

ALL ABOUT NORMATIVITY

by  
Zhou, Yili

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As members of the Dissertation Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by: Yili Zhou  
titled: All About Normativity

and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

*Terence Horgan*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date: Apr 26, 2023

Terence Horgan

*Mark Timmons*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date: Apr 24, 2023

Mark Timmons

*John Muniz*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date: Apr 26, 2023

John Muniz

*Reza Hadisi*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date: Apr 26, 2023

Reza Hadisi

Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copies of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

We hereby certify that we have read this dissertation prepared under our direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.



*Terence Horgan*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date: Apr 26, 2023

Terence Horgan  
Philosophy

*Mark Timmons*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date: Apr 24, 2023

Mark Timmons  
Philosophy



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is a turbulence journey. Moving to a new country, learning a new language, studying a new subject (education of analytic philosophy in China, in general, was not very good, no mention I was not major in philosophy in my undergraduate), adjusting into a new culture, etc. I can keep listing all these difficulties that I have encountered during my years in the PhD program, however, none of them was the one that almost “killed” me.

At some point, I start to realize that I am not welcomed. I do not belong here. I start to notice how dismissive some people are, who have a good reputation of being supportive to other students. I start to notice that people keep conflating me with another Chinese woman (even though there are only 3 Asian women in the department). I start to notice the expression on their faces when they have to talk to me, which tells me that they seem to believe “This Chinese woman is nothing: stupid, quiet, working hard, but that’s everything she gets”.

They do not believe that, one day, I will become a good philosopher; and it is not only they do not believe it, but they never consider it as a remote possibility. However, they always have this hope to their other students. They support them unconditionally, they never “double check” their academic record, because they believe their students.

But they never believe me.

It is one thing to say “let’s just be me and show to them how good I am!”, it is another thing to act on this for six year. I think I have shown them evidence how good I am, but they never believe it. They just hold that belief that I am nothing, and they don’t update it on the new evidence. I don’t understand. But I can tell that they are really good philosophers, full of knowledge and experiences. I admire them. I admire them so much that it is really difficult for me to not believe them, even though believing in them means stabbing a dagger in the heart. It is hurt. It is painful. It is killing me.

And they are right that “I am nothing”, to some extent. I know there are some good points in this dissertation, and I like these points. But let’s be honest, I hate this dissertation. It is terrible. It is a real piece of shit. I would love to have at least one more year to polish it, make it “readable”, make it deserve my name on it, and make it deserve Terry and Reza putting their names on it. In this sense, I fail. I fail myself, and I fail Terry and Reza.

Terry and Reza are only people who believe me. Terry never expresses his worry, but he keeps coming up with solutions for my situation and keeps asking me questions with his poker face. That is how I know he cares. And Reza. Reza is more expressional, and he tells me directly that he thinks I am doing good. What’s more precious is that, they both not only care about my dissertation, but also my career as a philosopher. Even though, neither of them is able to push back on the nasty thoughts others cast on me, their support is the only light that leads me through the years of endless darkness.

I know I cannot stay there anymore. I have made an agreement with them that I will leave in my six year, and I have tried hard to obtain this deal. If I choose to stay, I need to talk to them again to change that deal. It is simply impossible for me to beg like a dog again. So I need to rush myself to graduate with this horribly terrible dissertation, with the guilty of failing Terry and Reza (I know they would not think like this, but this is the real thought I have), because I know I need to drag myself out of this place, before I fully break down.

I am on the edge. I am almost broken. I cannot even bring myself to physically near the social science building, so at least one third of my dissertation was written down on the bench

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inside the music school, near water fountain and women restroom. Music school becomes a sanctuary to me. My interaction with people there makes me realize something is not going right in my department. I was so afraid of speaking English, because their reactions (for instance, they would lean in, widen their eyes, and put their ear towards my mouth) show that “my English is bad, I should not speak, I am wasting other people’s time” (as an East Asian woman, I don’t like waste others’ time). But I surprisedly find myself speaking English fluently in the music school, especially to my piano teacher, Daniel Linder. He not only accepts me in his studio but also restores my sanity as a human who has dignity. I don’t think he is especially “supportive” to me. He simply supports everyone in his studio. But that is all I need. I simply need to be treated as everyone else. As a teacher, he also teaches me other things beyond piano, but the most important thing he helps me relearn is that I am not a piece of garbage, which was something, at some point, I truly believed. Having a minor in music is not only a “break” for me, but also a life buoy.

I started to look for a life buoy under the encouragement of my roommate and my sister Ke (who is often conflated with me, even though she has long hair and I have very short hair. So, we decide to have a name together: Yikeyikeyikeyi). Ke is both strong and caring. It is lucky for me to have her around. I have already said a lot to her at the end of my minor degree recital (link here: <https://youtu.be/BqW5XYq8E5g>, in the last a few minutes in this video). It happened at the end of the last semester, and I have nothing new to add on. So I stop here.

I want to mention that even though I am not close to all students in the department, many of them have helped me in a lot of ways. I own a proper “thank you” to them. And Rhys, I hate my dissertation but I love the paper we wrote and publish together, and thank you for putting my name before your name.

I want to thank my mom, and my childhood friends 倩倩, 娜娜, 蕾姐, 王博, 小黄, 李葵 as well. I know they are not going to read it (and I won’t send it to them). So I won’t say more here. See, I have family, I have friends, and I have supporting systems, both in China and here. How lucky I am.

I want to stop now. I am supposed to submit this dissertation today and I have been writing on this acknowledgement for 2 hours now, in the morning, without breakfast. My belly is complaining, and I hear my phone vibrated which is probably Yaowen looking for me. I am not going to proofread this (since my dissertation has been proofread by Luke already). After reading it through, I will submit my dissertation, and look forward to my career as a professional philosopher.

I, ZHOU Yili, survived. I will keep working, and I hope I will keep loving philosophy till the end of my day.

### **LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

We respectfully acknowledge the University of Arizona is on the land and territories of Indigenous peoples. Today, Arizona is home to 22 federally recognized tribes, with Tucson being home to the O'odham and the Yaqui. Committed to diversity and inclusion, the University strives to build sustainable relationships with sovereign Native Nations and Indigenous communities through education offerings, partnerships, and community service.

DEDICATION

*To my mom and Ke*

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### Abstract

This dissertation is a collection of standalone papers about normativity in the moral and aesthetic domains. Taken on its own, each chapter deals with different thesis. However, as shown in the title, these three chapters are united under my view of normativity. In chapter 1, I argue that normativity of morality must *speak to the individual* by arguing against David Copp's style of large-scale of moral practice. In chapter 2, I argue that the aesthetic normativity of score-following in classical music performance is grounded in aesthetic experience of performers. In chapter 3, I argue that moral normativity is grounded in genuine moral experience.

Here is the summary of my view. I argue that we cannot explain the normativity for the individual agent, in morality or music performance, just by referencing an act's value for the relevant community or the practice of the community. By contrast, I argue that the pertinent account of normativity must be grounded in facts that refer to individuals. That is because, regardless of whether some large-scale practice preserves or promotes some value for all humans, its justification will not transmit to the justification of individuals. Therefore, the end or goodness of large-scale practice does not serve as an appropriate start to discuss issues of normativity. Instead, we should look for a normative source grounded in the experience of individuals, such as genuine, self-cultivated genuine domains specifically, normative experiences.



## Introduction

This dissertation is a collection of three papers. In this dissertation, I argue against the practice-based conception of normativity. According to this important view, in a normative system like morality or music performance, a pertinent agent should act in such-and-such ways in order to address the common interests of the relevant community. By contrast, I argue that the relevant community is not the source of normativity for individuals. This is because the normativity of rules governing large-scale practice for a community need not transmit to an individual member of the community, as shown in some interesting cases I discuss. This dissertation thus focuses on the idea that some types of normativity must *speak to the individual*—i.e., it must address the relevant significance of norm-conformity or reason-conformity to the individual, rather than merely addressing its significance to the community. Any normative system needs to make sense of the “binding force” of norms for the individual, although in different ways according to the kind of normativity. For instance, paradigmatic moral norms have a robust binding force for humans, whereas the binding force of paradigmatic music-performance norms arises from an optionally chosen social/professional role.

In the first paper of this dissertation, I focus on practice-based theories of moral normativity. I argue specifically against David Copp’s influential naturalistic moral realist approach while also maintaining that my critique of Copp is generalizable to other approaches that are similar in spirit. Copp locates the normativity of morality in the “ultimate ends” of the society. According to this approach, there are “generic problems” that need solutions in functioning human societies, and moral norms are normative because they are required for solving these generic societal problems. I argue that this approach cannot account for the appropriately robust normative force of morality for individuals, because there is an essential

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feature of moral normativity that is missing in Copp's theory: speaking to the individuals. The fundamental problem can be put this way: even if the need to solve generic social problems constrains a society to be such that most of its members conform to operative moral norms, why does this social need constrain a particular individual (and me, in particular) to conform, given that most others do conform?

Considerations that count against the practice view do not rely on peculiar features of morality, but rather that the requirement to speak to the individual is a general feature of many normative systems—even those, like classical-piano performance, that only apply relative to an optional, voluntarily undertaken, social role. In the second paper of this dissertation, I focus on norm of total-score-following in classical music performance as a case study. The norm of total-score-following dictates that a performance should conform not only to the aspects of the musical score that are normally regarded as constitutive of correct performance, but also to those aspects that are often regarded as mere “suggestions” by the composer (e.g., a marking *fff* on certain notes, meaning “very, very loud”). Practice-based theories have gained considerable attention in recent scholarship on this topic. In this view, the requirement to follow all the composer's score markings has binding force because this rule defines what constitutes the correct practice of classical music performance. I argue that a classical-music performer has an aesthetically binding aesthetic reason to follow all score-markings—a reason that is beyond mere constitutively correct performance. Inspired by the problems faced by the practice-based view, I propose a new understanding of the normativity of total-score compliance. I offer a characterization of a special aesthetic experience that constitutively requires following all of the composer's score markings, and I argue that pursuit of such an aesthetic experience is normatively binding on performers of classical music.

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The third paper in this dissertation cashes out the metaphor of “speaking to the individual”, in a way that incorporates the concept of “making one’s mind sincere” and self-cultivation from Chinese philosophy. I propose that moral authority is grounded in a self-cultivated genuine moral experience. To start, I focus on the question of “why be moral”: this question asks for the justification of morality as a whole. Offering an answer from the perspective of a large-scale practice would not answer this question, because it does not address the problem of why “I”, as an individual, should care about the pertinent normative system, without negotiation. This is where Chinese philosophy can contribute to the current discussion, according to which we would have uneasy mind if we do not act morally. This uneasy feeling does not constitute overriding or full-fledged motivational dispositions, but they do provide a psychological inescapability which leads us toward morality. Being moral is to sincerely respond to this uneasy feeling, which brings about special contentment and the sense of being rooted to one’s life. However, this uneasy feeling by itself is not genuine moral experience. Only through self-cultivation would one have genuine moral experience which is normatively binding for individuals: only it answers the “why be moral” question and provides the justification of morality.

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## Chapter 1

### The Normativity of Morality that Speak to the Individuals

#### Abstract

My goal is to show the problems of end-relational moral normativity as explored by realistic naturalists like David Copp. End-relational normativity locates the normativity of morality to the ultimate end (or goal) of the society (or community). I argue that this normative structure only grounds moral reasons for a society, but not for individuals in the society. Missing the feature of speaking to the individuals has the problematic result of annihilating the normative force of morality on individuals: unless the ends of individuals aligns with the ends of society, morality does not have a robust normative force on individuals. However, this result contradicts realistic naturalists' purpose of naturalizing robust normativity of morality.

In this paper, I will explain what “speak to individuals” means and will illustrate how realistic naturalists like Copp fail to ground a moral normativity that speaks to the individuals. In the first section, I offer a characterization of normativity that distinguishes morality from other systems. I propose a novel way to understand the concept of inescapability that reflects different grades and thereby successfully captures commonsensical moral normativity. Then, I emphasize that one kind of account of normativity that some naturalists support, formal normativity, is too weak to capture it. For preserving this commonsensical moral normativity, naturalist moral realists like David Copp rejects formal normativity.

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In the second section, I introduce Copp's project of naturalizing moral normativity. Specifically, I analyze how Copp's explanation of moral normativity differs from formal normativity and how it preserves properly robust normative force.

In the last section, I discuss the main difficulty in Copp's theory: the ends of a society cannot extend to the ends of individuals. The significance of solving the generic problem of sociality will not extend to every individual, just like the significance of solving the chess problem will not extend to every individual. I conclude that there is an essential feature of moral normativity which is missing in Copp's theory: speaking to the individuals.

## **1. Formal normativity and (the common sense) moral normativity**

Let us consider these three cases:

Defective chess player: Xiao is a professional chess player. In one chess game, she deliberately moves a piece illegally several times. This illegal move is not easy to be detected, but she knows that these moves violate the chess rules.

Defective shoemaker: Ke is the only shoemaker in a small village. To get more customers, he makes shoes that are easily worn out and lead to some small problems like leaking.

Defective moral agent: Ai is an ordinary adult who believes that consuming animals' products is immoral. However, they consistently consume the meat left out by their partner when their partner is out of town.

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Intuitively, when Xiao constantly violates certain chess rules intentionally, she is criticizable because the chess rules forbid it. Whether she “wants” that specific norm or not, there is a sense of ought that applies such that she should adhere to it. We can tell a similar story for Ke and Ai: the same sense of being mistaken can be found in all three cases.

However, there are some differences. For Ke, the cobbling standards are more objective and less arbitrary in the sense that the natural facts about our physical bodies constrain what shoes should be like. However, Ke could get himself off the hook by changing his goal as a shoemaker, just like Xiao could get herself off the hook by changing her goal as a chess player. In this sense, it is up to them whether they are still subject to criticism for violating pertinent norms. However, intuitively, we do not think that Ai can get themselves off the hook of morality by changing their subjective goal or preference. Intuitively, we think that whether Ai's action is subject to criticism is not up to them. We think that moral requirements have some special binding force that other areas like chess games lack. And thereby, intuitively, violating moral rules is more criticizable because moral rules have more binding force on us.

But why? Because normativity of morality is different from the normativity of chess or cobbling: morality binds Ai more than chess rule binds Xiao or cobbling rules bind Ke.

*Inescapability* captures this non-optional character of normativity of morality. In the following, I will provide a preliminary list of some core phenomena that this concept refers to and focus on the third one, since the third one is the least intuitive. Let's start with the first one.

(1) Inescapability contains but is beyond, or at least not identical to, a merely psychologically-compelling feeling of oughtness.

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In moral practice, sometimes we feel that there is no alternative but to do or refrain from doing. Morality points out a clear direction of what it requires or what it permits. For example, when people sacrifice their personal interests in order to “do the morally right things”, they report that they have no choice but to do what morality “commands”. In the debate between motivational judgments internalism and externalism shows, the former supports a first-person-inviolable feeling as the best candidate that captures the pertinent sense of inescapability. But even for motivational judgment internalism, that purely internal feeling is different from a seeming illusion or some irrational zeal; that is, we do not equate the sense of inescapability to a mere psychological feeling. It is not only a compelling feeling for us to act morally but a compelling feeling under some regulation. By the regulation of compelling feelings, I mean a kind of moral evaluation that is independent of psychological feelings. There is something above and beyond compelling feelings because this something-above-and-beyond grounds the oughtness of having these feelings. For example, we still evaluate the amoralist to be one who should have these feelings, even though they happen to have no compelling feelings for morality because they find that acting according to morality will not add any utility or benefit to their own interests.

(2) Inescapability is different from natural necessity via causal relation or some purely constructive necessity, since the force of moral inescapability is a normative force. At the least, a possibility of being morally wrong should be conceivable.

This inescapable character of morality must be distinguished from the natural laws, which contain a different kind of inescapability that does not allow even the conceptual possibility of being morally wrong. Physical laws have the inescapability of natural necessity because nothing

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can possibly successfully defy them. Natural laws bind us through causal relations. For example, as a living animal, I should go to grab a glass of water when I am thirsty because of the natural law that all animals need water. Regardless of my subjective preference—I might be a person who dislikes drinking water or refuse to drink water for some other reason—it is still the case that there is a kind of “should” for me to drink water when my body needs it. The only plausible way for me to escape from its binding force is death. But even death does not count as a successful escape because it is the result of causal efficiency. Because of the causal interaction between the natural laws and me, there is no conceptual possibility for me to successfully defy this law. Similarly, consider the spelling rule of a language. If I spell the word “tomato” as “potato”, then I am not violating the spelling rule because I am not spelling the word “tomato”. As Railton puts it, “acts of spelling constitutively involve satisfying the norms of spelling” (Railton, 1999). However, normative force is considered as a different kind of force that provides a different kind of inescapability. This sense of normative force, as Jean Hampton suggests (Hampton, 2009, p. 92), is different from “the horse grabs the hay”. Despite the question of where to locate the source of their binding force, normative rules cannot be “in the world” in the same way that physical/natural laws or grammar norms are. That is because the normative force does not operate through its consequence or its constituents. Since it is neither a causal power nor a constitutive necessity, the question of how to explain the special inescapability of moral normativity—which is possessed only by morality (along with other normative systems) but not by other systems like chess games or footwear—remains unanswered.

- (3) Inescapability comes with different grades.



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I suggest that the inescapability of normativity can come with different grades. First, notice that there is a distinction between what is inescapable and when it is inescapable: the former concerns the content that is inescapable, and the latter concerns the operational conditions of inescapability. Take the “Coke or Sprite” case for example. Whether or not I should drink Sprite rather than Coke is not inescapable in both aspects: the content is determined by us (through our preference) and whether or not the pertinent rules operate is also determined by us. The rules of cobbling and the rules of chess are different: the content is not completely determined by us because it is constrained by some natural conditions (in the cobbling case) and by some socially constructed constraints (in the chess case), but whether or not we have reasons to follow it is nevertheless determined by us. However, morality is different from these three cases: neither the content of what morality requires nor the operational condition of when it binds is “up to us”. Because neither of these is optional, in the moral case, we have the strongest sense of inescapability. This is shown in the following chart:

Strength of normative force		
	Content of the rule	Whether or not the rules bind
In moral case (robust normativity)	Not up to us	Not up to us
In chess case (non-robust normativity)	Not up to us	Up to us
In cobbling case (non-robust normativity)	Not up to us <sup>1</sup>	Up to us
In the “Coke or Sprite” case (no-normativity) <sup>2</sup>	Up to us	Up to us

<sup>1</sup> In the chess case and cobbling case, there are two kinds of “not up to us” in terms of the content: one is not up to us because of the social construction, another is not up to us because of the natural constraints.

<sup>2</sup> I hold an expressivist view on whether or not there is a normative standard in the preference or tastes.

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Another way to consider the different grades of inescapability is to consider Joyce's distinction between *inevaporability* and *inescapability*, which roughly corresponds to the distinction between the weak sense of inescapability and a strong sense of inescapability. According to Joyce (2001), along with Foot (1972), the content of chess rules will not evaporate even if no one cares. Our lack of interest will not make the binding force of these rules evaporate, but inevitability of the rule does not give us any reason to follow that rule either. However, that is not how we think about morality. As Joyce suggests:

In other words, in the moral case, we are not content to admit that our claim that there is a reason to refrain from killing is merely a permissible way of speaking from a perspective that endorses the dictates of morality. (2001, p.41)

Morality gives us inescapable reasons to follow, not only because the content of moral requirements is not up to us, but also because whether or not morality binds us is not up to us. We are not "content to admit" that moral requirements are only within the normative system of morality in a way that from a third-person perspective, someone could correctly claim that "according to morality, doing X is morally permissible/morally required." Instead, we think that the moral requirement gives rise to reasons that are not only inevitable, but also inescapable in the strong sense.

The distinction among different degrees of inescapability explains many of our intuitions about how morality differs from other areas. For example, we think that the content of moral requirements is not only sanctioned by a normative system, but by a normative system with importance and significance. The strong sense of inescapability explains why we think that

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morality is more significant and more important than other systems of rules: someone who violates moral rules or fails to respond to her moral reasons makes a significant mistake according to a normative system that she cannot escape from, rather than a mistake that is merely evaluated as “incorrect” according to the rules of a system that she can escape from. Morality is more significant and more important because it has some special force that other areas lack. As Copp puts it:

Intuitively, however, the normativity of morality and prudence are significantly different, for the ethical perspective is not arbitrary, and it is non-optional. A person who pays no attention to her ethical reasons is thereby making a mistake of normative significance. Ethical reasons and oughts seem in this way to be robustly normative, or authoritative, I will say. (Copp 2022, draft, Ethical Realism and Robust Normativity)

However, not everyone agrees that the moral mistake that Ai makes is more significant than the mistakes that Xiao and Ke make. According to normative formalism (Enoch 2017, Finlay forthcoming, and Broome 2007), the normative role that morality plays in our actions and decisions is not distinctive from the normative role that chess rules or cobbling rules play. Moral mistakes by themselves are no more normatively significant than other mistakes. The normative binding force of formal normativity comes from existing and established rules which serve as truth-making conditions for the pertinent claims and actions. Formal normativity is obtained whenever there are correctness conditions.

With respect to the common intuition of inescapability, realistic naturalists do not align with normative formalists. They suggest that certain ends and goals have some special normative

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significance, and the system that efficiently promotes or preserves these ends and goals has a robust sense of normativity. These normative systems have a metaphysical implication: the relational property, which relates certain natural and empirical properties that successfully promote or preserve certain ends to the pertinent normative system, is both empirical and normative. These relational properties could single out the normative significance and importance of morality from other formal-normative systems like chess games and footwear. That is because the end of morality is more significant than the end of chess games or the end of footwear. Call this the special end-relational normativity. I am, however, going to argue that this approach is not very promising in capturing the character of inescapability better than the weak inescapability in chess rules and cobbling rules. I will focus on David Copp's theory as a paradigm of this approach.

In the next section, I will introduce Copp's metaethical theory which addresses the normative status of morality.

## **2. David Copp's metaethical theory about naturalized moral normativity**

Unlike normative formalists, Copp rejects equating the normative force from morality to the normative force from a chess rule. Copp purports to explain how to naturalize this robust normative force that morality has.

Though morality has a different normative status than chess or footwear, Copp suggests that morality only has the weakest grades of normativity that he identifies based on the inherent significance: generic, motivational, and authoritative. I will only focus on generic normativity.

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Generic normativity is the weakest sense of moral normativity. It is about the prescriptive aspect of morality: moral evaluation and recommendation of our actions and decisions. As a naturalistic realist, Copp believes that moral claims do describe normative facts like “killing children is morally wrong” and moral predicates refer to moral properties like “being morally wrong”. This property is a relational property that relates to the moral system, which enables the society that subscribes to it to solve a generic problem about a fundamental need.

Note this weakest grade of normativity is different from the mere formal normativity. The former is related to the generic problems of normative governance while the latter does not. Copp’s teleological pluralism provides more details on this point: the normative status of a system is determined by how it could help a society that subscribes to it solve generic problems. The basic fact that underlies all generic normativity is the natural needs of humans. Normative systems are problem-solving devices that deal with generic problems, which are called the “problems of normative governance” (Copp 2009). As Copp claims,

First, humans face a family of endemic problems, due to the interaction between their nature and the circumstances in which they live. Second, the capacity of humans to deal successfully with these problems depends on their subscribing to systems of norms or standards. Our subscription to these systems enables us to deal with the relevant problems (Copp 2009).

The present view is that normativity is to be understood concerning generic problems humans face, other things being equal, in achieving what they value, problems that are better

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coped with when people are governed by appropriate systems of standards that they subscribe to than would otherwise be the case (Copp 2009).

The moral system deals with the problems of sociality, which result from our conflicting interests and our common need for cooperation to realize our values. The moral system ameliorates the problems of sociality, when it is subscribed to by most members of society.

Not all normative systems cope with the problems of normative governance. Copp suggests that problems regarding game-playing are not, which is why the corresponding formally normative systems of game-playing do not have a “genuinely and robustly normative” status. Instead, they have some kinds of “quasi-normativity” (Copp 2009). They are less normative because the associated problems are neither generic problems nor over and above generic problems. We may have a moral reason or a reason of etiquette to follow the chess rules, but the system of chess itself does not solve any problem of normative governance. As Copp claims,

According to pluralist-teleology, the ‘reasons’ that are internal to a game are not genuinely and robustly normative unless there is a generic problem of normative governance that is addressed by the normative system associated with the game. Pluralist-teleology can deny that there is such a problem. It can concede that humans have a need for enjoyable competition, but it can hold that there is not a special problem of meeting this need over and above the background problem of sociality as well as the problem of politeness (Copp 2009).

In his society-centered theory, Copp offers details regarding the problem of moral importance, including details about what counts as the problem of society and the justification

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for the normative status of the moral standards (Copp 2007, p. 138). The main idea is that morality is important because it serves our need to live together by facilitating beneficial cooperation and coordination in a society. All societies should be regulated by some standards and rules, to best serve their members' needs. The moral system is more significantly normative because moral standards are standards that help a society to best meet its members' needs and promote cooperation and coordination. As Copp claims:

On the society-centered view, a moral standard is justified relative to a society just in case, roughly, the society would be rational to select the code as its social moral code. On the needs-based account, a society would be rational to select a code as its social moral code just in case, roughly, the code's serving as its social moral code would better serve the society's needs and nonmoral values than any alternatives (Copp 1995, p.227).

A natural question for Copp's theory is this: Why does solving the generic problem of sociality ground the significance of morality while the function of chess or footwear cannot ground the same significance? For a dedicated professional chess player, chess has enormous significance and, concomitantly, chess rules have a correspondingly large normative force for her.

Copp could simply reply that real normativity only concerns generic problems, whether or not those are the kinds of problems that are most important to you as an individual. Thus, even if we grant this, we only get a normative system that targets society's generic problems. But morality is not merely intended for humans as a group, but also for individuals. If morality only

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regards groups of humans, then the importance of solving the problems of groups of humans only grounds the normative reasons for humans as a group, rather than the normative reasons for humans as individuals. I will discuss more in the next section.

### 3. Normativity of morality that speaks to individuals

I will first raise two related objections and give my diagnosis on why Copp fails to address them: his view lacks the ability to speak to individuals, which is an important feature of moral normativity.

The first objection shows the irrelevance of referring to what is inescapable to society. This strategy is futile since what is inescapable for a society is not necessarily inescapable for an individual.

Consider a double-dissociation argument, which contains two *reductio* arguments from two directions. My point here is not merely to show that what is good for society is different from what is good for individuals in that society. Instead, it is a general question for all theories that pins the normativity of morality on the community. Any such theory would have to deal with the possibility of society's interests and an individual's interests coming apart and yet still properly account for the remaining moral reasons.

Firstly, there are cases where morality demands R from an individual, but not in virtue of a generic social problem:

1. Let R be a reason that can only be morally normative for being a generic social problem.



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2. If a cruel hermit who enjoys torturing small beetles or a clever free-rider who successfully hides all her free-rider actions cannot have moral reasons to stop torturing beetles or stopping free-riding actions, then such reasons cannot be morally normative in virtue of a generic social problem.
3. However, these reasons are morally normative despite not being moral in virtue of a generic social problem.
4. Therefore, there exist moral reasons that are morally normative not solely in virtue of a generic social problem.

There are also cases where a generic social problem can be solved if the society does R, but individuals are not morally required to do R:

1. For any reason R that solves a generic social problem, R is also a moral reason.
2. If depriving the autonomy of other members in a society is the only way to maintain peace, then it is a moral reason for Officer Jonas to act accordingly.
3. Depriving the autonomy of other members in a society to maintain peace is not a moral reason for Jonas to act accordingly.
4. Therefore, there are reasons that require a society to do R but are not morally required of an individual.

The takeaway here is that Copp's theory is about how certain ends bind the society as a whole, but these ends (and their attendant obligations) do not extend to individuals. The best way to fix this problem is not to find a goal that binds both individuals and society, for two reasons.

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Firstly, as I will argue later, it is unnecessary because we only need to find the moral reasons for individuals. Secondly, it is not clear that the end binding both the society and an individual qualifies as a moral reason. This leads to my second objection.

The second objection: even if we find an inescapable end of a society that extends to individuals, this end does not generate a moral reason that has a clear direction of action. That is because the reason generated from this end is negotiable. According to this negotiable reason, the agent has different ways to satisfy the normative requirement. Moral reasons, in Copp's picture, lack an important direction. Just as Kolodny complains about Broome's wide scope interpretation of reasons (Kolodny 2005), the kind of moral reasons generated from solving generic social problems lack a kind of directionality of moral requirement. Consider the following case.

The case of the clever free-rider: consider a clever free-rider who lives within society. She is so clever that she successfully hides all her free-rider actions. Let's suppose that she will successfully do it in the future as well. She cares about the moral system that her society subscribes to only to the extent that she could continue her free-rider actions. For her, knowing what other members actually care about is important, because then she could use that knowledge to garner more benefits for herself. Suppose she used to steal money from the rich and successfully hide it. Since the people she steals money from are so rich that they won't even notice it, no mention of her acts reaches any other members of their society. She uses this money in the same way that these rich people plan to use (like buying the luxury goods), therefore, other departments of their society won't be affected by her stealing behavior.

This clever free-rider violates moral rule without diminishing the moral system or the goodness of the society as a whole, since other people follow the moral rules and they do not

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know she free-rides. As a clever free-rider, she understands that she needs to live in a society in which other people, or at least *some* other people follow the moral rules in order to preserve a society that benefits her own survival, and for that reason she cares about morality and goodness of her society, just like others do. However, the reason for her to care about moral rules is negotiable. It is negotiable because this reason does not have any normative force on her, and it does not have normative force on her because she manages to free ride without hurting the society.

This example can be hypothetical, but similar cases can be found in our daily life.

Consider a modified case of Ai in the opening case:

The modified case of Ai: Suppose Ai's partner finds out everything and asks them to stop, otherwise he would break up with them. So, Ai has a reason to either break up with their partner, or continue consuming meat but be more cautious when hiding it, or stop eating meat. Regardless of what moral reasons Ai has to stop eating meat, if these reasons ultimately spring from the relationship they have with their partner, then doing any of these three options would satisfy these reasons. After some careful calculation, Ai decides to continue consuming meat but be more cautious when hiding it.

In this case, in Ai's deliberation, the normative force of the reason of stopping consuming meat kicks in when their relationship is under the threat. For Ai, the reason to stop consuming meat is grounded in their relationship.

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Copp's explanation on moral reasons does not track back to private relationships but the generic problem of sociality. However, just being a member of the society does not by itself give us a moral reason to care about the society's ends. For example, being a member of a cult does not give us a reason to care about the cult's ends.

There are two features to emphasize about these views: (i) the normative importance of morality is exclusively constituted by the natural fact about the group's ends, and (ii) the natural fact that I am part of this group. If (i) and (ii) are all that matter to answer why a moral mistake is significant, then we can let ourselves off the hook by shifting our personal interests. However, being moral should give us an inescapable moral reason to resist shifting from caring about our fellow humans and thereby caring about society's ends. In other words: we never have a moral reason to be a clever free rider, and we have moral reasons not to be a clever free rider. Copp does not tell us how these moral reasons can be offered. On the contrary, in Copp's picture, a person in a society can choose to leave their society, be a clever free rider, or follow the moral rule in order to satisfy the requirement of solving the generic problem of sociality. It is counterintuitive because it lacks a determined direction that we usually attribute to moral reasons.

These two objections lead to a more general diagnosis for Copp's style of special end-relational normativity: it fails to explain the normativity of morality that speaks to the individual.

Why does moral normativity need to speak to individuals? Because it is simply an empirical fact that a group's interests are not always in line with the individual's interests, and we don't live in a world where generic problems about humans' interests as a group always match my personal problems. However, morality is supposed to overcome the gap between the differences in costs and benefits between individuals and of groups. Starting from the needs of

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the society not only leaves this out but also predicts that no moral reasons operate in the situation where an action does not hinder the interests of a group.

Because certain moral systems would enable the society to better cope with the generic problem, the special end-relational normative structure of society is normatively bounded by the moral system. But this does not tell us exactly how an individual in the society is normatively bounded by the moral system that her society subscribes to. That is why we can always find cases like the one in the double-disassociation objection and no-direction objection.

Note my view does not entail that there is no connection between moral reasons and the agents' internal conditions (as reason-internalists suggest), but only that Copp's theory does not provide moral reasons for these cases. Just like chess rules do not generate any chess reasons for non-chess players who do not want to play chess games, moral rules in Copp's picture do not generate moral reasons for amoralists who do not want to listen to requirements of morality. The reason is Copp's theory on generic-moral normativity only speaks to humans as a group, without speaking to individuals. The problem of failing to speak to individuals is that, at the individual level, generic normativity cannot be distinguished from formal normativity. Copp could reply that regardless of what the individual herself thinks about solving the "generic problem" of her community, she is subject to the standards of the moral system. However, to support this reply, Copp must show how morality is justified to this individual, and why she should care to be moral. After all, why are cruel hermit and clever free riders inescapable from morality? That is because morality is justified for them. Merely stating the benefits your community has from you being moral is part of what morality is about, but that is not everything. Morality is also about how it "guides" you to care about your community or do whatever benefits your community, and this sense of "should care" or "should do" is inescapable for the individual. Copp misses this

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latter part, any kinds of moral theories that only emphasize on what moral standards bring to the community miss the latter part, and thereby they lose the inescapable feature of moral normativity.

I turn now to some clarifications about what “speaking to individuals” does not amount to: (1) it does not amount to merely claiming that it applies to the individuals and evaluates their actions; (2) it does not amount to the claim that it must have some relation with your other reasons or your overall internal disposition and must take priority over you other reasons, which Copp calls the relational question (Copp 2010); (3) it does not amount to a psychologically compelling pull, even if it is capable of inducing this pull.

Let’s take each in turn. It does not amount to (1) because morality does not only evaluate individuals, but also obligates. Unlike Foot’s style of normative rules that unconditionally evaluate all pertinent agents, the system of morality generates reasons for all agents. We could make up any random rules that apply to individuals, but that does not mean these individuals should treat these rules as the source of reasons. The moral system not only contains a set of rules as other formal-normative systems do, but also contains intrinsic importance. That means morality has a normative force on the issues of “why you have to be a moral person” and “why you should value morality”.

Speaking to individuals also does not amount to (2) the claim that it must have some relation with your other reasons or your overall internal disposition and must take priority over you other reasons. Morality may not fit in the agent’s overall practical rationality in the sense that the agent might never be in a position to acknowledge it as the source of their reasons, but it nevertheless requires/commands/suggests on what they should act/deliberate. It also does not mean that you must take priority on moral consideration over other equally important

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considerations, but you must acknowledge morality as a source of your reasons. Being a source of your reasons is not equal to the claim that it must have some relation with your other reasons or your overall internal disposition.

Finally, it does not amount to (3) a psychologically compelling pull, even if it is capable of inducing this pull. If the inescapability I am asking for is a kind of psychological compelling sense, then I beg the question against Copp's theory. Because he explicitly rejects judgmental internalism, for the sake of argumentation I simply assume that moral judgments do not generate any internal pull. Happily, whether the agent would be motivated by her judgment does not matter. The point here is that there are some moral reasons that apply to an agent *regardless* of her own value systems or her psychological condition.

Point (3) leads to the positive implication for "speaking to individuals": being a source of normative reasons for individuals. I stay neutral about whether there are normative reasons for groups. The upshot of the above discussion is that moral normativity cannot be grounded without being a source of normative reasons for individuals.

Failing to speak to individuals puts some difficulties in moral practice. We want the moral system to tell us what we should do even when we don't live in an ideal society where there is no conflict between society's interests and our personal interests. Even in the worst society, morality should still have normative force for us. We want our moral education to focus on the normativity of "why I should care about the generic problems", instead of focusing on how these generic problems can be identified with my problems. Another difficulty is that it grants individuals an easy pass from moral norms by switching their interests, as the no-direction objection shows.

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These difficulties lead to the theoretical cost of failing to distinguish generic-moral normativity from formal normativity at the individual levels. Without the feature of speaking to individuals, moral normativity is no different from formal normativity.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper, I have argued against David Copp's style of end-relational normativity of morality. Generic problems of a society do not serve as a proper start to ground normativity of morality because it fails to incorporate that moral normativity should speak to the individuals; namely, giving rise to the moral reasons for the individuals.



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## **Chapter 2**

# **Why Follow the Score? A Case Study of Aesthetic Normativity in Classical Music Performance**

### **Abstract**

In this paper, I propose a new way to ground the aesthetic normativity of the score-following rule in classical music performance.

In the first section, I locate the central normative question of following the score by a target case which focuses on the conflict between getting things aesthetically correct and getting things aesthetically good. In the second section, I briefly argue against several intuitive answers to this question. In the third section, I raise my concerns about the most promising answer, the practice-based view, in the current literature. In the last section, I sketch an account that traces the source of aesthetic normativity to a special aesthetic experience that is necessarily constituted by following the score. I propose that this account not only successfully grounds Beethoven's attitude toward score compliance, but also points out the value of this score compliance tradition in classical music performance, additional to a further five advantages. I close my paper by discussing these advantages.

### **Section 1 The Puzzle of Why Follow the Score**

For pianists in classical music, correctly following the score means following not only the notes but other notations as well. In a letter to Czerny about teaching his nephew how to play the fortepiano, Beethoven even indicates that mistakes in the notes are “minor mistakes”, while mistakes in interpretation and ignoring dynamics are “much more serious problems” (Gerig

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2007, p. 95). To perform the piece correctly, Beethoven emphasizes the importance of following marks of interpretation and dynamics on the score. If Beethoven's insistence on score-following—including dynamic marks and other interpretative marks—is not irrational, what could ground his insistence?

What is at stake here is the normativity of following the score as an aesthetic rule. In classical music, this rule gives a correctness condition for performers. In this paper, I propose a new understanding of what grounds Beethoven's insistence on score-following better than current explanations do.

Normativity is a philosophical term of art. The question of normativity concerns the binding status of pertinent requirements or norms. Philosophers debate the nature of normativity, but roughly speaking, normativity refers to a kind of phenomenon where our actions are regulated by reasons, requirements, and demands that correspond to normative requirements or norms.

In this paper, I will focus on normativity of the aesthetic rule of following the score in classical music performance. It is regarded as a *pro tanto* rule<sup>3</sup> for all performers of classical music, and it binds the performers of classical music only. Put differently, following Kubala's terminology, this is a case about an “internal question” of aesthetic normativity (Kubala 2021): why the pertinent aesthetic rule binds the pertinent aesthetic agents within the aesthetic activity.<sup>4</sup>

Why does the rule of following the score become an interesting and important normative question? Consider the case below:

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<sup>3</sup> I will explain later why it is *pro tanto*.

<sup>4</sup> It is an “internal question” because this rule does not bind performers of other kinds of music.

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The Non-professional Pianist: Ren is a non-professional pianist. They are good enough to get a lot of things right, but they don't have enough training to possess excellent performance skills. In preparing a performance in their small town, they deliberately reduce the sound of a chord marked as "fff" to an "f" chord at the beginning of a romantic piece, because they know if they play it loudly as it is marked, due to their imperfect skills, they will produce a very harsh chord in the performance, which will lead to an unsuccessful performance. During their preparation, they fully understand that the composer intends the performer to have extremely loud sounds like the score notes marked as "fff" and given the tradition of the time the piece was composed, it should, despite its volume, be distinctly unharsh. But they are not able to convey both, so they have to choose. In the end, in order to secure a non-ideal but still successful performance, they decide to ignore the "fff" mark on the score and reduce the sound from "fff" to "f". However, they feel that it is a mistake to violate this dynamic mark and they wish they could have enough skill to follow the "fff" mark without producing a harsh sound.

In this case, after some deliberations, Ren decides to violate the rule of score-following to achieve a conservative performance. The occurrence of harsh sounds without a countervailing consideration is a bad-making feature of performing a romantic piece. Thereby, trying to avoid

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producing harsh sounds in a romantic piece is a reasonable consideration; but for Ren to do so requires violating the score-following rule. Therefore, there is a normative reason for Ren to violate this rule, given the reasonableness of avoiding producing harsh sounds. However, whether this normative reason functions as a countervailing consideration of violating this rule depends on whether this rule has normative force in the first place: to show the reason to follow the score and the reason to avoid harsh sound are on the same battlefield, we need to show why this rule has the normative force to earn its entrance ticket. To show why this rule has the normative force, we need to locate the source of its normative binding force. Therefore, for its first pass, our question is as follows:

*The simple question:* Why does the score-following rule give rise to aesthetic reasons?

Let's discuss a concern one may have about the case itself which leads to the first clarification of our question: one may argue that the problem here is simply that Ren lacks some essential pianistic skills. One might draw two conclusions here: (1) the question arises simply because Ren lacks some skills; and (2) following the principle of "ought implies can", the requirement of following the score is suspended.<sup>5</sup> I disagree. Here is my response: it might be true that Ren has this difficult choice to make simply because they lack some pianistic skills. However, no human performer possesses "perfect" skills, and all human performers encounter a similar hard choice due to the limitation of their skills or their instruments. In another word, the question raised from Ren's case can be generalized to all performers, regardless of how skilled they are. We will see a real-life case in the next section, in pianist Malcolm Bilson's quotation. Actually, as we will also see in the quotation from Bilson, this isn't even rare! It is ubiquitous; performers face this

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<sup>5</sup> I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

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kind of choice often. In such a scenario, the requirement of following the score is not suspended but overridden.

This leads to the first clarification of our question. Note the normative force of following the score is moderate rather than absolute; that is, it is excusable to violate the score. When there is a sufficient amount of goodness to be produced or a sufficiently robust norm is presented, that would make it permissible to violate the rule of following the score, as in Ren's case. In this case, the score-following rule is overridden, but the normative force of this rule is not undermined or defeated. This is why even though Ren is blameless in the sense that they are not absolutely or all things considered wrong, they can still reasonably feel that they are mistaken to violate the score. Then we modify the simple question as follows:

*The complex question:* Why does the score following rule, as a pro tanto normative rule, give rise to aesthetic reasons?

To finalize the modification of our main question, let's turn to the content of score: it is more dubious to say "you must follow" some parts on the score rather than others. Here we come to an intuitive distinction that cuts the content of the score into two comparative groups: one group is regarded as more constitutive of the piece than another group is. Peter Kivy also notices this distinction when he discusses the distinction between the composer's broad intention and narrow intention (Kivy 1995). Roughly speaking, narrow intention refers to the composer's intentions that are constitutive of the piece. Broad intention refers to the composer's "wishes, hypotheses, or tentative suggestions" that are not constitutive of the piece. What is constitutive to a piece is a question out of the scope of this paper and people may have different intuitions about how the distinction should be cashed out, but we can stick to a fairly intuitive distinction between being

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constitutive and being non-constitutive.<sup>6</sup> For instance, some think that within a chord, the “melody notes” are more constitutive than other notes. Another paradigm case is the notes on the score are more constitutive than dynamic marks or fingering marks. For the purpose of argument, let’s set aside the question of how to make the distinction between being constitutive and being non-constitutive and assume that the notes, in general, are more constitutive than dynamic markings.

Then following the narrow intention of the composer and the constitutive part of the score just is the minimal requirement for “following the score”, since it is the necessary condition for performing this piece. Our question is why performers should follow the score to the extent beyond the minimal sense of score-following.

Then in Ren’s case, in which the rule of the following scores requires them to play an *fff* chord does not lead to a good performance and even conflicts with the goal of achieving a good performance, why does Ren still have a normative requirement of following the dynamic mark of *fff*? Here we come to the final modification of our question:

*The main question:* Why does the score-following rule, as a *pro tanto* normative rule, genuinely give rise to aesthetic reasons, even for the aspects that do not constitute the piece?

In the next two sections, I will discuss four answers to this question. I will argue that they all fail. In the last section, I will offer my answer.

## **Section 2 Explaining away normativity of score-compliance in classical music performance**

### **(1): Three intuitive answers**

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<sup>6</sup> One criterion distinguishing notations being constitutive from notations being non-constitutive is recognizability; that is, whether or not a misplayed notation would affect an informative listener to recognize a piece. However, this is an incredibly low bar: even a performance misplaying a significant number of notes might not affect recognizability. Adopting this criterion means more than half notations on the score is non-constitutive, and this is certainly contrary to our intuition. For the purpose of this paper, I set aside the question of exactly what carves the distinction.

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In this section, I will first discuss three intuitive answers to the main question, and I will discuss the fourth one, the practice view, in the third section. The second and third intuitive answers are not explicitly defended, but are worth considering. The failures of these three intuitive answers help us see why the practice view, discussed in the next section, answers the main question more successfully.

The first answer is this: following the score constitutes the performance of this piece. According to this view, the performer should follow the score because, otherwise, they are not playing this piece at all. People like Davies hold this view. For example, Davies claims,

“If one is committed to playing the given piece then, equally, one must be committed to performing it authentically. To ignore a majority of the composer’s determinative instructions is not to interpret her work in an unusual way; it is to fail to perform, and hence to interpret, that work at all...achieving an appropriate degree of authenticity is a fundamental and unavoidable requirement.”  
(2001, p. 207-208)

In this quote, Davies suggests that following the score is a “fundamental and unavoidable requirement” because not following the composer’s instructions is to “fail to perform”.

This answer is obscure about what counts as “this piece”, especially if it does not consider the question of how much the non-constitutive aspects of the score should be counted in the piece. According to the intuitive distinction between constitutive and non-constitutive aspects of the piece, violating these non-constitutive aspects of the score in the performance (like Ren does) will

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still be counted as performing this piece. Davies' view cannot explain the reason-giving force of the norm to follow the non-constitutive aspects of the score, unless supporters of this view are willing to run into a vicious circularity of stipulating the performance of the piece as following the score including the non-constitutive aspects. Therefore, this answer does not work.<sup>7</sup> The lesson drawn from the first attempt is the following: the normative force of the score-following rule is not grounded in performing this piece.

The second answer is this: following the score leads to good performance. According to this view, failing to follow might not lead to the failure of the performance, but it leads to a bad performance. The problem with this answer is that it has too many prima facie counterexamples. Consider a case discussed in one of the pianists Malcolm Bilson's lectures:<sup>8</sup> The beginning of Beethoven's piano sonata, Op.111, has a very dangerous leap on the left hand. It can be played much more easily with two hands. If a pianist plays in the way Beethoven wrote, which is playing it with the left hand alone, then there is a very high chance that she is going to badly misplay the sequence at the beginning of the piece. Bilson explains why pianists should nevertheless play it only with the left hand as follows:

“I say go out on the stage and be plenty nervous, because it's dangerous, and because that's what Beethoven wrote. He wrote something that is potentially dangerous, and you can mess it up, and that's part of the excitement. Beethoven doesn't write a thing like that for a string quartet. He writes it for a piano because in the piano

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<sup>7</sup> For a similar approach, see Rohrbaugh 2020.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.cornell.edu/video/malcolm-bilson-knowing-the-score>



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it's difficult. To me, the leap is the subject matter. As Philipp Emanuel Bach would say, the notes are almost secondary.”<sup>9</sup>

Here, Bilson suggests that pianists should follow Beethoven's instructor of “be plenty nervous” when playing the beginning of Op. 111. Kivy would disagree. In his discussion on following the broad intention of the composer, Kivy suggests that we have two ways to justify following all the notations written by the composer: “the composer knows best” strategy and “delicate balance” strategy (Kivy 1995). The rough idea of these strategies is that the composer is assumed to know better than the performer and the composer's arrangement of the piece is the best among all possibilities. Kivy argues that there is no reason for us to believe that the composer's arrangement is necessarily the best one, nor do we have reasons to believe that the composer necessarily knows better than the performers. According to Kivy, the composer's intentions do not necessarily lead to good performances with higher aesthetic value. Therefore, Kivy would not agree with Bilson about “go[ing] out on the stage and be[ing] plenty nervous”, since doing that simply assumes a priori that the composer's arrangement is the best and the composer knows more than the performers.

I do not agree with Kivy's conclusion that we thereby do not have reasons to follow the score beyond the minimal sense, but I agree with him that we should not assume a priori that the composer knows better than the performer or the arrangement from the composer is the best among all possibilities. After all, once the performer fails to play that dangerous leap with her left hand

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<sup>9</sup> There are two different questions: one is “whether there is a pro tanto aesthetic rule to follow all the (correct) score notations, a rule that remains normatively applicable even when outweighed”; another is “whether there is an all-things-considered aesthetic rule to always follow all the (correct) score notations, a rule that is never outweighed”. Which one Bilson endorses is not clear. However, his quoted words are certainly compatible with the affirmative answer for the first question, since the first question is weaker than the second one. I set the second question aside.

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alone on the stage, it will very likely ruin her performance. Similarly, it is clearly shown in the case of Ren that achieving better performance is a reason weighing against following the score. Hence, from the second intuitive answer, we can draw the following lesson: The normative force of the score-compliance cannot be grounded in better performance because of countless counterexamples.

The third answer, unlike the first two answers that appeal to the aesthetic value external to the performer, appeals to the performer's subjective connection to the rule of following the score: the performer may simply commit to realizing both the broad sense and narrow sense of the composer's intention. This answer works better than the other two because it could explain why the performer has reasons to follow the score including the broad sense: If the performer has this commitment, then acting as such to fulfill this commitment is reasonable. However, this answer does not explain why the commitment is not equal to an irrational zeal, as Kivy accused. That is because we can easily accommodate our main question as a question of why the performer commits to doing so and whether or not they have genuinely aesthetic reasons to commit as such. We cannot answer how the normativity of following the score is grounded in this commitment without first answering how this commitment itself is aesthetically normative. From this intuitive answer, we can draw the third lesson: The normative force of the score-compliance cannot be grounded in a mere personal commitment.

To recap, the answers above are not satisfactory answers to our main question: how do we account for the aesthetic normativity of following the score, even beyond the constitutive aspects of the score?

### **Section 3 Explaining away normativity of score-compliance in classical music performance**

#### **(2): The practice-based view**

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In this section, I am going to introduce and raise concerns for a promising and current popular solution to our main question: the practice-based view on aesthetic normativity (Kubala 2021; Rohrbaugh 2020). According to this theory, the normative force of the score-following rule is grounded in the practice of engaging with classical music performance.

However, I have two main concerns about this view: first, it overlooks the disanalogies between the case of classical music performance and other kinds of human practices such as chess games; second, the normative force it provides is too weak to provide genuinely aesthetic reasons to follow the score.

1) The disanalogy between classical music performance and other human practices

Let's focus on the first problem. The practice-based view is not new to philosophers (Rawls 1955; Thompson 2008, p.149–210). Normative theorists use it to explain the normativity of rules of games (e.g., chess) and some moral norms (e.g., giving and keeping promises).

Take normativity of chess for example. According to the practice-based view, chess rules are normative for chess players because a chess player takes following chess rules as a reason in her deliberation. Without the activity of playing chess, the normative requirement of following the chess rules would not be conceivable (Rohrbaugh 2020). The normative status of chess rules is different from the normative status of the chess game itself. According to Rawls' distinction between the summary conception of rules and the practice conception of rules, the former justifies the action falling under the practice, while the latter justifies the practice itself. In this "two-level" normative picture, the rules within the practice have normative force for the participants. Chess players do not act by reference to the value of the chess game but by reference to the chess rules.

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Kubala and Rohrbaugh use the same line of thought to argue for the aesthetic normative force of the score-following rule. According to them, the score-following rule justifies the action of following the score for performers of classical music because this action is falling under the practice. As Rohrbaugh argues, the rule of following the score becomes an “end-in-itself” for practitioners who have internalized rules of a practice which is itself valuable. According to their view, to justify Ren’s consideration of following the score even when it leads to a harsh chord in a romantic piece, we only need to note that they are engaged in a type of practice which has an internal pro tanto rule: follow the score. As Rohrbaugh puts it,

“Participants in our musical practices are the kind of people who take scores and score-compliance seriously, who accord composers a measure of respect and recognize them as authoritative. They are disposed to take such circumstances as the fact of the notes in the score, the acts of the composer, or the sound of a model performance as reasons to act in certain ways—to play just those notes, to do as told, to emulate what is heard. ... Score-compliance considerations are accorded final worth, and, as such, remain undiminished when we play what is of questionable value, and do not expire at the moment that we play enough of a tune for it to be recognizable” (Rohrbaugh, 2020).

We see the force of Rohrbaugh’s analysis if we consider how it may be employed to explain the normativity of the rules of a game. Back to the chess example, a chess player cannot intelligibly

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ask the “Why-” question of chess rules when she is playing chess. For instance, she cannot intelligibly ask “Why should I move the bishop diagonally?” because as a chess player, she must conceive “moving bishop diagonally” as a reason to act accordingly when she is playing. What’s more, she cannot intelligibly question to what extent she should follow the chess rules either. For instance, she cannot deliberate about “To what extent I should move bishop diagonally?” The chess rule is simply not negotiable for her.

However, the problem is that the score following rule is intelligibly questionable, which indicates that it functions in a different way from chess rules. As a classical pianist, Ren can intelligibly question not only “Why should I follow the score?” but also the question of “To what extent I should follow the score now?” The live debate of authenticity in philosophy of music backs up this point. It is a debate about in what way that performers treat the score can be counted as an “authentic performance”. In this debate, different parties disagree about what role that score should play in the classical music performance and whether the score-following is “negotiable”.<sup>10</sup> If we regard the dispute of authentic performance as an intelligible debate, then the score following rule is intelligibly questionable. Therefore, as an internal rule, unlike the rule of “moving the bishop diagonally” which can adequately justify the action falling under the practice of chess, the rule of score-compliance is less adequate in justifying the action of following the score. For this rule to adequately justify the action of following the score, we need to look for other answers.

## 2) Too weak to ground genuinely aesthetic reasons

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<sup>10</sup> See Julian (2015) and Davies (1991) for the details of this dispute.

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My second concern is that the normative force of the score-following rule that the practice-based view gives rise to is too weak to ground genuinely aesthetic reasons.<sup>11</sup> According to the “two-level” normative picture in the practice-based view, in terms of explanation of normativity, practice is logically primary, and the intrinsic property falling under the practice which the rules of practice capture are logically secondary. As Rohrbaugh claims,

“On such theories, it is one’s being a certain kind of person or being a participant in a certain kind of practice that is good in the first place, and one’s practice-compliant actions are thereby rendered mediately good or rational as a result” (Rohrbaugh, 2020).

According to this explanation, the reason to follow the score is intrinsic but also indirect. It is intrinsic because performers follow the score for its own sake; it is indirect because its normative force is not tied to any aesthetic feature but the nature of the “two-level” normative picture that all practices share. If we reject the skepticism and assuming that classical music performance in general is valuable, the normative property of this practice would “transfer” to the rule of the practice (Thompson 2005, p.151). I have two concerns for this way of grounding genuine aesthetic reasons:

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<sup>11</sup> Supporters of the practice-based view may reply that the practice functions as an enabling condition for the pertinent aesthetic normativity, rather than a source of the normativity. I think that this is a very plausible proposal, and it would be very compatible with my own view (discussed in the next section). However, I think that an enabling condition is too weak to explain the normative phenomenon as Ren case shows. For instance, suppose I forget to turn off the oven and that causes my house to be burned down. My house burning down will not happen if there is no oxygen around. In this sense, Oxygen functions as an enabling condition for the house to burn down. However, compared to the answer that “I forget to turn off the oven”, it is less intuitive to say that “there is oxygen around” is a satisfying answer to the question of why the house is burned down. I thank Robbie Kubala for very helpful discussion on this point.

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Firstly, taking the consideration of following the score as an indirect reason which refers to the practice, in Ren's case, it trivializes Ren's struggle. Specifically, this indirect reason makes it difficult for Ren to understand what is going on from their own deliberative point of view. It trivializes Ren's struggle because when they face the choice between achieving a higher aesthetic value of avoiding harsh sounds and following the score to play an *fff* chord, Ren is not merely deliberating about what is required by the practice of classical music performance, but what they should do to respond to aesthetic reasons they have. Claiming that Ren is concerned about following the rule constitutive to the very practice of classical music performance simply fails to capture the phenomenon of what classical music performers are doing. It also makes the situation more puzzling from Ren's own deliberative point of view, because they are directly thinking about aesthetic reasons. In this sense, the indirect reason to follow the score provided by the practice view fails to ground a genuine aesthetic reason for Ren, since they are not deliberating about or responding to an indirect reason.

Secondly, grounding the normative force of following the score by reference to the nature of the rule of practice makes it difficult to compare different forms of music aesthetically. By aesthetic comparison, I don't mean to rank the value of different music performances, but simply comparing different aesthetic features of them. For instance, consider jazz music and classical music. Scores play different roles in these two forms of music: in fully noted jazz, musicians follow the score differently from how classical musicians do. What explains the different roles that the scores play in these two music forms? If the conception of practice comes first and the normative property of the rule is "transferred" from the normative status of the practice, then the differing forms of normative significance attached to following the score in the performance of the respective types of music is grounded in their differing performance practices. This practice-based

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reason can be a reason to explain why the score-following rule plays different roles in each practice, but this reason is not an aesthetic reason in the relevant sense; that is, it does not justify the aesthetic difference between these two forms of music performances, but only the different practicality between them.

To see the point above, consider how arbitrary elements can affect the history of how a practice is formed -for instance, prohibition against clapping during classical music performances. Let's assume that this is how the rule is formed: audiences don't clap between the movements because, in the past, the recording technique could not afford to record the claps. However, audiences can clap between different songs in a musical because at the time that the practice of musicals formed, the recording technique was further developed. The difference between clapping rules in classical music performance and musical performance is arbitrary in the sense that it is not justified by any aesthetic reasons. However, the difference of score-following rules in jazz music and classical music is not arbitrary, at least not arbitrary in the same sense.<sup>12</sup> This difference is grounded in aesthetic reasons and is thereby aesthetically justified. I am not claiming that the historical elements do not influence the score-following rule. My point is that, while the clapping rule is purely grounded in a historically arbitrary element that does not provide aesthetic or music related justification, the score-following rule should not be a merely arbitrary rule in terms of being aesthetic or musical justification.

I think that the different roles that score plays in jazz music and classical music capture different aesthetic properties. Because of the different roles that score plays in these two music forms, jazz musicians and classical musicians deliberate on different aesthetic reasons.

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<sup>12</sup> Even within classical music performance, the score is followed differently in different styles and different time periods.



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Exactly what genuine aesthetic reasons classical musicians could have to make sense of their obedience of score following rule? What justifies this score-compliance tradition in classical music performance? In the next section, I discuss my proposal.

#### **Section 4 Going forward: a sketch of an aesthetic experience that constitutes genuine aesthetic normativity**

In this section, I will sketch a new understanding of the normativity of score compliance which explains aesthetic significance of the score-following rule in classical music performance.

In short, I propose that, in classical music performance, following the score is a constitutive necessary condition of engaging in a special aesthetic experience.

In the following, I will first give some phenomenological descriptions of the pertinent aesthetic experience from three perspectives: the search for the cognitive “cue”, the growing musicality, and the specific “in the zone” experience. I propose that these descriptions highlight what I call the performer-experience episode. Put metaphorically, this is an episode of experience in which the performer tries to access the inner world of the composer by putting on the lens of the composer. I will explain what this metaphor means. Then, I will discuss how this performer’s experience grounds the normativity of following the score in the classical music performance. Lastly, I will discuss advantages of my view.

##### (1) Phenomenon

Below are descriptions of some individual cases that highlight the performer-experience episode:

Learning music as a classical performer: One important part of studying music is to learn how to find the right cognitive “cue” of the pertinent feelings. Performers find the cognitive “cue” by digging into the background information about both the composer and the piece itself. For instance, they ask questions like “What was the composer going through when they wrote this piece? What was the overall life of this composer like? Are there any other materials that relate to the piece?” Another way is to explore some specifications. For instance, music teachers sometimes ask students to “imagine a knife slowly stabbing into your belly”, or “picture that you are on a prairie, feeling the breeze on your face”, or “imagine you were in an alien country, terribly sick, hearing bad news about your homeland”, etc. By using these specifications, performers grasp what they should feel in their performance.

The growing musicality of a classical musician: Performer’s musicality is growing with their life experience. An experienced performer with a rich life experience seems to have more musicality compared to a child prodigy. A performer with richer life experience seems to know better about how to express herself through the music and how to “read” what the composer wants to say through the score. With their musicality growing, the performer

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experiences the “click” with the music in their performance. None of these is absolute and guaranteed, but I hope the point that there is correlation between the life experience and musicality is fairly intuitive.

Performing music as a classical musician: Some musicians have a distinctive “in the zone” experience when they are concentrating on their performance, known as the flow state which is usually associated with successful performance.<sup>13</sup> In general, when they are in this state, they usually find themselves drowning in the flood of pure emotions or sensations, highly and deeply involving in the music they are playing. However, each “in the zone” experience is a specific one. To be specific, about which emotion or sensation they are drowning in is predetermined by what they have learn from the score. Note, this does not mean that there is no room for performer’s personal interpretation; after all, it is the performer who is feeling this emotion or sensation in the performance.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, these emotions or sensations when they are “in the zone” are partially familiar and partially alien: they are both “mine” and “composer’s”.

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<sup>13</sup> See De Manzano, Thorell, Harmat, Ullen (2010).

<sup>14</sup> For instance, to play J. S. Bach’s *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book 1, No. 22, BWV867, no performers would (and they should not) experience excitement or great joyfulness. However, it is ultimately up to performers regarding which specific non-exciting and non-joyful feelings they are going to experience.

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All these phenomena point to a distinctive aesthetic experience that performers of classical music have. It is distinctive because it is related to the unique way that classical musicians treat the scores.<sup>15</sup> This experience is predetermined by the score and thereby can be acquired by cognitive efforts, it can be cultivated during the time, and it is both “inward” (self-directed) and “outward” (composer-directed).

This experience can come with a range, and it extends from the stage to the practice room. In the practice room, when a performer explores and does experiments on their instrument about different tone qualities in order to find the most suitable way to perform the piece. The criteria for them to choose the right sounds are the score in front of them and their own “musicality”. By “musicality”, I mean a performer’s ability of transferring what they want to express in their mind, according to their distinctive understanding of the score, into music on their instrument. The experience I describe is embedded in the daily practice: it is performers’ job to re-encode the score and figure out what is the best way to “translate” music on the score to their instruments. They do this job through following the score, and experiencing, or at least imaging they are experiencing, what the composer wants to say in their composition. This experience extends from the professional musicians to amateurs. Even a kid who just started their piano lesson could have a taste of it. This child’s parents may send her to study piano for doing some intellectual exercise which benefits her schoolwork, but what she gets from her classical music lessons is more than that: she gets the chance to see the other minds, and to experience the world from the composer’s lens.

Let me summarize features of this aesthetic experience of performers: (1) it usually needs some cognitive efforts of studying scores in order to engage in that experience; that is because (2)

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<sup>15</sup> On my explanation, other forms of music performance (such as jazz music) have their distinctive performer-experience, but in different figuration.

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what you can feel is regulated and positively guided by what the score encodes. Thus, even though different performers have different interpretations of the music, there is a range of the right interpretations that a performer could choose, and this range is determined by the score. However, once you are in that experience, (3) what you actually feel is involuntary and immediate. This is because you are the one who is feeling that flood of emotions; they belong to you. So, what the score encodes merges with your own inner world, and you (4) feel the partially alien and partially familiar sensation going through your performance. It is partially alien to you because this sensation is derived from the composer's inner life as recorded in the score, but it is partially familiar to you because you are the one who is actually feeling that sensation and you are exploring your own inner world.

## (2) Grounding the score-following rule

The score-following rule is a rule for performers in classical music. How is this rule related to the distinctive experience I described above? I propose, only by following the score does the performer have this special aesthetic experience, because the former functions as a necessary and constitutive condition to engage in the experience. All information on the score, no matter how "trivial" it seems to be, builds up to the music world that reflects the composer's inner world. By following the score, the performer is able to access the composer's inner world by putting on the lens that the composer provides. Let me explain this metaphor.

Classical music performance is not only constituted by performers, but also by composers. Therefore, even though the performers are the ones who do the performing work, classical music performance is not only about performers expressing oneself, but also about exploring a

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composer's inner world, by putting on a composer's lens. The composer records a slice of their inner world into the score. The more detailed the score is, the more information the score encodes, and the more determined the performers' experience is. By the composer's "inner world" encoded in the score, I mean that the information encoded in the score is not merely about what has been presented to the composer, but also the composer's distinctive way of processing, responding and presenting the information. By the lens of the composer, I mean the way in which the composer uses to express their inner world through their music: by using different compositional languages such as "rubato". By putting on the lens of the composer, I mean a specific and distinctive way for the performers of classical music to access a slice of the composer's inner world: by following the score in the performance.

Studying the score and following it in the performance shapes the way that performers sense the world and provides them with a distinctive aesthetic experience. The score regulates the performer-experience. However, in this experience, they are not simply "told" to experience or simply follow the instruction about what to feel; instead, in addition to the cognitive effort they put into "reading" the score, they are also actively involved in the world constituted by composer's music. After all, unlike a MIDI player, performers are sensible beings, and they are the ones that feel what the composer feels. That is why they are not merely "reading" the score or presenting the composer's inner world; instead, they are "putting on their lens" when they are performing: they experience their inner life as if it was our own.

Now, I hope that it is clear how to answer the main question of how to ground the genuinely aesthetic normative force of the score-following rule as a pro tanto rule for all performers of classical music. My answer is: following the score is a necessary and constitutive condition for acquiring this experience.

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Back to Ren's case to illustrate: When Ren is deliberating about what they should do, they are deliberating in terms of aesthetic-performing reasons: when they are performing the music on the score, whether playing an *fff* but harsh chord "makes more sense" in interpreting the composer's inner world and merging with their own. On the practice-based view, simply because Ren is a participant of classical music practice, Ren takes the consideration of following the score as an indirect aesthetic reason. However, my view accounts for a direct aesthetic reason to follow the score, and this reason is grounded in the distinctive performer-experience they have in their performance, where they actively engage with the composer's inner world. Because what is indicated in the score is the information that constitutes the picture of the composer's inner world, the score-following rule remains normative even when it is overridden by some other considerations. In my proposal, the normative force of score-following rule, for classical music performers, is genuinely aesthetic because it regulates their aesthetic performer-experience.

### (3) Advantages and clarifications of my proposal

My proposal has five significant advantages. Firstly, my view is compatible with the practice of many classical musicians who treat the score-following rule seriously and regard it as a *pro tanto* normative-aesthetic rule. Focusing on this aesthetic experience of performers, we gain more insights into why we hold the score-following rule as genuinely intrinsically reason-giving and what aesthetic reasons we have to follow this rule in classical music performance.<sup>16</sup>

Secondly, my view explains why the normative force of following the score is not negotiable in the sense that it is not affected by facts such as who your audience is and whether

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<sup>16</sup> See appendix.

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you are performing on your own. Unlike what supporters of the practice-based view suggest (Kubala 2021), as a performer, I do not feel less obligated to follow the score, even when I am playing on my own. Similarly, when I am playing only for my old grandma (constituting the entire audience), who is not familiar with Western classical music and sits down only to support her grandchild, I still feel the aesthetic obligation to follow the score. This sense of obligation is difficult to cash out as an instrumental one. In these cases, I follow the score, not for practicing my performance or exercising my fingers, but for obtaining that aesthetic experience and playing the music.

Thirdly, my proposal explains the distinctive benefit of performing music: by actively engaging in the music written by the composer, the performer enriches her own inner life. Here are two ways in which the performer could benefit from classical music performance:<sup>17</sup> (i) the performer has a chance to access her own feeling, which may not be revealed to her otherwise, since the performer needs to explore how own feelings in order to better understand and feel what the composer feels; (ii) for someone who is trapped by her own experiential and emotional framework (e.g., consider someone who just never ‘gets’ the point of nostalgia), performing a nostalgic piece of classical music could open up a space of possible emotional experiences for herself.

Kivy once suggests that realizing the broad sense of the composer’s intention only has “instrumental good” and it must be “evaluated in terms of its payoff” (1995, p. 151). Following the composer’s broad intention on the score which does not constitute to the piece, it amounted to treating the composer’s intention with “missionary zeal” (Kivy 1988, p. 227). My account offers insights on why it is not irrational to follow every detail on the score and defends this tradition in

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<sup>17</sup> They are not exclusive. These are just the two that I most relate with. There are surely other ways that performers benefit from performing classical music.



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classical music performance: to gain the aesthetic experience I described above, classical musicians need to follow the score as much as they can. This experience benefits performers and have a potential to benefit general audiences.

Here I want to point out that there are three relations: the relation between composers and performers, the relation between composers and audiences, and the relation between performers and audiences. My paper only focuses on the first relation. However, even though I only discuss the normativity of following the score as a matter that only concerns the performer, with some additional commitments, it could also be a matter that concerns the audience. For instance, if we commit to the view that the audience will not be able to access the inner life of the composer without the performer following the score to even the non-constitutive aspect, and the view that there is a clear obligational relation between audiences and performers, then the normativity of following the score is also a matter that concerns the audience. That is because performers must follow the score to fulfill their obligation to the audiences. The details of these issues are out of the scope of this paper, though I think it is a plausible view. However, this paper does not have these commitments for two reasons: first, it needs to be argued that the audiences experience the inner life of composers in the same way as the performers do;<sup>18</sup> Second, even if the pertinent audiences do not experience anything and even if the performer knows it in advance, the performer still has the aesthetic reason to follow the score. The kind of aesthetic reasons I discuss here are

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<sup>18</sup> One clarification on how my view differs from the expression theory of art: my view is compatible with the expression theory but does not entail it. Expression theory suggests that music can express higher level or complex emotions. My view focuses on the score, not the music that is on the score. Therefore, my view is compatible with the possibility that the audience does not get anything from the music in the same way that performers get from the scores. Thereby, it is possible that the performer experiences the composer's inner world while her audiences experience nothing from her performance. It may be due to a deficiency in the performance on the performer's side or due to the very fact that music by itself does not adequately express how the composer feels about the world. I stay neutral on these issues.

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performer-centered, and they cannot be conceptually conflated with the aesthetic reasons from the point of view of the audience's perspective. This leads to the next advantage of my view.

Fourthly, my view supports the intuition behind what Dodd calls “score compliance authenticity” (2015, p. 485) and provides insights on the ongoing debate about authenticity. This debate focuses on whether deviating from the score contributes to aesthetic value. But if my proposal succeeds, then there is a genuine aesthetic reason for performers to follow the score-following rule and not deviate from the score without a further reason. More importantly, this aesthetic reason is disentangled from other reasons, and its normativity stands on its own. That is because, according to my proposal, the rule of following the score has its own normative source as being the constitutive condition of having a unique aesthetic experience of performers. My proposal leaves open how strong this aesthetic reason is and when it can be overridden by other aesthetic reasons such as the reason for pursuing better performance, as Ren does. But my proposal shows that when deliberating on what they should do in their performance, they are deliberating on different considerations grounded in different and competing normative resources.

Fifth and finally, while having several distinctive and independent advantages, my proposal is also friendly to the practice-based view. I agree with supporters of the practice-based view that only practitioners of classical music performance are subject to the score-following rule. We only disagree about what the role of score-following rule plays in classical music performance and why it has certain normative force: according to the normative structure offered in the practice-based view, the score-following rule gains its normative force merely by being a practice-internal rule, and I disagree. However, my proposal can be developed into a theory that provides a crucial supplement to this normative structure that the practice-based view provides. As an internal rule, the score-following rule is normative once we embrace a non-skeptical view on the value of

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classical music performance. My proposal could be developed to justify why the very practice of classical music performance has aesthetic value, which, according to their view, “transfers” its normative status to the internal score-following rule.<sup>19</sup>

## Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued against four ways of grounding aesthetic normativity of the score-following rule in the classical music performance: being constitutive to playing this piece, leading to good performance, appealing to the performer’s personal commitment, and the practice view. They fail to provide a satisfactory answer for our main question of how the non-constitutive aspect of the score gives rise to aesthetic reason. Instead, I propose a view of grounding aesthetic normativity of the score-following rule in an aesthetic-normative experience of performers; namely, the performer’s experience of trying to access the inner world of the composer by putting on the lens of the composer. According to my view, following the score is the necessary and

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<sup>19</sup> Understanding this aesthetic rule as a rule involving *sui generis*, irreducible and intrinsic normativity, this option seems to be overlooked. However, it is not a new idea for philosophers. For example, many philosophers who support irreducible realism in metaethics have actively argued for this sense of normativity for morality and epistemology (Cuneo 2007; Shafer-Landau 2003). My view also contributes to our understanding of the non-robust sense of normativity.

According to some error theorists and realistic naturalists in metaethics (Olson 2014; Copp 2007), the less robust normativity is less queer and more compatible with our naturalistic world because it is not irreducible and not *sui generis*. Non-robust normativity is not mysterious since its normative force is grounded in the pertinent practice of its normative system. The normative system of classical music performance is non-robust since its applicational condition is “up to the agent”, which means only the agents within the practice are subject to the normative system. However, my view shows that the score-following rule does not gain its fully normative force from the practice of classical music performance. Reducing this rule or the distinctive aesthetic experience it constitutes is difficult. That is because my argument in the previous two sections has shown that the normative force of the score-following rule is not reducible to a purely subjective dispositions of the agent, aesthetic goodness such as a *prima facie* good performance, or the socially constructed practice. In this sense, the normative force of following the score and the performer-experience it constitutes is *sui generis*. Therefore, being less inescapable does not mean being more reducible or less *sui generis*, and being reducible or irreducible is unlikely to be a litmus test for distinguishing robust and non-robust normativity.

Another related insight is that irreducibility does not entail absoluteness. The rule of following the score can be irreducible, and yet in certain situations, it can be outweighed by other considerations.

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constitutive manner of engaging with this experience, and that is why this rule is aesthetically normative for classical musicians.

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## Chapter 3

### Be True to Yourself: the “Why Be Moral” Question and Justifying Morality

#### Abstract

In this paper, I argue that the normativity of morality must be grounded in genuine normative moral experience. Genuine normative moral experience is an experience in which the individual agent experiences the inescapable constraints of being moral through the inescapably uneasy feeling sanctioned by one's own heart.

In the first section, I compare two groups of examples of morally problematic agents and highlight the distinction between the question of “why be moral” and the question of “what morality requires.” The former is about justifying morality as a whole, while the latter is about justification within morality. I propose four criteria for justifying morality as a whole.

In the second section, I discuss my proposal of grounding morality in genuine moral experience. In the third section, I discuss how to acquire genuine moral experience through self-cultivation and explain the difference in moral failures between the two groups in the first section.

#### 1. “Why be moral?”, moral inescapability, and justifying morality as a whole

In this section, I will discuss the justification of morality as a whole. To start, let's compare these two groups of problematic agents:

Group 1:

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Yik as a “moral” alien: Yik is an intelligent alien on Planet XJ8963. Residents on this planet have a reversed moral experience. Just like most residents do, Yik always feels to be bound by what is regarded as the "morally right thing". However, the contents of this bindingness are reversed from ours. For instance, instead of regarding “treating people equally” as morally right, it regards having slaves as morally right. Therefore, it has a slave, even though it does not want to have one. It does not want a slave because it enjoys doing everything by itself and it enjoys its solitary. Therefore, for Yik, having a slave would hinder it from enjoying itself. Nevertheless, it does what it regards as morally right and keeps a slave.

Niao as an annoying neighbor: Niao is both a good neighbor and a bad one. He is a good neighbor in the sense that he is always ready to help all his neighbors and do good for his community. However, he is also a bad neighbor because he always misses the target: he acts on what he regards as morally right, but these actions are never wanted by his neighbors. Quite the opposite, his neighbors find that he always makes trouble for them by “being good” in his own way.

Group 2:<sup>20</sup>

Mei as a cruel hermit: Mei lives by herself. She is a hermitic (though not hermetic) seer.

Because she is well-educated, she clearly knows that other creatures can feel pain just

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<sup>20</sup> Note, here I am not assuming that Mei or Hua has any psychological defect (such as being a psychopath, whatever the abnormal psychological state this term refers to). They simply do not understand why they should care about morality, and I remain neutral about whether they would start to care about morality if they read this paper.

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like she does, and she clearly knows that torturing causes pain. One day she meets another human who passes by. She captures that person and tortures them to death. As a seer, she knows that no one will find out what she has done. She also knows that she won't do it again, just because she knows she will not meet another person for the rest of her life.

Hua as a clever free rider: Hua lives within society. They are so clever that they successfully hide all their free-riding actions. Let's suppose that they will successfully hide all their future free-riding actions as well. They care about their society's moral system only to the extent that they can continue to free ride. For them, knowing what other members care about is important, because then they could use that knowledge to garner more benefits for themselves.

The point of comparing these two groups of agents is to show the important role that "kind heart" plays in our moral life. Later, we will see how "kind hearts" plays a significant role in justifying morality as a whole.

Intuitively, all these agents are wrong in some way. But they are wrong in very different senses: in group 1, Yik and Niao do what they regard as the morally right thing, with the intention of being good. They act wrongly because they do not know what morality really requires them to do in their situations. On the contrary, in group 2, if it is not for their self-interests, Mei and Hua would never do what morality tells them to do, even though they know what morality requires. They at most have instrumental reasons to act morally.

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Niao in the group 1 belongs to a kind of people who do bad things with kind hearts (好心办坏事), as many Chinese would say. We regard them as being weird or stupid, and their weirdness and stupidity can still cause huge harm. However, even if we do not call people in group 1 “morally good”, there is a sense that they, especially people like annoying neighbor Niao, are less morally problematic than people in group 2.

Along with some other philosophers (King 2020; Field 2022),<sup>21</sup> I think the intuition that people who have the kind (moral) heart but fail to act morally have some moral worth is at least reasonable. This intuition is reasonable, because as the comparison between these two groups shows, there is something specially “right” or “good” for the agents of group 1: they have kind hearts and they respond to their kind hearts.

In this paper, I am going to argue that it is specially “right” or “good” for agents in group 1 to have a kind heart and respond to it because having a kind heart or a good intention plays a significant role in justifying morality as a whole, and the agents in group 1 are more morally justified than the agents in group 2. Borrowing ideas from Chinese philosophy, especially Confucianism, I propose that self-cultivated genuine moral experience grounds the justification of morality. I will discuss my proposal in the second and last sections. Before that, let’s discuss what kind of justification we are looking for in this section.

Why is morality justified? Firstly, a justification of morality is not a justification within morality, and the “why be moral” question is different from the question of “what morality

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<sup>21</sup> The issue I discuss in this paper is related to (but unaffected by) the dispute of moral worthiness of de re and de dicto moral motivation. One party argues that de dicto moral motivation does not have moral worth because it is more like a fetish (Smith 1994; Arpaly 2003; Weatherston 2019), and another party argues that de dicto motivation is at least as moral praiseworthy as de re motivation is (King 2020; Field 2022). I do not phrase my argument in terms of de re and de dicto dispute for the following reason: I think that King makes a convincing point that de re and de dicto moral motivations share a lot of similarities in terms of moral evaluation, especially in the case that they both fail to lead to the right moral actions. I am more interested in the case when the agent fails to carry out their good moral intention, regardless it is de re or de dicto. So, this dispute is not essential to my argument.



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requires” or “what moral correctness is”. The justification of morality is not about what morality requires, but why these requirements should be followed. Separating these two questions highlights the feature of moral inescapability from the inevaporability of the norms.

For any norm, the content of the norm does not evaporate even if no one cares (Joyce 2001, Foot 1972). Even for a norm of a club, one’s lack of interest in this norm will not make this norm “evaporate” in the sense that, if one violates it, one will be evaluated as being wrong. However, the inevaporability of the norm does not tell you why you should follow that norm: even if one is evaluated as “being wrong”, according to the norm, that fact by itself does not tell one why one should follow it. Morality should be different. Morality should have something above and beyond inevaporability. As Joyce puts it, “In other words, in the moral case, we are not content to admit that our claim that there is a reason to refrain from killing is merely a permissible way of speaking from a perspective that endorses the dictates of morality” (2001, p. 41).

Morality not only gives rise to inevaporable evaluative conditions, but also inescapable requirements. The justification of morality is different from the correctness condition of morality, because the latter does not explain why moral requirements are inescapable for moral agents. After all, what morality requires—the correctness conditions—could equally apply to all moral agents, regardless of whether they care about these conditions. These requirements will not evaporate just because some people do not care about them. However, that does not answer the “Why be moral” question, because we still want to know why these people—who do not care about morality—should care. To justify morality, we need to explain moral inescapability, not moral inevaporability. We need a justification of morality that cashes out the metaphor of morality being inescapable for people who seem to not care about being moral at all.

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Why should we be moral, regardless of whether we care? Answering this “Why be moral” question is difficult. On the one hand, we cannot answer this question by saying that “Because that is what morality requires.” There are two reasons why: firstly, this is an uninformative and circular answer. Secondly, one may perfectly understand what morality requires but still asks why one should care about fulfilling moral requirements, just as someone may perfectly understand what a club rule requires but still question why one should care about following it (Foot 1972). Thereby a successful answer to the “Why be moral?” question should not be conflated with a question about moral correctness regarding what is morally right and wrong. As Scanlon states, a justification of morality as a whole is different from justification within morality (Scanlon 1998b).

On another hand, we cannot answer the “why be moral” question by saying that “Because otherwise you will be put into jail!” This answer is not about fulfilling the requirement of morality, but the requirement of the legal system or the requirement of promoting one’s self-interests. Therefore, the answer to the “why be moral” question, or the justification of morality as a whole, seems to be either non-informative or not about morality. Prichard concludes from this difficulty that the philosophy of morality “rest[s] on a mistake” (Prichard 1912). But arguably, the positive lesson we get from this difficulty is that the justification of morality should be the justification of moral requirements, while it is still an informative and non-circular justification (Scanlon 1998b).

To justify morality in an informative way and to ground the normative force of morality which extends to agents in group 2, we need to show that the significance of being moral is intelligent and satisfying to people like agents in group 2. <sup>22</sup>The point here is that the justification

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<sup>22</sup> One may wonder, how does the “informative and non-circular justification” mean “a justification that is intelligent and satisfying to people who seem to not care about it”? This is a conceptual point: it is conceptually

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is for individuals, not for a group of individuals. Consider an alternative view offered by David Copp and Peter Railton (Railton 1999; Copp 1995, 2007). According to this view, we should be moral because morality brings us benefits, such as living in a better-coordinated society. We must live together, and living together requires solving various problems caused by different interests, preferences, etc. Because morality helps us solve these problems, we should follow moral requirements. However, this way of justifying morality is not satisfying for people like agents in group 2: why should Mei, as a hermit, be moral? And why should Hua, as a clever free rider, be moral? If they will never hurt any group, why should morality still bind them? Even for ordinary people who do live in groups, since we are not creatures that are built to benefit the group (like bees or ants), we are free to live in the group while harming it. Intuitively, morality is supposed to fill the gap between “What benefits others?” and “What I should care about?” Simply offering an answer about what is good for one’s society does not tell one why one should care about one’s society. It is not a matter of us knowing why one should care about morality, but a matter of a kind of “should care” that speaks to oneself.

The normative force of morality should “speak to” individuals. However, a satisfying justification for individuals being moral is different from justifying why all individuals should drink water or why “the horse grabs the hay”, as Hampton puts it (2009, p. 92). First, normative inescapability is not causal inescapability. It is not intuitive to say that we cannot violate moral requirements or moral laws in the same sense that we cannot violate physical laws. For instance, when I am thirsty, I have a compelling pull to drink water. I cannot violate the physical law at play in the sense that if I do, I hurt my body. However, we can clearly violate the compelling pull

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impossible for someone to “genuinely not care about these important upshots of being moral at all” but still “genuinely understand why these important upshots are intelligent and satisfying”, unless they are defective.. Someone may genuinely not understand why they should value morality over other things, but that is different from saying that they genuinely do not understand why it is satisfying and intelligent.

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toward morality without hurting ourselves. Secondly, the normative force of morality is (at least conceptually) different from the motivational force of morality. I set aside disputes around moral motivation. Here I only want to focus on this point: The normative binding force is not only a compelling feeling for us to act morally but a compelling feeling under regulation. The moral bindingness is different from a brute psychologically compelling pull.

From the discussion above, I conclude that a justification of morality should be (1) both informative and directly relate to morality to avoid Prichard's questioning; in addition to that, it should also (2) cash out moral inescapability instead of moral inevitability and focus on justifying morality which beyond a mere correctness condition that applies to the individuals and evaluates their actions; (3) ground normative force that speaks to the individuals and be a satisfying justification for individuals; and (4) focus on the normative guidance and the bindingness of morality instead of a compelling but brute psychological pull.<sup>23</sup>

## **2. Genuine moral experience as a ground for justification of morality**

In this section, I will first show an example of genuine moral experience and two features of this experience. Then, I will discuss why genuine moral experience justifies morality: two features of genuine moral experience specify the mechanism of moral inescapability and lead to two important upshots of being moral.

### **(1) The case and two features of genuine moral experience**

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<sup>23</sup> One may wonder whether morality should be overriding and whether the justification of morality should ground the priority of morality. I am neutral on this point. In general, justifying morality is conceptually different from showing that morality is overriding. A normative system can be justified with or without it being overriding. A moral realist can believe that morality is not overriding (Copp 2010), but they can also believe that justifying morality is to show "how it could make sense to give it priority over them" (Scanlon 1998a, p.160).

First, for an example of genuine moral experience, let's look at the story of Junzi's life:

A kindhearted woman named Junzi lived in a small town in China, working as an ordinary staff in a small company. One day, on the way she rushed to work, she saw a homeless child begging for food. There was no one else except her and the child. She knew she was almost late for work, so she first walked away. However, upon looking at his shabby clothes and skinny body, she felt her heart was uneasy. Eventually, she stopped for him, taking him to the restaurant for food and sending him to the police afterward, hoping to find his family. The boss and other co-workers heard what she had done for the child, and they expressed their admiration for her kind heart to her.

This was not the end of her interaction with the child. The police found his family, and told Junzi that his family was too poor to feed him and that was why they left him in the street. Junzi decided to fund him till he reached adulthood. She was not rich, so she had to cut down on her daily expenses to support the child. Sometimes she asked herself whether this was worthwhile. But recalled the child's big sad eyes, some part in her heart knew that she simply could not stop supporting him. Except for her partner, no one else knew how much effort she had made to help him.

After she started to support the child, Junzi was pulled into the issue of how poverty affected children and she felt the urge to help other children in poverty. She knew that she could not change too many things, plus her personal

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life was affected by helping one child, so she was puzzled if she should help more children. And one day, she read Peter Singer's famous paper on this topic, and she was persuaded. She stopped questioning, and she started to look for a way to keep a balance between her personal life and supporting children in poverty. She found an organization that helped famished children in Africa in a professional way. She donated to them till her life ended. This time, no one knew her deeds. During her last days, she revealed it to her partner, and expressed her contentment and peaceful mind with helping these children.

I cannot exhaust all instances or all features of genuine moral experience. Here I want to discuss two important and necessary features of this experience illustrated in Junzi's story, which leads to two significances of being moral for the individuals.

The first feature is that, without other people's watching or requiring, in her private time, Junzi not only acted on doing what morality required her to do but also spent time studying and deliberating what these requirements were. She noticed the puzzle of keeping the balance between doing the morally right thing and sustaining her personal life, and she actively looked for answers. She was vigorously attached to her good intentions—helping others—as if someone was constantly supervising her. But as a non-religious person, she knew that there was no one monitoring her action or her inner life, and she was simply guided by her kind heart. It is not a psychologically compelling motivational feeling that “pushes” her to act; instead, it is an authoritative bindingness from her own heart which functions as if she was supervised by others. Her kind heart supervised her in a way that she would be “punished” by an uneasy mind when she failed to respond to her kind heart accordingly.

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Another feature, related to the first one, is that she never ignored what her heart “told” her to do, she sincerely responded to it, and she gained an eased and content mind by acting accordingly to her heart: the first time she saw the child and tried to walk away, she did not because she noticed that she would feel uneasy if she did not help him. She was responsive to what she took to be morally good: before she started to actively think about the issue of helping children in poverty, she had already sincerely responded to her reaction of seeing a child suffering. Later, she sincerely responded to her reaction of being pulled to engage with the issue of poverty and children. The guidance from her kind heart became more and more efficient because she never “turned back” from it. Being guided by her kind heart, she gained a peaceful mind and contentment.

These two features of the genuine moral experience are not new to philosophers. Two concepts in Chinese philosophy correspond to these two features: “shen du” (慎独) and “cheng yi” (诚意). The literal meaning of “cheng yi” is “making one’s mind sincere”; that is, one makes effort to figure out what one’s heart “tells” one to do and sincerely respond to it. The literal meaning of “Shen Du” is “watching out for oneself when one is on their own”. However, this term also covers the meaning of “making one’s mind sincere” (梁涛 2004). This is why: by being sincere to one's mind, one is able to be moral even when one's on their own; by watching out for oneself when one's on their own, one is able to be sincere to one’s mind.<sup>24</sup> But exactly how do these two concepts relate? Consider three levels of “Watching out for oneself when one

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<sup>24</sup> As The Great Learning (“Da Xue”, 大学) suggests,

What is meant by "making the thoughts sincere." is allowing no self-deception, as when we hate a bad smell, and as when we love what is beautiful. This is called self-enjoyment. Therefore, the superior man, must be watchful over himself when he is alone. [...] The disciple Zeng said, "What ten eyes behold, what ten hands point to, is to be regarded with reverence!". [...] Therefore, the superior man must make his thoughts sincere. (Da Xue, Chinese Text Project, Dr. Donald Sturgeon (德龍), <http://ctext.org/zh>)

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is on their own” (“shen du”) (陈立胜 2021): being careful as if others are watching, being careful as if the spirits (or ghosts) are watching, and being careful as if your own heart (or heart-mind, “xin”, 心) is watching.

In general, the concept of shen du refers to the occasions where others are not presented, but one is still moral in terms of actions and intentions. It starts with a Chinese folk intuition: living in a group and being judged as a morally bad person by others is not desirable for individuals. Thereby one is usually careful when others are present. According to this folk intuition, when others are absent, like in one’s private time, spirits (“Gui Shen”, 鬼神) might still watch and judge, and being judged as a morally bad person by the spirits is not desirable for individuals as well. Therefore, one is also careful in private time when one thinks the spirits are present. However, other people cannot always be around in one’s entire life, and even the spirits may not reach out to every aspect of one’s entire life—one’s inner life in one’s mind is not accessible to the spirits. The idea here is to emphasize that there is something in one’s inner life that is only open to one’s own self.<sup>25</sup> One’s feelings, intentions, and the “liminal moments of emotional incipience” (“ji”, 机)—something that just enters one’s consciousness and before it starts to affect other mental processes—are mostly recognizable by one’s own self. Thereby, one is the best candidate to guide and watch out for one’s own inner life. In Junzi’s case, her kind heart plays the role of guiding her through the process of helping children in poverty, even when she is struggling with if she really should do it. Her “heart” is the best candidate for knowing what she is struggling with, so her own kind heart is the best supervisor that leads her to find the answer and make the right choice. She is guided by her own heart as if she was guided by others.

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<sup>25</sup> Let’s set aside the issue of whether one’s conscience is always transparent to one’s self. The point is one’s conscience *can* be transparent to one’s own self.



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Corresponding to this Chinese folk intuition, in one's public life, one is watching out for what one does and says as if one is avoiding others' judgments of "being morally bad" (the first level of being shen du). In one's private life, one is careful as if the spirits are present (the second level). However, the most effective supervision comes from one's own heart. One's own heart will always be there in one's inner life and watch out not only one's behaviors, but one's intentions and even the "liminal moments of emotional incipience" (the third level). Nothing, except oneself, is able to watch out for one's inner life at this level.

When one could be "watching out for oneself when one is on their own" at the third level, one could "make one's mind sincere". These two concepts are not synonymous, but they are not separable. They are united in the genuine moral experience. I will discuss the meaning of the concept of "making one's mind sincere" more closely in the next section. Since this section is about how morality could be grounded in genuine moral experience, I will focus on the role of "making one's mind sincere" (or the third level of shen du) plays in justifying morality as a whole.

## (2) How genuine moral experience justifies morality as a whole

As mentioned, a justification of morality should be (1) cash out moral inescapability instead of moral inevitability; (2) informative and directly morality related to avoiding Prichard's questioning; (3) ground normative force that speaks to the individuals; and (4) focus on the normative guidance and the bindingness of morality.

Let's start with meeting criteria (1) of specifying the mechanism of moral inescapability and discuss how this mechanism also satisfies criteria (3) and (4). As shown in Junzi's case, the

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second feature of genuine moral experience (corresponding to the concept of “making one’s mind sincere”) cashes out the mechanism of how morality is inescapable for individual moral agents who have genuine moral experience: one is guided by the active bindingness feeling towards morality which provides prescription and positive guidance. When one has the genuine moral experience, one’s heart is not merely “sitting” there and being a “witness”, but actively “watching out” and being a “supervisor” who leads one to do what one takes to be the right action. Having an uneasy mind if one fails to respond is how this “supervisor” functions, but the guidance from this “supervisor” is not to ease your mind; instead, the content of the guidance is to act on what this “supervisor” takes to be morally right (I will discuss this point soon). One can ignore the uneasiness, but one would not escape from the uncomfortableness that this uneasiness brings.

Take Junzi’s case for example. When Junzi first saw the child, she tried to walk away but she felt uneasy. At that moment, Junzi acted to respond to what she took to be the right thing to do; that is, she helped the child in need; otherwise, she would have an uneasy mind. She could have ignored this uneasiness, because this uneasiness would not cause her to lose money (but being late to work would) or necessarily impact her health. However, if she ignored this uneasiness and failed to faithfully act on what her kind heart told her to do, then she would not gain the peacefulness and contentment associated with doing what she took to be the right thing to do. Without acting morally and sincerely responding to her kind heart, her mind would not be eased.

Note that, even though otherwise she would end up having an uneasy mind, Junzi did not act in order to ease her uneasy mind; instead, she acted rightly because it was what she took to be the right thing to do at that moment. The point of being sincere to one’s mind is not to ease one’s

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mind or avoid an uneasy mind. In this sense, Junzi's reason to help the child is not to ease her mind, but to do what she takes to be the morally right thing. This is analogous to feeling the pain from my impacted wisdom teeth. When I feel this pain, I go to see a dentist to remove them; otherwise, I would keep feeling pain. But my reason to see a dentist is to remove my wisdom teeth, not to ease the pain. It could be the case that I am wrong about how bad it is to keep wisdom teeth (for instance, if they were not impacted then I should not remove them), just like Junzi could be wrong about what she should do at that moment (for instance, if the kid's parents were on their way to pick up him, then she should have waited there with him). But the reason for me to see a dentist is to treat my bad teeth because I take it to be true that these bad teeth should be removed; similarly, Junzi's reason to send the child to the police because she took that to be the right thing to do at moment. My points here are: (a) in the genuine moral experience, one acts on what one takes to be the morally right thing to do, even though one could be wrong about it;<sup>26</sup> and (b) what makes that thing the morally right thing to do, from one's own perspective, can be independent of what that response could bring to oneself.

With this mechanism, we know how the normative guidance or normative bindingness of morality "speaks to" individuals instead of a large-scale practice of a group.

Now we turn to criterion (2) of avoiding Prichard's questioning. I propose, in short, genuine moral experience as a grounding of justifying morality brings about two important upshots of being moral, which corresponds to two features of genuine moral experience.

The mechanism of moral inescapability leads to the first important upshot, which corresponds to the second feature of genuine moral experience: when one is "sincere to one's mind", being a moral person and having a moral mind bring one a special peacefulness and

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<sup>26</sup> Such as Yik in the opening case.

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contentment of knowing that one has done what one takes to be good. This is a positive experience, but it is arguably different from being happy or having happiness. For instance, if Junzi has too much bad fortune or lacks sufficient external support, intuitively, we are hesitant to regard her as having happiness. However, that does not affect us admitting her to have a peaceful and content inner life.

Another point of significance when individuals are moral—which flows from the first feature of genuine moral experience—is this: when one is able to “watch out for oneself when one is on their own”, one has the “root” and the “orientation” for one’s life. Having a “root” is significant in two related ways. Firstly, we do not only live in a group with others, but we also live with ourselves. Living with oneself does not require one to be a hermit. Even when we are with others, there are aspects of our life that leave others out; namely, our inner life. Being able to watch out for ourselves in our inner life not only confines our actions to our inner world, but also gives us a sense of orientation to our inner life. Secondly, this “orientation” is not external to us in the sense that it is rooted in us. We are not young kids who need an adult to set up orientations for us, instead, we set up directions for ourselves. When we have a root, we not only know where we are oriented to but why we should be so oriented, because these orientations are set up by the “root” we have. Being able to watch out for oneself, one is like a tree that is strongly rooted in the ground and is thereby free from the danger of blowing over or blowing away.

Now we can see the role that one’s heart plays in justifying morality: sincerely responding to one’s heart issues moral bindingness. Even though people like the agents in group 1 (Yik and Niao) fail to meet what morality requires them to do (Yik’s case is more complicated, as I will discuss in the next section), they are sincere in their hearts. Their heart issues the feeling

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of bindingness characteristic of morality, even though the contents of what they are bound to do rest on mistakes. (We will discuss why they make these mistakes in the next section, along with the mistakes made by agents of group 2.) As mentioned, since the justification of morality is different from justification within morality, and moral inescapability does not require moral correctness. Having false content or acting wrongly does not undermine the justificatory power of sincerely responding to what their hearts to be morally right. So, compared to agents in group 1, what is the extra wrongness that agents in group 2 have? They do not understand why morality is inescapable, because they are not sincere to their heart (again, that does not mean morality is not inescapable to them, as we will discuss soon).

At this point, one may ask the following question: how could morality also be justified to someone who does not have genuine moral experience? For people like agents in group 2, who know what morality requires but do not care about it, what justification of morality would satisfy them? To thoroughly answer this question, we need to discuss the concept of “making one’s mind sincere” (“Cheng Yi”, “诚意”) more carefully in the next section. Here, I want to point out that these two significances I discussed in this section are salient and intelligent to people who do not have genuine moral experience, thereby the justification of morality extends to them as well.

Recall, the importance of being moral for individuals are (1) having a “root” for one’s life and (2) having special contentment and satisfaction. These two features do not rely on one’s moral character. Even for someone like Mei and Hua from group 2 in the opening cases, these important upshots are intelligible. In what sense are they intelligible to Mei and Hua? Consider the dentist's case again: suppose, similar to Mei’s and Hua’s attitude of morality, I do not care about the health of my teeth. So instead of seeing a doctor, I take painkillers to dampen the pain. However, it is still intelligible for me that removing wisdom teeth brings me oral health, even

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though I do not act on it because I don't care about my oral health. It is intelligible regardless of my attitude to my oral health, because the pain would be here regardless of whether I care. Therefore, understanding what benefits removing wisdom teeth could bring to me does not require me to care about my oral health. Similarly, it is intelligible to Mei and Hua that being moral would give them the "root" for their life and bring them special contentment and satisfaction, even though they may not act on it, nor do they care.<sup>27</sup>

For people who are not psychologically defective, having genuine moral experience is appealing regardless of whether they have this experience or not. For one thing, one's heart-mind would not disappear just because one is not sincere to it; it may become alien to oneself, but it would remain a "witness" that fails to actively guide one's action but passively "watch". Whether the role of one's heart-mind plays as a witness or a supervisor comes with a range: no matter how little the role it plays, it may come to one's mind in the form of unease at some point. Pursuing genuine moral experience not only gives one an opportunity to have these important upshots of being moral, and helps one avoid an uneasy mind.

Therefore, genuine moral experience provides an answer to the "why be moral" question without running into Prichard's questioning of how the significance of morality could be both directly related to morality but not completely dependent on morality. The two upshots are informative, because either having a content mind or having a root for one's life relies on one's moral character: one could be "cold" to morality, but still recognize the benefits that flow from these two important upshots. They are still directly related to morality in terms of content and acquisition conditions. The content of having a root and having an eased mind is directly about morality; what is more, one cannot gain these significances unless one really aims to be moral. In

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<sup>27</sup> Note that we don't know if Mei and Hua would change their mind if they know these two upshots of being moral.

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other words, following moral requirements is a constitutive and necessary way to have this experience.

To conclude, having genuine moral experience grounds the justification of morality as a whole. Firstly, it meets Prichard's line of questioning head-on. Secondly, it cashes out the mechanism of morality being inescapable and specifies the significance of being moral. It targets the moral mind of doing what one takes to be morally right and is not merely about moral evaluation. Thirdly, the important upshots of being moral are about and for individuals, and it is satisfying for individual agents like those in group 2. Fourthly, it is not about a psychologically compelling feeling, but a sense of authoritative bindingness of doing what one takes to be the morally right thing to do.<sup>28</sup>

How to pursue genuine moral experience? How to make sense of the problematic groups in the first section in terms of lacking genuine moral experience? I propose that self-cultivation is constitutive of genuine moral experience, and the failures of agents in two groups lie in their failures to complete different processes of self-cultivation.

### **3. Self-cultivation is constitutive and necessary for having genuine moral experience**

In this section, I will discuss why self-cultivation is constitutive of having genuine moral experience by looking closely at the concept of "making one's mind sincere". To be specific, I will start with the concept of "making one's mind sincere", which is not separable from the concept of "watching out for oneself when one is on their own." This will answer the question of what kind of "mind" we need to be sincere about. Then, I will introduce the process of self-

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<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, it does not imply that the moral considerations are overriding or being overridden.

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cultivation as a mental discipline in Chinese philosophy. Finally, I discuss how to make sense of the two different kinds of mistakes of group 1 and group 2.

Let's start with what kind of mind asks for sincere responses. Recall, one common feature both Junzi and agents in group 1 share is that they sincerely follow guidance from their hearts on what is morally right.<sup>29</sup> The guidance from their hearts does not necessarily lead to action, but the bindingness feeling from their uneasy mind: they feel alarmed and concerned in these moral situations.

A Chinese philosopher, Mengzi, used a thought experiment similar to Junzi's story to illustrate that we all have "the feeling of commiseration" (惻隱之心) which refers to "a heart-mind which cannot bear to see the sufferings of others"(不忍人之心). He asks us to imagine seeing a kid falling into a well,

When I say that all men have a mind which cannot bear to see the sufferings of others, my meaning may be illustrated thus: even nowadays, if men suddenly see a child about to fall into a well, they will without exception experience a feeling of alarm and distress. They will feel so, not as a ground on which they may gain the favor of the child's parents, nor as a ground on which they may seek the praise of their neighbors and friends, nor from a dislike to the reputation of having been unmoved by such a thing. (Mengzi, Gong Sun Chou 1, 3.6/18/5-3.6/18/7)

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<sup>29</sup> Note this does not mean the agents in group 1 (Yik and Niao, but especially Niao) necessarily have genuine moral experience. We will soon discuss why.



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We feel alarmed and distressed, independent of what we can gain from this feeling. It is an immediate and direct feeling of alarm and distress we have when we are watching someone is about to suffer. This feeling of alarm and distress indicates what we take to be the morally right thing to do. Again, this does not mean we must act on it, but simply that we will remain to be alarmed and distressed. Being sincere to one's mind means that one is responding to one's feelings of alarm and distress in a way that one is guided by one's own heart.

One may question the thought above by wondering the following two questions: First, is Mengzi right that we all would feel alarmed and distressed when we see others suffering? Is it possible that some of us do not feel alarmed and distressed? Second, is it possible that what we feel alarmed and distressed about is not morally right, just like the alien Yik in the opening example? To reply, first, we note that this feeling is weak in terms of its motivational power: we are not "motivated" or "pushed" to act on it. Instead, as an authoritative bindingness, we are "bound" and "guided" by this feeling in the sense that there is a special kind of uncomfortableness of watching a child who is about to suffer. It is plausible to assume that one does not have this feeling of alarm and distress only if one is psychologically defective. Second, Yik's case is a stipulated one where all "agents" on Yik's planet have distorted psychological inclinations. By stipulation, Yik cannot feel alarmed and distressed towards its slave's suffering, unless resorting to some dramatic solution (like hitting its head). Yik is having a "moral illusion" about what is morally right and there is no principled way to bring it back to the "moral reality". Therefore, we do not have to compare our world to such a stipulated case, unless we commit to global normative skepticism.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, as shown in the dentist's case in section 3, it is possible that we are wrong about what is morally right, just as I might be wrong about what is

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<sup>30</sup> They might not be decisive, but we do have good reasons to reject the global skepticism. See Zhou & Borchert, forthcoming.

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the right way to treat my wisdom teeth. My point is that our heart “knows” what we should act on by having an uneasy feeling of alarm and distress, independent of whether it is right about moral correctness.

Let’s back up to “the feeling of commiseration”. Mengzi suggests that this feeling is just a “sprout” that needs cultivation. Without cultivation, these feelings will not go far.<sup>31</sup> Only cultivated “sprouts” will play an active role in our moral life. How do we cultivate this feeling?

Cultivation is open to various executions, but I want to emphasize the importance of self-cultivation. Only by engaging in self-cultivation can one have a genuine moral experience. Let me explain.

To have genuine moral experience, the necessity of engaging with self-cultivation is not only in terms of the accessibility of our own inner life, but also in terms of the efficiency of self-cultivation. Firstly, as mentioned in the third section, our own heart is the best candidate to supervise our inner life: our desires; intentions; the faint, unsettled thoughts in one’s mind; and the “liminal moments of emotional incipience” (“ji”, 机) just after they have entered one’s consciousness and before they start to affect other mental processes. Secondly, stopping someone from being immoral at the action level is too late, as is stopping someone from being immoral at the motivation level. Instead, stopping someone from having immoral thoughts, desires, and the “liminal moments of emotional incipience” just after they have entered one’s consciousness and before they start to affect other mental processes is the most efficient way to cultivate a moral person.

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<sup>31</sup> As Mengzi suggests,

Of all seeds, the best are the five kinds of grain, yet if they be not ripe, they are not equal to the ti or the bai. So, the value of benevolence depends entirely on its being brought to maturity. (Mengzi, Gaozi 1,11.19/61/64)

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Chinese philosophers in the Confucianist tradition have developed a whole system of mental discipline for one to self-cultivating one's moral agency oneself. It is called "xiu shen" (修身) or "gong fu" (功夫) which contains four steps.<sup>32</sup> This mental discipline is not only about cultivating one's moral mind, but here I only focus on two steps that relate to cultivating your own heart-mind: "making one's mind sincere" ("Cheng Yi", "诚意") and "rectifying one's heart-mind" ("Zheng Xin", "正心").

To make one's mind sincere is to conform to one's heart-mind which "cannot bear to see the sufferings of others" and to conform to "the feeling of commiseration". Just like Junzi in the previous section, who saw a homeless child and felt alarmed and concerned, reacted sincerely to these moral sensations. After helping the child, she kept thinking and acting on her feeling of commiseration. Even though she was not consciously doing this mental discipline, the time and energy she had spent on helping children make her a good example of someone who makes efforts to sincerely respond to her mind.

Now let's discuss "Rectifying one's heart-mind" as an important complement and see how the annoying neighbor Niao is different from Junzi. When one "make(s) one's intention

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<sup>32</sup> In The Great Learning (Da Xue, 《大学》), there are four steps of self-cultivation: "investigate things and affairs" (格物, "Ge Wu"), "extend one's knowledge" (致知, "Zhi Zhi"), "making one's intentions sincere" (诚意, "Cheng Yi"), and "rectify one's heart-mind" (正心, "Zheng Xin"). Cheng-Zhu school and Lu-Wang school, as two groups of most influential Neo-Confucian scholars, hold different interpretations of the first two steps, especially the first step of "investigate things and affairs". According to the Cheng-Zhu school which emphasizes investigating outwardly, "investigate things and affairs" refers to the process of discovering "pattern, principle, coherence" (理, "Li") expressed in things in the external world. On the contrary, the Lu-Wang school suggests that "investigate things and affairs" is better understood as rectifying one's intention (意, "Yi") in response to things, as a matter of identifying and rooting out selfish intentions (Angle & Tiwand, 2017). Compared to the Cheng-Zhu school, the Lu-Wang school focuses more on the mental discipline of cultivating one's "intention" (意, "Yi") and "heart-mind" (心, "Xin"). However, even for the Cheng-Zhu school, the importance of mental discipline is highlighted through the method of "reverential attention". As mentioned before, "reverential attention" refers to the process of keeping one's attention on the effort of being impartial and less selfish. To my understanding, "reverential attention" greatly overlaps with "making one's intention sincere" and "rectifying one's heart-mind". Another important note is that Zhu Xi's "Self-only knowledge" (独知, "Du Zhi") similarly has much overlap with Wang Yangming's "conscience, knowledge of the good" (良知, "Niang Zhi"; Chen Lishen 2021). Therefore, in this paper, I only focus on "making one's intention sincere" and "rectifying one's heart-mind" as the main processes of one's mental discipline.

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sincere”, one is able to watch out for one’s inner life and outward behaviors and make them conform to moral requirements. When one “rectif[ies] one’s heart-mind”, one can not only have good intentions that conform to moral requirements, but also the right judgments in the circumstances. “Making one’s intention sincere” focuses on critical examination of one’s intention, and “rectifying one’s heart-mind” focuses on reducing the disruption from personal interests.<sup>33</sup> In order to make the right judgments about external circumstances, one needs to first recognize the rightness in one's intentions, and then one needs to reduce the disruption of personal interests. “Making one’s intention sincere” is the basis of “rectifying one’s heart-mind”, because we need to first sincerely face the good intentions that happened to us, identifying the right and the wrong, and then we can make the right judgments. However, “rectifying one’s heart-mind” is an important complement to “making one’s intention sincere” because our good intentions are easily disrupted by our various responses to the stimuli of the external world. To make the right judgments, one needs to engage in an impartial reflection and aim to form a less selfish judgment.<sup>34</sup>

The point of “rectifying one’s heart” is not to eliminate one’s emotions. Instead, the point is to monitor and regulate our emotional responses stimulated by external circumstances in order to make sure that our heart really is aiming at what it purports to be aiming at: responding to

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<sup>33</sup> Zhan Jiehao, 论“诚意”与“正心”, Academia, [https://www.academia.edu/4980940/%E8%AB%96\\_%E8%AA%A0%E6%84%8F\\_%E8%88%87\\_%E6%AD%A3%E5%BF%83](https://www.academia.edu/4980940/%E8%AB%96_%E8%AA%A0%E6%84%8F_%E8%88%87_%E6%AD%A3%E5%BF%83)

<sup>34</sup> A quote below from The Great Learning shows the importance of “rectifying one’s heart-mind ” as an important complement to “making one’s intention sincere”:

What is meant by, "The cultivation of the person depends on rectifying the mind may be thus illustrated: If a man is under the influence of passion he will be incorrect in his conduct. He will be the same if he is under the influence of terror, under the influence of fond regard, or under that of sorrow and distress. When the mind is not present, we look and do not see; we hear and do not understand; we eat and do not know the taste of what we eat. This is what is meant by saying that the cultivation of the person depends on the rectification of the mind. (Da Xue, Chinese Text Project, Dr. Donald Sturgeon (德龍), <http://ctext.org/zh>)

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what we take to be the morally right thing to do. Emotions just are these natural responses toward external circumstances. We monitor emotions by having a direction settled by our good intention. The purpose of monitoring our “passion”, “terror”, and “sorrow and distress”, is to preserve what our kind hearts intend to achieve; put differently, to make sure that we do not miss the target of our hearts.

Now we can see what kind of mistakes Niao is making. Unlike Yik, who is psychologically defective, Niao does not have the full-fledged genuine moral experience because Niao misses the target of his heart. Niao misses the target of acting morally because he fails to find a way to preserve his “good intention” from various disruptions one experiences as a result of external circumstances; that is, he fails to “rectify the heart-mind”. Therefore, he could have avoided the moral illusion, and he should. He should avoid the moral illusion not only because it is required to have full-fledged genuine moral experience, but because that is what his heart-mind really wants. After all, he does feel the bindingness feeling towards being moral and he wants to act morally. But because of various disruptions, he cannot make the right judgments according to different circumstances. If he could engage in self-cultivation as Junzi does by engaging with mental discipline of rectifying his heart, he would have avoided the moral illusion, acquired genuine moral experience, and been a welcome neighbor.

How to make sense of the mistakes of group 2 and why they are also bound by morality? They fail to be sincere to their mind and they lack self-cultivation. Just like one may question why one should have genuine moral experience, one may question why one, like people in group 2, should engage in self-cultivation. Again, my answer is that without self-cultivating oneself to be sincere to one’s own heart, one lacks the opportunities of having all the important upshots that genuine moral experience brings to the individuals: the “root” of one’s inner life and special

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contentment and satisfaction of being moral. For the agents in group 2, both Mei and Hua know what morality requires but they both cannot feel the bindingness feeling toward being moral.

This fact alone does not show that they have a different moral nature than Niao. Instead, this simply shows that their hearts have been so remote and alien to them as if they have lost them.

However, one's heart will not disappear. At some point, Mei or Hua might feel uneasy for they have turned back to their own heart: they are not true to themselves, nor true to their own feelings of concern and alarm. If they really want to know what is going on inside themselves and be sincere to their own mind, they should understand that they are also bound by morality.

Being moral is being true to yourself.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, I argue for how genuine moral experience justifies morality as a whole. It explains the mechanism of how morality is inescapable: one is positively guided by the active feeling of being bound to morality to follow moral requirements, because otherwise one would feel uneasy.

This provides an informative answer for what grounds normative force that speaks to the individual: sincerely responding to this binding feeling towards morality brings out the significance of being moral. One has a sense of “root” as an internal authority for oneself, and one acquires special contentment and satisfaction. However, even though one cannot escape from this binding feeling towards morality, one can nevertheless ignore it, and thereby it loses its normative binding force.

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The crucial features of genuine moral experience are being “shen du” and “making sincere one's mind,” which require one to respond to one's heart sincerely. Therefore, to have genuine moral experience, one must engage in self-cultivation. Regulation from oneself is an efficient and necessary way to sincerely respond to the requirements from one's own heart, which serves as a supervisor in genuine moral experience.

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