and other animal products in a purely utilitarian manner. We learn about them as items of food in terms of their nutritional and sustenance functions, and acquire strong beliefs on their necessity for the fulfilment of these vital functions. The idea that our consumption practices might be morally questionable usually only comes much later, after we have already spent many years acting in a way that presupposes the purely utilitarian (nonmoral) status of those practices. This makes it hard to take seriously questions that challenge the dispensability or reformability of those practices.

Defenders of slavery and animal exploitation were and are able to invoke a variety of warnings issued by expert authorities on the dire consequences of doing away with the functions that these practices serve, such as, for example, economic collapse, social disorder and disintegration, financial hardship, mortal damage to medical research, starvation, and ill health. For most people today, the idea that meat production and scientific research on animals might be prohibited is likely to elicit premonitions of a dull, impoverished, unhealthy, and uncaring world (a world in which the interests of rats, mice, cows, and pigs are protected at the cost of suffering and early death for human beings). It surely does not stretch the imagination to hypothesize that most people in slave trading and owning societies would have had an attitude to the necessity and dispensability of slavery that is similar to most people's today in relation to animal exploitation. If that hypothesis is well founded, then in order to gain some speculative insight into how it was that people living in slave owning and trading societies could have thought slavery indispensable and therefore not unjust, most people need only contemplate their own attitude toward animal exploitation.

Of the two core conditions of adequacy for explaining the "profound transformation in moral perception" represented by the emergence of the antislavery move-

ment and the abolition of slavery, I have now fulfilled the first. I have explained why and how it was that slavery endured for so long as a morally acceptable institution. I did this by showing how the formative and constraining influence of social consensus and epistemic authority over individual judgment, and the conservative bias of legality, familiarity, and continuity, make it extremely difficult for people to doubt the necessity of an established institutionalized practice. As I have said, I believe that this attitude of acceptance is not unreasonable. The aim of this essay, though, is not to *evaluate* the attitude but to *explain* it, and in so doing to explain how it was that slavery managed to endure for so long.

I shall set out now to meet the second condition, namely, to explain why abolitionism and abolition arose and occurred when they did. We will see that just as it is the influence of the social collective that contributed centrally to the longevity of slavery, so it is also, in the form of a special subgroup, the social collective that played the crucial role in promoting its eventual abolition.

V. SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF MORAL CRITICISM

The idea that slavery might be dispensable, and indeed abolishable, became embodied in the various organizations that campaigned publicly for the abolition of the slave trade in late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Britain. Charles Tilly (2004, 33) suggests that around the turn of the eighteenth century this activity consolidated into what can be counted as "the world's first social movement." With the arrival of this social movement the form of critical attitudes toward slavery underwent a crucial transformation. Prior to this development, such criticism as there was had consisted only in the sporadic musings of maverick individuals. After it, criticism became (in Britain first, with the northern United States following) widespread, organized, serious, and respectable.

A somewhat harsh view of the sporadic criticism that existed prior to the formation of the antislavery movement is that it amounted to little more than "empty moralising" in that it was sentimental, disconnected, and inconsequential (Brown 2006, 52). It was often motivated by an indulgent quest for purity of conscience rather than radical social change, and found immediate satisfaction in the "delectable tear" of sentimentality (ibid.). Whatever the actual degree of its sincerity, the core features of this form of critical activity are that it was abstract, disconnected from practical political action, and not taken seriously by the wider public. The rare instances of criticism of animal exploitation that occurred prior to the formation of the animal liberation movement in the 1970s took the same form. In the history of modern philosophy, for example, Rousseau, Schopenhauer, Bentham, and Mill stand out for having expressed moral qualms over the exploitation of animals. Mill chastised human beings for having their heads in "the slough of selfishness," and Bentham denounced the human "hand of tyranny" that kept animals in their place.

Yet neither of them endorsed antivivisectionism, and both were "lifelong meat eaters" (Regan 2007, 14), as were Rousseau and Schopenhauer. Their criticism looks moralistic, because on the one hand it stood out among their contemporaries as hyper-radical, but on the other hand it issued in no calls for a change in behavior toward those practices over which it ostensibly stood in sharp condemnation. Even so, this moralism was probably not, contrary to what Regan and Singer imply, down to personal shortcoming.[21] It was, rather, a consequence of the wider absence of social support for feasible alternatives to the criticized practices. What they lacked is the example, nurture, and support provided by a social movement for change.

With the formation of a social movement for radical change of an institution-alized practice the possibility of moral criticism of it is thereby transformed. The new context created by a social movement opens up a publicly visible space in which respectable persons, with authority and expertise, position themselves in opposition to the criticized practice. A social movement for change brings to pub-lic attention the need to engage in reflection and deliberation on the criticized prac-tice and the obligation to come to a decision on its moral acceptability. Thus the first transformative effect of a social movement is to disrupt the hitherto taken-for-grantedness of a criticized practice, and to render the question of its necessity and dispensability thinkable and debatable. The second effect is to orientate discussion and action in a practical direction by focusing attention on alternatives to the criti-cized practice. The third effect is the transmutation of critical ideas into a coordi-nated program of social and political action, which in the case of slavery culminated in legislative enactment and military enforcement of the movement's abolitionist aims.

Why did the antislavery movement come into being at the time that it did, and how was it able to achieve its radical aims? It is a striking fact that the most promi-nent and influential members of the abolition movement were Quakers, who were also highly successful business people, in industry, shipping, banking, and com-merce, and thus at the vanguard of the newly developing capitalist mode of pro-duction. Some Marxist historians have challenged the popular and official view of the achievements of these people wherein they are depicted as moral heroes, and the British government that enacted their aims as supremely humanitarian. Most famously, Eric Williams argued in *Capitalism and Slavery* in 1944 that abolition was actually motivated not by humanitarian values but by the economic self-interest of the campaigners and the British government. But the consensus among historians today is that the abolition of the slave trade and dismantling of slavery in the British colonies occurred at a time when the slave trade was integral to British trade and industry, and both were at their peak of profitability. In short, abolition "was com-parable to committing suicide for a major part of Britain's economy" (Davis 2009).

The evidence does seem to suggest, then, that the popular view of the aboli-tionists being motivated solely by humanitarian moral conviction is correct after all. However, there is also a strong reason for thinking that their actions were not as

purely altruistic as they seem just in the light of the economic evidence. This is to be seen in a rather significant omission in the abolitionists' moral concern, which shows that their altruism was quite remarkably circumscribed. They did not extend the moral concern that they had for the suffering of slaves to the plight of British workers (many of them very young children), who toiled long hours in unsanitary, debilitating, and dangerous conditions, in the new factories, mines, and mills. The discrepancy is glaring: abolitionists' moral vision enabled them to perceive with naked clarity the evils of faraway slavery, yet they failed to see the suffering endured by workers in their own country as an evil at all. Moreover, this is not just a retrospective critical observation, but an accusation leveled by contemporaneous critics of abolitionists, namely, that their "moral outrage was being directed against oppression overseas while similar or worse oppression was complacently tolerated at home" (Davis 1987, 800). It goes without saying that the British government was not minded to institute legislation prohibiting the extreme excesses of labor exploitation. Once again, we see the insufficiency of an awareness that an institutionalized practice causes suffering as a reason for finding it unjust.

Given the apparently obvious similarity in moral badness of the suffering caused by New World slavery and British industrial labor—a similarity which abolitionists were forced by their critics to confront—why did the abolitionists fail to see or acknowledge that similarity? Davis argues that their "class interest" in promoting the market economy and the commodification of labor power prevented them from seeing the dire condition of industrial workers as a moral evil. Although he concedes that abolitionists did not campaign against slavery *in order to* promote the institutionalized practice of wage labor relations,[22] he does think that their omission is morally reprehensible. Only a culpable self-deception (unconsciously motivated by class interest), Davis contends, allowed them not to see or recognize the suffering of British workers as a morally bad state of affairs (1987, 802). This evaluation is challenged by Haskell, who does not deny that abolitionism had the effect of facilitating the onward institutionalization of wage labor and free market relations, but maintains that this was an unintended consequence of abolitionists' actions of which they had no expectation. Haskell therefore argues (like my mitigating claim for Rousseau, Schopenhauer, Mill, and Bentham with regard to vegetarianism and antivivisectionism) that the abolitionists sincerely and reasonably believed that the moral status of slavery was categorically different from that of wage labor. Whereas abolitionists had come to see slavery as a socially constructed system of exploitation based on brutality, greed, and tyranny, they saw wage labor, with its legal guarantee of self-ownership and freedom of contract, as the realization of conditions commensurate with human beings' essential nature. In a word, abolitionists saw slavery as the exploitation of labor through force, violence, and captivity against the will of the enslaved, but wage labor as the consensual and uncoerced exchange of goods and services among equal agents.

Because the primary purpose of this essay is explanation and not evaluation, this is not the place to enter into the dispute on the overall assessment of abolition-

ists' moral responsibility for their good actions and (arguably) bad omissions.[23] Of greater significance for the purpose of explaining the timing and location of abolition is the extent of historians' agreement over the social and economic conditions out of which abolitionism arose. The key fact, which features centrally in otherwise competing historical accounts, is that abolitionists were able not just to criticize slavery "moralistically," but to commend a plausible alternative to it, one which, moreover, they could portray as being better for everyone in the long run. Their ability to do this depended on there actually being a demonstrable viable alternative, which there was, in the market economy and system of wage labor that underlay the impressive achievements and potential of the developing capitalist mode of production. This was, in effect, the first time that a competitive alternative to the functionality of slavery and other forms of coerced labor had been available: "free labor was virtually unknown in the rest of the world during most of human history" (Davis 2009). It was primarily the *moral* superiority of wage labor, as the "natural" and divinely ordained mode of instituting economic relations between free, equal, and rational beings, to which abolitionists appealed.

Thus the abolitionists did not just campaign *against* slavery, but also at the same time *for* wage labor and the market economy. The success of the animal liberation movement (such as it is) is also, I believe, predicated on the availability, plausibility, and respectability of alternatives to the practices of animal exploitation. Liberationists are able to argue that a "cruelty free" lifestyle is not only a feasible option, but one which would be much better for the consumer's health, world food distribution, and the environment (as well, of course, as being better for the unconsumed animals). This lifestyle was not a realistic option for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century philosophers such as Rousseau, Schopenhauer, Bentham, and Mill. It only became easily available in the late twentieth century through developments in scientific and medical knowledge, the technological, productive, and distributional capacity of mature capitalist economies, and the popular example set by participants in the social movement for reform and abolition.

It is this ability to point to an available, plausibly superior alternative to a harmful institutionalized practice, that lifts objections to it out of the realm of merely moralistic expression and into that of efficacious radical social criticism. The need for a plausible alternative also explains why abolitionists failed to see the misery of industrial workers as a morally unjust state of affairs. The reason being, quite simply, that whereas in the case of slavery abolitionists were able to advocate its dispensability by invoking the superiority and naturalness of wage labor, with regard to wage labor itself they had nothing to serve as an available, plausibly superior, alternative to it.[24] The suffering of the urban and rural poor in Britain was perceived similarly to how the suffering of slaves was perceived before the antislavery movement, and how we now perceive the suffering of the world's destitute: as a misfortune that at most deserves one's sympathy and regret that nothing can be done about it, apart from the charitable efforts of some especially sensitive souls.

It remains the case today that, according to widespread consensus, there is no

plausible alternative to wage labor and the market economy, and apart from a basic welfare "safety net," those that suffer hardship or poverty are considered simply unfortunate, not the victims of institutionalized injustice. Maverick critics (mostly Marxist intellectuals) that advocate a revolutionary change to the economic system are not taken seriously, and typically are seen to be either utopian dreamers or dangerous saboteurs—just like pre-antislavery movement critics of slavery were.

VI. CONCLUSION: MORAL ARGUMENT IS NOT ENOUGH

The abolition of the slave trade and dismantling of existing slave systems in the nineteenth century is clearly a shining example of the progressively transformative power of morally motivated protest. But the crux of my argument has been that moral argument is not enough by itself to get large numbers of people to turn against a harm-inflicting institutionalized practice hosted by their society. This does not mean that moral argument is an inert or epiphenomenal form of activity, but it does indicate that it requires certain social, material, and practical conditions to become effective. Proponents of moral explanation claim that this mode of explanation is continuous with commonsense perspectives on morality. But although I have rejected moral explanations of the persistence and ending of slavery, my argument is not incompatible with the ordinary commonsensical understanding of moral obligation. It is, I suggest, also part of commonsense morality to hold that if there is no plausible alternative to a useful institutionalized practice in one's society then that practice cannot be considered morally wrong, and those who insist that it is wrong are just being moralistic.

NOTES

1. There is consensus among contemporary historians on this. Davis (1975, 11, 48), for example, describes slavery as "a social evil to which mankind had been blind for centuries" and which had been seen as one of the "supposedly inevitable misfortunes of life." See also Haskell (1987), Brown (2006), Temperley (1977).

2. I will just say that I largely concur with Leiter's (2001, 94) judgment that (at least) many moral explanations are "just patently vacuous" pseudo-explanations, "a repetition of the datum rather than an explanation," as he aptly puts it.

3. Dillon (1969, 503) neatly formulates the problem thus: "slavery had existed for many centuries, yet abolitionism was a relatively late development. How could this chronological discrepancy be explained?"

4. It should be pointed out that Aristotle's defense of slavery was exceptional at the time (Williams 1993), and that there was hardly any "proslavery" justificatory activity until the mid-eighteenth century (Brown 2006, 35). The rarity of justifications of slavery is also indicative of the absence of criticism, since justification is always a defensive response to criticism; the absence of both justification and criticism testifies to the taken-for-grantedness of slavery.

5. Giuseppe Cambiano conjectures that those unidentified critics against whom Aristotle took up arms were "either isolated intellectuals or members of some exclusive group," and Williams (1993,

112) describes their views (somewhat uncharitably, it seems to me) as having been expressed "in general and abstract terms." Brown (2006, 40) writes that "the history of antislavery sentiment before the 1760s is the history of isolated moralists." Even abolitionist leaders, many of whom were otherwise respected bourgeois citizens, were often denounced as "pious charlatans, all too happy to ruin the empire with costly and dangerous experiments" (Brown 2006, 10).

6. Moody-Adams seizes upon this consideration as evidential support for her opposing claim that no one could have been rendered *unable* to form a critical judgment by their culture. I think both extremes (either that people were unable or that they could not have been unable to form critical views) are untenable. See Pleasants (2008).

7. "In every slave regime some people were morally perceptive enough to recognize that slaves suffered" (Haskell 1987, 849); "prior to the eighteenth century … humanitarians expressed compassion for the misfortune of individual slaves" (Davis 1975, 82); in ancient Greece, "no one was disposed to deny" that slavery was "intensely unpleasant for the slaves" (Williams 1993, 109).

8. As Haskell (1998, 302) puts it, *"for two millennia after Aristotle, the suffering of slaves continued to be perceived as nothing worse than a regrettable but necessary evil."*

9. Because normative advocacy is not my purpose in this paper, and because the moral status of institutionalized animal exploitation has not yet been settled, "animal exploitation" should be read value-neutrally, as equivalent to, for example, "mineral exploitation." Likewise, when I refer to animals as victims of the practices that exploit them I mean that they suffer pain and distress, but not necessarily that they suffer it *wrongfully*.

10. Tom Regan, the founder of the idea that animals have rights, says: "clearly, there is something in the idea of being for animal welfare that every person of goodwill can accept" (2007, 33).

11. When an institutionalized practice is unhesitatingly taken for granted by a society's members as a quasi natural feature of the social world into which they have been born, most will have no explicit beliefs about its justness. In such circumstances there will have been little or no occasion to consider whether or not it is just. I think this may be what Williams (1993, 117) means when he says that for most ancient Greeks slavery "was not seen as either just or unjust." Haskell (1998, 294) interprets Williams as attributing to the ancient Greeks, via this "baffling distinction" between "'not just' and 'unjust,'" an esoteric moral perceptual ability. But on the assumption that Williams meant that most Greeks simply did not think about slavery in terms of justness because they took it to be a natural, necessary, and indispensable practice, I take this attitude to be commonplace and characteristic of most people's view of animal exploitation today.

12. Indeed, until Peter Singer published his groundbreaking "Famine, Affluence and Morality" (1972), no moral philosopher had even considered that there *might* be a direct omissive relation between our comfortably affluent consumptive practices and the destitution of distant people. Speaking for myself, this possibility had not occurred to me until I read Singer's essay, and I find that it comes as a shocking surprise when introduced to students.

13. Guerrero and Moody-Adams actually think that, unlike the justifiability of slavery for past people, it is difficult for us to work out whether animal exploitation is morally wrong. Guerrero commends a precautionary principle against killing animals just in case it is wrong (2007, 77), while Moody-Adams says that the question is open to "genuine moral disagreement" (1997, 116). Neither offers any reason for this supposed difference of difficulty.

14. As John Searle (1996) has persuasively shown, the reasonableness of holding some beliefs, namely, those with a social object, such as the function of money, consists *entirely* in the fact that everyone else holds them too.

15. Kraut (1994) also argues that most Greeks *could not* have believed slavery necessary, but for the opposite reason to that given by Moody-Adams, namely, that they *lacked* the skills of counterfactual reasoning (but this would entail that they also lacked the ability to think it dispensable).

16. Until the mid-eighteenth century, hardly any respected philosopher, clergy, or scientist had challenged the seeming naturalness and inevitability of slavery.

17. These studies, dating at least from the 1950s, constitute a "paradigm" (in Kuhn's sense of the term) within psychology. See Doris (2005) for an illuminating exposition of the situationist paradigm and discussion of its philosophical implications.

18. But not impossible; there is nearly always a sizable minority that resists social pressures to conform or comply. This important aspect of the findings, which is often underappreciated, is mir-

rored in social reality itself, where there are always some dissidents who reject the normative consensus on their society's exploitative institutionalized practices.

19. Karl Popper agrees with Kuhn on this: an isolated Robinson Crusoe on a deserted island would not be doing proper science even if he managed to construct laboratory equipment and followed disciplined experimental and observational procedure. The reason is that "there is nobody but himself to check his results; nobody but himself to correct those prejudices which are the unavoidable consequence of his peculiar mental history …" (1966 § 219). And Wittgenstein concurs, for if "whatever is going to seem to me right is right," that means "we can't talk about right."

20. See Kuhn's (1996, 62–64) discussion of an experiment in perceptual psychology that vividly demonstrates the "conservative" effects of familiarity in shaping our expectations as to what there is to see. Kuhn thinks this applies equally to cognitive and perceptual processes. See also Harold Garfinkel's (1984) seminal micro-sociological "breaching experiments." Garfinkel's method was to disrupt people's taken-for-granted expectations and assumptions in their everyday settings and then observe their extravagant reactions of outrage and bewilderment, which he plausibly took to be indicative of the strength of their psychological attachment to familiarity, continuity, and normality.

21. They showed no sign of insincerity, weakness of will, or regret or shame at not living up to their own avowed moral principles.

Moralism is an interesting concept. As charged by contemporaries, it accuses the critic or preacher of sinning against the norms of common decency by fraudulently presenting what is really nonmoral behavior as though it were morally bad, thereby attempting to make the critic look good by making everyone else look bad. Applied retrospectively, the charge of moralism accuses the critic of failing to act in accordance with his or her own moral principles, while continuing to benefit from the practices and behavior that he or she criticizes. Either way, the "moralist" is disparaged for debasing the genuine currency of moral discourse and practice.

22. Thus the interest that he attributes to abolitionists is by no means direct. Rather, it is a *collective* interest, that is, the interest their social class had in building and promoting an economy and social order on the foundation of legally guaranteed freedom to contract and to exchange goods and services. This collective interest could be connected to individual interest, along the lines suggested by recent philosophical work on collective responsibility (see, for example, Miller 2004)—but Davis does not do this, and it would in any case, I think, amount only to a quite attenuated individual interest.

23. See the various contributions in Bender (1992).

24. The same reason explains why most critics of animal exploitation advocate only vegetarianism, not veganism. It is arguable that, by arbitrarily restricting their concern to the suffering of animals that are killed to be eaten, and excluding those that suffer similar pain and distress in the process of dairy and egg production, the moral concern of ethical vegetarians is limited in much the same way that the abolitionists' was.

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