

In a world where it is proclaimed that “might is right”, “the end justifies the means”, “all is fair in love and war”, “survival at all costs”, “live a fast life, die young, and have a good-looking corpse.”...etc; it seems important to understand that alternative coherent ethical-foundations exist, so that we don’t blindly seek refuge from our ethical quandary, in a received wisdom, usually dictating altruism !

Disclaimer:

-As at least an aspiring practitioner of a profoundly egoistic philosophy and world view here described as 'absolute self-responsibility', the following can not purport to be a disinterested discussion of egoism as an ethical-end, ethical-foundation. So notwithstanding the author’s enthusiasm for his subject, the intention is to make known the possibility of ethical-foundations, providing a coherent and consistent basis beyond altruism, rather than proselytise one of them.

- The approach to philosophical problems here<sup>1</sup>; emphasises direct engagement outside the philosophical canon; consistent with this, there will be found few references to the literature; although there are some brief comparisons with the egoism of Max Stirner and Ayn Rand. This approach is coupled with an extreme concern for communicated word meaning<sup>2</sup>, resulting in frequent comparisons between proposed definitions of words and their common usage dictionary equivalents. So whilst the subject matter of the title is the ostensible topic, it is hoped that the ontological approach to philosophical subjects emphasizing language, in particular word definition, will encourage others to this form of direct engagement; rather than immediate reference to chosen authorities,

Ethical prescriptions in a general sense would seem to be *essentially a requirement for certain constraints on behaviour taken on by one person; as commitments to act to some end, to some other person*, That other person might even be oneself at a later time. Where an ethical-end also an ethical-foundation is just such an end; whether regarded as divinely ordained, a natural part of the world or just a Kierkegaardian existential choice.

with [*Kierkegaardian existential choice*]<sup>3</sup>(here) : *a final, absolutely unjustified and unjustifiable choice,*

[*Kierkegaardian existential end*]: *an ethical end or ethical foundation whose final justification is a Kierkegaardian existential choice, as distinct say from one which merely affects all of one’s existence. The contention is that all chains of justification, like all causal chains; must be finite. Thus they must, if not circular; have a final 'link' whose justification hearkening back to Soren Kierkegaard is a 'leap of faith'*

So from

[*altruism*] ( *Concise Oxford*): “*Regard for others as a principle of action*”

which is expanded for clarification here as

[*altruism*](here): “*Absolute (ie. non-contingent also generic) identification and/or commitment to help, by the social-self (aka body) to the members of one or more social subgroups eg couple, family, tribe, religious community, oppressed demographic.....) and a contingent one, by the intentional self to the social-self (aka body)*”

This enlarged and more precise sense of the word altruism, is meant to emphasise, that it is here considered the ethical foundation, for a large number of

-Diverse values: eg gratitude, loyalty, persistence, bravery, determination, honesty and obviously self-sacrifice

-Miscellaneous religious ethical prescriptions (where justification is required, beyond or instead of God’s commandment)

eg Christian ethics: as ‘golden-rule ethics i.e. “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” ;

where the social subgroup

seems to consist ideally of all members of the human species;

eg Mahayana Buddhism: in particular the Bodhisattva ideal ; where the social sub-group would seem to consist of oneself and all sentient beings !

- Diverse personal and political philosophies.

eg Romanticism: (philosophical) as for example “ to cast one’s fate to the wind”; where the social subgroup may merely consist of the person and the beloved

eg Patriotism: as for example in the song “I vow to thee my country...” ; where the social subgroup consists of all members of one's nation state

eg [*Humanism*] (*Oxford Concise*) “*Devotion to human interests.....*” ; where the social subgroup is all members of the human species.

-eg Fascism, Marxism, Anarchism, Feminism, Socialism, Anti-racism etc. where a commitment is made to the members of some social sub-group; often oppressed. Even Environmentalism where there seems to be a commitment to future human beings and current animal and plant species and Animal-liberation where a commitment is made to members of those animal species.

<sup>1</sup> see appendix I and II for details of that approach to philosophical problems

<sup>2</sup> see appendix III regarding that extreme concern that intended word meanings are communicated.

<sup>3</sup> see appendix IV regarding Kierkegaardian existential choice

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An absolute .ie intrinsic problem with these many forms of altruism:

Because the commitment to help the other is absolute; unless constrained in a particular set of ethical prescriptions, it can too easily be interpreted as a right to interfere in the affairs of others; eg “ I only did it, because I was trying to help”

Other problems of altruistic philosophies ;

1/ The problem of self-sacrifice: self-sacrifice is considered a commendable motivation, in all forms of altruism. But most advocates of altruism (in any of the above forms) would concede that in a factual sense (ie. philosophical 'positive sense') we are always just aspiring altruists; that is as children we start as egoists. The hope of tradition and society is that this 'unfortunate situation' will be rectified by education and experience. It is hoped that individuals will be reformed to some more altruistic ethical world-view; particularly in a philosophically normative sense i.e. as a set of ethical prescriptions of what "should be". Never the less it will come as no surprise that self-sacrifice is often corrupted by the underlying egoism, as an expectation of personal gain in consequence of it eg. "After all I've done for you !"

2/ If ethics is considered as also applying to non-social situations ie 'the alone on a desert island scenario'; a separate ethical foundation or ethical-end is required to justify such prescriptions; with the consequence that with two ethical-ends; the possibility for conflict is created. For example in Buddhism the view seems to be that ethics applies to all acts, not just those with social consequence, yet many of the "actions" of The Eightfold Path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right samadhi; seem to be purely egoistic (as skilful means to achieve nirvana) in contrast to the altruism of the Bodhisattva ideal.

Even to some extent Christianity's :

- "Seven Heavenly Virtues": Chastity, Temperance, Charity, Diligence, Patience, Kindness and Humility and

"Seven Deadly Sins": Lust, Gluttony, Greed, Sloth, Wrath, Envy and Pride ,

when considered as improvements or deficiencies to be remedied of the self, (as the soul); in the latter.

-Digressing this becomes especially clear in the Christian monastic tradition; perhaps offering, a further explanation for it's intolerance by the Protestant reformation, an arguably altruistic movement; although the issue also arises in other spiritual traditions. but regardless

3/ The problem of self-responsibility: because the responsibility to the 'other' is here considered logically absolute in altruism; it follows that the responsibility to the self is at best logically contingent; even discouraging of self-responsibility; perhaps paradoxically explaining the broad appeal of altruism over egoism eg "Why am I in this situation, I have done nothing wrong ?"

Notwithstanding; altruism in this extended form is the preferred ethical foundation, ethical basis, ethical end ;ie basis of justification by different names ; of most systems of ethics. both in academic philosophy and across cultures. Many people; even some extremely erudite individuals appear to be convinced that not only is altruism the preferred ethical foundation; it is the only one possible. That is 'egoism' and specifically 'egoistic ethics' is considered a contradiction in terms, because 'ethics' considered as a system of behavioural constraints; is altruism as defined above. Altruism is quint-essentially about membership of the group; and from an altruistic view membership is considered a privilege to be earned by the individual, perhaps in some initiation or rite of passage; where as for egoism membership of the group is just a commitment to co-operate dependent on time and circumstance.

Lets put aside discussion of the desirability of egoism as an 'ethical foundation'; whilst it is first made clear what is intended by that idea using the example of a set of ethical prescriptions comprising the particular egoistic philosophy here termed "absolute self-responsibility". So that we can see that at least one version of an 'egoistic ethics' as a personal or political philosophy can't be simply dismissed as a form of nihilism, even if in the end it has no appeal. That is at least one form of egoistic ethics is tenable as a universal personal ethical system; even if ever unlikely to be so.

Firstly we should be clear that we are not concerned with 'egotism', which has quite a different meaning

eg. [*egotism*](*Concise Oxford*): "The fact of being excessively conceited or absorbed in oneself."

whereas roughly what is intended here is

[*egoism*](*Concise Oxford*): "Ethics theory that treats self-interest as a foundation of morality"

which for reasons of precision, generality and to emphasise it's logical complementarity with altruism; is expanded in the definition here to:

[*egoism* ](here): "Absolute (ie. non-contingent also generic) identification and/or commitment to help by the intentional self to the

social-self (aka the body); and a contingent one by the social-self (aka the body) to the members of one or more social subgroups eg partner,family, tribe, religious community, oppressed demographic.....) "

Again it must be emphasised, egoism as an ethical-end, is very much a minority one. Most would see the beginning and end of egoism, in the behaviour of young children and narcissistic personalities of all kinds including psychopaths and sociopaths and it can't be denied that such people are egoists. It might even be extended to those who engage in some myopic rational calculus of self-gain to the ends of pleasure, wealth or power..etc or those who aspire to so called "enlightened self-interest", to be regarded as just your childish or parochial egoists; some-what 'improved', in an altruistic sense, by an awareness, empathy and more importantly a sympathy, for the effect of their actions on others. No doubt such people do exist; but here we are concerned with egoism as 'pure', also radical, unlimited or absolute as illustrated by the particular philosophy of " absolute self-responsibility".

Consider for example a sociopath who doesn't regret his or her actions for altruistic reasons, but for egoistic ones ! That is he or she see's:

- that mal-treating friends results in less friends, mal-treating fellow citizens results in a bad reputation and much animosity, if not time in jail and loss of freedom.

- that the complex webs of deception erected to hide those actions, require increasingly large investments of time and energy and result in a vulnerability to accidental disclosure.

- that the promise of lies, as an easy solution to hiding those actions proves illusory; being vulnerable to the flux of time and circumstance

- that the revealed lies are often more devastating than the truth would ever have been !

- that the resulting loss of credibility can be a functional social disadvantage, not just a reduction in social status.

A question that our sociopath; or anyone else who is just curious, for that matter might ask is "What is it to be purely selfish ?; as in for oneself, not in some puerile parochial way; ie 'for the self as opposed to for the other'; but to ask 'where does ultimate self-responsibility lie' and where and to what end does such a path lead for one who pursues it ? That is regardless of the physical situation; whether one is caught in drought, flood, earthquake, plague etc or social situation as poverty, powerlessness, isolation revolution, war etc; or psychological situation as neurosis, depression, heartbreak etc the "buck stops here". Not as a commitment to self-sufficiency, but as an acceptance of final responsibility, by the phenomenological self to it's body. Of course an egoistic philosophy which is a commitment to self-sufficiency is quite possible as are many others, but not the one being expressed here.

In one sense the following enquiry is just repeating the question of the Greeks: "What is the good life ?" except they only asked that question in an altruistic sense; here we ask it in a purely egoistic sense, which seems to lead to several others. What is the self ? , what is it to 'improve' that self in the sense of absolute self-responsibility ? - what is it's situation in a general sense and what is it to 'improve' that situation in the sense of absolute self-responsibility? Are there any general rules of behaviour that are consistent with that end, or failing that, make it no 'worse' ?

I/ An aspiration to 'sanity' with the word 'sanity' used for lack of another.(see below); seems consistent with 'absolute self responsibility'; and as a value does not seem inconsistent with the egoistic philosophy here termed " absolute self-responsibility"; even if ultimately another 'Kierkegaardian existential choice.

with [sanity](here): "to see that which exists as opposed to what should or should not be"; Even though we have

[sanity](Concise Oxford)as "...the fact of showing good judgement and understanding...": perhaps the former could be considered another usage of the latter.

Regardless sanity as above might seem just a form of 'rationality',except that here rationality is seen as contingent on knowledge and it's logical consequences;

ie [rational] (here): ". action or belief consistent with knowledge// rather than eg [rational](Concise Oxford): "...endowed with reason..."

and with [reason](Concise Oxford) is:"". 1.Fact adduced or serving as:argument, motive,cause or justification...."

That is beyond the limits of knowledge; rationality can provide no justification for the kind of unlimited self responsibility envisioned here. Sanity in the above sense seems to reveal a foreboding situation

"The social-self (ie. physical body) is found to be, in a material universe which is simultaneously dangerous, transient, unpredictable indifferent and utterly unforgiving to and of it's existence. and a society which is much the same ! Perhaps for completeness it could be added; a material and social universe where beauty and ugliness , horror and ecstasy, pain and joy, misery and happiness are inextricably mixed. .... a dire prognosis, with worse to come ! . For correlated with that social-self one seems to find an intentional self, as a phenomenological self, ie a personality;

with [phenomenology](Stanford E of P) "*Phenomenology is the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view*" but not necessarily requiring that *The central structure of an experience is its intentionality...*"

thus [phenomenological self](here) : "*what one can see of one's intentional self, in one's direct subjective experience*"

So a self as a personality, which is just a chance accretion of pre-existing genetic conditioning, acquired habitual responses and the values and ideological prejudices of that individual's society ; together with a rudimentary means of mediating the resulting conflicts. This is contended to be, very similar to the personality of Freudian theory : comprising id, super-ego and ego respectively; where "id" denotes those aspects acquired genetically or via habit ; where "super-ego" denotes aspects acquired socially and the "ego" is a rudimentary means of reconciling conflicts between the two. The whole conceived as the smaller conscious part of a much larger unconscious mind; but described as a process or perhaps a process of processes of values; an immense conditioned entity ! A process being a structure in time, though here is intended phenomenological time, not time by the clock, and instead of the word 'conditioning' with possible overtones of "Pavlovian and /or Skinnerian conditioning"; we might use 'training' in the sense the modern neurologist or information technologist intends, when 'training a neural-net'; but again used, in a phenomenological sense.. .

A brief consideration of the life of that personality, by that personality; reveals that not only is it not 'as it might hope to be' but often the opposite. Even worse it is realised this 'personality' is serially and/or simultaneously incoherent and it's fragments often in conflict. with each other...it is a group of selves rather than a self , where

-the caring, nurturing parental impulse, is at war with the often violent, hierarchical sadomasochistic sexual impulse

-the hedonistic pleasure seeking impulse, is at war with the ascetic, which seeks freedom from the tyranny of the senses

-the romantic impulse that would declare us free, is at war with the rational, which requires our action be consistent with what we know !

-perhaps as Freud speculated there is even an impulse for death at war with an impulse for life. So a radically more complex incoherent and conflicted 'self' than the naive simplicity of the self of Max Stirner !

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max\\_Stirner](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max_Stirner)

What it is not immediately obvious in a system , like the phenomenological self, is that even the selection of an ethical foundation on the basis of it's consistency with some of those values, though possible is problematic. Because it amounts to the subtle attempt by one fragment of that self to gain dominion over another; thus it merely increases the incoherence of the self. The most obvious example being the condemnation of the sexual impulse by the parental; with the consequence of sexual repression but a little introspection will reveal others. Notice in the above , while we are attempting to avoid exacerbating that incoherence, by avoiding taking sides in any of it's conflicts on one hand; we are categorically denying (for example) that we are free as romanticism would insist or ever likely to have clear, comprehensive and certain knowledge as rationality would require.; on the other. As far as that personality as a collection phenomenological impulses knows, it's existence in the material universe starts with biological birth and ends with biological death and regardless of the discoveries of that lifetime, much may always remain unknown. Whatever; the incoherent whole is racked with conflict, perhaps irreducibly, so that even the possibility of coherence is dubious !

What to do ?, how should one act ? -

The contention here is; there can be no deductive connection from an 'is' to an 'ought'. This is not merely the epistemological theory that value statements can't be falsified, but a sense that to attempt to derive an ought from an is, reflects a profound fanaticism as "there is only one way, one solution, one possible response to the current situation and we or I have it." Thus the view here that there are perhaps a myriad ethical foundations also ethical ends; that as Kierkegaardian existential choices, can have no further justification; they must all be in Kierkegaard's sense "leaps of faith". Thus in any situation those myriad ethical ends can justify different sets of ethical prescriptions.

With this proviso; perhaps we have unconsciously already made a tentative step !; "a leap of faith" We have recognised that somehow 'to see what exists' in the sense of seeing the situation of that self, dire though it may be; is to at least to leave the material situation, unchanged, thus no 'worse' ! ...Leaving 'better and worse' in a phenomenological sense to be defined ! Seeing that situation as it is ; the self's incoherence in time, the unreliability of instinctual and habitual responses, as guides to avoiding a 'worse' future situation; it becomes apparent that even though knowledge of one's material, social, psychological and spiritual situations may increase, it will never be complete. ie that rationality in the sense of "action consistent with knowledge"; must always remain uncertain.

2/ So acknowledging the need for a profound agnostic humility in the sense of what can be known, believed in and acted on with certainty !; also seems consistent with 'absolute self-responsibility'

The sequential and simultaneous incoherence of the phenomenological-self; as seen by any fragment of that self seems inconsistent with absolute self-responsibility because it will inevitably lead to conflict, ; even though the parochial response of whichever of those phenomenological-selves is active (eg the parental, the romantic, the rational, the sexual..etc.) is to want to proceed to it's own goal! For the purpose of comparison with altruism, egoism 'has been conceived as an ethical end or ethical foundation, but enquiry seems to suggest that the particular egoistic philosophy of absolute self-responsibility may imply the eastern notion of a path of self development and exploration of the self.

[see end-notes 1.0 The end of incoherence ] but regardless:

3/ To act in a way which increases the incoherence of the self would seem to be inconsistent with 'absolute self-responsibility'; where absolute self-responsibility' may also be akin to a path, as a progressive development or exploration of the self

What is a 'worse situation' and what is a 'better situation' for the phenomenological self; according to 'absolute self-responsibility'? In a logical sense as an ethical foundation "this would seem to be merely repeating the original question; but viewed in the context of that previously mentioned dire situation, it would seem that:

- a situation with greater choice, will always be at least no worse, with instinct, habit and choice less constrained and/or the material circumstance less pressing Even though no final end has been defined !

To use an example, the monkey with it's fist trapped in a jar, because of the nut it vainly strives to keep; can realise it is 'better' to abandon the nut, though lacking any clear plan or ambition for the rest of it's life !

The situation of those phenomenological selves can be ordered by difficulty as material, social, psychological and spiritual.

That is the perceived difficulty of actually seeing the conditions of the phenomenological self as they are; in contrast to how they might be wished. Perhaps one can see the material circumstance, without too much difficulty, but consider we have only of late started to realise that natural catastrophes are not punishments! Thus seeing one's social situation as in seeing one's friends and associates and the ensuing relationships 'as they are' rather than as one might wish; will be more difficult. Still more difficult will be to see one-self, phenomenologically as one is now; perhaps describable as 'emotional intelligence', for example just recognising anger, contentment, sadness, joy, embarrassment or pleasure..etc in oneself. Finally in what I am terming 'spiritual', we must consider problems like the non-social 'skilful means', virtues and vices of Buddhism and Christianity.

eg What ontologically do the Buddhist concepts of 'right-action' and 'nirvana' mean and is the former a skilful means to the latter ?

What ontologically is meant by 'wrath' and is it thus a sin? ; eg interpreted as "Is wrath and/or it's consequences universally undesirable for the phenomenological self; ie unjustifiable in this extended sense of 'absolute self-responsibility' ?

To understand such problems preliminary to an answer will require ontological enquiry, beyond the discussion here.

[see end-notes 2.0 Enquiry into violence etc ]

4/ "To act in the direction of a less restricted situation"; would seem consistent with absolute self-responsibility;

- similarly giving priority to the long term situation will have priority over the short term; for absolute self-responsibility ..

- whereas to hold onto 'unnecessary' things and situations (eg the consequence of habits and prejudices); would seem to be inconsistent

The awareness that intense attachments and aversions eg the avoidance of pain, the intense impulse to breath etc. may serve profound biological imperatives like the avoidance of injury and death, on the one hand ; whilst on the other seeing from personal observation that certain of those attachments and aversions eg sex and food can have an undesirable material and phenomenological consequence; eg a carnivorous dietary choice last night say; may be followed by an experience of a heavy body, low energy and unclear mind the next morning.

Perhaps a gradual change in that preference might occur; not as a result of some ascetic 'spiritual choice' or some ethical philosophical choice or some rational scientific dietary choice; but simply from direct observation of the self by the self.

[see End-notes 3.0 The action of awareness ?]

5/ Thus the acknowledgement that the apparent 'non-action of awareness'; may also result in change; regardless of which fragment of the self is active

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It is time to briefly consider other values which might be justified by absolute self-responsibility';

- ambition: as the intention to strive towards; pleasure, social status, power, wealth, erudition or some spiritual goal .

comment: absolute self-responsibility can provide only contingent justification for the 'sufficiency' of such; in the sense that if they are gained but found wanting, no guarantee was provided. Curiously analogous to biblical injunctions like

“What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?”

.- similar comments would apply to seemingly traditional egoistic values like; will-power, self-discipline, self-reliance

and egoistic seeming personal and political philosophies like stoicism , fatalism and libertarian anarchism. Again to understand such problems preliminary to an answer will require ontological enquiry, beyond the discussion here.

[ again see end-notes 2.0 Enquiry into violence etc ]

Really 'absolute self-responsibility' seems to speak to the minutiae of existence, whether or how to clean one's teeth or how to deal with an unhappy love affair [see end-notes 4.0 minutiae of existence.] Not withstanding; we now have some sense of 'egoism' as an ethical foundation ' via the philosophy of absolute self-responsibility

Regarding the theories of Max Stirner, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max\\_Stirner](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max_Stirner)

eg “Sacred things exist only for the egoist who does not acknowledge himself.....”

comment:

-seems to be no attempt at a “concise, precise, exhaustive, reductive” description ie definition of intended sense of egoism

-seems to lack any sense of the phenomenological self as conditioned, incoherent, conflicted, deluded etc entity

-seems to lack any sense of existence of profound spiritual problems, for the self; beyond institutional religion, theology and altruistic ethics

Ayn Rand , also very briefly! from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayn\\_Rand#Philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayn_Rand#Philosophy)

eg “..The need for morality, according to Rand, is dictated by our nature as creatures that must think and produce to survive; hence we would need morality even on a desert island.....”

comment:

-regardless of whether: survival is considered a virtue (ie. it seems more like a Kierkegaardian existential end), made very clear in the medical dilemma of choosing between survival and quality of life;

-or whether thought and production are requirements of it (ie the problem of the kind of survival envisaged and whether it is possible) ; has implications for whether such thought and production, is even possible.

- “the need for morality” though; would seem to imply that to be without morality is a real, if undesirable possibility.

Yet when the self is conceived as here as personality; as a process of processes of values; instinctive, habitual, moral and ideological; in

which morality is just one of many types of value, the contention that a 'real' phenomenological self ie personality, might exist without

morality ie a tabula-rasa as opposed to say a quandary of conflicting values; seems hypothetical in the extreme. Curiously though if “hence

we would need morality even on a desert island.....” was reinterpreted as; “hence we could benefit from a coherent, consistent morality even

on a desert island.....”; it might receive some support from absolute self-responsibility' egoism ; as for example would those non-social

prescriptions of Buddhism mentioned earlier; even though they can have little altruistic justification.

-Concerning the commitment to help the other ( the primary subject of most traditional altruistic ethics) the egoism of absolute self-responsibility' seems to place no blanket prohibition on helping the other, even when nothing is gained beyond the satisfaction of the moment, or when the calculus of what do I get in return for what I give; indicates nothing definite . So although absolute self-responsibility prohibits self-sacrifice: help for others will be allowed, obviously contingent on who,when and where. Even though the temptation to interfere in the affairs of another, will be subject to more caution in the egoism of absolute self-responsibility than in most altruistic philosophies ; in the end both altruist egoist philosophies will be subject to the same underlying incoherence and delusions of the phenomenological self. Whilst altruism's intricate ethical dilemmas balancing responsibility between smaller and larger social sub-groups, finds no part in absolute self-responsibility, because that commitment is always contingent. Something similar does arise in regard to balancing responsibilities to those different fragments of the phenomenological self and their situation.

In conclusion:

1/ Whilst we offer no apology for this approach to philosophical enquiry or the conclusions reached, perhaps there needs to be some apology or explanation for the frequent digressions. The motivation for including them is to suggest that while the first principles approach and the insistence on clarity of language, may seem quite austere in it's disregard of the familiar, comfortable content of the received wisdom of erudition; it does never the less seem to result in a quality akin to exploration, with many unexpected, interesting and digressing discoveries

2/ A question for those many unconvinced aspiring altruists who will remain.

“When others are not effected, shouldn't I consider the greater context of myself ?

So that I don't (for example) sacrifice :

my health for wealth, power or social status, my curiosity for academic accomplishment;

my capacity for enquiry for some illusion of certainty, respectability or security;

my sanity for conformity with some ideology or social norm; my serenity for a complex web of deceit;

my credibility for a veneer of respectability; my energy for some plethora of trivial activity;

my freedom for some addiction or habituation; my clarity for some slick conventional explanation

3/ In answer to “What if everyone aspired to absolute self-responsibility (as above); who would fix society’s problems ?

- in the short term things would not be especially different from now; such egoists would still vote for programs to alleviate social injustice for contingent egoistic reasons, just as their more parochial brothers and sisters do now
- in the longer term to the extent that those problems reflect the problems of a society’s citizens writ large; that is the problems of ordinary ‘parochial egoism’; then if our lives and aspirations incorporate a deepening sense of what is important, the contention would be that without the necessity of revolution, legislation, education or inducement; society’s problems, would be reduced. and our children being influenced by our example as well as our philosophy, would provide some guarantee of its continuity. Indeed the prevalent aspirational altruism in its many forms; which from this point of view seems a kind of hypocrisy, whereby we excuse and thus allow to continue our parochial egoism; by pretending that the world is improving in some altruistic sense.
- but it can’t be denied that any form of egoism’ will be anathema to religious proselytisers, ideologues, leaders, politicians and activists of all persuasions; whether of the left or the right.

It is not suggested that altruism and egoism are the only possible foundations; that is there may exist ethical foundations which are neither - some aesthetic of action: eg “Not good form old chap...” or -the interesting suggestion from Siddhartha Gautama in the “Raft Sutra” that there may be emergent ways of being which seem to incorporate either no ethical foundation or whose ethical consequence is so contingently complex as to defy description -or in that myriad of Kierkegaardian existential ethical ends, foundations we have not or can not even conceive Surely future human societies; will operate amidst a diversity of such ?

Appendix I : Concerning a direct approach to philosophical problems, outside the canon.

That direct approach to philosophical enquiry explicitly avoids reference to philosophical literature; in this case altruism and egoism. This is not merely an apology for a lack of erudition; but the explicit contention that philosophical enquiry, independent of tradition is both possible and the underlying basis for that tradition. But while such 'first principles enquiry' demands the putting aside of the authority of that received wisdom, it equally demands giving credibility equal with one's own, to its theories, standpoints and values; Thus one takes full responsibility for theories being false, standpoints being untenable, ethical prescriptions being inconsistent with each other and/or being unjustified by a particular ethical foundations. Perhaps one even considers the possibility that, that choice of ethical-foundation may ultimately be a final arbitrary unjustifiable one; here termed a Kierkegaardian existential choice.

So from this position; the common scholarly activity of comparison, contrast and/ or attempted reconciliation in the theories of established sources B and C on philosophical subject A; isn't actual philosophical enquiry but just a selective literature revue. It is simply to continue an ancient scholastic delusion.. More-over a scholastic delusion based on a literature of authoritative sources, which is a stochastic accretion of diverse theories, standpoints and values; in multiply mistranslated 'texts' of convoluted sentences ; the definitions and/or implicit meanings of whose words, often seem merely idiosyncratic constructions, serving the convenience of their authors!

Appendix II Relation of this philosophical approach to Anglo-Saxon and Continental Philosophy

While this approach to philosophical enquiry shares the Anglo-Saxon Positivist Tradition's impatience with obscure language and scholastic debate, it also shares the Continental Tradition's perseverance with unrestricted access to the content of phenomenological experience. But it also rejects some features of both eg whilst it would on one hand categorically deny that sentences of words as material symbols, unconnected to their originating minds and demographics; eg "text" in the Post-Modernism sense; have any more meaning than, say a scattering of sand grains on paper ; it would on the other reject the scientism, implicit in Positivist attempts to reduce philosophical problems to scientific ones.

Appendix III Regarding that extreme concern that intended word meanings are communicated.

How to ensure the important words in any philosophical discourse are understood by their participants and their intended meanings communicated . That is; before two or more people can discuss:

- the existence of some material or phenomenological matter , if an ontological claim;
- or truth, if a theory;
- or tenability, if a point of view, -
- or desirability if a value judgement or ethical prescription;
- or self consistency and/or justification via some ethical foundation, if a set of ethical prescriptions ;
- or status as a Sartrean existential choice, if an ethical foundation (as here)

Then the meaning of the word or words, articulating the idea; need to be shared by that other person or group.

for a fuller development see:

[Ontolexics-a\\_framework\\_for\\_problems\\_of\\_discourse,lexicography\\_and\\_translation30May20.pdf](https://cldup.com/iIEE1frySf.pdf) [31KB, 3xA4 pages] via <https://cldup.com/iIEE1frySf.pdf> (from)

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[Ontolexics-a\\_framework\\_for\\_problems\\_of\\_discourse,lexicography\\_and\\_translation-30May20rec26Sept22.abw](#)

Appendix IV regarding ' kierkegaardian existential choice'

If 'chains of justification' are not infinitely long or recursive (as circular), then there must be a 'final link', which by definition is necessarily without justification and the possibility of justification. Analogous to chains of causation, where the proper answer to what preceded the (currently conceived) first cause must be 'I don't know'. This idea possibly having its origin in Søren Kierkegaard's justification for his choice of Christianity, as 'a leap of faith'. That a link is final and without current justification does not of course demand it should remain so, rather it is to acknowledge there must always be a final link; as all knowledge is ultimately finite.

## End-notes 1.0 The end of incoherence

-Prompting the speculation; that perhaps further along this path one of these selves might recognise it's own nature as limitation, both as a blinkering of perception and a hobbling of action ?; With the possibility that this fragment becomes still ; precipitating an exponential spreading as a crystallisation of such stillness, amongst the other fragments ?..

## End-notes 2.0: Enquiries into violence and other 'spiritual' problems

To briefly illustrate such an enquiry; if we are not simply accepting or rejecting received wisdom or our own prejudice, the first problem will be to see and define 'what anger is'. Then if it is theorised that a consequence of anger is that it often leads to violence(say), we must also ask 'what is violence? again in the sense of prescribing it's category. Next we would need to determine if violence say is a necessary implicit consequence rather than merely a possible consequence of anger. Finally we can ask is anger and/or violence consistent with 'absolute self-responsibility' as here defined ? Similar considerations will apply to the problems of hedonism and asceticism and the related problems of naivete, experience and innocence.....etc ; even the nirvana of Siddhartha Gautama... but we digress  
..... In a peculiar sense, 'absolute self-responsibility' seems astonishingly to lead back into the concerns of spiritual or even mystical experience; it's more profound problems seemingly reflected in those mystical traditions like Christian Monasticism, Sufism, Taoism and Zen-Buddhism;

## End-notes 3.0 The action of awareness ?

If a fragment of the self does nothing; does nothing occur ?" ; even though this discussion chiefly concerns the phenomenological aka subjective self; it is at least possible that the phenomenological self as a smaller part of an unconscious mind; is correlated with a material brain considered as a neural-net; and the simple awareness(for example) of that incoherence , might correlate with 'self-training' of a smaller part of that neural-net, by a larger part ?

## End-notes 4.0 Minutiae of existence:

eg all human beings would seem to be susceptible to the pair bonding, which is reciprocated love with

*[love].as : "a profound indifferent, unchosen, unchoosable, attachment, and/or attraction and/or affection for another".*

But if that reciprocation no longer exists or never existed, absolute self-responsibility would seem to dictate the short term pain, disillusionment, depression, emptiness of abandonment of the relationship; even as a friendship, rather than the long term persistence in something which can only result in greater pain, self-conflict, dominion, humiliation and delusion. But it would also seem to require the recognition, and acknowledgement of "being in-love"; both to oneself and less obviously to the other.! absolute self-responsibility being unforgiving of deception of the other, in the long term; for the absolute self-responsibility' egoistic reasons our sociopath discovered !