

Second Philosophy

Led by	Shingles Fotherington / Dane Standing
Title	Cruelty & Kindness
Date	15 March 2009

INTRODUCTION

I would like to take this opportunity to say that this is not a debate about animal cruelty, per se, but about the cruelty and kindness of humans with humans.

‘You gotta be cruel to be kind’. Do we really? Why are these terms so ambiguous? Is the distinction between them clear cut? By what do we quantify as kind and cruel, by what factors is this affected? Can an act be both cruel and kind? Is it all just a matter of perspective? Cruelty and kindness, each apparently the antithesis of each other, yet our contemporary thinking hints that they are very ambiguous terms. What shall follow is an in depth discussion about the nature of cruelty, the nature of kindness, the link between them (If there is any) and some examples I will invite you to comment on whether you think them cruel or kind. Then finally a short statement from myself.

The nature of Cruel: Let’s define our terms:

Oxford: 1) Disregarding or taking pleasure in the pain or suffering of others; 2) Causing pain or suffering.

Let’s look at how these figures characterised Cruelty:

- Marquis de Sade: *‘Certain souls seem hard because they are capable of strong feelings, and they sometimes go to rather extreme lengths; their apparent unconcern and cruelty are but ways, known only to themselves, of feeling more strongly than others.’*
- Hamlet (of Shakespeare): *‘I must be cruel only to be kind’.*
- Antonin Artaud: *I employ the word ‘cruelty’ in the sense of an appetite for life, a cosmic rigor, an implacable necessity, in the gnostic sense of a living whirlwind that devours the darkness, in the sense of that pain apart from whose ineluctable necessity life could not continue; good is desired, it is the consequence of an act; evil is permanent.*
- Henri Becquerel: *‘Decisiveness is often the art of timely cruelty.’*
- William Williams: *The business of love is cruelty which, by our wills, we transform to live together.”*
- Atharva Veda: *“The child learns to worship money and the things which money can buy; he admires cruelty and cunning, rather than Sympathy and Love. So, the Home, the School and the Society have to rise and take up this challenge posed to the future of this great land.”*
- Friedrich Nietzsche: *‘Wherever man has allowed himself to be persuaded to self-denial in the religious sense, or to self-mutilation... desensualisation, decarnalisation and contrition to Puritanical repentance-spasms... he is secretly allured and impelled forwards by his cruelty, by the dangerous thrill of cruelty toward himself .*

Now, what of that illustrates cruelty clearly?

Second Philosophy

DISCUSSION:

Simulat: the dictionary definition :-)

Reflection: agreed sim, the rest is more artistic

Shingles: nothing, further, Sim?

Oswy: I didn't see how the second part of the dictionary definition can work.

Reflection: many of these other quotes seem to be highlighting the necessary pain that is involved in all aspects of life, love included, which is an important point, but to say that this is cruelty is hyperbole in my opinion

Oswy: The first part can.

Simulat: well - with the dictionary definition it's easy to see how sometimes to be kind you need to be ready to inflict pain

Shingles: What's wrong with the artistic, Ref?

Simulat: In AA they have this idea of tough love

Reflection: nothing is wrong with it Shing, but you asked what illustrates cruelty clearly, and art seems to draw out associated meanings and perspectives, which may not at first clarify

Fergus: shingles, the artistic evokes an emotional meaning of the term while the dictionary is essentially a factual statement.

Oswy: I see cruelty in the first sense of the definition as a deeply immature thing. Not the thing a reflective and well balanced individual would engage in.

Reflection: Yes and the inflicting of pain is not cruelty in my view (I think the initial definition is wrong in that sense)

Shingles: well, a continually updated description of the term's use is what the dictionary can provide, Fergus

Shingles: Could you explain a bit more about that, Reflection?

Fergus: shingles, you're basically presenting two questions: what do we mean when we say "cruelty" and what do we feel when we witness or experience it.

Reflection: pain, is a necessary part of life, and to inflict it for the good of the recipient (as when punishing children, is not cruelty, but is rather compassion)

Oswy: Why would you want to inflict pain for pleasure unless you are a sadomasochist? If you are into SM then you have a genuine reason.

Shingles: but doesn't that highlight the point that whether something is deemed Cruel or not depends upon perspective, Fergus?

Simulat: be back in a few minutes

Shingles: well, SM does have to be practised in a very trusting relationship, Oswy

Reflection: whether something is cruel depends, I think, on the intention of the agent (Oswy, close your ears to this), how it is deemed has to do with the intentions of the observers as well as their insight

Oswy: Shingles I know and I don't see SM as cruelty. But someone who is not a SM, why would they want to inflict pain for pleasure. If you are going to do things that are painful to others you better have a good reason.

Shingles: Ok, I think I don't disagree with you, there, Ref

Oswy: It's when you get down to the reasons that you have the debate for instance is torture cruel?

Shingles: most definitely yes, Oswy

Reflection: torture is meant to be cruel, Oswy, that is part of its effectiveness

Oswy: But to use the example of a thousand thought experiments if you torture one person to save the lives of thousands then is it still cruel.

Marya: A doctor using a needle on a child can be very painful for the child, but it is necessary for him/her to do so in order to administer a lifesaving medication ... so simply inflicting pain would not *necessarily* count (which goes against the second definition in the Oxford dictionary)

Reflection: good point Oswy, if the intention is not to cruelly cause pain to the prisoner, and you would gladly get the information otherwise, and the intent is to save the thousands, then it is not cruel

Second Philosophy

Shingles: I'm fascinated by the way you all are tackling the dictionary definition and not dealing with the quotes posted

Marya: well, to my mind, the other quotes are poetry, romantic and/or personal interpretations

Oswy: You could argue a la CIA that moderate torture is unpleasant but not cruel. It only becomes cruel when it is done for pleasure for revenge.

Reflection: well Shing, the dictionary definition is challenging enough!!!! And we are mostly not agreeing with it ;-)

Shingles: So... if the intention is to cause pain expressly then it is cruel. I don't think to cause pain would ever be anyone's real intention, Reflection

Oswy: Shingles my problem with Nietzsche as usual is that I don't understand what he is talking about.

Shingles: Ah, perhaps I should explain my intent in using these artistic/romantic quotes

Marya: I'm not so sure about that Shing, there are people in the world, more than just a few, that are or as far as we can tell, do seem to 'like' to cause others pain, for varying reasons

Oswy: What does Williams mean when he says the business of love is cruelty?

Reflection: hmm, Shing, I think that sometimes we do inflict pain just to see the other person suffer (sad to say)

Reflection: revenge, for example

Marya nods

Shingles: But with what motivation, what does that act gratify in us, Reflection, Marya?

Shingles: I was confused by that too, Oswy

Oswy: Shingles surely that is the whole point of cruelty It is base and primitive and immature it is the joy of inflicting pain for pleasure. As such we condemn it.

Reflection: in revenge we feel compensated for the pain that someone else has unjustly (in our view) inflicted upon us

Shingles: I was with you all the way up to condemning it, Oswy

Marya: Well, not all of us would be gratified by causing others pain (not even for the sake of revenge) but yes, as Ref said, it seems a matter of compensation

Oswy: No right thinking person would want to be described as cruel because it describes a lack in the person. It shows them as childish

Reflection: although less commonly we can take a primal glee in watching the suffering of others, the Roman gladiatorial combats were enormously popular

Shingles: or a disregard of others, Oswy

Oswy: Children can be cruel but that is the nature of children at times.

Marya nods

Reflection: Oswy, living as we do in the post-modern age, there are entire subcultures built around the persona of cruelty, I think

Oswy: Ref I think the potential for being cruel is in all of us. I agree. We have to keep cruelty in its box.

Fergus: Oswy, do the children perceive themselves as being cruel or is that the label we apply based upon our wider experience?

Shingles: There is a great quote I saw '*Cruelty is a fashion statement we can do without*' I think that can be used to shed light on the irresponsible way romanticism has glamorised cruelty in literature

Reflection: I think the Romans justified cruelty, as did the Spartans by the concept that in order to be strong, one needed to be desensitized to the humanistic aversion to causing pain

Oswy: Fergus My impression as a teacher of many years is that they get seized with a primitive passion. The adults then have to analyse for them what has happened. So they learn hopefully?

Marya: That's an interesting question, Fergus ... it seems to me that they don't perceive themselves as being cruel ... I think they don't think about it in those terms - that it is a far more instinctive behaviour for them, perhaps (imo)

Reflection: I think children are just naturally exploring the broad range of emotions and actions which nature has equipped them with. It is up to the culture to define which ones fit the particular culture and which ones don't

Second Philosophy

Oswy: Ref what did you mean by the postmodern culture thing?

Reflection: Os, I believe modernism suggests a progressive perfection of humanity, while post-modernism rejects this along with a greater tolerance for things that are not "progressive" in the modern sense

Oswy: Thanks Ref. Again I know why I am a modernist. Ye Ha

Shingles: I would prefer the modernist approach too

Shingles: Ok, let's look at kindness

The Nature of kindness

And conversely, we should define our terms here also.

Oxford:

- 1) Considerate and generous
- 2) Not harmful to
- 3) Affectionate; loving

And some quotes on kindness from these figures

- Albert Schweitzer: *'Constant kindness can accomplish much. As the sun makes ice melt, kindness causes misunderstanding, mistrust, and hostility to evaporate'*.
- Barbara de Angelis: *'Love and kindness are never wasted. They always make a difference. They bless the one who receives them, and they bless you, the giver.'*
- Lao-Tse: In this world, there is nothing softer or thinner than water. But to compel the hard and unyielding, it has no equal. That the weak overcomes the strong, that the hard gives way to the gentle -- this everyone knows. Yet no one asks accordingly.
- Chinese Proverb: *A bit of fragrance always clings to the hand that gives roses*
- Lao-Tzu: "Kindness in words creates confidence. Kindness in thinking creates profoundness. Kindness in giving creates love."
- Abraham Lincoln: "Kindness is the only service that will stand the storm of life and not wash out. It will wear well and will be remembered long after the prism of politeness or the complexion of courtesy has faded away."
- Leo Buscala: "Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around."

And again, what of that rings true about kindness?

Oswy: Well kindness is certainly a blessing. It brings huge social advantages.

Marya: I would go for the first definition in the dictionary again, Shing

Shingles: Now, you wouldn't want to appear predictable, would you, Marya?

Marya: Oh, I don't mind appearing predictable at all ;)

Oswy: We are all very kind to each other here and look at the advantages we can talk about kindness in a rational way to our mutual benefit.

Second Philosophy

Reflection: Shingles, I agree with the definition, and the art here, I think, well expresses the importance of kindness and compassion, as well as it's paradoxical power in the world

Shingles: Could you explain its 'paradoxical power, Ref?

Oswy: I have a feeling that that Nietzsche led us all astray here again. He glorified the aggressive and denigrated the kind.

Shingles: let's not scapegoat Nietzsche with that, many others have done the same before him, Oswy

Reflection: sure the zen thing said it well, water seems soft, but it cannot be compressed (thus hydraulics) and it wears away stone. Kindness is superficially thought to be soft, but is very powerful, thus paradox

Shingles: Love is strongest, Ref

Reflection: ahhhh, but then we would have to define love, Shingles ;-)))

Reflection: is that cruel?

Oswy: Shingles If you want to be kind to Nietzsche I will comply. But if it wasn't him then others close to him developed the cult of the cruel. The kind were seen as weak. Servile foolish.

Shingles: yes, that culture is an unhelpful one, Oswy

Fergus: Shingles, I'm wondering whether there isn't a bit of a dichotomy at work here. I think we're mostly agreed that "cruelty" is a label applied from the point of view of the receiver or the observer, but seldom from the point of view of the actor. On the other hand, "kindness" is a label which can be applied from any of the three perspectives.

Oswy: Fergus are you saying the actor never wants to say he she is cruel?

Shingles: ok, now do we have to take all three of those perspectives into account or may we use just one of them, Fergus?

Reflection: interesting point Fergus, although the "reality" of it seems to have to do with the intention of the agent, so someone can do something which is seen as kind, but be doing it to harm or be cruel to another person, in which case, it would not actually be a kind act, even if it were perceived that way

Shingles: I'd say that the actor never truly grasps his own cruelty

Shingles: Ambiguity - How are kindness and cruelty linked?

Fergus: Oswy, I try very hard to avoid "never". All things are possible in an infinite universe. But I think we can probably agree that the actor seldom perceives himself as being intentionally cruel.

Reflection: if I know I am hurting someone for the simple pleasure of it, I think I know I am (especially after the fact)

Boudica: why do you say that the actor never grasps cruelty? Does the actor, then, in your opinion, actually grasp anything?

Shingles: then why do you do it, Reflection?

Boudica: I mean, when it comes to emotions

Oswy: Shingles When I was a child I cut the heads off three fish in a senseless act of cruelty. I have been ashamed of the act ever since I did it and still am today. I wonder if people do feel shame at their own cruel acts. And hide the shame in reasons?

Reflection: because it feels good Shing :)))

Shingles: of course they do, Boudica

Boudica: can you say than an actor understands them?

Mike111: if a person is kind in one area, the other person might consider the person's ethics wrong and become cruel

Shingles: No, I cannot, Boudica

Boudica: I killed a frog once like 10 year ago. Felt ashamed. I wonder why; well, I guess I had some reasons, but anyways

Oswy: Boudica, yes me too what strange thing seized me and made me do it?

Reflection: as humans, I think we have instinctual circuits built into us, for "the kill", and part of that circuit is to take delight in it

Mike111: I killed a snake with a pellet gun and felt bad after; think that was the last thing I killed other than flies and bugs

Second Philosophy

Deoridhe: Do you think one aspect of the cruelty might be power over something else - to control it to such an extent you can kill it?

Boudica: apparently we all have our killing experiences...

Shingles: Precisously, you all had reasons, but couldn't really grasp them, Oswy, Boudica, Mike

Fergus: Mike, I try not even to do that. The problem is not the bug or fly, but the bug or fly's location. I'll swat it if I can't relocate it, but prefer to get it outside.

Boudica: probably a repulsion, etc., etc. If examined deeper I'm sure we'd find them

Oswy: Shingles All I grasped at the time was the impulse and the need to do it uncontrollable.

Reflection: it is like we have talked about how a cat will "toy" with a mouse that it has caught, before killing it, and we project cruelty onto this. It is more likely that it is the "catching circuit" taking an opportunity to practice. So to our killing circuits like to get some practice now and again also, I think

Shingles: a need? That's interesting; I wonder what cued that need

Mike111: lol I try to get flies outside to if I can, but most bugs are fair game when they step inside.. The only 1's I let live are lady bugs

Boudica: or you blow smoke on it Ferg, yes? :)

Shingles: Yea, I came across that argument. I didn't like it, Reflection

Fergus: Not that I recall, Boudica.

Oswy: I go out of my way now to ave spiders flies etc.

Reflection: so, I suppose, I'm the only one in this group who has actual honest to god murderous impulses? ;-)))

Fergus: Probably not, Ref.

Oswy: No Ref when I was a teachers I could have killed several children a day and teachers too.

Shingles: But it doesn't make sense to say that you do have those impulses but think the act of murder wrong, Reflection

Reflection: hahahaha Oswy, I bet!!!

Fergus: No place to hide the bodies, Oswy? I know how you feel.

Boudica: I think that what you are saying is exactly to the point but we're afraid to breach it, so to speak

Reflection: of course it does Shingles; I have all manner of "wrong" impulses every day!!!!

Deoridhe: I daydream about people trying to mug or assault me so I can kick their ass. I figure it's the only way my moral sense of "don't start trouble" can indulge in the fantasies.

Shingles: but if you have the impulse, a part of you likes that 'wrong' impulse, Reflection

Mike111: I think lots of societies murderers get there blood taste satisfied from joining the army

Oswy: Ref you are right, I think these are deep violent things in us and in the immature adult they can surface again. We see examples everyday in the newspapers of adults actually attacking children babies etc.

Reflection: right Deo, that's a good example. I am almost always "justified" for the mayhem which I imagine :))

Deoridhe: I think that's behind a lot of the rationale for torture, though. 'I'm saving thousands,' etc... Never mind that information gotten under torture is unreliable; the rational is in place for a different purpose.

Reflection: yes, Shingles, a huge part of me loves the wrong impulse!!, that's why we have to have such strict social sanctions against these circuits

Oswy: Ref I also thin that as a historian I have to wade through the blood of history where these impulses have been let loose with a social sanction.

Boudica: this is really interesting. I was talking about it, about the concept of discipline, for example, well, with Shingles the other day

Shingles: you make it sound like we are not to be trusted with ourselves, Ref

Deoridhe: I think sometimes we're not.

Marya nods

Oswy: Shingles, surely it is true that we are a complex set of emotions in tension and contradiction.

Reflection: one can always trust oneself to be oneself, Shing ;:))

Shingles: and what is yourself like, Reflection?

Reflection: an infinite potentiality, which can be unloosed in good ways as well as bad, depending on circumstance I would imagine

Second Philosophy

Shingles: indeed

Boudica: so, how does it work? We're not disciplined well enough, or the murderous instincts are those of animals, which we cannot control or hide in ourselves?

Oswy: Young men with guns drunk on drugs drink and fundamentalism are not to be trusted. They are inviting the primitive the cruel to leak out.

Boudica: so then we have this instantaneous urge for rage and murder; unless we educate ourselves about how to control these things?

Shingles: sort of, Boudica

Deoridhe: Freud called it the Death Urge, which often is projected outward onto other people in a desire to hurt or destroy them.

Shingles: All right, let's take a look at our examples to see if we can figure out cruelty and kindness. Example:

Ok, at the ending of Casablanca, Rick tells Isla to get onto the plane with Victor rather than leave Victor, her husband, and run away with Rick. Even though Rick and Isla genuinely love each other, Rick chooses to sacrifice that for Victor's well being. Has Rick been Cruel or kind?

Oswy: Boudica, as an ex teacher I agree I thought getting students to be civil was the most important part of me job never mind subject teaching.

Reflection: it seems as though the challenges of corralling our hurtful instincts is increased, as individual freedom of opportunity continues to progress. It is very hard to "choose" the more cerebral response, often

Shingles: I think it's easy in ones right mind to choose the cerebral; the challenge is to reach that right mindness, Reflection

Wichard: It seems that this is all tied up in the civil and civilizations, which are part of the implied social contracts among individuals and groups.

Fergus: shingles, Rick is imposing his view of what is best. It happens to coincide with Victor's view, but that seems almost irrelevant. Makes for good drama, though.

Reflection: that is an interesting artistic example shingles. Rick is a tough guy, but in deep love with Isla, and yet has a greater love for the idealism of the "cause" and so makes the ultimate sacrifice of his own romantic attachment, and sacrifices Isla's happiness also on the altar of the greater good. Thus it is the ultimate compassion as it is give at great personal cost

Shingles: yes, Fergus, I think mostly he is cruel with himself

Boudica: for example, we are more drawn towards people who possess a kind of calmness within themselves (unlike my exertions, but anyways). What I wonder is why? This kind of calmness is an opposite of wildness, I'd say, so it means that we seek for serenity

Wichard: And in the post-modern world there are always multiple competing views of any structure or setting

Fergus: But is inflicting pain for the greater good cruelty or kindness?

Marya: Sadly I haven't seen the movie so I don't know much about the background, but I would say Rick was neither cruel nor kind, only selfish perhaps or ignorant - though I expect it had something to do with social expectations of the era more so than anything else

Shingles: very good question

Wichard: Fergus, that depends on the stance, and there are multiple stances

Oswy: The Casablanca thing is a bit like our debate on love. Didn't we decide that people should be true to their emotions and this was better for all in the long run? It seems cruel but it is kind in the long run?

Shingles: I'd say for the most part it would be cruelty, but it does depend on circumstantial factors, Fergus

Marya: Yes, it did occur to me too that it was a love or loyalty question

Shingles: I agree, Oswy :)

Reflection: Fergus, in this case, the pain for both rick and Isla reaffirms the essential truth of their identification with the allied cause and the liberation of mankind and so is kind to them also, though painful

Second Philosophy

Wichard: Bit under which conditions might "kind in the long run" be good or bad or some state in between that's harder to figure out

Shingles: Or, if instead, Rick begs Isla to stay and insists how much he loves her and encouraging her to stay with him in full knowledge of how it will make Victor feel. Has Rick been cruel or kind?

Marya: ahhh, see, I am missing a great deal of context by not having watched the movie!

Fergus: So then the question becomes not one of whether cruelty or kindness is a matter of perspective, but also one of the timeframe of the involved parties.

Oswy: Remember Rick was also a crook and a twister. I bet he met up with Isla at some later date and stole her away from Victor with whom she had become bored.

Wichard: I think so, Fergus

Marya: Nice one, Oswy

Wichard: yes, indeed, that great, Oswy

Mike111: twister?

Oswy: Rick should be honest with himself and let Isla do the same.

Reflection: rick, doesn't do what he does for victor shingles, he does it because victor has important work, which only he can do for the "cause". It would be a totally different story otherwise.

Shingles: to injure Victor would be kind, Oswy?

Wichard: Should? Oswy? How?

Oswy: Mike. A crook a con man. A shady character?

Marya: why did he need Isla to do his work?

Reflection: because he would be devastated, emotionally at her loss

Shingles: Rick: 'You're part of his work; you're what keeps him going'.

Deoridhe: 'Behind every great man is a very tired and often cranky woman'?

Wichard: That's a back-story that isn't clear, Marya

Marya: the same as Rick and Isla were devastated?

Oswy: Shingles Victor is going to escape and carry on his work. It would injure him more in the long run to have a relationship with Isla that was based on false emotions.

Shingles: Oh, sexism really isn't cool, Deo

Shingles: good point, Oswy

Oswy: Victor has to be led to maturity in these matters.

Reflection: Rick's point in his famous soliloquy is that both he and Isla would be untrue to their deeper natures, if they were to indulge their romantic love, as profound as that was

Shingles: difficult in that times Values

Deoridhe: Yeah, sexism isn't cool, but Casablanca has some really kind of obvious sexist aspects to it. The old sexist saying seems to apply to it, as Isla's feelings of emotional loss are unimportant, but Viktor's are critical.

Wichard: But each character in the film has an agenda, sometimes they're coincide, but often they don't

Reflection: of course values at different historical times are different Deo. In terms of this piece of art, we should remember that it was made during the second world war

Deoridhe: There was a reason I put the old trope in quotes, however. I don't actually buy it.

Oswy: I agree Deo There are a number of characters who want a good slap besides the Nazis

Reflection: the overall importance of deeper ideologies was much less questioned then than now, I think

Marya: Then doesn't that mean that in the end, the sacrifice Rick made (for himself and on Isla's behalf) was 'for' Victor and not for the cause, simply because it would have devastated him emotionally? And why are Victor's emotions more important?

Reflection: no Marya, it was so that Victor could do his work in the war effort. Clearly if it were just Victor, Rick would just have taken the girl ;-))

Marya: But couldn't Victor do his job without Isla?

Deoridhe: Interesting how that reading renders Isla something to be "taken".

Marya: Surely if the cause was that important, Victor could/should do it anyway, regardless?

Reflection: no he would not have been effective because of his emotional reactions, Marya

Second Philosophy

Deoridhe: Isla's lack of efficacy is unimportant, however.

Marya: ... so Victor's emotional state was more important to him than the cause?

Reflection: yes, Deo through most of human history, women have been objects to be won over and taken and then hoarded :))

Shingles: disgusting

Deoridhe: Lovely, Ref. Good to know where I stand.

Marya: Well, as uncomfortable as it is, it is still true

Deoridhe: Yes, it is true. It's also sexist. However, the pointing out of it is not sexist, as the sexism existed prior to the verbalizing of the reality.

Marya: Yes indeed, Deo

Deoridhe: Thus, pointing out Isla's role is to be a power behind a great person, not a great person herself, is not sexist. XD U see what I did thar?

Marya: lol

Shingles: OK: WE HAVE BEEN GOING ABOUT AN HOUR NOW, BUT BEFORE I ANNOUNCE THE OFFICIAL CLOSE I WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS A STATEMENT TO THE GROUP

Cruelty and Kindness are profoundly linked, and an expression of our attitude to our fellow humans and our own self. The way we outwardly treat our fellow humans, how we make ourselves appear and the message we spread is always significant. It is the expression not of the Golden Rule, not of how we would like to be treated, but of how we expect to be treated. The thinking here is that we treat others how we think we deserve to be treated ourselves(1). To this extent it carries full significance the way we treat other people, if we behave kindly we view ourselves as deserving of kindness, however if we behave unkindly we view ourselves as deserving unkindness.

I completely expect that sentiment to be heard with much disagreement and I urge all listeners to remember that there was no blame attached to that. When we blame we perform a cruel act, it is a resignation of acceptance to those around us, we suspend our ability to forgive. Blame separates the blamer from the blame. That itself is a cruelty because when we blame we create a world where blame is possible, not only for those around us, but for ourselves as well. This is crucial, because of our treatment of others being an expression of how we think we deserve to be treated, and so by blaming; by suspending our forgiveness we create a world where we suspend our forgiveness of our self.

It is profoundly important that we have the ability to forgive ourselves. Imagine a husband and wife, who have known each other a long time, each is aware of the other's idiosyncrasies, but each time they have an argument they blame each other for having those idiosyncrasies and spend a long time apart afterwards not speaking. The affect of this will be that while they will live a relatively happy life together, but they will never move past those misunderstandings between each other, the arguments and the trouble will keep reoccurring. Consider that as an analogy for living with ourselves, if we blame ourselves for our own idiosyncrasies, what we might think of as 'our failings', we suspend the ability to forgive ourselves for them and we can never move past them.

Boudica: oh, wow, my god that is some insight; by creating a world here we suspend forgiveness; we create a world where we suspend forgiveness for ourselves; ha; neat

Fergus: It raises a question related to the nature of blame, but that's probably a topic for a different day.

Oswy: I agree Fergus the nature of blame could be questioned here and should be another debate.

Shingles: But a husband and wife that love each other unconditionally can talk through and help each other through their misunderstandings together. By forgiving those around us we create a world where others may forgive us and where we can forgive ourselves and move on from our blocks. It is so fundamentally positive to have unconditional acceptance for ourselves, not to be complacent, but to accept ourselves blamelessly. Blame

Second Philosophy

separates our self from ourselves; it causes our self to fracture and to weaken. If we are able to gently accept our self we can begin to understand our self. Understanding is key.

To do this for our self is a great kindness, and the root of kindness to all others. If we are able to forgive we create a world where we can all be understood. This is a profound kindness, the unity of people with all people; the common understanding between us all is a precious, precious kindness. It allows us to understand each other, to accept each other to forgive all others and ourselves. If it is unconditional, if it is fully accepting we can create a world where we can be, not just ourselves but all of us, accepted for people, and good, kind people. This is what is meant when it is said that kind acts reach further than that one act. They contribute to a world of kindness and unity

Deoridhe: I agree with that ideally, Shingles, but I think it has some profound weaknesses practically, and I'm not sure how to get from here to there. Right now we do NOT live in a world where differences, much less idiosyncrasies, are much tolerated, much less embraced without blame.

Oswy: Shingles you are describing a liberal society where the individual is self reflective and uses the self reflectiveness of his her own human condition to be tolerant of others. It's a noble ideal

Shingles: Ghandhi *'You must be the change you wish to see in the world'*.

Shingles: I hear you, Oswy

Deoridhe: I can be as much change as I want to be; I doubt I can save a single black trans woman from being murdered by police.

Shingles: Cruelty is the wilful neglect or contradiction of such kindness. But thinking on this level, the reason, the impetus to behave cruelly is derived from that being feeling that they deserve to be treated cruelly themselves. There is injury there, and if we are to really stop them we need to show their injury to them, and with the kindness we invest in forgiving them for hurting themselves helps them to see their own humanity. No one is born cruel, only through misunderstanding and injury does cruelty grow to be habitual, but it is not good to blame that cruelty. Nobody is irretrievable, only difficult to reach...

Reflection: essentially shingles these are the insights of the axial age religious philosophers, and which the world has been struggling with for the past 2000 years now

Shingles: Each of us, right now can make a positive difference

Shingles: why do you think they are being struggled with?

Reflection: because it is contrary to human neurology

Oswy: Shingles Ref Absolutely but it's very difficult to get people to act on these principles. We have to keep trying though.

Shingles: then there's either a flaw with the sentiment or with the findings of neurology

Oswy: Civilization can guide neurology or override it.

Reflection: it has been fairly obvious since the Iron age that we are our own worst enemies, but we are hardwired in ways that makes it very difficult to make these changes. Even the churches founded in the names of the axial philosophers have done the opposite of what the philosophers themselves suggested, continuously

Fergus: The difference between "is" and "ought", perhaps?

Shingles: I've never seen it as a very big gap, myself, Fergus :)

Reflection: there is no flaw with the sentiment Shing, except that it is almost impossible to do, and neurology is just what it is ;-)

Oswy: I am a great believer in education and that means ought and ought again.

Shingles: nice contradictory statement, Ref, heheh

Deoridhe snickers.

Fergus: *"Stress is what happens when your brain overrides the natural desire to kick the s**t out of some a**hole who desperately needs it."*

Boudica: we are reflections of what we see

Second Philosophy

Reflection: yes, that is a famous and apropos quote Fergus :))

Shingles: what we see is a reflection of us

Boudica: from when we are small, when e are born, we become what we absorb

Oswy: Liberal societies are the best examples we have of primitive neurology being guided and controlled and channelled to meet the ideals of our sentiments.

Reflection: yes, Boudica and Shingles :))

Fergus: Nature or nurture, Boudica? I think the answer is "yes"

Boudica: though Ferg, one needs to learn to control his/her anger, that is know how to do so, which comes through practice, I think

Reflection: yes, Oswy, the changes which have been achieved in a mere 2000 years are a tribute to the adaptability of humans in their ability to override such basic elements of their own nature.

