Canadian Journal of Philosophy (2020), 50: 8, 919–933
doi:10.1017/can.2020.43

DISTINGUISHED LECTURE

Bernard Williams as a Philosopher of Ethical Freedom

Miranda Fricker

The Graduate Center, The City University of New York, New York, USA
Email: mfricker@gc.cuny.edu

Abstract

Interpreting Bernard Williams's ethical philosophy is not easy. His style is deceptively conversational; apparently direct, yet argumentatively inexplicit and allusive. He is moreover committed to evading ready-made philosophical "-isms." All this reinforces the already distinct impression that the structure of his philosophy is a web of interrelated commitments where none has unique priority. Against this impression, however, I will venture that the contours of his philosophy become clearest if one considers that there is a single, unchanging root conviction from which his ethical philosophy grows. Despite the perpetual motion of his philosophical thought—its erudition, originality, range, and unceasing forward momentum—still, I contend, there is something unchanging at the heart of it. I will show this by reference to three signature theses: internal reasons, the relativism of distance, and the porous borders of philosophy and history. I will argue that the root conviction of which these are the fruits is the conviction that the constraints of universal rationality seriously underdetermine how one should live. This, I believe, is the vision of the human ethical condition that constitutes the largely inexplicit yet utterly fundamental presupposition beneath Williams's ethical philosophy taken as a whole. I label the object of this root conviction *ethical freedom*, and thus portray Williams as a philosopher of ethical freedom.

Keywords: Bernard Williams; internal reasons; relativism of distance; truthfulness; authenticity; ethical freedom

Bernard Williams's ethical philosophy contains an extraordinary wealth of philosophical ideas, both critical and affirmative. Now commonsensical, now intriguing, now exhilaratingly against the grain, a first observation that readers might make is that it is all expressed in a deceptively conversational style—deceptive insofar as a conversational style creates an impression of simplicity and easy reconstruction by the reader after she has closed the book. And yet, Williams's philosophy is not remotely simple, and it is famously difficult to reconstruct. Everything seems to depend on everything else without any single element being conspicuously primary and, when attempting a summary, one invariably discovers one has neglected to factor in some careful form of words that deftly keeps a generalization just this side of a universal claim, or represents a proposition as sufficiently compelling to steer the argument in a certain direction yet without quite committing to its truth. A conversational style produced with such conditional precision and dialectical subtlety makes for the most demanding kind of reading—and the most rewarding kind of rereading.

A familiar experience when rereading a Williams text is that it shifts perspective before one's very eyes, so that a feature previously presenting as a background consideration now appears sharply focussed in the foreground of the argument, or, indeed, vice versa. This play of perspective comes about partly because Williams deliberately leaves many things unsaid. In his signature essay "Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline," he lampoons a certain analytical style of meticulously explicitating not merely those objections that are actually worth addressing but rather every single possible criticism—a style which he describes as trying "to remove in advance every conceivable misunderstanding or misinterpretation or objection, including those that would occur only to the

© The Author(s) 2020. Published by Canadian Journal of Philosophy.

https://doi.org/10.1017/can.2020.43 Published online by Cambridge University Press

malicious or the clinically literal-minded. This activity itself is often rather mournfully equated with the boasted clarity and rigour of analytic philosophy" (2006a, 183). He goes on to characterize a preferable method of writing philosophy, however, and one that surely casts light on his own style:

> Now, it is perfectly reasonable that the author should consider the objections and possible misunderstandings … ; the odd thing is that he or she should put them into the text. One might hope that the objections and possible misunderstandings could be considered and no doubt influence the text, and then, except for the most significant, they could be removed, like the scaffolding that shapes a building but does not require you after the building is finished to climb through it in order to gain access. (183)

The preferred kind of philosophical text described here is one whose surface is undisturbed by gratuitous critical eddies but rather flows more smoothly, more conversationally— its course defined as much by what is *not* said as by what is. This is, on the whole, what Williams's own writing is like, though it must be admitted that he sometimes leaves so much unsaid or inexplicit that the result can be frustratingly compressed and allusive, with the consequence that it is decidedly tricky to interpret. But, then again, it is partly these very characteristics of his writing that make rereading his work so rewarding: it takes repeated encounters to at last stabilize one's sense of what the purport of a given argument really is, what the main reasons in favour of it are, and how it figures in his overall picture of things. Reading Williams, one needs to repeatedly take up different angles of view for the real shape of any given thought to present itself.

A second observation is that over the span of a distinguished career many philosophers tend to change their minds about this or that philosophical issue, so that interpreting their oeuvre is significantly a matter of tracing the reasons for the shift in stance or method, perhaps differentiating early and late phases of thought that stand in some puzzling tension with one another. Such transitions from early to late phases are most marked in cases where an intellectual disillusionment has brought the change, as is the case with Wittgenstein, for instance, or Rorty. By contrast, however, Williams's intellectual trajectory betrays no moment at which any scales fell from philosophical eyes, and quite simply he barely changed his mind about anything—not his ethical relativism,[1] not his cognitivism, not his famous critiques of Utilitarianism and Kantianism, not the internality of reasons, not the misguidedness of the whole enterprise of moral theory, not the idea of moral luck, or retrospective justification, or the destruction of moral knowledge by reflection, or his conception of the porous limits of philosophy where it borders with history. Name any of his most central, even controversial, proposals and one will find his view remained remarkably consistent throughout. The argument, for instance, that he first put forward in 1974[2] for the distinctive brand of ethical relativism he called the "relativism of distance"—an argument I find to be revealingly compressed in the wrong place, as I shall explain—remained largely unchanged from its first form in the paper, "The Truth In Relativism,"[3] through later discussions of it in his 1985 statement monograph *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, and beyond in later papers such as "Subjectivism and Toleration" or "Human Rights and Relativism," which are from 1992[4] and 2005 respectively. There may be a slight qualification along the way, but no real change of view or argument. The same might be said of the arguments for his reasons internalism. This unchangingness is remarkable in a thinker of such dynamism, range, and erudition, and whose output overflows three decades of philosophy.

[1]There is a slight adjustment in that in *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* Williams clarifies his earlier statement by making it explicit that there is no synchronic cross-cultural application of relativism, only a historical one. See 1985, 242n3.

[2]"The Truth in Relativism," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 75 (5): 215–28.

[3]Reprinted in *Moral Luck* 1981.

[4]Reprinted 2006a.

https://doi.org/10.1017/can.2020.43 Published online by Cambridge University Press

As a consequence, the considerable development and expansion of his moral philosophy over time is not best visualized as exhibiting a linear development of twists and turns to be traced and explained by the careful reader. For contrary to appearances, Williams's ethical philosophy turns out, I propose, to have an unexpectedly singular conviction at its root. The branching out of his philosophy over time, therefore, is best seen as the flourishing of different theoretical expressions and implications of that root conviction. In rereading Williams, one discerns—beneath the considerable kinetic energy on the page—a deep stillness of vision. And this stillness derives from an unchanging conviction regarding our basic ethical condition that provides the life force of his work, early and late, critical and positive, as the philosophical DNA that integrates the whole.

The imprint of this unchanging conviction can be discerned in negative all over the surface of the critical philosophy. It used to sometimes be said of Williams (so the philosophical folklore has it) that his contribution was more critical than constructive, more negative than positive. If anyone remained disposed to say this after the publication of *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (1985), which certainly does contain a great deal of critical material, I would have already been disposed to argue with them. In that book, he asks (roughly speaking): Is the idea of universal human flourishing sufficient to entail a specific moral life? And he answers No; for there is a thing called history, which shows there is more than one way to flourish. What about the idea of aggregate Utility? No again; a doomed attempt at moral accountancy that obliterates the shape of an individual life. What about universal reason of a different stripe, construed as delivering categorical moral requirements from bare rationality? No again; a brilliant yet deeply misguided purist fantasy of moral justice; one that we all recognize and live by to some extent, but which we would do well to leave behind. These invigoratingly negative answers, however, are essential in building to the book's affirmative theses concerning the existence of ethical knowledge achieved through the application of our "thick" ethical concepts, the preferred epistemic ideal of "ethical confidence," the fundamentally first-personal nature of ethical reasons that give shape to an individual life, and (most importantly of all for a book with "the limits of philosophy" in its title) the various ideas he advances there concerning the nature of philosophy's relation to history, and the importance of doing philosophy in a way that is fully conscious of the historical contingency of both ethical philosophy and ethical life.

Be all this as it may, however, no one could in any case seriously cast Williams as a philosopher of principally critical bearing after the publication of *Shame and Necessity* (1993), let alone *Truth and Truthfulness* (2002), not to mention the three posthumously published collections of papers (2005, 2006a, and 2006b). And so I will not further discuss the erstwhile notion that his contribution was more critical than constructive. I will try, however, to show something rather more challenging than its simple falsehood. I will try to show that the earlier and manifestly critical work that vigorously engaged the dominant mainstays of moral philosophy was in fact already rooted in a positive meta-ethical vision that informed the critiques and animated them from the start. But let me at last be more specific: in elaborating this claim I will aim to show that the base philosophical conviction in his work, which embeds his deepest philosophical instinct about the human condition, is the conviction that we are, in a far-reaching sense, *ethically free*. That is, we are substantively free to set our own ends, and thereby generate our own values and correlative practical reasons because the only genuinely universal requirements of rationality—broadly understood *chez* Williams as the avoidance of false belief and deliberative error—significantly *underdetermine how one should live*. Ethical freedom, then, follows from the underdetermination of ethical value by universal rationality; and I will argue that the central and signature theses of Williams's moral philosophy are best read as one or other affirmation of ethical freedom in this sense. I believe this explains the unchanging quality of his work even as it grew in ever new directions; for it is ethical freedom we find, if we attend carefully, to be expressed again and again in so much of his philosophical writing—now explicitly, now obliquely; now negatively, now positively; in relation to reasons and obligations, or in relation to moral culture, or again regarding philosophy's relation to history. Or so I will argue.

https://doi.org/10.1017/can.2020.43 Published online by Cambridge University Press

In order that I might connect this ethical freedom with the chief materials I will be invoking from Williams's later philosophy, I will sometimes use the label *dialogical freedom*. Whereas *ethical freedom* here names a metaphysical fact about our basic ethical condition such that our ethical reasons are underdetermined, dialogical freedom indicates a *practice* through which we might complete their determination—a certain kind of dialogue. A further reason to adopt the latter label from time to time is simply to help avoid the misconception that Williams is at any point philosophically exercised by questions concerning freedom of the will. That Williams was a philosopher of ethical freedom is significantly obscured by the fact that he was a sceptic regarding the "problem of free will." That is, he was sceptical that there is any such problem. This is one of the places where his thought displays a localized but genuine affinity with that of Wittgenstein—for Williams effectively regarded the alleged problem of freewill as a *pseudoproblem*; that is, a mere appearance of a problem, and one that is created by the very process of philosophizing:

> The traditional metaphysical problem of the freedom of the will … exists only for those who have metaphysical expectations. Just as there is a "problem of evil" only for those who expect the world to be good, there is a problem of free will only for those who think that the notion of the voluntary can be metaphysically deepened. In truth, though it may be extended or contracted in various ways, it can hardly be deepened at all. What threatens it is the attempt to make it profound, and the effect of trying to deepen it is to put it beyond all recognition. The Greeks were not involved in those attempts; this is one of the places at which we encounter their gift for being superficial out of profundity.[5] (1993, 68)

The idea of the voluntary can reasonably be "extended or contracted" depending, for instance, on what view one takes of situations of coerced choice. In the archetype of the highwayman who commands "Your money or your life!" there is room for extension or contraction regarding how far the victim's act of handing over the money is to count as voluntary. One might regard it as voluntary because their action flows from their reasoning about what best to do under the constrained circumstances or, alternatively, as involuntary on account of the fact that death's being presented as the sole alternative rather forces their hand. Be that as it may, for Williams there is, by contrast, very little *deepening* of the idea of the voluntary to be had, and in particular it cannot be deepened sufficiently to resemble the metaphysical idea of freedom that is at stake in the supposed problem of free will. One reason he puts forward for thinking that the diminishment of the voluntary by constraint is irrelevant to the alleged problem of free will is that the freedom inherent in voluntariness can be diminished ("contracted") by degrees, as it is by the highwayman, but no one thinks freedom of the will comes in degrees. Free will is all or nothing. For this reason, Williams declares the idea of constraint on the voluntary to be a red herring when it comes to thinking about free will. This, at any rate, is a key strand of the argument put forward in "How Free Does the Will Have to Be?" (1995, 5). No doubt there are other sources of his scepticism about the freewill problem, such as the complex conception of willing that in some quarters at least invites the anxiety, but I will not try to capture them here.[6] For present purposes, the point is simply that the kind of freedom I am suggesting Williams was essentially always championing, whether in critical or positive mode, was not our metaphysical freedom from causal determinism, but rather our *ethical freedom* from determination by a fraudulently all-encompassing idea of rationality. In Williams's scheme of things, this freedom needed rescuing from the dungeons of the "morality system" that denied it, and which he found to dominate so much of moral philosophy.[7]

[5]Here Williams is alluding to Nietzsche's comment, "Those Greeks were superficial—out of profundity" (1974, 38).
[6]See "Nietzsche's Minimalist Moral Psychology" in Williams 1995.
[7]On the "morality system," see Williams 1973 and 1985.

https://doi.org/10.1017/can.2020.43 Published online by Cambridge University Press

So how does this most basic conviction that we are ethically free express itself in Williams's work? I will answer by reference to three signature Williams theses: internal reasons, the relativism of distance, and the open borders of philosophy and history.

a. Internal reasons

Williams argues that nothing can count as a reason of someone's to ϕ without there being a "sound deliberative route" to ϕ-ing from some motivationally live state—perhaps a desire, perhaps a disposition—that is either already in that person's "subjective motivational set" *or* would be in it were it not for some false belief or deliberative error. Inasmuch as someone's apparent reason may turn out to depend on any such false belief or deliberative error, it is not a reason for them after all.[8] Our reasons, then, though conditional on the contents of our very own subjective motivational set, or *S*, are by no means transparent to us. On the contrary, we can easily be mistaken about our reasons owing to at least three areas of epistemic opacity: that concerning worldly facts, that concerning our own psychological states, and that concerning what constitutes a sound deliberation in a given circumstance. First, as regards the hazard of factual error, we might recall Williams's example of someone thinking they have a reason to drink the stuff in the glass because they believe it to be gin when in fact it is petrol, and so they do not really have a reason to drink it (1981, 102). Second, as regards deliberative error, someone might think they have a reason (in this case, an all-things-considered reason) to quit their job and yet they have not fully thought through the likely consequences of doing so, and are not taking proper account of the negative impact on their hoped-for alternative prospects in the industry. So far, so Humean, for Hume's two caveats to the generalization that our reasons bear a one-to-one correlation with our actual "passions" or motivating states are, precisely: cases of false belief, and instrumental reasoning that is faulty in selecting insufficient means (Hume [1739] 1975, II[iii]:3). But Williams adds to Hume's two caveats a further thought concerning the second. He emphasizes that deliberation can often be less than it should be because of a more amorphous failure than one of simply picking an insufficient means to one's end, for it might involve (other kinds of) failure of the *imagination*.[9] Perhaps the person entertaining quitting their job *has* thought through the impact on their future prospects in the industry, but has not yet vividly imagined the stressful emotional impact on their family, and the ethical significance of voluntarily imposing that stress on them. Perhaps they have not yet fully appreciated how far their hoped-for alternative employment would really suit them longer term, or cohere with the other things they most value, or appear to former colleagues as a sellout, and so on. In addition, and partly as a consequence of this point about failures of the imagination, Williams stresses the idea that what someone has reason to do at any given time might often be significantly *less than fully determinate* since either of the main elements might itself be less than fully determinate—chiefly, the presence or absence of the requisite motivational state and the existence of the requisite sound deliberative route along with a sufficiently focussed imagination. Quite possibly, on his picture, a significant indeterminacy in what one has most reason to do is more the norm than the exception.

[8]This epistemic and rational idealization can be read positively as well as negatively such that it guarantees not only the absence of false beliefs but also the presence of relevant true beliefs (see Williams "Internal and External Reasons," 1981, 103). Ignorance, just as much as false belief, can obscure a person's reasons from their view.

[9]"Reflection may lead the agent to see that some belief is false, and hence to realize that he has in fact no reason to do something he thought he had reason to do. More subtly, he may think he has reason to promote some development because he has not exercised his imagination enough about what it would be like if it came about. In his unaided deliberative reason, or encouraged by the persuasions of others, he may come to have some more concrete sense of what would be involved, and lose his desire for it, just as, positively, the imagination can create new possibilities and new desires. (These are important possibilities for politics as well as for individual action.)" (Williams 1981, 104–5).

https://doi.org/10.1017/can.2020.43 Published online by Cambridge University Press

This picture of what it is to have a reason to do something, then, involves a substantial idealization, but a carefully incomplete one. On Williams's view, rational idealization reaches as far as ruling out plain doxastic and deliberative inadequacies but strictly no further, for there *is* no further idealization to be had. In his view, rational idealization simply does not reach beyond these things to settle the question of our ends or value priorities. To pretend that it does can only signify a delusional piece of rational overreach—an artefact of the peculiarly rationalistic conception of ethical life he labelled the "morality system." The prioritization of values that in fact determines our ends is for Williams an irreducibly substantive matter and to a significant degree *up to us*—again, not in any sense intended to affirm free will, but simply in the sense of sourcing our value priorities in ourselves, in our particular commitments and concerns and, most importantly, in what Williams sometimes calls "ground projects"—the primary practical involvements that shape and give meaning to our distinctively individual lives.

Williams offers a positive internal reasons justification for precisely this degree of idealization and no more:

> The grounds for making this general point about fact and reasoning, as distinct from prudential and moral considerations, are quite simple: any rational deliberative agent has in his S a general interest in being factually and rationally correctly informed. (1995, 37)

Given that we all, generally, have a motivation to avoid factual and deliberative error, we all thereby have a reason (construed on the internal interpretation) to avoid these things; but we should not pretend there is a similarly universal motivation towards any particular set of moral or even prudential *ends*. On the contrary, even a cursory glance at moral cultural diversity in the now, let alone through history, reveals a noticeably diverse array of ends and related value priorities. For this reason, on Williams's scheme of things, any further idealization would represent an outrageous annexation of the ethical by self-styled universal rationality. But what is the difference between the internal and the external theories of reason when it comes to what we should say on the ground, in deliberation, and particularly in cases of disagreement about what to do? Is there any real difference at this level? I think there is an important difference. Not in the degree of passion of argument, forms of disagreement, or general difficulty in determining what to do and how to live (that all looks exactly the same on either meta-ethical picture), but rather in what we are entitled to say at the notional end of the day when all arguments have been tried yet without achieving convergence—that is, cases of ultimately failed attempts at ethical persuasion.

In "Internal and External Reasons" (1981), Williams cites the fictional example of Owen Wingrave, a character he takes from Benjamin Britten's eponymous opera. Owen, whose father died in battle, comes from a proud military family, and is under immense family pressure, most especially from his military-minded grandfather, to join the army for reasons of family honour and pride. But Owen has pacifist values and staunchly resists the idea that he has all-things-considered reason to join up. Stipulatively, Owen is making no factual or deliberative errors and has exercised his imagination fully, but simply holds different value priorities from the rest of his family, who are trying to bring him round to their way of seeing things. In such a scenario, the proper conclusion for the internal reasons theorist to draw is that *Owen* does not have all-things-considered reason to join up. The reasons of family honour and pride that his grandfather finds conclusive simply turn out not to be conclusive for Owen. To insist otherwise is at best "bluff," as Williams puts it or, worse, coercive "brow-beating." It is at this notional endpoint of proper persuasive efforts that one can imagine a wise third party intervening to say "Enough! Stop trying to make him into someone he's not."

I hope it is becoming clear that the internal reasons thesis is a direct expression of what I am urging is Williams's deepest philosophical conviction, namely that we are ethically free. The Owen Wingrave example is particularly vivid because it concerns circumstances under which an individual's pacifist conscience might be discovered and sustained under dramatic counterpersuasive pressures, but Williams also intends it to illustrate our quite generic situation—the situation

https://doi.org/10.1017/can.2020.43 Published online by Cambridge University Press

characterized by what I am calling our dialogical freedom. We engage in discussion about what to do—sometimes difficult and disharmonious discussion across interpersonal ethical distances that refuse to close up—and provided there are no errors of fact or deliberative reasoning, including no failures of the imagination, then in the situation where no consensus is ultimately reached, the proper conclusion is that the differing parties *have different reasons*. On this picture, all the normal deliberating and arguing we go in for in order to decide what to do is simply not the kind of activity that permits only one right answer, for there is more than one equally rational range of value priorities and therefore more than one way to live. But the external reasons theorist denies this plurality and the rational underdetermination that gives rise to it. The external reasons theorist, then, *denies ethical freedom* in our sense. *That* is the ultimate difference between the two interpretations of what it is to have a practical reason. And it means that the moment at which all reasonable attempts at persuading Owen to join the army are deemed to have failed, any external reasons theorist who is sympathetic with the grandfather's perspective will say that Owen is *still not seeing* what he has most reason to do, whereas any internal reasons theorist who is sympathetic with the grandfather's perspective will say, no doubt in a disappointed tone, that it turns out, all things considered, *Owen* doesn't have reason to do it. The external reasons theorist regards Owen as failing in relation to rationality—at the very least his deliberation is rationally nonideal; the internal reasons theorist, by contrast, thinks nothing of the kind—rather she has learned something important about Owen.

This understanding of internal reasons as directly expressive of Williams's philosophical commitment to the reality of our dialogical freedom to determine our own values is supported if we reread "Internal and External Reasons" in the light of later work, most especially the discussion in his last book, *Truth and Truthfulness* (2002), concerning the two rival conceptions of self-knowledge found in Rousseau and Diderot respectively. Williams there explores the essential role of "trustful conversation" in the substantive determination of our beliefs. ("Trustful conversation" is dialogue where each party can trust the Accuracy and Sincerity of what the other says—that is, their truthfulness.) Williams exploits Diderot's view of how our psychologies become "steadied" through trustful conversation with others, so that we may discover what we think not through introspection, let alone the kind of introspective isolationism that Rousseau embraced in his eccentric autobiographical project (1953), but rather through a certain kind of ordinary social intercourse. Our minds become "steadied" through trustful dialogue with others about what is the case, and this dialogical process involves bringing propositions entertained in the first instance sans propositional attitude (the contenders being belief and desire) to settle into one category or the other. Williams explains the mechanism as follows:

> [The subject] is engaged in trustful conversation with another who relies on him, and the question is whether he can give that person to believe the proposition. In doing that, he may well, in such a case, give himself to believe it as well. *It is the presence and needs of others that help us to construct even our factual beliefs*. (2002, 194; emphasis added)

But it is not only beliefs that become steadied through trustful conversation. Williams adds something, apparently merely in passing, that I would suggest is in fact of enormous significance to understanding his philosophy of practical reason—namely that this same process of trustful conversation applies to the construction of our desirelike states:

> It is a further implication of Diderot's picture of the mind that similar factors can help us to construct our desires. If we consider what is involved in this, it can give us, also, a deeper insight than we have had so far into the nature of wishful thinking. (2002, 194)

At this point, we need to put two and two together. Not regarding the question that Williams is immediately concerned with—namely that of explaining the phenomenon of wishful thinking as a

https://doi.org/10.1017/can.2020.43 Published online by Cambridge University Press

piece of steadying gone wrong, whereby an item destined for the desire category slips into the belief category instead—but rather regarding a different question. We need to put two and two together regarding the question of how the construction and discovery of one's desires through the process of trustful conversation can be combined with the doctrine of internal reasons to produce a certain conclusion: that the process of psychological steadying through trustful conversation *is* the practice through which our individual ethical reasons are generated—the practice of dialogical freedom. Indeed since human beings must live out their reasons in time and social space, the process of discovering and constructing our reasons is an ongoing, shifting business: ongoing trustful conversation with different interlocutors at different times will generate our reasons, sometimes reaffirm them, sometimes undermine them, and sometimes destroy them, making way for new ones. (I freely admit that Williams does not draw this conclusion, but I find, nonetheless, that if we put the early and late work together, it is both exegetically and philosophically compelling.) Recall that Williams's view is that our reasons are a function of motivational states that would be in the agent's *S* once any errors of fact and deliberative reasoning are eliminated. What he delivers through Diderot's model is an account of how such items in one's *S* can be properly generated and/or discovered: through dialogue that counts as trustworthy inasmuch as it is truthful (contains no errors of fact or deliberation), we ask ourselves what is desirable, what is of value, which values are more important than others, and ultimately also what is important *simpliciter*.[10] As individuals, we can only think in (real or imagined) dialogue about what matters and about what sort of life we want to lead, and this is the truthful process of social construction through which our "ground projects" and other reasons are actually generated. It is also the process through which a person such as Owen Wingrave can discover that he really doesn't have reason to join the army, even though others may vehemently wish that he did.

For Williams, then, our practical reasons are both radically first personal, as he sometimes puts it, and yet also, I contend, fundamentally second personal owing to their essentially dialogical generation.[11] They are created and discovered by way of the same trustful conversations through which our very beliefs and desires are steadied, and our minds perpetually and repeatedly made up. That dialogical process *is* the most basic interpersonal process through which we exercise our dialogical freedom and thereby come to our own, sometimes distinctively individual, motivations and reasons. We come to them necessarily through dialogue but not necessarily through dialogue of a kind that is conducive to convergence. On the contrary, we might—like Owen Wingrave, perhaps—engage in trustful yet fraught and impassioned dialogue that brings us to realize with increasing lucidity that we disagree, and that our interlocutors' reasons are decidedly not our own. This is why Williams at one point alludes to the misguided optimism of a certain neo-Hegelian outlook according to which the social construction of individuals near guarantees harmony of some basic kind between the individual and society.[12] No such guaranteed harmony is found in Williams's social conception of the individual, where trustful conversation might equally lead to the kinds of potentially dramatic *dis*harmony that makes for ethical plurality among individuals within a single moral culture—a culture in which different individuals may each cultivate a distinctive shape to their life. This picture requires no solo heroes of existential freedom daring to throw away the moral rulebook, but rather portrays the thoroughly and necessarily *social* practice through which our individual psychologies become repeatedly steadied. I infer that this ongoing, socially ramified dialogical practice of trustful conversation—the lived expression of our ethical freedom—is the primary practice that supplies our varying answers to the Socratic question that Williams took to be at the heart of ethics, namely, How should

[10]Williams introduces the distinction between relative importance and "something's being, simply, important (important *überhaupt*, as others might have put it, or important *period*" in *Ethics and The Limits of Philosophy* (1985, 182).

[11]I use "second personal" here independently from the sense of "second-person standpoint" that Stephen Darwall (2006) has elaborated, which concerns the presumed symmetrical normative authorities implicit in the very stance of moral address. Williams's focus here is simply with the social formation of individuals' reasons.

[12]See, for instance, "Saint-Just's Illusion" (Williams 1995, 139).

https://doi.org/10.1017/can.2020.43 Published online by Cambridge University Press

one live? (1985, 1). This inference fits with his broad claim in *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* that while philosophy should surely be able to contribute to answering Socrates's question, it cannot possibly do so on its own. To answer the question we must also live, and what I propose we infer from *Truth and Truthfulness* is that this entails living in trustful conversation with others, determining and redetermining our reasons in time and social space. This is the practice of dialogical freedom.

Another inference to be drawn, I believe, from the account I have offered of Williams's reasons internalism as a direct expression of his belief in ethical freedom is that it obliquely affirms the place and value of *authenticity* in ethical life. For on his view it turns out that to have a reason to do anything is to have one's *own* reason to do it, where this carries the standing possibility of opposition to somebody else's reason (hence the aptness of the Owen Wingrave drama as an illustration of our general predicament). While I have cast this as a conviction that does not draw on existential heroics of any kind, still one does catch the occasional glint of romanticism in Williams's ethical philosophy, and indeed this is one of the distinctive pleasures of reading him. Its energy is felt here and there throughout Williams's oeuvre, including the earliest and latest works. It is explicit, for instance, in his very first book, *Morality*, when he quotes D. H. Lawrence's dictum "Find your deepest impulse and follow that," adding:

> The notion that there *is* something that is one's deepest impulse, that there is a discovery to be made here, rather than a decision; and the notion that one trusts what is so discovered, although unclear where it will lead—these, rather, are the point. The combination—discovery, trust, and risk—are central to this sort of outlook, as of course they are to the state of being in love. It is even tempting to find, among the many historical legacies of Protestantism to Romanticism, a parallel between this combination and the pair so important to Luther: obedience and hope. Both make an essential connection between submission and uncertainty; both, rather than offering happiness, demand authenticity. (1972, 79)

Much later, in an interview with *The Guardian* (Jeffries, 2002) upon the publication of his last monograph, *Truth and Truthfulness,* he once again quotes that same striking Laurentian injunction, this time relating it explicitly to his own philosophy: "If there's one theme in all my work it's about authenticity and self-expression… . It's the idea that some things are in some real sense really you, or express what you [are] and others aren't".[13]

From this positive and now more fully elaborated picture of what it is to exercise our dialogical freedom so as to generate and discover those ethical reasons that are one's own, the central criticism in Williams's famous critique of the "morality system" can be seen to follow. The forms of objectivist moral theory, such as Kantianism and Utilitarianism, that exemplify the morality system do so essentially because they each embrace an external interpretation of what it is to have an ethical reason. These views leave no room for dialogical freedom, let alone as a process that might reveal one's "deepest impulse" as an authoritative moral injunction. For Kant, moral reasons are imperatives that definitively transcend all and any desirelike states in the moral subject; for Utilitarians and other consequentialists, proper reasoning about what to do derives from facts about consequent aggregate happiness or other kinds of wellbeing, which themselves have nothing to do with the subject's own motivational states except inasmuch as these may contribute to the overall calculus, or perhaps motivate them to do the right thing once they have formulated it. With this observation, we arrive at the essential respect in which Williams's critical philosophy should be seen to be animated by a prior, and positive, meta-ethical vision: the practice of dialogical freedom, containing as it does the possibility of authenticity, constitutes the only clear-eyed, ethically engaged response to the realization that we are ethically free. In the early critical work, Williams's nascent yet vivid sense of this fundamental truth about our ethical predicament was already, I believe, the lens

[13]I am grateful to Matthieu Queloz for drawing my attention to this interview.

https://doi.org/10.1017/can.2020.43 Published online by Cambridge University Press

through which he saw both Kantianism and Utilitarianism as distorted by objectivist and moralistic fantasy. These fantasies can only be recognized as such if they are seen in the relief afforded by the backdrop of ethical freedom.

b. Relativism of distance

Let me now turn to my second signature Williams thesis: the relativism of distance. We find the same affirmation of dialogical freedom expressed again in this connection, only here it is applied at the cultural level rather than at the intersubjective level. The main arguments he explicitly sets out for his relativism hinge on a dual psychological condition relating to the possibility of a group from one moral culture (*S*1) being able to convert to the alternative moral culture (*S*2). The dual psychological condition is, first, that the converts could "retain their hold on reality," and second, "to the extent that rational comparison between *S*2 and their present outlook is possible, they could acknowledge their transition to *S*2 in the light of such comparison" ("The Truth in Relativism," 1981, 139).[14] This dual condition is presented as marking the boundary between what Williams calls "real confrontations" and merely "notional confrontations" between moral cultures, and so is apparently central to the definition of his relativism. Here is how he introduces that distinction:

> A relativist view of a given type of outlook can be understood as saying that for such outlooks it is only in real confrontations that the language of appraisal—good, bad, right, wrong, and so on—can be applied to them; in notional confrontations, this kind of appraisal is seen as inappropriate, and no judgments are made. (1985, 161)

Yet it seems to me that this prominent psychological condition in fact does next to no work in the real structure of the view. Why, after all, would anyone think that the psychological and practical possibility of converting to the alternative moral outlook poses a proper limit to mere judgements of moral appraisal? The possibility of conversion per se seems neither here nor there as regards the propriety of appraising, not least because it is surely clear that there are alternative moral cultures in the present to which a group of *us* would surely not be able to convert, and yet Williams quite rightly insists that relativism finds no application in such cross-cultural cases in the now. He says, for instance: "Relativism over merely spatial distance is of no interest or application in the modern world. Today all confrontations between cultures must be real confrontations …" (Williams 1985, 163). This asymmetry in his view between spatial distance and historical distance does not cohere with the criterion of moral conversion.

It is fortunate, then, that an alternative version of Williams's line of thought recommends itself. I contend that the idea that is really doing the work in Williams's relativism is something not psychological but rather functional, regarding the ability to exercise our basic dialogical freedom to construct the ethical values we live by. This essential motivating idea for the relativism of distance flies by in a couple of sentences in the original paper, so that one has to catch it on the wing. The idea is this: any moral appraisals delivered across merely notional confrontations would contain "so little of what gives content to the appraisals in the context of real confrontation" that they "lack the relation to our concerns which alone gives any point or substance to appraisal" (1981, 141, 142). In effect Williams is saying that the deliberative point or function of moral appraisal goes missing across merely notional confrontation. But what really is this point or function? I believe that drawing on the concept of trustful conversation elaborated in *Truth and Truthfulness* places us in a much-improved position to answer this question—and I openly admit that it delivers a different answer from the one given by Williams in his original arguments for the relativism of distance. The

[14]It is a strongly practical social condition, too, as the counterfactual he spells out (and the correlative idea of a "real option") involves the ability to make real social arrangements to actually live together according to the alien values. I have discussed this point more fully in Fricker 2010.

https://doi.org/10.1017/can.2020.43 Published online by Cambridge University Press

answer we arrive at is that the real reason why some (but not all) historically distant moral cultures lack the requisite "relation to our concerns" to warrant appraisal is that they are too alien for us to be able to engage them imaginatively in trustful conversation about how to live. If an alien moral culture is such that we cannot imaginatively recruit them into our practice of dialogical freedom, then the main point of appraising them and their values goes missing, so that little is left but a moralistic judgmental tick. On this picture, to proceed with appraisal across this kind of distance would be a piece of moral-cultural narcissism, and one that would likely obscure more fruitful modes of engagement with past moral outlooks.

Williams modelled for us just what such an alternative, nonmoralistic stance could be in his study of ancient Greek ethical thought presented in *Shame and Necessity* (1993). Here his project was to counter a certain progressivist orthodoxy to the effect that our characteristic modern phenomenology of wrongdoing, namely *guilt*, is superior to its allegedly simpler ancient counterpart, namely *shame*. Williams argued that the Greek notion *aidos*, translated as *shame*, in fact already incorporated the desirable reflexivity found in modern guilt, namely the internalization of the shaming gaze, so that this form of moral compunction is revealed as not dependent after all on actually being caught in a shameful state by others because the agent's own internalized sense of apt reaction is already sufficient. Oedipus's dreadful act of dashing out his own eyes gruesomely dramatizes exactly this point about internalization for, in blinding himself physically, it is painfully evident that he cannot make himself inwardly blind to the horrifying fact that, through no fault of his own, he has married his mother and killed his father. There is no hiding from internalized shame any more than there is from the pangs of a post-Christian guilty conscience.

In revealing the reflexive structure of *aidos*, Williams embarrasses the progressivist urge concerning the superiority of modern moral guilt-feeling; and he simultaneously models the historically reflective kind of philosophy he always promoted and came later to label *impure philosophy*—that is, philosophy that mixes itself with history. Acknowledging, if not in so many words, at the outset of *Shame and Necessity*, that we are in merely notional confrontation with the ancient world, he observes:

> We cannot live with the ancient Greeks or to any substantial degree imagine ourselves doing so. Much of their life is hidden from us, and just because of that, it is important for us to keep a sense of their otherness, a sense which the methods of cultural anthropology help us to sustain. (1993, 1–2)

What we *can* do, through the study of ancient Greek ethical thought, is learn something about our own ethical life and our own philosophical conceptions of it—in particular, our blind spots, and philosophical fantasies. And so, later, in "Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline," he laments that on the whole philosophers tend not to think much about history of philosophy "because it is not part of a philosophical undertaking, as locally understood, to attend to any such history. But—and this is the point I want to stress—we must attend to it, if we are to know what reflective attitude to take to our own conceptions" (Williams 2006a, 191). Indeed, the alternative positive vision of ethical life that Williams surely gained from studying "Greats" (or Classics) as an undergraduate equipped him with a clear vision of the self-deceived aspirations of "the morality system" that he regarded as inflated with objectivist and ahistoricist delusion. That the morality system itself partly constituted a historically contingent formation of ethical life was, I surmise, simply manifest to Williams from the start because he greeted its philosophical expressions already imaginatively primed with a rich sense of the ancient outlook that had so long preceded it. His acquaintance with ancient styles of ethical thought, and especially the Greek sensibility's capacity to confront the role of luck in ethical life, placed the hyperreflective, purist predilections of the dominant strand of modern moral philosophy in revealing critical relief. This is why, despite his rejection of the defining features of the tradition as he found it, there is no hairpin turn to be tracked in Williams's moral philosophical journey—he pulled up to philosophy from a place where the modernist moral project already appeared as a decidedly suped-up piece of engineering.

https://doi.org/10.1017/can.2020.43 Published online by Cambridge University Press

To sum up this interpretation of the motivating idea behind Williams's ethical relativism, my suggestion has been that the real, if fleeting and unhelpfully backgrounded, argument for the relativism of distance—and the marker between real and notional confrontations on which it depends—does not rest, after all, on the psychological and practical possibility of conversion but rather the deliberative possibility of engaging in real or imagined trustful conversation as a means to adjusting our own values. *That* is the line that moral appraisal cannot appropriately cross without becoming empty moralism, and the psychological impossibility of actual conversion to the relevant alternative practice is not in fact what marks it at all. Instead, what marks the line of appropriate moral appraisal is the possibility of imaginatively including members of the alternative outlook as interlocutors in our own practice of dialogical freedom. The relativism of distance, then, is really (and despite appearances) a direct implication of the deliberative necessity of dialogical freedom that I am endeavouring to reveal as the practical correlate of Williams's foundational belief in ethical freedom. Dialogical freedom receives only a muffled expression in Williams's case for the relativism of distance because it is marginalized in the presentation of the argument. But this is not surprising because, for real confrontation, the necessity of imagined trustful conversation across ethical cultures was not something Williams would be in a position to fully articulate until much later, when the material for *Truth and Truthfulness* was coming to fruition.

Where does this interpretation leave us with respect to the undermotivated asymmetry between historical and cultural distance in the now? In a better position, I think, for it is a further advantage of the interpretation on offer that it helps motivate the asymmetry. When we have to negotiate alien moral cultures in the present, and even while we may certainly not be in a position to actually convert to any of their ethical practices, we are inescapably thrown into something like the practice of dialogical freedom—thinking through how to relate to the alien values, perhaps challenging them, perhaps being somewhat changed in the light of them, and so on. This fact at last provides a robust reason why relativism can find no application "over merely spatial distance … in the modern world": as soon as another culture's moral otherness has arisen for us in the present, a dialogue of some sort has thereby begun, and so the possibility of trustful conversation as the desirable dialogical mode is already indicated. For the relativism of distance, this provides the real sense in which, as Williams sometimes put it, it is always "too late" for relativism across cultures in the now.[15]

c. The borders of philosophy and history

The third signature thesis from Williams that I wish to relate to his belief in our ethical freedom is more of a limiting case, for Williams's work was also deeply engaged with the relation between ethical freedom and its opposite—namely, *necessitation*. His abiding fascination with the limits of philosophy and its relationship with history just *was* a fascination with the relation between one region of ethical necessity—namely, those few features of ethical life that can be discovered a priori—and the kind of contingency displayed by us as we exercise our ethical freedom in real time and social space, to create moral culture. Thus we come to his work in State of Nature genealogical explanation, which was the method he explored in his final book in order to incorporate both necessity *and* contingency in a single framework. This method, or rather the State of Nature aspect of it that depicted "origins," delivered certain constraints on ethical freedom by revealing that some values—notably, truthfulness, and elsewhere he made a similar argument in relation to (political) freedom[16]—are

[15]For more discussion of this issue see Fricker 2013.

[16]"This contingent historical deposit, which makes freedom what it now is, cannot be contained in or anticipated by anything that could be called a definition. It is the same here as it is with other values: philosophy, or as we might say a priori anthropology, can construct a core or skeleton or basic structure for the value, but both what it has variously become, and what we now need it to be, must be a function of actual history" (Williams, "From Freedom To Liberty: The Construction of a Political Value," 2005, 75–76).

https://doi.org/10.1017/can.2020.43 Published online by Cambridge University Press

necessary in the sense that they will inevitably arise in any human society. This is so for the excellent reason that they arise out of absolutely basic human needs. In the case of truthfulness, a compound of the protovirtues Accuracy and Sincerity, the basic epistemic need to pool information means that any society is bound to have a protovirtue of truthfulness. So far, so necessary. But then, history kicks in, and everything that ensues is more or less contingent. The particular cultural forms that truthfulness can take are many and various—perhaps as a value that is profoundly related to ideas about the authentic self, or perhaps one conceived primarily in relation to a notion of honour, or again a value whose role in society is more bureaucratically conceived, being thought of above all as serving efficiency in reliable information sharing. Necessity and then contingency; philosophy and then history. The State of Nature genealogical method carefully feels for original necessities and fixes them as core features while releasing its grip on all else, allowing the historical contingency of the world to accrue thereafter. On this picture, our basic human nature and social needs as we begin to form a protosociety do constrain what form a human ethical life might take, but only a little, for there is so much room for cultural-historical difference and, within that, individual difference too. That is why Williams embraced the State of Nature genealogical method, and we can now see that the deliverances of the State of Nature story effectively specify the limiting conditions on our exercise of ethical freedom. We start with basic societal needs that mean we are bound to cultivate some protovirtue of truthfulness, or some protovalue of political freedom, but thereafter necessity falls away, leaving us ethically free to engage our various practices of substantive dialogical freedom, setting our ends by way of ramified dialogical engagements that steady our minds—our beliefs, our desires, our values, our reasons.

There is a special connection, I believe, between Williams's late concern to vindicate and explain the core value of truthfulness and his early critical work deconstructing the morality system. The special connection is that his critique was always centred on the idea that the morality system was insufficiently truthful, and indeed characterized by a number of defining fantasies. Accordingly, a resounding normative message for our profession that emanates directly from the very raison d'être of *Truth and Truthfulness* is that we should resist fantasy in intellectual life—we have an ordinary but important responsibility to be truthful not only in life but also in philosophy. In describing Accuracy as a component of truthfulness, for instance, Williams writes: "This feature of Accuracy involves two aspects. One of them concerns the investigator's will—his attitudes, desires, and wishes, the spirit of his attempts, the care that he takes. It involves his resistance to wishful thinking, self-deception, and fantasy (2002, 127).

I believe it was already this vivid sense of our intellectual responsibility to avoid fantasy in philosophical thought that drove the early critiques of the morality system—the responsibility to resist moralistic and universalistic fictions, to debunk the concomitant external interpretation of what it is to have a reason, to interrogate how the associated "institution of blame" functions to perpetually recruit others into shared reasons under the truthless idea that all ethical reasons are already and necessarily shared.[17] It was only in *Truth and Truthfulness* that he could fully elaborate this idea, but the method in the earlier critical work was precisely that of resisting philosophical fantasy in favour of a naturalistic realism about where our values come from. This aspiration at last finds explicit philosophical expression in *Truth and Truthfulness*, of which the overriding aim was to achieve a naturalistic account of ethical value that did not undermine ethical conviction—a clear-eyed meta-ethics that would, however, leave such convictions stable under reflection. *Truth and Truthfulness* was in this regard the philosophical flowering of a career-long passion for the possibility of resisting fantasy in moral philosophy.

Let me end with a final note of explanation regarding my own interpretive methodology in relation to these themes. In my partly strict, partly experimental exegesis of three pillars of

[17]In this connection see, for instance, his comment about "blame" as it functions in the morality system as a "continuous attempt … to recruit people into a deliberative community that shares ethical reasons" ("How Free Does The Will Need To Be?," 1995, 16).

https://doi.org/10.1017/can.2020.43 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Williams's meta-ethics, while I certainly hope to have told a truthful story, I would not for one moment pretend to have served up the truth, singularly conceived, about how to interpret Williams. For any idea of serving up a single true interpretation would involve a basic misconception, not only of my own purposes but, more interestingly, a misconception of the character of Williams's highly distinctive philosophical texts. His philosophical writings, though disciplined, subtle, and purposeful, are generally what one might call *resistant texts* in the sense that they actively resist attempts to rigidly fix their significance. This is in part simply a consequence of their often compressed and allusive quality noted at the outset—but that is not the whole explanation. What creates their resistant nature is also that many of his ideas resonate in strikingly different ways depending on what other ideas within his philosophy one considers them in relation to. I have mainly put three early ideas in relation with later ones, critiques in relation with positive philosophical proposals, and I hope to have thereby substantiated my interpretive claim that we should understand Williams's meta-ethical oeuvre as the gradual expansion and elaboration of his belief in ethical freedom—a conviction he elaborates now by reference to reasons, now by reference to the contingency of moral culture, now by reference to the idea that philosophy should be aware of its borders with history in order that it may trespass intelligently and self-reflectively as "impure philosophy."

There is no question, then, of offering any solo exegetical truth, but instead—and in keeping with Williams's own view of the place of truth in historical interpretations where a chronicle of epistemically "plain truths" might receive a plurality of equally truthful interpretations[18]—I have drawn upon early and late ideas he plainly committed to, and I have sounded some new interpretive notes by putting those ideas into explicit relation with one another. These new relations exemplify the changeability of philosophical resonance that I find so remarkable in Williams's writing and deeply characteristic of his philosophical style. While there surely may be stray moments of plain unclarity or vagueness, mostly I find his philosophical texts have this resistant quality because Williams himself was resistant in exactly the same way—resistant to allowing the reader, or indeed the writer, to let the philosophy slide into deadening ready-made categories. "Avoid -isms!" he used to say, explicitly echoing the advice given to him by his "teacher and mentor" Gilbert Ryle. Williams passed on this seemingly innocuous advice to his own students in what now strikes me as a new exemplar of how to be superficial out of profundity. Avoiding -isms may sound innocuous, but it goes deep. Deep enough in Williams, I believe, to be expressed in his resistance to the ready-made -isms of his philosophical time, because they were not well-shaped to commit him to exactly what he wanted and nothing else. He wanted moral truth without *one* moral truth; moral cognitivism without objective moral knowledge; historicism without "standard relativism"; a deep separation of science from ethics without any dualism of fact and value; practical necessity without categorical necessity; naturalism without reduction; individualism but only through social dialogue; social construction but always constrained by truthfulness so that the dialogical production of our beliefs, desires, reasons, and identities emerges as our most natural means of discovering self and world.

I have read three of Williams's key meta-ethical theses as sourcing their first energy in an affirmation of our freedom to set our own ends, underdetermined as they are by the bare strictures of rationality. And I have suggested that this human predicament of ethical freedom implies the possibility of living authentically through sociality, determining our own ends as the product of ongoing trustful conversation. Indeed, I would suggest that in Williams's scheme of things authenticity might plausibly be considered *the* ethical value, but one which appropriately remains offstage, since (like other central values, such as happiness or love) it cannot be aimed at directly in life, and tends to get pulled out of shape under explicit philosophical discussion. Authenticity is necessarily a by-product of living truthfully, and so it doesn't help to focus on it directly—better to cultivate lived forms of truthfulness and let authenticity bloom as it may. Living authentically is our best response to the fact of ethical freedom, and the best response to the objectivist fantasies of the

[18]See Williams 2002, ch. 10.

https://doi.org/10.1017/can.2020.43 Published online by Cambridge University Press

morality system. "The only serious enterprise is living," he characteristically asserts in *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (1985, 117). This remark is not only revealing of Williams's sense of proper priorities in ethics, it is also reminiscent of the potent combination of affirmation and irreverence that he surely recognised and relished in Nietzsche. In Williams, however, as I have tried to show, the deconstructive impetus is already infused with a positive and theoretically articulate vision of the fundamental importance of resisting philosophical fantasy. And in Williams, the scornful Nietzschean energy is transmuted into the distinctive dialogical form that brings it to maturity, and sociability, through the interpersonal tutelage of "trustful conversation." This practice of dialogical freedom is what I have presented as determining and uncovering our reasons and our selves in Williams's vision of ethical life. It is what enables us to *have* an ethical life, clear-eyed, under conditions of ethical freedom.

Acknowledgments. This paper grew from material presented in several places: the 2019 Canadian Journal of Philosophy Annual Distinguished Lecture; a presentation at Agency, Fate and Luck: Themes from Bernard Williams (University of Lund); a talk at the Moral Sciences Club in Cambridge; and a written version produced for the 2020 YTL Centre Annual Lecture in Politics, Philosophy and Law, King's College, London. I am most grateful for helpful discussions on all those occasions, and especially to my three commentators at King's: Mari Mikkola, Hallvard Lillehammer, and Christoph Kletzer. Subsequently Matthieu Queloz and Iakovos Vasiliou each generously gave me helpful comments on a written draft; and finally, my thanks to Patricia Williams for her invaluable insights and encouragement.

Miranda Fricker is Presidential Professor of Philosophy at The Graduate Center, CUNY. Her main areas of research are moral philosophy, feminist philosophy, and social epistemology. She is an associate editor of the *Journal of the APA*, and a fellow of the British Academy and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Bibliography

Darwall, Stephen. 2006. *The Second-Person Standpoint: Morality, Respect, and Accountability*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Fricker, Miranda. 2010. "The Relativism of Blame and Williams's Relativism of Distance." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 68 (supp. vol.): 151–77.

Fricker, Miranda. 2013. "Styles of Moral Relativism—A Critical Family Tree." In *Oxford Handbook of the History of Ethics*, edited by Roger Crisp. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hume, David. 1975. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. 3rd ed. Edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge. Oxford: Clarendon Press. *First published 1739*.

Jeffries, Stuart. 2002. "The Quest for Truth," *The Guardian*, November 30, 2002. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2002/nov/30/academicexperts.highereducation.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1974. *The Gay Science*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books. *First published 1882*.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1953. *The Confessions*. London: Penguin. *First published 1781*.

Williams, Bernard. 1972. *Morality: An Introduction to Ethics*. New York: Harper & Row.

Williams, Bernard. 1973. *Utilitarianism: For and Against* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

Williams, Bernard. 1974. "The Truth in Relativism." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 75: 215–28.

Williams, Bernard. 1981. *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers 1973–1980*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Williams, Bernard. 1985. *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*. London: Fontana Press.

Williams, Bernard. 1993. *Shame and Necessity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Williams, Bernard. 1995. *Making Sense of Humanity and Other Philosophical Papers 1982–1993*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Williams, Bernard. 2002. *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Williams, Bernard. 2005. *In the Beginning Was the Deed: Realism and Moralism in Political Argument*. Edited by Geoffrey Hawthorn. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Williams, Bernard. 2006a. *Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline*. Edited by A. W. Moore. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Williams, Bernard. 2006b. *The Sense of the Past: Essays in the History of Philosophy*. Edited by Myles Burnyeat. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Cite this article: Fricker, M. 2020. Bernard Williams as a Philosopher of Ethical Freedom. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 50: 919–933, doi:10.1017/can.2020.43

https://doi.org/10.1017/can.2020.43 Published online by Cambridge University Press