

It was a Different Time: Judging Historical Figures by Today's Moral Standards

Alfred Archer (Tilburg University) & Benjamin Matheson (University of Bern)

Abstract: How should we respond to historical figures who played an important role in their country's history but have also perpetrated acts of great evil? Much of the existing philosophical literature on this topic has focused on explaining why it may be wrong to celebrate such figures. However, a common response that is made in popular discussions around these issues is that we should not judge historical figures by today's standards. Our goal in this paper is to examine the most plausible way to understand this objection. We will examine three different interpretations of this argument. First, we will examine a view we call Temporal Moral Relativism, according to which moral standards are relative to particular points in time. Next, we outline Blame Relativism, the view that people from the past may be excused from blame for acts of conventionalized wrongdoing. Finally, we outline Ideals Relativism, according to which our moral ideals are partially relative to the time in which we live. We argue that Ideals Relativism provides the most plausible interpretation of this argument.

Introduction

In 2002, Winston Churchill was voted "The Greatest Briton of All Time" in a UK television poll.¹

Churchill is held in such esteem in large part for his role in the Allied Victory in the Second World War. Not only do people think well of Churchill, but he is also celebrated through statues, busts, and other forms of commemoration in the UK and in other countries.

Churchill also held many views that many today consider appalling.² He also played a pivotal role in bringing about the 1943 Bengali famine that is estimated to have killed millions.³ During the famine, Churchill ordered that India must continue exporting food to Britain and that food being transported to Bengal should go instead to bolster the well-stocked supplies of British soldiers and to top up food stockpiles elsewhere in Europe.⁴ Churchill blamed this famine on the Bengali people, saying that it was their fault "for breeding like rabbits".⁵ Churchill's actions were fiercely criticized at the time with Indian politicians demanding an inquiry into the causes of the famine⁶ and The Viceroy of India saying, "Churchill's attitude towards India and the famine is negligent, hostile and

contemptuous”⁷. Even the British Secretary of State in India said he “didn’t see much difference between his [Churchill] outlook and Hitler’s”⁸.

Should we celebrate those like Churchill who played an important role in a country’s history but who are also perpetrated acts of great evil? The recent philosophical literature provides several helpful answers to this question. Celebrating someone who has committed acts of evil may involve expressing disrespect for their victims⁹, it may express support for the wrongdoing¹⁰, and it may support harmful ideologies¹¹. Given this, some argue that we ought to vandalise or deface celebratory statues¹², while others have argued we ought to remove these statues¹³. Others argue that removing celebratory commemorations of controversial figures may deprive a group of people of its heroes¹⁴ and rests on the questionable assumption that we should only build memorials to the morally virtuous¹⁵. Philosophers have also investigated the argument that removing memorials of controversial figures may amount to ‘erasing history’¹⁶, that memorials and commemoration rituals can function as a form of ‘emotional imperialism’¹⁷, and whether we ought to treat the narratives of those depicted in statues as fictional symbols rather than accurate historical records¹⁸.

The recent philosophical literature, however, hasn’t touched upon a widely made argument in the public debate about the continued celebration of controversial historical figures. In response to calls to remove statues and others forms commemoration of Churchill, some argue that these calls are unjustified and so we should continue to celebrate Churchill *because* we shouldn’t judge him by today’s moral standards. This argument is made explicitly by historian Andrew Roberts. He claims that because “it is completely illogical, ahistorical and unfair to natural justice to judge the people of the past by today’s morals...Churchill [shouldn’t] be knocked off his plinth in Parliament Square because he was a racist, at a time when almost everybody else – on the left as well as the right – also

was”¹⁹. While journalist Christopher Bucktin says that Churchill “possessed genuine greatness” and that

His will and determination inspired a nation and was crucial to the defeat of the Third Reich... Churchill's legacy should not be tarnished for something we didn't even have a name for back then. We should be wary of "presentism" – the judging people of another time by the standards of today.²⁰

Bucktin implies Churchill should continue to be celebrated as a one of the greatest leaders of modern times because we shouldn't judge him by today's moral standards. Similarly, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Boris Johnson once said that, “[Churchill] sometimes expressed opinions that were and are unacceptable to us today, but he was a hero, and he fully deserves his memorial”.²¹ Johnson implies that we should continue to celebrate Churchill with a memorial because the opinions he expressed that are unacceptable by today's moral standards shouldn't count against him being a hero.

Similar arguments are offered in support of continuing to celebrate other historical figures. Some argue, for example, that we should continue to celebrate Christopher Columbus, because “you shouldn't judge what happened in the past by today's standards”²² or because applying “today's political norms to historical figures such as Christopher Columbus is unfair”²³. More generally, Paul Ratner claims it is “unfair” to judge people from the past without taking into account that they were acting “within the constraints and prejudices of the society of their day”²⁴.

Despite this frequently made defence of continuing to celebrate heroes of the past despite their moral failings – which we will call The Different Time Defence – it is not clear exactly what this defence amounts to and whether it stands up to scrutiny. In this paper, we aim to establish the most plausible form of The Different Time Defence (or “The Defence”, for short). For the sake of space, we will focus on its use to support the continued celebration of Churchill in this paper, though we intend our arguments to apply more generally. We will outline three competing interpretations of The Defence. In §1, we outline and justify the desiderata that we will evaluate these accounts against. In §2, we outline Temporal Moral Relativism, the view that moral standards are relative to particular points in time. Next, in §3, we outline the view that people from the past may be excused from blame for acts of conventionalized wrongdoing. We call this account Blame Relativism. Finally, in §4, we outline Ideals Relativism, according to which our moral ideals are partially relative to the time in which we live. We argue that Ideals Relativism provides the most plausible understanding of The Defence in part because it avoids understanding the debate about The Defence as a metaethical one and instead understands the debate to be about whether the commission of atrocities undermines one’s admirability as a political leader.

1. What would a good account look like?

Before outlining these different accounts, we will first explain the method we will use to evaluate them. We will assume that those who argue that we should not judge historical figures by contemporary moral standards are arguing in good faith. This means that those making this argument are doing so sincerely. We assume, then, that this argument is not being raised to derail or distract away from a discussion of the historical figure’s actions. Of course, this will not be the case for all of those who make this kind of argument in political discussions. In particular, we might worry about the political motivations behind a Conservative Party politician, such as Boris Johnson, using the argument in

defence of a conservative politician like Churchill. Nevertheless, we take this argument to be sufficiently widespread to make it worthwhile to investigate as a philosophical argument made in good faith, even if some of those making such arguments have ulterior motives for doing so.²⁵

We also assume that defenders are not denying that the figure being criticized acted in the way they are being criticized for acting. Rather, the claim is that it is mistaken to criticize those actions by contemporary moral standards. Of course, as noted, there will be instances where this argument is not introduced by those who sincerely hold it. Again, though, our interest is in trying to find the most plausible version of 'The Defence', so our focus will be on those who accept the descriptive account of the historical figures actions but deny that it is appropriate to respond to those actions with negative moral judgements.

Given this assumption, what would a good understanding of 'The Defence' be like? First, and most obviously, an account should provide a plausible interpretation of what those who make this argument say. Given that our aim is to provide an account of an argument made in the public debates surrounding this issue, we seek to give an account that, as much as possible, fits with the claims made by those advancing this argument. An analysis that is too far removed from what those who advance this argument say is likely to be seen as a different argument altogether, rather than a plausible reconstruction of the argument we are investigating. We will call this desideratum *Plausible Interpretation*.

Second, an account is preferable to the extent it is plausible. This follows straightforwardly from our aim to find the most plausible interpretation of the argument that we should not judge great historical figures by contemporary moral standards. To do well according to this desideratum, an account should be conceptually coherent and not generate implausible results when applied to similar issues. Most

importantly, an account should make clear how it follows that we can continue celebrating controversial historical figures, such as Churchill, on the basis that we should not morally judge him according to today's moral standards. We call this desideratum *Plausible Account*.

Finally, an account is preferable to the extent that it provides a plausible account of the disagreement between those who claim that we should not judge great historical figures by contemporary moral standards and those who think that we should. However, our aim is not just to provide an understanding that is conceptually coherent and has a prima facie plausible argument in its favour. We also aim to provide an understanding that helps to facilitate public debate on a controversial topic. Given this aim, we take it as an advantage of an account of The Defence if it can provide a plausible account of where the proponents and opponents of this defence disagree. We call this desideratum *Locate Disagreement*. It is worth noting that this desideratum is not as essential as the other two. It is far more important that an account of this defence should be both plausible as an interpretation and as a philosophical position. It is an additional advantage, though, if such an account can also provide a plausible interpretation of this disagreement.

We turn now to consider our three interpretations of The Different Time Defence.

2. Temporal Moral Relativism

One way of understanding The Defence is by appealing to the truth of Temporal Moral Relativism: the view that the moral standards that are dominant at the time an action is performed determine the truth value of a moral judgement of that action. Because the dominant moral standards can (but need not) change over time, an action might be permissible at one time but impermissible at

another. For example, a sexist comment could be permissible, and correctly judged to be so, in 1942 but impermissible, and correctly judged to be so, in 2023.

Temporal Moral Relativism is a form of Moral Relativism, according to which the truth conditions of a moral judgement are determined by the dominant moral standards that are widely accepted by the relevant a group of people.²⁶ The typical focus of Moral Relativism is the differences that exist in different contemporary moral standards. Suppose Society A deems that it is wrong to eat meat and another Society B deems that eating meat is morally permissible. Relativists hold there is no universal truth about whether eating meat is wrong. Rather, when someone from Society A judges eating meat to be wrong, their moral judgement is true. However, when someone from Society B makes the same judgement, their judgement is false. Consequently, Temporal Moral Relativism can draw on some of the motivations for Moral Relativism.²⁷ One such motivation is that it avoids ethnocentrism, the view that one's own culture is superior to other people's.²⁸ Different societies endorse very different moral standards and there is a temptation to respond to this difference by judging one's own moral standards to be superior. By endorsing Moral Relativism, we can hold that our moral judgements are no more correct than the moral judgements of people from other cultures. Temporal Moral Relativism adds that this is not just across cultures, but also across time. In the words of author L. P. Hartley: "The past is a foreign country, they do things differently there".²⁹ Because Temporal Moral Relativism holds that the truth value of moral judgements is relative to the dominant moral standards of a particular time, this view avoids the assumption that our present moral standards are superior to those of other times.

Accepting Temporal Moral Relativism provides the basis upon which the following argument in support The Defence, focused on the case of Churchill, can be built: The truth of a moral

judgement is determined by whether that judgement fits the moral standards that are dominant at the time in which the action was performed. According to the moral standards that were dominant at the time when the action was performed, Churchill's actions were not wrong. Therefore, it is false to judge that Churchill's actions were morally wrong.

This argument combines Temporal Moral Relativism with an empirical claim about what the dominant moral standards at the time of Churchill's actions were. In order to be plausible, this claim must be further restricted. Churchill's views would not have fitted with the moral standards of the Bengalis who suffered the effects of his decisions. The relativism here then must be not only temporal but also restricted to the moral standards dominant in the United Kingdom at the time, or perhaps further still to those dominant amongst the English ruling class.³⁰

Even this empirical claim is controversial. Many have claimed that Churchill's racist actions and views went far beyond what was generally accepted among the English ruling class at his time.³¹ Though we are sympathetic to this claim, we will set aside this controversy for the purposes of investigating this general line of defence of celebrating historical figures.

On the face of it, this view provides a *plausible interpretation* of The Different Time Defence. The idea that we should not judge Churchill by today's standards can plausibly be understood as making the same kind of appeal to Moral Relativism as those who claim that we should not judge people in other cultures by our own standards.

On closer inspection, though, this account is not a perfect fit with the claims made by those who endorse The Defence. First, some who endorse this defence explicitly distance themselves from

Moral Relativism. Roberts, for example, says that: “If we merely judge them [people from the past] by the morals of their own times, that doesn’t tell us very much. If we don’t judge them morally at all, we let off the likes of Hitler and Stalin in a welter of moral relativism”.³² At least some of those who endorse The Defence, then, cannot plausibly be interpreted as endorsing Temporal Moral Relativism.

A more general problem is that those who endorse The Defence tend to stress the *unfairness* of judging people from the past by today’s standards rather than the fact that those judgements would be *false*. This need not be a major problem with this interpretation, as those who endorse this it could add the additional claim that not only are moral judgements about people from the past based on contemporary moral standards false, but they are also unfair because they are false. As we will see though, this additional claim raises problems with the plausibility of the account.

Let’s turn now to whether Temporal Moral Relativism offers a *plausible account* of The Defence. It is worth noting that Temporal Moral Relativism will face the standard objections that are raised against Moral Relativism. As Roberts notes, Moral Relativism makes it difficult to see how we can make any negative moral judgements about people from the past, including genocidal dictators, slave owners and torturers, if those actions were accepted as permissible at the time. In addition, it leaves us unable to praise those whose behaviour was not widely accepted in their own time. We are in no position, then, to praise those who resisted the moral standards of their time to fight for racial justice, women’s rights, or sexual freedom. While we take these to be important objections, we will focus our discussion on objections that are specific to Temporal Moral Relativism as an account of The Defence.

The most important problem arises from the claim that it is *unfair* to judge past people according to contemporary standards. As mentioned above, in order to make this account a plausible interpretation of 'The Defence', its supporters need to claim that moral judgements about Churchill that appeal to today's standards are not only false but also unfair. Claiming that something is unfair is a moral judgement and so we take this claim to express the judgement that it would be morally wrong to judge Churchill in this way. This is not only supported by the use of the word 'unfair' but also by the fact that those who articulate this view cite in support of it the idea that we should not let a historical figure's reputation suffer or 'be tarnished' because their behaviour violates current moral standards that were not widely accepted at the time. This suggests that the complaint here is that allowing someone's reputation to be destroyed in this way would be morally inappropriate and so the judgement of unfairness here is a moral judgement. If this is a moral judgement then, according to Temporal Moral Relativism, whether this judgement is true depends upon the dominant moral standards *at the time* someone forms that judgement. This means that, according to Temporal Moral Relativism, it is only unfair to judge people from the past by today's standards if the dominant moral view of today is one that holds it to be unfair. If the dominant moral view is rather that it is fair to morally judge past people, then the Temporal Moral Relativist is committed to saying that it is fair to make such judgements. On this understanding, then, this defence depends upon a claim about the dominant moral standards of the day. This is particularly problematic given that many of those who make this defence claim to be responding to a widespread moral trend that they are opposed to.

This way of defending 'The Defence' therefore faces a dilemma. Either the temporal relativist makes no claim about the unfairness of judging people from the past by today's standards, in which case it does not provide a satisfying interpretation of 'The Different Time Defence'. Or it does make this

fairness claim, in which case the objection stands or falls according to whether the dominant moral standards of the day deem it to be unfair to judge past behaviour by today's standards.

A potential way past the dilemma is to claim that unfairness does not arise from the content of standards. Rather, it arises from the fact it is unfair to blame someone for failing to perform an action that would be, by the standards of their time, a supererogatory action. Because supererogatory actions are not morally required, it is not fair to expect Churchill to have been better than what the standards of his time expected from him.³³ While this might get the Temporal Moral Relativist past the dilemma, it turns the Temporal Moral Relativist into a Blame Relativist because it makes questions about fairness ultimately questions about the appropriateness of blame. Indeed, the plausibility of the Temporal Moral Relativist's response relies on Blame Relativism being plausible, and it is no longer clear why they must make any claims about moral standards in general being relative to different times. Because we consider Blame Relativism in the next section, we set aside this point here.

Finally, does Temporal Moral Relativism do a good job of *locating the disagreement*? According to this understanding of the defence, the disagreement here takes place at the metaethical level. Those who are in favour of continuing to celebrate Churchill are defending a metaethical view about what determines the truth conditions of moral judgements. Their opponents are rejecting this view. This strikes us as an odd way of characterizing this disagreement. Given the heated and political nature of these discussions, it would be far more plausible to think that the disagreement here is a first order ethical disagreement. Moreover, as we argued above, the emphasis proponents of this argument place on the *unfairness* of holding Churchill to contemporary moral standards suggests that this is a moral claim about what standards it is fair to hold people to, rather than a metaethical claim about

the truth conditions for moral statements. On this view, however, the disagreement takes place at a much higher level of abstraction and the real area of conflict is a metaethical disagreement. As mentioned before, we do not think it is essential that an account does a good job of locating the disagreement, but it certainly seems to be a disadvantage of this view that it posits that this disagreement take place at this level of abstraction.

In summary, while Temporal Moral Relativism appears at first to provide a plausible interpretation of The Defence, it in fact faces a dilemma with respect to Plausible Interpretation and Plausible Account: in order to be plausible as a defence it must appeal to a moral claim which, given Temporal Moral Relativism, would only be true if it were in line with today's moral standards. Furthermore, it locates disagreement at an implausible level of abstraction.

3. Blame Relativism

Suppose you press a button and a bomb goes off. Suppose also that you didn't know – and had no reasonable way of knowing – that this button would set off a bomb. Given your non-culpable *factual* ignorance of this consequence of pressing the button, you are not blameworthy for the bomb going off. Many also hold that non-culpably *moral* ignorance also excuses.³⁴ A teacher in the 18th Century who doesn't know – and had no reasonable way of knowing – that corporal punishment is wrong is arguably excused for hitting his students. Given the dominant moral views of the time that were ignorant of the fact that corporal punishment is wrong, the teacher arguably has no reasonable way of knowing he is doing something wrong when he hits his students. So, the teacher is not blameworthy for doing so.³⁵

One way to understand this view is as a kind of Blame Relativism. Given that meeting the epistemic condition on blameworthiness differs depending on the dominant moral views of a particular time or, as Fricker put it, “the routine moral thinking of the day”³⁶, the standards on blameworthiness are therefore relative to the period of time in which a person lives in.³⁷ For example, corporal punishment may always be wrong, but someone who lives in a society that widely approves of corporal punishment may not be blameworthy for hitting his students. On this account, what is morally right, wrong, good and bad may not change over time but what whether a person is blameworthy for a particular kind of action does change.

Blame Relativism offers defenders a way to explain how some historical figures may not deserve blame for the wrongs they committed in a way that is compatible with them deserving praise for their achievements.³⁸ Blame Relativists can hold that while blameworthiness standards have changed over time, praiseworthiness standards haven’t because they can hold that only blameworthiness is relative to the society or time a person lives in. So, the blame relativist can say that we should not blame Churchill for his racist views and actions, as these were in line with the routine moral thinking of the day (at least in his social context, that of the English ruling class). There should be no barrier, then, to our continued celebration of Churchill.

Blame Relativism offers a *plausible interpretation* of The Defence and, as an interpretation, has two advantages over Temporal Moral Relativism. First, Blame Relativism can explain why it is unfair to blame historical figures by claiming that they were non-culpably morally ignorant. If the ignorance was not their fault, then it would be unfair to blame them for the actions that stemmed from it. This blame would be unfair because they could not reasonably be expected to have avoided ignorance here and so it would be morally wrong to blame them for the ignorance stemming from it. This

contrasts with Temporal Moral Relativism, the core focus of which is on the *truth* of moral judgements rather than their *fairness*.

Second, Blame Relativism is compatible with criticizing the actions of historical figures. According to Blame Relativism, we can still criticize people's actions as wrong, unjust or discriminatory even if we don't blame people for performing them. This is an advantage of this interpretation as it fits with what many say in defence of continuing to celebrate Churchill. Roberts, for example, accepts that Churchill "was a racist" but argues that this was at a time when the same could be said for "almost everyone else".³⁹ Roberts does not deny the wrongness of Churchill's racist views and actions but argues that Churchill should not be blamed for them. In contrast, Temporal Moral Relativism cannot easily accommodate this kind of criticism, as on this view, it would be simply false to say that Churchill's actions were wrong if they were in line with the standards of the time.

But does Blame Relativism provide a *plausible account*? One important advantage for Blame Relativism over Temporal Moral Relativism is that Blame Relativism can explain why some people from history may not deserve blame for acts that would be blameworthy today in a way that is compatible with morally praising people from the past. The idea that the standards of blameworthiness may be partially determined by the moral standards of the time is fully compatible with the idea that we can praise people according to our contemporary moral standards. By avoiding positing a general moral divide between the past and the present, Blame Relativism can explain why we may still praise people from history.

However, this account also faces several important problems.⁴⁰ We will focus on the problems for Blame Relativism as a way of understanding The Defence. First, while this account can explain why

people from history may not be blameworthy for their immoral behaviour, it does not tell us whether we should continue to celebrate such people. Just because we shouldn't blame certain historical figures, it doesn't follow that we should continue to honour and celebrate them. To defend the way figures like Churchill are currently celebrated, defenders must show that while it is not fitting to blame such figures, celebrating such figures is fitting. It is not enough to point to the claim that someone like Churchill is praiseworthy for significant achievements. The fact that he committed serious wrongs is something that plausibly counts against celebrating him, regardless of whether he is blameworthy for those wrongs. If we want to express condemnation for a person's actions (even if we don't take them to be blameworthy for performing those actions), building and maintaining statues of them, putting their face on the national currency, and voting them the greatest Briton of all time are strange ways to go about it. It is just not clear how we can celebrate Churchill like this without also condoning the wrongs he committed. Moreover, most adherents of Blame Relativism hold that we can still engage in some forms of moral criticism of those who aren't blameworthy, whether this be reproach⁴¹ or disappointment⁴².

Another problem for this account as a *plausible account* is that it is not clear that Churchill was in fact non-culpable for his moral ignorance. Churchill was not an ordinary member of British society; he was the leader of the country. So, he had a greater influence than others in *shaping* the dominant views in society. This influence plausibly brings with it a greater responsibility for what these dominant views are and makes the claim that Churchill is non-culpably ignorant less plausible. Given his role in maintaining the dominant views, Churchill might then be, to some extent, blameworthy even if ordinary people are exculpated for thinking and doing similar things.

Finally, Blame Relativism appears to do a good job of *locating disagreement*. While Blame Relativism is compatible with a metaethical account of the disagreement, it can also give a more straightforwardly ethical account of the disagreement. Proponents and opponents of The Defence could agree that the commonly accepted moral standards of the time can mitigate blameworthiness but disagree about whether that is the case for a particular historical figure. Settling this issue will involve an ethical investigation into issues such as whether that figure was non-culpably morally ignorant, whether the figure was acting in line with the standards of the day, and whether the particular wrong actions they performed are the kind that are ever excusable. This is not an abstract debate about the truth-making conditions for moral facts but an ethical discussion about how to respond to the historical figures being discussed.

However, this account of the disagreement is not completely satisfying. On this account, the disagreement is focused purely on the morally bad behaviour of the historical figure. But these debates tend to focus also on the figure's positive achievements. The claim from proponents of The Defence is that we should not allow our present moral judgements to cloud our view of the historical figure's great achievements. There appears to be an implicit comparative judgement being made between how positive the achievements are and how bad the wrongdoing was. By only focusing on the question of whether the wrongdoing is excusable, this account does not capture this feature of the debate. While this account does a better job of locating disagreement than Temporal Moral Relativism, an account that was also able to capture the comparative element of this disagreement would be preferable.

4. Ideals Relativism

So far, we've considered whether The Different Time Defence can be most plausibly understood as appealing to Temporal Moral Relativism or Blame Relativism. As we have seen both accounts face problems. Amongst other problems, Temporal Moral Relativism struggles to make sense of why making moral judgements about the past is *unfair*. Blame Relativism does a better job of this, but falls short for, amongst other things, focussing entirely on negative reactions towards a person's behaviour and traits. In this section, we propose that Ideals Relativism is the best understanding of The Different Time Defence. As we'll argue, Ideals Relativism is able to capture the main insights of Temporal Moral Relativism and Blame Relativism whilst avoiding the problems with these other accounts.

The account we propose posits a form of relativism about the *moral ideals* that ground admiration. According to Antti Kauppinen, admiration is an emotional response to a person, "who is construed as leading a life manifesting (or approximating) an ideal of the person we endorse".⁴³ An ideal is a model of excellent or perfect conduct that provides a model we can aspire to and orientate ourselves towards.⁴⁴ For example, a person who rescues someone from a burning building, going beyond what morality requires of her in that situation, manifests one ideal of a moral hero – namely, a willingness to sacrifice one's safety for the benefit of others.

Ideals may also be tied to social roles, such as the ideal of a teacher.⁴⁵ These ideals are models of excellent or perfect ways of embodying these social roles. For teachers this may involve being caring and patient towards students, enthusiastic about one's subject and diligent and conscientious in preparing classes. Embodying an ideal related to a social role is compatible with failing to embody other possible ideals that are available. Someone who embodies the ideal of a teacher, for example, may fail to embody the ideal of a romantic partner. These ideals may also be linked to certain

narratives. The ideal of the moral hero will be linked with certain stories about what the life of a hero involves. As we argue elsewhere, admiring someone in relation to an ideal of a hero may only be fitting if that person does not violate the narratives associated with that ideal.⁴⁶ Someone who becomes admirable for their heroic fight against corruption would cease to be admirable if they later become corrupt, as this later corruption violates any acceptable narrative for a heroic opponent of corruption.

Building on this work about the nature of ideals, we propose that *ideals are partially social constructed*. While there may be a thin way of articulating certain ideals that are stable across different societies, a fully developed thick account of a particular ideal will be informed by the dominant beliefs, narratives and norms present in a particular culture. For example, being committed to educating one's students may be an essential component of the ideal of a teacher in any society. However, a fully worked out conception of this ideal will look quite different in a society that values hierarchy and discipline compared to one that values equality and creativity. Our point here is not just that people in different societies will have different views of what an ideal teacher looks like. Rather, we are claiming that the ideal teacher will *in fact* be quite different in these different societies, given the different cultural backgrounds they are operating in. This proposal then involves a form of ideals relativism, as what is involved in a developed account of an ideal will depend in part upon the cultural context. This does not mean that only one ideal of a teacher will exist in any given culture. Rather, our claim is that a culture will shape and constrain what can count as a member of the set of different possible ideals of a teacher in that society.

If we accept Ideals Relativism in relation to different societies, we should also accept it in relation to the same society over time. Cultural beliefs, norms, and narratives vary in the same society over time

just as they do between different societies at the same time. So, the ideal of a teacher in 19th Century Britain will be quite different from the ideal of a teacher in 21st Century Britain. Ideals Relativism would allow that a person can be a moral hero at a particular time because she manifests admiration-grounding ideals *of that time*, but they would not manifest the relevant admiration-grounding ideals of the same society at a different time. More specifically, such relativism could allow that Churchill embodied the ideal of a heroic leader in his social context *in his time* but would not embody this ideal in the relevantly similar social context *in the present time*.

Ideals Relativism differs from Temporal Moral Relativism by being compatible with standards of moral wrongdoing being the same across time. Churchill's abhorrent actions, such as causing the Bengali famine, were just as a morally wrong during his time as they are now. However, Ideals Relativism allows that the same forms of wrongdoing may prevent someone from embodying a particular ideal at one time but would not prevent them from embodying that same ideal in a different time. Embodying a moral ideal related to a social role does not require that one be an ideally moral person. For example, someone who saves someone from a burning building may still embody the ideal of the hero, even if they also engage in small scale theft or tax evasion. What matters here is not only the extent of the wrongdoing but also the *kind* of wrongdoing, which will be related to the relevant ideal. While small-scale tax evasion may not prevent someone from being a heroic rescuer, it may well be incompatible with embodying the ideal of a dedicated campaigner for economic justice.

The final component of Ideals Relativism involves how to deal with *inter-cultural* and *inter-temporal* admiration. Suppose someone embodies an ideal of a teacher in their own culture, is it fitting for someone from a culture with quite different conceptions of an ideal teacher to admire them? We

propose that it is fitting to admire someone for embodying an ideal that is different from your own culture's ideal only if the ideal they embody is sufficiently close to your own society's version of that ideal. Where these ideals are too different from one another, it would be unfitting *for us* to admire someone in relation to their culture's ideal (though it would remain fitting for members of that culture to admire this person in relation to their culture's ideal). This means that someone from 21st Century can fittingly admire someone for embodying the 18th Century British ideal of a teacher only if these two ideals are sufficiently close to one another. This means that there must be significant overlap between these two ideals even though they are not identical. Importantly, the overlap must be between specific ideals rather than the overall set of ideals of these two societies.

Ideals Relativism is a form of relativism because whether someone is admirable is relative both to the ideals present in the culture of the person performing the act and the person making the judgement. When the agent and the judger share a culture, the admirability of the action depends on the presence of an ideal in that culture that makes that action admirable. Such admirability judgements are relative in two ways. First, the agent must be admirable according to an ideal present in their own culture. Second, that ideal must overlap sufficiently with an ideal in the culture of the person making the judgement. So, the same historical action could be admirable at one point in history but cease to be admirable later on. Churchill's actions as a political leader could have been admirable in 1980s Britain but not in 2020s Britain.

To use Ideals Relativism to support the defence, we need an ideal that Churchill plausibly embodied in his time that might look quite different today. Take the ideal of the heroic political leader. A thin conception of this ideal may involve someone who is able to make courageous and excellent political decisions for the benefit of the nation, even when these decisions are unpopular, unconventional, or

risky. More developed notions of this ideal will be informed by the relevant cultural context. These cultural contexts will, among other things, inform which kinds of (blameworthy) wrongdoing would be compatible with embodying this ideal and which would not. We might think, for example, that in contemporary Britain, someone cannot embody the ideal of a heroic leader if they are willing to cause a famine that would lead to between 1.5 to 3 million deaths. However, it could be that this disregard for the life of colonial subjects was compatible with the ideal of heroic political leadership present in Britain in the 1940s. Given that whether a person is admirable depends on ideals of the time and place they were living in, this would allow the Churchill supporter to say that we have reason to admire Churchill, as he embodied the ideals of heroic political leadership that were relevant in 1940s Britain. The key assumption here is that although these ideals are not identical, there is sufficient overlap between them for it to be fitting to admire Churchill today for embodying the 1940s British ideal of heroic leadership.⁴⁷

One might question whether overlap between ideals at different times is necessary for admiration to be fitting.⁴⁸ For instance, suppose someone says they admire Spartan leader Leonidas's strength at Thermopylae, where the Spartans ultimately could not repel an invading Persian army. For this to be a counterexample to the claim that overlap between ideals is necessary for admiration to be fitting, it must be the case that there is in fact no overlap between the ideals of a political leader now and in Sparta. While there are great differences between contemporary society and Spartan society, there does seem to be some similarity between ideals of a political leader now and back then. Political leaders are often admirable for various kinds of strength in contemporary society. While physical strength is not valued as highly, other kinds of strength are, such as mental strength and moral strength. We suspect that if we look closely enough at any plausible examples of a person being

admirable despite a seeming lack of overlap between relevant ideals between two societies we will find some overlap.⁴⁹ Finally, even if there is a clear case without any overlap, our point is about the fittingness of admiration. The fact a person admires a historical figure does not alone show that such admiration is fitting. It must be shown that the historical figure is admirable. It is not clear how it could be shown that a person is admirable without appealing to what is presently admirable.

Does this provide a *plausible interpretation*? Ideals Relativism can help explain Bucktin's claim that "Churchill's legacy should not be tarnished for something we didn't even have a name for back then".⁵⁰ Because some of the factors against Churchill being admirable are ones that "we didn't even have a name for back then", it makes sense they would not be obstacles for someone to embody the ideal of a heroic leader. Given that we do have a more developed understanding of these things now, these forms of wrongdoing would plausibly count against a person embodying the ideal of a heroic political leader. Of course, many of Churchill's wrongs did have names back then. One way to interpret Bucktin is as meaning that Churchill's legacy shouldn't be tarnished for things that were widely tolerated in his time. On this interpretation, acts that are widely tolerated – even if they were recognised by some as being morally wrong – do not prevent someone from embodying the ideal of a heroic leader.

Ideals Relativism can also help to make sense of the idea that judging Churchill by today's standards is unfair: it's unfair for wrongs that were widely tolerated in a person's time to count against that person being admirable at that time. Unlike the Blame Relativist who might hold that widespread toleration counts against one being blameworthy, the Ideals Relativist can allow that Churchill was blameworthy in his time. The Ideals Relativist simply holds that his immorality (whether he was blameworthy for it or not) need not have prevented him from embodying the ideal of the heroic

political leader. According to Ideals Relativism, the fittingness of admiration for historical figures is determined primarily in relation to the ideals of their time. It would be unfair, then, to deny that someone is admirable simply because they do not live up to present day ideals, as these are not the ideals we should be using to judge someone's admirability. However, it should be noted they are not altogether irrelevant on this account: if the ideal of the past is too different from contemporary ideals, then admiration will be inappropriate.

Is this a *plausible account*? Unlike Temporal Moral Relativism and Blame Relativism, Ideals Relativism can explain why it makes sense for Churchill supporters who make this argument to continue to celebrate his actions. His actions are worthy of celebration today because he embodied the ideal of heroic leadership of his time and this ideal is sufficiently close to present-day ideals to make admiration – and thus honour and celebration – fitting. The fact he was blameworthy for committing serious wrongs and possessed vicious character traits may not undermine his embodiment of the ideal of heroic leadership of his time because, we suggested, this ideal in his time was such that it was compatible with committing those kinds of wrongs and possessing those kinds of vicious traits. The Ideals Relativist then just needs to make the case our present-day ideals of a political leader overlap sufficiently with the ideals of a political leader in Churchill's time to make it appropriate to admire Churchill today.

Ideals Relativism avoids the main problems identified with earlier accounts of the defence. Unlike Temporal Moral Relativism, Ideals Relativism can hold that it would be unfair to hold past people to ideals that were not present during their lifetimes, as it is not committed to relativism about fairness judgements. Unlike Blame Relativism, Ideals Relativism can make sense of how a person's vices and moral wrongs can be weighed against their virtues and moral achievements, as judging whether

someone has lived up to an ideal is a global evaluation of a person that involves weighing up both their positive and negative traits.

Of course, the Ideal Relativist version of The Different Time Defence will not be accepted by everyone. Some may have metaethical disagreements about our proposed account of ideals. In terms of the public debates around this issue, a more likely objection is that present-day ideals of heroic leadership are simply too far removed from any previous ideal that would allow someone to be a heroic leader whilst holding the views Churchill held or acting in the way Churchill did. We actually agree with this point of view. However, we think this is exactly where we should *locate the disagreement* between proponents and opponents of The Defence. This is a substantive ethical disagreement about whether the gap between the ideals Churchill embodied in his time and the ideals that we should endorse today is too big to make it appropriate to publicly celebrate him with statues and on banknotes. The dispute, then, amounts to a dispute about whether Churchill's views and actions that may not have been a barrier to admiration in his own time are sufficiently serious to render him an inappropriate target of admiration today. This, we take it, is exactly what both sides of this dispute are disagreeing about.

We have outlined our final account of The Different Time Defence: Ideals Relativism. On this view, it is ethical ideals which are, partially, relative to social-cultural context. We have argued that this account provides a more plausible interpretation and account of The Different Time Defence than both Temporal Moral Relativism and Blame Relativism. Moreover, it can locate the disagreement between proponents and opponents of this defence in exactly the right place, as a substantive ethical disagreement about the extent to which immoral actions and attitudes from the past where moral ideals were different should act as a barrier to admiring and celebrating someone today.

Conclusion

We have sought to provide the best understanding of The Different Time Defence. We argued Ideals Relativism provides the best option for proponents of the defence, as it fits best with the statements made by public proponents of this view, is the most plausible account and does the best job of locating where these proponents disagree with their opponents. Our discussion makes an important contribution to this discussion by providing the first account of the various ways to understand The Different Time Defence and making an initial case in favour of Ideals Relativism. While we have gone some way to outlining what Ideals Relativism involves, we accept that there is plenty of room for this view to be further developed in future work. Another point worthy of further investigation is how The Different Time Defence interacts with the other arguments that have been made in the discussion of how to respond to the other arguments made in the literature about whether and when we should continue to celebrate those who have achieved great things but also perpetrated acts of great evil. An important point to note here is that even if The Different Time Defence is right to hold that we still have some reason to celebrate Churchill, this does not necessarily mean that this is what we should *all-things-considered*.

Another crucial point is that The Defence rests on the assumption that there were different admiration-grounding ideals in Churchill's time. This assumption may be questioned. The mere fact that Churchill was widely admired in his time does not by itself tell us that this admiration was appropriate. Hitler and Stalin were also widely admired, yet we take such admiration to be mistaken. Ideals Relativism, along with Temporal Moral Relativism and Blame Relativism, needs some support for the claim that Churchill did indeed live in a different time – in something more than the trivial sense that he lived in the past. Future work on this topic could investigate these empirical claims

which underpin the Ideals Relativist's account of the defence. All of this suggests that future work on this topic should be interdisciplinary, combining insights from philosophers, historians, and sociologists amongst others.⁵¹

Bibliography

- Abrahams, Daniel Alexander. "The Importance of History to the Erasing-history defence". *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 39, 5, (2022): 745-760.
- Archer, Alfred and Matheson, Benjamin (2020). "Admiration Over Time". *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 101, 4, (2022): 669-689.
- Archer, Alfred and Matheson, Benjamin. *Honouring and Admiring the Immoral: An Ethical Guide*. New York: Routledge, 2021
- Archer, Alfred, and Benjamin Matheson. "Commemoration and emotional imperialism." *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 39, no. 5 (2022): 761-777.
- Archer, Alfred, and Benjamin Matheson. "Emotional imperialism." *Philosophical Topics*, Forthcoming.
- Armitage, David. "In Defense of Presentism". In *History and Human Flourishing*, ed. Darrin M. McMahon. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022.
- Attar, Samar. *Debunking the Myths of Colonization: The Arabs and Europe*. Maryland: University Press of America, 2010
- BBC History. "Should we judge historical figures by the morals of today?" *BBC History* (10/6/2020) <https://www.historyextra.com/period/modern/historical-figures-statues-judge-morals-today/> [Accessed 7/3/2022].

BBC News. "Churchill Voted Greatest Briton". *BBC News* (24/11/2002)

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/2509465.stm> [Accessed 7/3/2022].

Bell, Macalester (2022). "Against Simple Removal: A Defence of Defacement as a Response to Racist Monuments". *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 39, 5, (2022): 778-792.

Benson, Lee "Columbus controversy? Knights of Columbus are too busy doing good". *Deseret News* (9/10/2023) Available at: <https://www.deseret.com/2023/10/8/23885621/columbus-controversy-knights-of-columbus-are-too-busy-doing-good> [Accessed 8/11/2023].

Berninger, Anja (2022). "Commemorating Public Figures – In Favour of a Fictionalist Position". *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 5, (2022): 793-806.

Brownlee, Kimberlee. "Moral aspirations and ideals". *Utilitas*, 22, 3, (2010): 241-257.

Bucktin, Christopher "You can't judge Churchill by the standards of today". *Birmingham Mail* (11/10/2018) Available at:

<https://www.thefreelibrary.com/You+can%27t+judge+Churchill+by+the+standards+of+today-a0557700450> [Accessed 7/3/2022].

Burch-Brown, Joanna "Is it wrong to Topple Statues and rename Schools", *Journal of Political Theory and Philosophy*, 1, (2017): 59-86.

Calhoun, Cheshire. "Responsibility and reproach". *Ethics* 99, 2, (1989): 389-406.

Demetriou, Dan. "Questioning the Assumptions of Moralism, Universalism, and Interpretive Dominance in Racist Monument Debates". *Public Affairs Quarterly* 36, 3, (2022): 233-255.

Demetriou, Dan and Wingo, Ajume. "The Ethics of Racist Monuments". *Palgrave Handbook of Philosophy and Public Policy*, edited by David Boonin, 341-355. Palgrave, 2018.

Fischer, John Martin and Ravizza, Mark. *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

- Fricker, Miranda. "The Relativism of Blame and Williams's Relativism of Distance". *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume*, 84, 1, (2010): 51-177.
- Frowe, Helen. "The duty to remove statues of wrongdoers." *Journal of Practical Ethics* 7, 3, (2019): 1-30.
- Gowans, Chris, "Moral Relativism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = [<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/moral-relativism/>](https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/moral-relativism/).
- Harman, Elizabeth. "Does moral ignorance exculpate?" *Ratio* 24, 4, (2011): 443-468.
- Hartley, L.P. *The Go-Between*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953.
- Hunt, Linda "Against presentism". *Perspectives on History*, 40, 5, (2002): 7-9.
- Kauppinen, Antti. "Ideals and Idols: On the Nature and Appropriateness of Agential Admiration". In *The Moral Psychology of Admiration*, edited by Alfred Archer & Andre Grahlé, 29-44. Rowman and Littlefield, 2019.
- Lai, Ten-Herng. "Political vandalism as counter-speech: A defense of defacing and destroying tainted monuments". *European Journal of Philosophy*, 28, (2020): 602– 616
- Lim, Chong-Ming. (2020a) "Transforming problematic commemorations through vandalism". *Journal of Global Ethics*, 16(3): 414–421.
- Lim, Chong-Ming. (2020b) "Vandalizing Tainted Commemorations". *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 48(2):185–216.
- Mason, Elinor & Wilson, Alan T. "Vice, Blameworthiness and Cultural Ignorance". In *Responsibility: The Epistemic Condition*, edited by Philip Robichaud & Jan Willem Wieland, 82-100. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Mukerjee, Madhusree. *Churchill's Secret War: The British Empire and the Ravaging of India* New York: Basic Books, 2010.

- Mukerjee, Madhusree. "Bengal Famine of 1943: An Appraisal of the Famine Inquiry Commission." *Economic and Political Weekly*, 49, 11, (2014): 71-75
- Prince William Times (2019) "Letter: Judging Columbus by today's standards is unfair". (2019): https://www.princewilliamtimes.com/opinion/letter-judging-columbus-by-today-s-standards-is-unfair/article_26f4a452-467b-11e9-aa21-c3efb3e03f2f.html [Accessed 8/11/2023].
- Ratner, Paul. "The trouble with judging historical figures by today's moral standards". *Big Think* (28/6/2020) <https://bigthink.com/the-present/judging-people-of-history-by-todays-standards-is-necessary-but-biased/> [Accessed 8/11/2023].
- Rosen, Gideon. "Culpability and Ignorance". *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 103, 1, (2003): 61-84.
- Scarre, Geoffrey. *Judging the Past: Ethics, History, and Memory*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2023
- Schulz, Johannes. "Must Rhodes Fall? The Significance of Commemoration in the Struggle for Relations of Respect". *Journal of Political Philosophy* 27, 2, (2019): 166-186.
- Smith, Holly. "Culpable ignorance". *Philosophical Review* 92, 4, (1983): 543-571.
- Tharoor, Shashi. *Inglorious empire: What the British did to India*. London: Penguin, 2017.
- Timmerman, Travis. "A case for removing confederate monuments". in *Ethics, Left and Right: The Moral Issues that Divide Us*, edited by Bob Fischer, 513-521. New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2020.
- Tilley, John "Cultural Relativism," *Human Rights Quarterly* 22, 2, (2000): 501-547
- Walker, Peter; Topping, Alexandra and Morris, Steven "Boris Johnson says removing statues is 'to lie about our history'" *The Guardian*, 2020 URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/jun/12/boris-johnson-says-removing-statues-is-to-lie-about-our-history-george-floyd> Accessed on 19/01/2023
- Williams, Bernard. *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*. Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1985.

¹ BBC News, “Churchill Voted Greatest Briton”

² Attar, *Debunking the Myths of Colonization*, 9

³ Mukerjee, *Churchill's Secret War*, 131

⁴ Tharoor, *Inglorious Empire*, 160

⁵ Mukerjee, *Churchill's Secret War*, 205

⁶ Mukerjee, “Bengali Famine”, 71

⁷ Mukerjee, *Churchill's Secret War*, 238

⁸ Mukerjee, *Churchill's Secret War*, 233

⁹ Lai, “Political Vandalism”; Schulz, “Must Rhodes Fall?”)

¹⁰ Archer and Matheson 2021, *Honouring and Admiring the Immoral*.

¹¹ Burch-Brown, “Is it Wrong to Topple Statues”

¹² Bell, “Against Simple Removal”; Lim, “Vandalizing Tainted Commemorations”, Lim “Transforming problematic commemorations”.

¹³ Frowe “The Duty to Remove Statues”, Timmerman “A Case for Removing”.

¹⁴ Demetriou and Wingo, “Ethics of Racist Monuments”

¹⁵ Demetriou, “Questioning the Assumption of Moralism”

¹⁶ Abrahams, “The Importance of History”

¹⁷ Archer and Matheson, “Commemoration and Emotional Imperialism” and Archer and Matheson “Emotional Imperialism

¹⁸ Berninger, “Commemorating Public Figures”

¹⁹ BBC History, “Should we judge historical figures”

²⁰ Bucktin, “You can’t judge Churchill”. Bucktin makes explicit a connection between the defence and a common methodological position in historical inquiry – namely, the reject of presentism. In what follows, though, our focus is not on what methodology historians should employ but rather in the ethical debate about whether we should judge past people by today’s moral standards. For more on presentism and its rejection, see, e.g., Hunt, “Against Presentism”, and Armitage, “In Defense of Presentism”.

²¹ Cited in Walker, Topping, and Morris, “Boris Johnson says”

²² Benson, “Columbus controversy”

²³ Prince William Times, “Judging Columbus”

²⁴ Ratner, “The Trouble with Judging”

²⁵ Thanks to an anonymous referee for pushing us to clarify this point.

²⁶ Gowans, “Moral Relativism”

²⁷ We set aside in what follows various forms of moral relativism, such as agent and assessor relativism, discussed in the philosophical literature. Our reason is that these are not relevant to understanding The Defence as it is in the public debate. Williams’s (*Ethics and Limits of Philosophy*) relativism of distance might seem relevant to some, but his claims run counter to those who endorse the defence. In particular, Williams holds we *cannot* make moral judgements about (temporally and culturally) distant societies. However, proponents of The Defence agree we can make such judgements but hold that they are unfair, in some sense.

²⁸ Tilley, “Cultural Relativism”

²⁹ Hartley, *The Go-Between*.

³⁰ Thanks to an anonymous referee for pushing us to clarify this point.

³¹ For example, Mukerjee, *Churchill's Secret War*, 233.

³² BBC History, "Should we judge historical figures".

³³ Thanks to an anonymous referee for suggesting this.

³⁴ For example, Smith, "Culpable Ignorance"; Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control*; Rosen, "Culpability and Ignorance"; cf. Harman, "Does Moral Ignorance Exculpate?"; Mason and Wilson, "Vice, Blameworthiness, and Cultural Ignorance".

³⁵ Alternatively, one might hold that because there is no way for the teacher to know that his actions are bad, he cannot reasonably be expected to not hit his students. On this alternative, his non-culpable ignorance means that his actions aren't wrong, and so he isn't blameworthy. The badness of his actions might, though, render attitudes weaker than blame fitting, which we discuss shortly.

³⁶ Fricker, "The Relativism of Blame", 166

³⁷ On this view, the conditions on blameworthiness remain the same over time, i.e. there is always a control and an epistemic condition on blameworthiness. The relativistic aspect enters at the level of meeting the epistemic condition. Whether one counts as *non-culpably* ignorant is relative to one's time period and the dominant moral views at that time.

³⁸ Another possibility is that Churchill is blameworthy, but it is not all-things-considered appropriate to blame him because most of us, if we had been in the same historical circumstances, would have acted just as Churchill did.

³⁹ BBC History, "Should we judge historical figures".

⁴⁰ There are of course objections that might be raised against whatever background view we might appeal to in support of Blame Relativism. For example, Elinor Mason and Alan Wilson ("Vice, Blameworthiness, and Cultural Ignorance") criticize the idea that non-culpable morally ignorance excuses one from blameworthiness by pointing out that this ignorance may stem from a vice and that this vice is blameworthy.

⁴¹ Calhoun, "Responsibility and Reproach"

⁴² Fricker, "The Relativism of Blame",

⁴³ Kaupinnen, "Ideals and Idols", 32

⁴⁴ Brownlee, "Moral Aspiration and Ideals", 242

⁴⁵ Kaupinnen, "Ideals and Idols", 41)

⁴⁶ Archer and Matheson, "Admiration Over Time"

⁴⁷ One might wonder whether the Temporal Moral Relativist could appeal to a similar idea and hold that if there is an overlap between the moral standards of two times, then we can admire the good but not the bad done by people in the past because there is sufficient overlap between the standards of goodness but not on the standards of badness. On this view, Churchill can be fittingly admired because his good acts still count as admirable, and we can discount the acts which today are considered bad because they were not bad in his time. While such a view is possible, it involves accepting the dubious assumption that the moral standards governing the badness of acts were sufficiently different than they are today. The Ideals Relativist does not need to accept this. Ideals Relativism can explain how it can still be fitting to admire Churchill even though he did a lot of morally heinous things (and regardless of whether he was blameworthy for doing such things).

Thanks to an anonymous referee for pressing us on this point.

⁴⁸ Thanks to an anonymous referee for pressing us on this point.

⁴⁹ For more on this kind of point and on this topic in general, see Scarre, *Judging the Past*.

⁵⁰ Bucktin, "You can't judge Churchill".

⁵¹ Versions of this paper were presented in Prague, and at the Commemorating Evildoers Mancept Workshop 2021. Thanks to Tomas Koblizek, Paula Satne, Oliver Hallich and two anonymous

referees for helpful feedback. Benjamin Matheson's work on this paper was supported by the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) under contract number [MB22.00083].