Eichmann and Us: Differences in Moral Responsibility and Reasoning

Fatema Tambawalla

Abstract

Is being rational, moderately reasons-responsive, normal and following the law enough to safeguard our actions from blame? Adolf Eichmann, as Hannah Arendt shows, was in possession of the above characteristics, followed the law and acted out of seemingly good motivation. Yet he managed to contribute to an unjust and immoral system, eventually leading to the deaths of millions of people. In this paper I aim to show that much like Eichmann we too, engage in various oppressive systems around us, despite being rational, normal, reasons-responsive and law abiding. We may not be actively participating in large scale genocide like him, but by driving a gas car and consuming meat or living in a society where systemic racial injustice occurs we nonetheless manage to contribute to both racism and climate change. It is evident that merely fulfilling the criteria to be held morally responsible for our actions, being in possession of good intent and being cognizant of the law are not enough to prevent us from severe moral transgression. I propose that engaging in dialogue with people outside of our immediate communities serves as an important epistemic check against which we measure our actions and enables us to criticize our own moral standards, hopefully preventing us from transgressing morally in a way similar to Eichmann's.

Introduction

Is being normal, rational, moderately reasons responsive and following the law enough to prevent us from severe moral transgression? At first glance it might seem so, after all most of us possess the above characteristics and do not seem to perpetuate harm in any significant way. Adolf Eichmann however, as Hannah Arendt famously shows, possessed the above traits of rationality, was law-abiding, and arguably only concerned with getting by (as most of us are), and yet his actions led to the deaths of untold millions.[1] How, then, might we too be like Eichmann?

In this paper, I take up this question, arguing first that we too participate in systems of oppression while meeting the same conditions to be held morally responsible as Eichmann, who in his role as an architect of the Final Solution was responsible for managing trains which transported millions of Jewish people to their death. The difference between Eichmann and us, it might seem then, is one of degree and not kind. Fortunately, I argue, if we are like Eichmann in this respect we can take concrete steps to ensure we do not continue mindlessly perpetuating harm as we move about our daily lives (albeit not to the same extent as Eichmann). I argue in the second half of this paper that by engaging in critical dialogue about moral issues with those outside our immediate communities we are better placed to detect ways in which we might be falling radically afoul of our moral duties than if we were merely law-abiding, reasons-responsive, and in possession of seemingly good motivation.

In the first section I will lay out what exactly I mean by the terms normal, rational and moderately reasons-responsive (now referred to as traits of rationality) in order to make it clear in the following sections that we share these attributes with Eichmann and can be held morally responsible for our actions in the same way as him. The second section will aim to characterise Eichmann in accordance with his traits of rationality and seeming lack of ill intent to show that someone who is in possession of these attributes can (and did) make significant moral transgressions and perpetuate widespread harm. I will also examine Eichmann's argument defending his lack of moral responsibility due to the alleged ordinariness of his role and powerlessness of the position he occupied. In the third section I will move to pointing out the similarities between Eichmann and ourselves. Much like him we are law-abiding and possess attributes that enable us to be held morally responsible for our actions yet we continue to unwittingly contribute to problems like systemic racial injustice and climate change. Thus the fourth section will serve to elaborate on the solution I propose to ensure that we take steps to avoid transgressing morally like Eichmann ie. to engage in dialogue with people who come from different moral communities than us in order to view our own actions through a more critical and empathetic lens. The final section will focus on a case study of how facilitated dialogue works when implemented with immediately conflicting communities and the positive effects it can have on its participants.

[1] Hannah Arendt and Amos Elon, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (London: Penguin Books, 2006).

Normality, rationality, reasons-responsiveness

What does it mean to be a normal person? One sense of normality is prevalent in statistics. That, however, is not the sense of normality which concerns us, for the 'normal distribution' of traits may, for a certain community be such that no one is capable of being held morally responsible. This would be an odd result for an attempt at explaining in virtue of which conditions an agent can be held morally responsible. Accordingly, in what follows, I will interpret talk of normality via the legal standard of a 'reasonable person.' This legal standard, though vague, is employed throughout the law and philosophy. Someone who fits this standard then would be understood as an ordinary, reasonable person, as unremarkable as a man on the Clapham omnibus.[2] This is what I mean by normal. Normality would also entail reasonably following the accepted social and moral norms of one's community, being sane, having the ability to tell right from wrong, having sound judgement and having the ability to cultivate positive interpersonal relationships. From the above characterization of a normal person it would seem that most people around us fit this description, they might possess different traits but can all be categorized as normal people. An abnormal person, in contrast, would not fit the accepted social standard for common people and would deviate from the normal, generally in a negative way.[3] This might be recognizable, for example, in the form of mental insanity or behaviours and urges that are not viewed as socially acceptable.

To go one step further, most normal people presumably also take themselves to be making decisions and acting on the basis of rationality and reason. To be a rational person would mean that one has the ability to appropriately process information through reason[4] and to make decisions based on clear thought and rationale. An example of a rational decision, would be if a person chose to forgo eating a dish that might contain ingredients they are allergic to. Acting with the intention of satisfying one's preferences and pursuing suitable means to their ends would also be characteristic of a rational person.[5]

In order to be rational however, one would also need to be sufficiently responsive to reasons. Someone who is weakly reasons responsive might recognize and respond to some reason while making a decision but the pattern of reasons responsiveness they showcase might be too erratic for them to be someone we can hold morally responsible.[6] On the other hand, someone who is moderately reasons-responsive would be a person whose psychological mechanism "exhibits regularity with respect to its receptivity to reasons." They understand "how reasons fit together" and that "acceptance of one reason as sufficient implies that a stronger reason must also be sufficient."[7]

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[2] Graham Gooch and Michael Williams, "Reasonable Person," Oxford Reference, 2015, https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780191758256.001.0001/acref-9780191758256-e-3691.
[3]Robert C Carson , James N Butcher , and Susan Mineka , *Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life*, 11th ed. (New York: Allyn & Bacom, 2000).
[4]Hubert Rottleuthner et al., "Practical Rationality," in *Treatise of Legal Philosophy and General Jurisprudence* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), pp. 992-1034.
[5] Niko Kolodny and John Brunero, "Instrumental Rationality," Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (Stanford University, November 2, 2018), https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rationality-instrumental/#RatCohRea.
[6] Matthew Talbert, "Moral Responsibility," Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (Stanford University, October 16, 2019), https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-responsibility/.
[7] Ibid.

From the above it is evident that someone who is normal, rational and moderately reasons-responsive, fulfils some key requirements in order to be held morally responsible for their actions. It would also be fair to assume that most people who fit these characteristics take themselves to be law abiding and acting out of good intent. However, is merely being in possession of traits of rationality, following the law and doing the right thing sufficient in preventing us from engaging in morally blameworthy actions? At first glance the answer might seem like it is yes, however, as I show in the following section, it might not be so straightforward. Adolf Eichmann, as we shall see, was in possession of all the above capacities, followed the law and still managed to actively engage in an immoral and harmful system, leading to the death of millions of people. In fact if we look a little closer, we might not be very different from Eichmann ourselves and perhaps also engage in harmful systems of our own.

Understanding Eichmann

The first part of this section will focus on understanding Adolf Eichmann's characteristics of normality, rationality, moderate reasons responsiveness and an apparent lack of malice as laid out by Hannah Arendt in her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. In describing Eichmann and his actions, Arendt coined the term "the banality of evil"[8] and emphasised throughout the book his apathy towards the victims of his actions and his inability to think for himself or think from another person's point of view. This combined with his rational thinking and extraordinary diligence for his job is what enabled him to be a catalyst for incredible evil. Her book changed the way we view evil and showcased an aspect of evil that was not bloodthirsty, psychopathic or consumed by hatred but banal and that the execution of such evil required precisely people like Eichmann who were apathetic, rational and had no distinctive thought of their own. Understanding these characteristics is important as it helps us to distinguish Eichmann from someone who might be psychopathic or whose ability to tell right from wrong may be impaired which in turn impacts the extent to which we may hold him morally responsible for his actions.

Eichmann's normality and competency to stand trial were medically established and were clearly evident from his behaviour and testimony right from the beginning of the trial. Multiple psychiatrists pronounced him normal, one going as far as to say that he was "More normal, at any rate, than I am after having examined him." Another psychiatrist was said to find "his whole psychological outlook, his attitude toward his wife and children, mother and father, brothers, sisters, and friends was 'not only normal but most desirable'." Even the minister who visited Eichmann regularly in prison after the court heard his appeal, declared that Eichmann was "a man with very positive ideas."[9] As Arendt reports this demonstrated:

> "The hard fact that his was obviously no case of moral let alone legal insanity. Worse, his was obviously also no case of insane hatred of Jews, of fanatical anti-Semitism or indoctrination of any kind. He "personally" never had anything whatsoever against Jews; on the contrary, he had plenty of "private reasons" for not being a Jew hater"[10]

Eichmann also insisted over and over that he was motivated purely by obedience and not by any kind of hatred or ill will towards the Jewish community. He felt let down when the court did not understand that and take it into consideration and his last statement reiterated this sentiment;

> "His hopes for justice were disappointed; the court had not believed him, though he had always done his best, to tell the truth. The court did not understand him: he had never been a Jew-hater, and he had never willed the murder of human beings."[11]

Why then would Eichmann possibly participate in the genocide of millions of Jewish people if he did not possess any motive to do harm? As Arendt pinpoints it is precisely because, "except for an extraordinary diligence in looking out for his personal advancement, he had no motives at

[8] Arendt and Elon, *Eichmann in Jerusalem,* 252.
[9] Ibid., 25-26.
[10] Ibid., 26.
[11] Ibid., 247.

all."[12] He took pride in the fact that he carried out his duties earnestly and merely did not pay any particular attention to what he was doing or what these duties were. Eichmann even went so far as to admit that "he would have had a bad conscience only if he had not done what he had been ordered to do."[13] Not choosing to fulfil the tasks assigned to him was "unthinkable" and switching to any other well paying job available to him was "inadmissible" even though it would entail no more than shifting to another lucrative post.[14] Eichmann's commitment to doing his job well was also in no way illegal in nature. Someone who wasnt acting normally (in Eichmann's sense of the word) would have been considered abnormal or an exception in Nazi Germany and herein lay the assurance that he was doing the right thing, as he continued to conform to the values of a fascist system and remained unaware of the criminal nature of his actions.[15] He was also following the law of the land since Hitler's orders were validated by regulations and directives drafted by "expert lawyers and legal advisers" thus paving the way for his orders to be treated as law and giving Eichmann's actions a legal attribute.[16] It was this diligence in following instructions and incapability to see outside of what was expected of him that made him a man who would undoubtedly, "have killed his own father if he had received an order to that effect."[17]

I will now move to critiquing Eichmann's argument which defends his lack of moral responsibility because of the ordinariness and powerlessness of his role. His constant reiteration that he did not possess any base motives and had no desire to kill anyone was followed by his insistence that he was not someone who should be held responsible. People like him, with seemingly no other options were "forced to serve as mere instruments in the hands of the leaders."[18] He was not a leader and the only crime he did feel guilty for was that he had been obedient and obedience, something normally seen as a virtue had been utilised by the true people in power for the wrong reasons.[19] In Eichmann's view this was no fault of his and he was of the opinion that his role, in the transportation of Jewish people and subsequently in their death, was mere chance. Consequently, according to him, anyone else living in Germany at the time could have occupied the same role, making all Germans liable to some extent. Despite Eichmann's view that he is not someone who can be conferred with moral responsibility clearly, our intuitions suggest he is someone who was in possession of the powers and capacities required to be held morally responsible. From the prior characterization of Eichmann we can safely infer that he was normal, rational and reasons-responsive and from the evidence of the consequences of his actions we can intuitively account for the fact that he seemed to occupy a position of significant power. Thus, he should be held morally responsible for his actions, in spite of his insistence otherwise.

Coming to the latter part of his argument, what Eichmann's reasoning does not account for is that despite his insistence that he was just like other German people, he was in a unique

[12] Arendt and Elon, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 287.
[13] Ibid., 25.
[14] Arendt and Elon, *Eichmann in Jerusalem,* 92.
[15] Ibid., 26.
[16] Ibid.,
[17] Ibid., 22.
[18] The New York Times, "Letter by Adolf Eichmann to President Yitzhak Ben-Zvi of Israel," The New York Times (The New York Times, January 27, 2016), https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/28/world/middleeast/adolf-eichmann-letter-to-israel-president.html.
[19] Arendt and Elon, *Eichmann in Jerusalem,* 247.

position to cause significant harm with the characteristics he possessed. His thoughtless diligence in carrying out tasks, ambition to do well at a job and not examining the implications of his actions are all virtues that are characteristic of Eichmann. There is also the role that his specific circumstances and life experiences played in helping him become part of the Nazi regime and be designated his role. If he had not lost his job in 1933 and decided to move back to Germany from Austria maybe he wouldn't have been presented with the opportunity to take up a new job, one that eventually led him to the role he finally occupied.[20] These events that propelled him towards his job are distinct in the way they shaped his choices, making it impossible to hold any other person in Nazi Germany responsible simply because they shared the same characteristics as Eichmann. If we did conclude that in principle anyone could have carried out his job exactly like him because they had the same capacities as him, that would lead to some peculiar conclusions. If all it took to attribute responsibility to someone was the shared virtues we had with them, then it would mean that there is nothing praiseworthy about the impact Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had leading the civil rights movement because anyone during that time period who was a good orator, powerful writer and had remarkable leadership qualities would have had the same impact and success. There is clearly some kind of unique causal link between the individual and the action they are held morally responsible for (the nature of that link remains in question) and therefore Eichmann’s argument that anyone could have stepped into his shoes and performed his task well and so anyone could be held morally responsible for his actions does not hold true.

[20] Ibid., 34.

Eichmann and us

The example of Eichmann from the previous section clearly exhibits that merely being normal, rational and following the law is inadequate when it comes to preventing an individual from perpetuating harm. Eichmann's traits of rationality are also not unique; most people possess the above qualities. In fact, much like him, we too engage in morally blameworthy actions everyday even though we often take ourselves to be acting out of seemingly good motivation and are mainly preoccupied with getting by. Take for example the problem of climate change or systemic racial injustice. While individually we might believe in preventing climate change or might not be actively racist or discriminate against people of colour, merely existing in a society where racial injustice occurs or consuming meat is enough to be complicit in both these problems.[21] Simply being "not racist" is not enough because even if you are not racist you may still benefit from systems around you that are built on white supremacy and on the oppression of people of colour. If the status quo places white people above people of colour and that status quo is upheld by legal authorities and institutional control, it ensures the comfort of white people living in that society. To then carry on without active interruption of a racist system is to be complicit in racism.[22]

Similarly driving a gas car, engaging in the consumption of fast fashion[23] and consuming meat or dairy[24] are all seemingly small individual actions that unwittingly contribute to the problem of climate change. Clearly we still manage to perpetuate harm despite acting in good faith, being in possession of traits of rationality and following the law. It is true that we do not have the same causal power as Eichmann, ie. his actions had a far more widespread and immediate contribution to the extermination of Jewish people in Nazi Germany than the average citizen's actions have to exacerbating climate change, but nonetheless there is some form of causal contribution and that is enough for us to plausibly be held responsible.[25]

It might be tempting to say that because our individual actions are so miniscule and reversing our actions of, say, driving a gas car, will not solve climate change there is no real point in

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[21] Robin Zheng, "What Is My Role in Changing the System? A New Model of Responsibility for Structural Injustice," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 21, no. 4 (December 2018): pp. 869-885, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10677-018-9892-8, 1-2.

[22] Ari Shapiro, "'There Is No Neutral': 'Nice White People' Can Still Be Complicit in a Racist Society," NPR (NPR, June 9, 2020), https://www.npr.org/2020/06/09/873375416/there-is-no-neutral-nice-white-people-can-still-be-complicit-in-a-racist-society.

[23] To better understand the adverse effects of the fashion industry on climate change see: Shari Nijman, "UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion Addresses Damage of 'Fast Fashion'," UN Environment, March 14, 2019, https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/un-alliance-sustainable-fashion-addresses-damage-fast-fashion

[24] For more on how the consumption and production of meat affects climate change see: H. Charles J. Godfray et al., "Meat Consumption, Health, and the Environment," Science, July 20, 2018, https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aam5324.

[25] With all pervasive problems like systemic racism and climate change, these injustices are most often inextricably linked. Most often indigenous people or people of colour who have contributed the least to the climate crisis end up bearing the worst effects of climate change. In the example of these different interlinked systems, contributing to one system of oppression implies subsequent harm in other systems too. For more see: David Lammy and Manish Bapna, "There Is No Climate Justice without Racial Justice," Time (Time, May 3, 2021), https://time.com/6017907/climate-emergency-racial-justice/.

choosing to act, behave or think differently. After all, it does stand true that only big corporations and government regulation can significantly alter the trajectory of climate change happening at a rapid pace and for every person giving up meat there are hundreds more continuing to consume it. Why then should one continue to keep making the right choices if it does not seem to matter or have a significant impact on the big picture? This claim however, that our actions are so miniscule compared to the whole and so continuing to make the choice to drive a gas car or not drive a gas car doesn't matter anyways is dangerously close to Eichmann's argument shirking responsibility for his actions. For Eichmann the idea of choosing to do something differently or abstain from performing his actions was unthinkable and would have been practically useless even if it was morally meaningful.[26] Yet as Arendt writes, “nothing is ever “practically useless.” While our individual actions might not be able to cause a significant change, not acting against oppression or discrimination means we forgo even trying to bring about a morally positive contribution. Doing our part in a collective action problem hopefully also inspires people around us to do the virtuous thing and work towards a consequential result. As long as someone remains to recount the events that took place our actions hold meaning if only because they set the precedent that despite conditions of terror or social pressure it is still possible and important to do the right thing. What it comes down to is that some people will comply with what is seen as the norm (whether that is driving a gas car or playing a hand in genocide) and some people simply will not and it is up to each individual to decide what kind of person they are. “The lesson of the countries,” Arendt writes, “to which the Final Solution was proposed is that “it could happen” in most places but it did not happen everywhere. Humanly speaking, no more is required, and no more can reasonably be asked, for this planet to remain a place fit for human habitation.”[27]

[26] Arendt and Elon, *Eichmann in Jerusalem,* 232.
[27] Ibid., 233.

Beyond rationality and the law

The problem laid out in the previous section visibly points out that we might not be very different from Eichmann. Not only do we engage in harmful systems around us but we do so while being normal, rational, reasons-responsive and following the law. That brings us to the question I aim to answer, what else can we do outside of following the law, acting rationally and having seemingly good motivations to ensure that we do not transgress morally in a way similar to Eichmann's? It was his ability to mindlessly carry out a certain task and focus only on excelling at his job that led him to become part of a destructive and immoral system. While we may not be participating in the bureaucracy of Nazi Germany there is clearly a need to think critically about the destructive and immoral systems we ourselves might be part of.

One step towards fulfilling that need and taking steps to prevent us from walking down the same path as Eichmann, is to engage in dialogue with people outside of our immediate communities. By being open to a criticism of our values and moral standards we can become more aware of the moral implications of our actions and look at them through an empathetic and nuanced lens. Not only does engaging in dialogue help us become more self aware of our own biases and social conditioning, it also enables us to foster skills that prove vital in differentiating us from Eichmann, namely critical thinking, the ability to be aware of and analyse our own social conditioning and the ability to empathize with people who have different identities and experiences from us. As we engage in dialogue and develop these skills, listening to a different perspective and talking to people who may come from a different faith, socio-economic background, race or gender serves as an important epistemic check against the kind of knowledge we already possess and by which we measure our actions. While there is something to be said for the "unforced force of the better argument"[28] during deliberation and to what extent reasonable people can concur what the best arguments are, it is only an assumption that with adequate time, resources and conducive conditions two people can in principle take part in a productive discussion and emerge better informed than they originally were. To moderate the chances of both parties not concurring, it would probably help to set up a goal for dialogue in order to establish a desired outcome both parties can work towards and in time achieve.

Of course, for dialogue to be truly effective and to have it be a catalyst for some form of change (in our mentality or in our actions) there has to be an active individual commitment to seeking it out and to having honest interactions with others. It also would not be realistic to expect one conversation to break through years of social conditioning or have it trigger a complete reversal of values and here is where the consistency aspect of dialogue comes in. The consistency of our interactions is far more important than the intensity or duration of them (though an appropriate amount of time is necessary for the interaction to be meaningful).

It would also be challenging for dialogue to be immediately productive if the people engaging in it inhabit polar opposite identities and come from differing moral communities. A good strategy to ensure that our actions have the least harmful implications would be to seek out conversations with people with whom we share similar identities but differ in the moral

[28] Jürg Steiner, "Force of Better Argument in Deliberation," in *The Foundations of Deliberative Democracy: Empirical Research and Normative Implications* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

communities we inhabit or vice versa. This potentially increases the probability that along with differing on certain values the people interacting will find something they have in common, leading them to understanding and bridging the gap between their differences. To understand the effects and mechanics of dialogue better the following section will focus on a case study of the implementation of facilitated dialogue with people who come from different communities and how it affects their ability to critically think, empathize, criticize their own moral standards and affect change.

Dialogue in action

To better understand how facilitated dialogue works and its long term impacts when implemented with people who come from opposing communities I will focus on the dialogue programme and the experiences of participants from the Seeds of Peace International Camp. Started in 1993 by American journalist John Wallach, it aims to bring Middle Eastern youth (teenagers aged 14-16) from conflict areas like Israel and Palestine to engage with each other in a traditional summer camp setting.[29] While initially focused on the Middle Eastern conflict, now the programme has grown to include not only Middle Eastern teenagers but also delegations from the US, UK and Southasian countries like India and Pakistan. For three weeks around 450 adolescents from opposing sides of the conflict gather in Otisfield, Maine to engage in dialogue with each other while also participating in routine summer camp activities like sports, art, drama etc. Dialogue, which is conducted everyday for 90 minutes, is grouped into Middle Eastern dialogue with teenagers from the US, UK, Israel, Palestine, Egypt and Jordan and Southasian dialogue with teenagers from the US, India and Pakistan. Facilitated by trained dialogue professionals, one dialogue group consists of 12 participants and discussions cover politics, the conflict, prejudice towards each other, stereotypes, identity and more.[30]

Along with dialogue, interactions with other campers include sharing a living space (grouped together by conflict region) and being seated together on a table for all three meals. For the duration of their time there, participants are encouraged to make "at least one friend"[31] from the other side of the border in an attempt to learn how to humanize the enemy and empathize with the different stories and perspectives they will be exposed to. In dialogue a safe space is provided, to "experiment with conflict in ways that do not tear communities apart, but might actually bring people closer together."[32] Here, as articulated by Seeds in educational material, the aim of engaging in facilitated dialogue with an opposing group is:

> Not to sign peace accords, to find a solution to structural problems in society, or even to agree. It's about profound personal transformation that Seeds will carry with them back to their communities and for the rest of their lives. In just three weeks, it begins to show itself in small but meaningful ways: challenging the status quo; asking questions to learn, rather than to make a point; really listening to what a person is saying, rather than just quietly formulating their next point; or seeing that "the other" is actually much like them.[33]

Seeds provides a unique opportunity to evaluate how conflict-resolution and prejudice-reduction strategies function in real-world settings. Unsurprisingly, quite a bit of research evaluates the efficacy of such strategies. In what follows I draw on Edie Maddy-Weitzman's pioneering work "Waging Peace in the Holy Land: A Qualitative Study of Seeds of Peace" assessing the impact

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[29] "History Archive," Seeds of Peace, accessed December 22, 2021, https://www.seedsofpeace.org/history/.
[30] Edie Maddy-Weitzman, "Waging Peace in the Holy Land: A Qualitative Study of Seeds of Peace, 1993-2004" (PhD diss., Boston University, 2005), 3-4.
[31] John Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face: The Seeds of Peace Experience* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2000).
[32] Lori Holcomb-Holland, "What Really Happens in Dialogue? A Peek behind the Curtain," Seeds of Peace, November 7, 2018, https://www.seedsofpeace.org/what-really-happens-in-dialogue-a-peek-behind-the-curtain/.
[33] Ibid.

of the Seeds of Peace experience on campers. Maddy-Weitzman also provides a thorough description of life at camp for participants to which I am also indebted.

According to Maddy-Weitzman, the first time campers from both sides interact with each other is when they arrive at camp from the airport. Feelings of mistrust, suspicion, hatred and fear abound as most of these teenagers have directly or indirectly been affected by the violence and suffering that takes place due to the conflict back home. Some are descendants of refugees and Holocaust survivors or have lost family and friends in the numerous encounters between their people.[34] Both sides come armed with stereotypes and images of what they think the enemy looks like. As Maddy-Weitzman's description of Seeds suggests, among participants there is:

> A certain degree of symmetry in the way that both sides perceive each other. Notable is the tendency of each community, particularly during a time of increased conflict, to engage in 'black and white' thinking in which they are the ' good guys' and the other side is demonized and seen as the 'bad guys.'[35]

The Israeli Jewish campers tend to arrive with the image of Palestinians who live only a few kilometres away from them as "inferior, primitive, and violent people" despite having close to no contact with them. Meanwhile, the stereotype typically believed by Palestinians, who only interact with Israeli Jews at checkpoints, is one that portrays them as "violent soldiers and settlers."[36] Consequently the first week of dialogue is used to build trust among the campers, to share things they might have in common, basic name games and getting to know each other. Coming to camp is the first time that they have been given the opportunity to express their grievances to the other side and talk about how their lives have been impacted by the conflict.[37] For example: Palestinians can talk about their experience growing up under the occupation and Israelis can share what its like to live in fear of bus bombings and other attacks.[38] At camp "the external reality of the conflict is addressed in a safe and controlled environment"[39] and it is an opportunity for campers to hear for the first time the narrative of the other side from someone who lives on the other side, discuss the different perspectives of common historical events and learn about each other's history and culture. In dialogue there is an emphasis on expressing one's feelings, being honest to one's experiences, focusing on not only hearing but active listening and being aware of the different identities present in the room. These initial few sessions can be overwhelming and daunting as they begin to have conversations and listen to people who have completely opposing values and perspectives from them.

> You don't normally think, what would a Palestinian kid of my age think about what is going on here .. . You don't think of how it looks like from the other side when you don't know the other side. I would just lack knowledge about other people, you know for a 14 year old, where they live and how they are. It's not that I had any images of the

[34] Maddy-Weitzman, "Waging Peace in the Holy Land," 86.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid., 87-88.
[37] Ibid., 119.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.

> Palestinians - I just didn't think of how they live, and where they live and who they are. (Oren, Israeli-Jew)[40]

The first time they sit down for dialogue most of the participants are nervous and focused on saying the right thing, either aggressively representing their national identity and deeply entrenched beliefs or choosing to be diplomatic and not talk about their real emotions regarding the conflict. At this initial stage in the dialogue process campers typically showcase a tendency for voicing opinions or beliefs in accordance with their communities' collective narrative. Each side views their narrative as “true and objective and perceives those of the other side to be false and subjective.”[41]

> It was very difficult because the first time anyone goes to camp I think they have very firm and fixed ideas and beliefs and it's so hard. Changing them is kind of impossible, but even questioning them is still difficult. Getting to actually listen to someone who has opposing views or questions your own beliefs or being open to someone else's opinion, that was extremely difficult ... I wasn't tolerant of all different opinions. I could not sit quietly and be calm when someone was saying something that I don't believe in or that sounded so different from what I was taught, what I had heard, and from my beliefs. It was very difficult. (Narmeen, Palestinian)[42]

As the first week of camp comes to an end and the second week begins, campers have spent more time with each other and had meaningful interactions outside of dialogue while eating meals, sharing bunks or playing games where both Israelis and Palestinians are on the same team. These interactions play a key role in building a sense of community and friendship among the campers, and provide an opportunity to develop personal individual relationships. It is also now that real understanding happens in dialogue and there is a greater willingness to listen. The personal stories each camper shares helps create greater empathy and insight.[43]

> You see that just shouting at them and arguing, only wanting to put your point forward and not accept their point, is a little ignorant and ... you also realize that you know you don't get anywhere by just arguing and saying we're right and you're wrong .... listening to them and see what they think, to see what we haven't been able to listen to, so maybe we can see that maybe some of the conflict is also our fault and not only theirs, so we can also work with them simultaneously to make our world a better place and to make our conflict a little bit easier. (Sami, Palestinian)[44]

> And you start to know more and more what the Palestinians went through. Because once you know what people have gone through, you might understand how they feel and you might better understand their goals, why they do the things they do. (Yuval, Israeli-Jew)[45]

[40] Maddy-Weitzman, “Waging Peace in the Holy Land,”88.
[41] Ibid., 121.
[42] Ibid., 120.
[43] Ibid., 139.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Maddy-Weitzman, “Waging Peace in the Holy Land,”143.

It is also in the second and third week that dialogue becomes the most challenging. Participants have formed intergroup friendships, have started to trust each other and so are more willing to listen and internalize the conversations they are having. In this week, the initial homesickness has faded and now narratives are challenged and all the stereotypical thinking is laid out on the table.[46]

> The first week is hard, but the second week is harder, because that's the week when you start to realise that there is another side and you start to realise that you 're not the only one and you have to compromise. And compromising is much harder than understanding. (Yuval, Israeli-Jew)[47]

Previous conceptions of right and wrong are challenged and campers leave these dialogue sessions with a more nuanced understanding of the narratives each side has been exposed to all their lives.[48] This in turn pushes them to reflect and critically think about the different versions of history they have learnt and what both sides have been conditioned to believe.

> Specifically, I learned that the histories we know are different . . . All of us sort of discover, wait a second we haven't learned the same things. We spent the first few days arguing strongly that, ' no, it's not right, you're just making up those facts,' until we came to the realization that we've just been taught different things from when we're very little and we believe them with all our heart. (Rafi, Israeli-Jew)[49]

> There is one fundamental issue - whether Palestinians fled when Israel was established or they were kicked out. And obviously they said the Israeli army butchered us and we had to leave and what I knew, I didn't know much, but what I knew is that they fled ... First of all, I was presented or posed with a new question - wait, is it true that they fled or were they butchered or threatened by the Israeli army? So even though I didn't get an answer then, at that point I questioned my facts, my history. (Eyal, Israeli-Jew)[50]

In particular the Palestinians learn about the significance and deep attachment that Israeli Jews have to the land. One camper realises, after daily interactions with the Israelis, that both sides feel equally attached to the land and believe with the same intensity that the land belongs to them. She reaches this conclusion, convinced that this means that both sides must compromise and share the land.[51] The Palestinians also learn more about the Holocaust and why a Jewish state is important to the Israeli campers, something that they have never heard in their communities back home.[52]

> Yeah, of course, so much about the Holocaust. I didn't know anything about it. These were the things that the Israelis would talk about. Like I never knew that the Israelis .. .

[46] Ibid., 136.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid., 141.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid., 142.
[51] Ibid., 144.
[52] Ibid.

> were so connected to Palestine and Israel. Just sometimes as much as some Palestinians, you know they're really connected. It's not that they go there just because they're powerful and they want to occupy it. Not all of them are like that. So that didn't come to my mind right away. I had to listen to that until I understood it. Why they wanted to create Israel in the first place? It's not because they wanted to make the Palestinians suffer, it was because they were actually going through suffering in Europe and they had nowhere to go. All these things I didn't know. (Adham, Palestinian)[53]

The findings of a 2014 study conducted by Juliana Schroeder and Jane L. Risen, aimed at understanding the effects of intergroup contact on the attitudes of participants at Seeds of Peace, show that campers' positivity towards the outgroup is directly correlated to their positivity towards members from the outgroup[54] ie. the friendships they made with individuals from the opposite group had a direct correlation towards how they viewed the opposite group as a whole. Data collected from precamp and postcamp surveys over three consecutive years demonstrates that campers exhibit an "increased positivity toward the outgroup from precamp to postcamp"[55] with data from 2012 indicating that 64.2% of participants form a close personal friendship with someone from the outgroup; 67.5% of Palestinians made an outgroup friend compared to 61.0% of Israelis.[56] The importance of making a friend from the conflicting group not only has the effect of increased positivity and reduced prejudice but also has an effect on the way campers interact with each other in dialogue. Making a friend corresponds with a deeper feeling of respect for individuals from the outgroup and a greater willingness to continue engaging in difficult conversations with each other.[57]

> Friendship is certainly the bridge. I could see it at the beginning of camp. There were many arguments in these dialogue sessions where we would sit and discuss the issues .... as camp progressed, because we became friends we learned to respect each other more and when you're listening to a friend of yours rather than a perfect stranger you stop and you listen. And that's why the discussion became more mature and the discussions became more open and understanding as camp went by .... The key element is really the friendship, the friendship is what allowed the opening up. (Rafi, Israeli-Jew)[58]

Thus by the end of the third week, when campers return home not only do they presumably leave with a better understanding of the conflict and the reality faced by the other side but they also hopefully gain the ability to to examine their own social conditioning. Engaging in dialogue and forming friendships with people who come from different moral communities likely enables them to critically think about the singular narrative they have been exposed to and in what ways it might be incomplete. This and the deep sense of empathy they now feel for people who have different values than them plays a principal role in the long term engagement of skills like being

[53] Maddy-Weitzman, "Waging Peace in the Holy Land," 144.
[54] Juliana Schroeder and Jane L. Risen, "Befriending the Enemy: Outgroup Friendship Longitudinally Predicts Intergroup Attitudes in a Coexistence Program for Israelis and Palestinians," *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 19, no. 1 (2014): pp. 72-93, https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430214542257, 79.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid., 80.
[57] Maddy-Weitzman, "Waging Peace in the Holy Land," 134.
[58] Ibid.

able to continue questioning their narratives, seeking out other perspectives in order to have a more nuanced and informed understanding of their own viewpoint and rethinking their understanding of right and wrong.

Objection

An important part of the Seeds of Peace programme and a key factor that contributes to its efficacy in reducing prejudice between two conflicting groups is its use of a "neutral-setting"[59] model. By having campers from Israel and Palestine participate in dialogue in a neutral setting outside of the middle east, away from the conflict and their families greatly contributes to a willingness to listen to and engage with the other side.[60] In a secluded area in Maine they feel "secure and somewhat sheltered from reality, and distant from the immediacy of the conflict."[61] This cultural and geographic distance highlights a problem that is inherent to a dialogue programme that takes place in a neutral setting ie. the "re-entry" problem.[62] After they leave camp and return back home the challenge shifts from engaging across lines of conflict to continuing to hold on to their new ways of thinking and attitudes towards the other side. After three weeks becoming friends with the enemy and forming close interpersonal relationships, returning to the old environment that propagates the stereotypes and narratives they worked hard to break comes as a rude shock. Campers are told when they leave that "the real work starts when you return home"[63] and indeed, returning is the most difficult part of the Seeds of Peace process. This "re-entry" problem occurs due to:

> A mismatch between their newly acquired lenses and the old ones. Changes obtained during a program take place in a socially supportive context. But once out of the program, the question of maintaining the changed perspectives in the face of the old, well-established narrative, collectively held by one's social milieu, becomes paramount.[64]

Thus after mediating conflict in a neutral setting, returning back home can result in a lapse back into old ways of thinking, diminishing the positive effects of intergroup contact. Schroeder and Risen's 2014 study which also longitudinally tracked the attitudes of the Israelis and Palestinians towards their respective outgroups immediately before and after camp, following "re entry" into their home country found that:

> Participants had more positive attitudes toward the other side of their conflict after the intervention than before. Although the positivity in attitudes toward the outgroup faded after participants returned to their home countries, there remained a significant increase compared to attitudes prior to the intervention's start. These results suggest that the reentry problem is real, but that it may not undermine all of the long-term effects of the intervention.[65]

A key factor that predicted positive attitudes towards the outgroup after reentry is friendship. Participants that made at least one friend from the outgroup during the intervention better

[59] Maddy-Weitzman, "Waging Peace in the Holy Land," 130.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid., 131.
[62] Ibid., 159.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Gavriel Salomon and Baruch Nevo, "The Dilemmas of Peace Education in Intractable Conflicts," *Palestine - Israel Journal of Politics, Economics, and Culture* VIII, no. 3 (October 31, 2001), 74.
[65] Schroeder and Risen, "Befriending the Enemy," 84.

maintained a positive attitude towards the rest of the group members. Maintenance of that friendship during reentry is also a key predictor of positive attitudes.[66]

One of the problems faced by campers upon re-entry, which is also a problem that arises while maintaining friendships is the re enforcement of the inequality between Palestinian and Israeli campers. The sense of equality which is created at camp by living and eating together and wearing the same green t-shirts doesn't translate back home.[67] Once they return to their normal lives, Palestinians have to cope with the issue that the Israelis they are now close friends with at camp are from the same group that is restricting their movement and the Israelis have to grapple with the fact that their Palestinian friends are from the same group that is responsible for terror attacks.[68] The contact hypothesis which theorizes that intergroup contact can reduce prejudice (and on which the SoP dialogue model is based) functions on the pretext of certain conditions, namely equal status between the groups, intergroup cooperation, support from higher authorities like the law or governments and the setting up of a common goal.[69] A key factor in this is equal status in order for the intervention to result in favourable outcomes. Even though there may be equal treatment of both parties there is not enough acknowledgement of the power dynamic present in dialogue spaces due to the nature of the conflict. Deep rooted and extended conflict situations (like Israel-Palestine) are also typically characterised by critical inequalities in status and relations between the concerned groups.[70] These inequalities in power are a reflection of the external political situation and a failure to address them leads to a reinforcement of the status quo.[71] Facilitating intergroup contact that makes members aware of these power inequalities enables them to interact with the other group with awareness (inside and outside the dialogue space) and no longer mindlessly act out the power dynamics present.

A reckoning with how to facilitate more equitable dialogue is followed by a reckoning of what the goals of peace intervention are for each party. In a conflict where there is clearly a stronger and a weaker party (one that is discriminated against or under occupation)[72] it is important to ask what the desired outcome of dialogue is for the weaker group.[73] Are the objectives of empathy, critical thinking, trust and informed action applicable equally to both oppressor and oppressed? For the former the desired outcome is to be able to understand and empathize with the pain and suffering of the latter and to examine the ways they also contribute to this suffering but what is the desired outcome for the oppressed group?[74] One programme that has faced this question is Neve Shalom/Wahat Al Salam (Oasis of Peace) a Jewish - Arab village where both Israeli - Jews and Israeli Palestinians live together.[75] It brings together Jewish and Palestinian youth for four day workshops at its school of peace and works as a model of co existence and

[66] Schroeder and Risen, “Befriending the Enemy,” 85.
[67] Maddy-Weitzman, “Waging Peace in the Holy Land,” 162.
[68] Ibid., 162-163.
[69] Ibid., 26-27.
[70] Ibid., 51.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Determining who occupies the roles of oppressor and oppressed might not be readily clear in every instance where people engage in dialogue and is obviously subjective to the nuance of the identities of the participants and the varied perspectives of the conflict (or topic in discussion).
[73] Maddy-Weitzman, “Waging Peace in the Holy Land,” 53.
[74] Salomon and Nevo, “The Dilemmas of Peace Education,” 71.
[75] Maddy-Weitzman, “Waging Peace in the Holy Land,” 53.

cooperation. Initially it used the decategorized contact approach where interpersonal interactions are emphasised and there is a focus on developing interpersonal relationships. By downplaying national identity participants can discover commonalities, disprove stereotypes and see the opposing group as more heterogeneous but this approach also ignores core conflict issues.[76] Now it uses a categorised approach where the national identity of both groups is central to the dialogue and there is an emphasis on intergroup relations. Here there is a focus on making connections between dynamics present within the group, like inequitable power relations, and the reality occurring outside the group.[77] The aim of dialogue then becomes to "develop the social and political awareness of the participants, and to help them to identify their own position in the conflict."[78] After understanding the inequities in power, making a friend across a divide in power means to not only humanize the other group but also to take action in their respective communities to bridge the inequities between the opposing groups.[79]

[76] Ibid., 50.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid., 54.
[79] Farhat Agbaria and Cynthia Cohen , "Working With Groups in Conflict: The Impact of Power Relations on the Dynamics of the Group." (Brandeis University, 2000), 11.

Dialogue and Us

In our everyday lives reaching out to people across a difference in values might not involve dialogue of the same nature as dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. Rather it might take the form of having a conversation about driving a gas car with someone who is directly affected by climate change or sitting down with a person of colour to better understand the effects of systemic racial injustice. In Eichmann's situation engaging in dialogue might have taken the form of seeking out a genuine conversation with a Jewish person to recognize the full extent of the damage his actions had on people's lives. Exposing ourselves to a different set of values might not even take the form of a conversation if an individual with whom we might engage with might not be readily available but could also look like exposing ourselves to media which showcases a different perspective and explores a different moral viewpoint. The form and nature of dialogue are highly malleable according to the different opportunities available to us and the different systems we might contribute to, however the basic principles of committing to understanding the effects of our actions, engaging with someone from a different moral community and being open to a criticism of our values remain the same.

Conclusion

In this paper I aimed to answer the question of whether being normal, rational, reasons-responsive and following the law is enough to prevent us from transgressing morally. The case of Adolf Eichmann clearly exhibits that merely being in possession of these virtues falls short in safeguarding our actions from blame. Not only was Eichmann in possession of the above traits of rationality but also law abiding, yet he managed to play a hand in the genocide of millions of people. I argue that on closer examination we might not be as different from Eichmann as we think we are. We too share these traits with him and are also cognizant of the law. Despite that, we still manage to perpetuate harm while contributing to systems of oppression and engaging in morally blameworthy actions. What then can be done to ensure that we do not stray down the path of Eichmann? The solution I put forth is to engage in critical dialogue with people from varying moral communities. By exposing ourselves to people who do not possess the same values as us, not only are we introduced to a different perspective but are also pushed to consider the moral implications of our actions by viewing them through a more nuanced lens. Participating in dialogue also helps us develop skills like empathy, critical thinking and the ability to criticize our own moral standards all of which are key in distinguishing ourselves from Eichmann and ensuring our rationality and reasons-responsiveness do not prevent us from identifying (and hopefully correcting) our moral transgressions.

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