The Uncivil War

by

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This 1900-word moralist tract and primer rejects more peripheral approaches to morality, moral philosophy, ethics or meta-ethics, focusing instead on morality itself, and the implications of the reality of morality, both moral necessities, those things which must be in order for morality to be, and moral consequences, those things which must be since morality is, all in the hardly metaphorical context of the war against responsibility and more.

There can hardly be a more rigorous or normative moral theory, or one which arises more naturally and logically from the subject itself, and indeed little of it is original, although seldom have all the principles involved been so systematically and concisely gathered in one place.
Picked and prudent sentiments.

—*The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade*
Responsibility has always been quite flexibly arrogated and evaded and imputed and impugned, and even established so.

And some more or less simple arguments show the antiquity, extent, success and cost of this war against responsibility and more.
Responsibility is of course a matter of morality, moral philosophy, moral theory or moralism.
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The assertion or proposition that it is wrong to believe that some things are wrong is self-contradictory and therefore false.
If the assertion or proposition that some things are wrong was false, then falsehood wouldn’t be wrong.
Every moralist can proceed in the calm and settled assurance that even if morality wasn’t real it could hardly then be wrong to believe and act as if it was.
What good would a science or philosophy be, as a science or philosophy, which did not hold falsehood, including fallacy, at least in its own theory, to be wrong?
Consistency as expedient is not consistency, and least of all in the most important matters.
Some claim that we can never really know anything.
But how do they know that?
Others argue against the validity of logic.
Still others say the world is an illusion, in which case so are they, not to mention their speeches and books on the subject.
Morality is real.
But how could it be, if there was no responsibility?
There would be no morality if there was no responsibility, but morality is real, and so responsibility must be real, also.
Morality is real, and therefore responsibility is real. But how could responsibility be real if there was no choice? There would be no responsibility and therefore no morality if there was no choice, but morality and responsibility are real, and so choice must be real, also.
Choice of course is not omnipotence but the power to exercise or refrain from exercising one’s other powers.
Morality is real, and therefore responsibility is real, and therefore choice is real.

But how could choice be real if “choice” was caused or determined internally or externally to the “chooser”? There would be no choice and therefore no responsibility or morality if “choice” was caused or determined internally or externally to the “chooser”, but morality, responsibility and choice are real, and so choice is not so caused or determined so, and so each chooser is an individual.
Just as there could be no morality if there was no responsibility, choice or individuality, there could be no responsibility if there was no morality, choice or individuality, no choice if there was no morality, responsibility or individuality, and no individuality if there was no morality, responsibility or choice.

That is, if any one of these, morality, responsibility, choice or individuality, did not exist, neither would the others.

And so morality, responsibility, choice and individuality are equivalent.
Putting the foregoing another way, just as the existence of morality implies that of responsibility, choice and individuality, so that of responsibility implies that of morality, choice and individuality, that of choice that of morality, responsibility and individuality, and that of individuality that of morality, responsibility and choice.

That is, when any one of these, morality, responsibility, choice or individuality, exists, so do the others.

And so morality, responsibility, choice and individuality are equivalent.
Since morality, responsibility, choice and individuality are equivalent, inconsistency with regard to any one of them is inconsistency with regard to all of them.
Morality is real, and therefore responsibility is real, and therefore choice is real.

But how could choice be real if every “choice” was foreknown, or predicted, or at least foreknowable or predictable?

There would be no choice and therefore no responsibility or morality if “choice” was foreknowable or predictable, but morality, responsibility and choice are real, and so choice must be unforeknowable and unpredictable.
Foretell or predict some little act to me which you say I will do as soon as you finish speaking, and I will do otherwise, as I choose, and where is foreknowability or predictability?

Worse, I can do as you say.
“Prediction” of all possible cases—for example, “There will either be a sea battle tomorrow, or not”—is no prediction at all. Even if such “predictions” are spread among a group of such “predictors”.

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Since choice is unforeknowable and unpredictable, so too must be its effects, and any foreknowledge or prediction of those effects an implicit foreknowledge or prediction of choice.
Many common or popular and even established beliefs contradict the existence of morality, responsibility, choice, individuality and the unforeknowability and unpredictability of choice and its effects.
Has our peculiar lack of development of and education in morality, moral philosophy, moral theory or moralism facilitated and does it facilitate the invention and adoption of the many beliefs which contradict the existence of morality, responsibility, choice, individuality and the unforeknowability and unpredictability of choice and its effects, or have those beliefs hindered and do they hinder that development and education?

The answer is surely “Both.”
Morality is real, and therefore responsibility is real, and therefore choice is real, and not caused or determined by fate or destiny, or kismet, or karma.
If it was someone's fate or destiny, or kismet, or karma, to be, say, king, it would be someone else's to be his subject, and vice-versa.
Which applies to much more than monarchy, and fate and destiny, and kismet, and karma.
Morality is real, and therefore responsibility is real, and therefore choice is real, and choice and its effects are unforeknowable and unpredictable, and so there are no omens or dreams of future choices or their effects, there is no astrology, numerology or cartomancy, there are no psychics or clairvoyants, and so on.

And, likewise, there is no palmistry, physiognomy or phrenology, there are no, say, criminal faces or skulls, and so on.
Morality is real, and therefore responsibility is real, and therefore choice is real, and so not caused or determined by divine or diabolic will, plan or power.
Morality, responsibility and choice are real, and choice and its effects are unforeknowable, and so there are no spirits or gods foreknowing or foretelling future choices or their effects, and so there is no divination, augury or prophecy, and so there are no seers, oracles, augurs or prophets, and so there are no saviors or messiahs.
Morality, responsibility and choice are real, and choice and its effects are unforeknowable, and so there is no omniscience.

And since omnipotence would include omniscience, there is no omnipotence.
Morality is real, and therefore responsibility is real, and therefore choice is real, and so not caused or determined by any human nature, good or evil.
Morality is real, and therefore responsibility is real, and therefore choice is real, and so not caused or determined by heredity or environment, separately or together.

We can turn our backs on even the best pedigrees and upbringings, and the worst.
Morality is real, and therefore responsibility is real, and therefore choice is real, and so not caused or determined by historical, economic, cultural, social or psychological forces or mechanisms.
Morality, responsibility and choice are real, and so history does not work out in any necessary pattern, whether static, regressive, progressive, cyclic or dialectical.
How well would a market function, and how long would it last, where buyer or seller or both could be defrauded or robbed or murdered with impunity?
Morality, responsibility and choice are real, and so choice is not caused or determined by family, clan, tribe, caste, nationality, ethnicity, culture, race, age or sex.
Morality, responsibility and choice are real, and so choices are not caused or determined by instinct:

There is suicide, and maternal infanticide.

Likewise, choices are neither innate nor a priori.

Nor are they caused or determined to occur in stages or phases.

Nor are they caused or determined by any subconscious or unconscious mind.

Nor are they caused or determined by any humors, characters, personalities or tempers:

Still less can there be any types of such humors, characters, personalities or tempers.
Morality, responsibility and choice are real, and so choices are not caused or determined by techniques such as teaching, hypnosis or psychotherapy.
Morality, responsibility and choice are real, and so choices are not caused or determined by, say, reading books.
Contradictions of the existence or unforeknowability or unpredictability of choice or its effects are ipso facto false allegations of causation.
Morality is real, and therefore responsibility is real, and therefore choice is real.

But how could they be, if choice had no effect?

There would be no morality, responsibility or choice if choice had no effect, or if there was no effect, no cause-and-effect, no causation, but morality, responsibility and choice are real, and so choice has effect, and causation is real.
Choice must be caused to be, and choice must cause, but choices must be uncaused, or there would be no choice at all.

And it remains to be seen how, exactly, this all works, if that is the word for it, a matter of that knottiest and still immature biological science neurology.

But the picture that morality, moral philosophy, moral theory or moralism suggests of our world and us in it is a spectacular one, of chains of causation, each cause the effect of a previous cause, all but universal, broken only where each and every one of us is, each individual.
An effect of course follows or succeeds its cause, yet many false allegations of causation contradicting the existence or unforeknowability or unpredictability of choice or its effects are characterized by the alleged effects following their alleged causes far less than even half or fifty percent of the time, along with reluctance to present the proportions or percentages of succession involved.
There have been no double-blind studies or metaanalyses as to whether an apple falls when you drop it.
If some cause or determinant of behavior existed the only effect of which was behavior which could occur by choice, how could it be, say, diagnosed? Which applies to much more than bad medicine.
Many contradictions of morality involve substitutions of something else for morality, a substitution even of some specific good for morality, classically wealth, law-abidingness, loyalty or discipline.
The antiquity of the war against morality, responsibility, choice, individuality, the unforeknowability and unpredictability of choice and its effects and causation can be seen in the inconsistency and expedience of the religions with regard to all of these.

And its modernity can be seen in the same inconsistency and expedience of psychology and sociology, and psychiatry, and “laissez-faire” and Marxism.

It is an eternal war.

And it frequently goes against morality, responsibility, choice, individuality, the unforeknowability and unpredictability of choice and its effects and causation.

What is the cost of this war, and such victories?
Bad ideas divert resources from good ones, wrong beliefs from right ones, pseudosciences from science and fake medicine from medicine.

They are wasteful.

But as costly as such wastefulness is, it is not the greatest cost of the inconsistency and expedience examined here.
What happens to justice, which is to say liberty, which is to say government, when responsibility and nonresponsibility are misconstrued?
Any thought, idea, choice, belief, ideology or practice which explicitly or implicitly contradicts the existence of morality and therefore of good is, as an implicit contradiction of the existence of the latter, evil.

And any establishment thereof can hardly be good, or justice, or liberty, or government.

Or peace.