

# Hypocrisy and Conditional Requirements

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This paper considers the formulation of the moral requirement against hypocrisy, paying particular attention to the logical scope of ‘requires’ in that formulation. The paper argues (i) that we should prefer a wide-scope formulation to a narrow-scope formulation, and (ii) this result has some advantages for our normative theorizing about hypocrisy – in particular, it allows us to resist several of Daniela Dover’s (2019) recent arguments against the anti-hypocrisy requirement.

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It’s commonly thought that hypocrisy is *pro tanto* morally wrong. Although the term ‘hypocrisy’ covers a wide variety of moral failings, a typical case of hypocrisy is one in which you fail to ‘practice what you preach’ – that is, one in which you criticize others for  $\phi$ -ing while  $\phi$ -ing yourself. To work with an example of someone who failed to practice what he (literally) preached, we could consider the American evangelical pastor, Ted Haggard, who delivered sermons criticizing homosexuality while at the same time engaging in a sexual relationship with Mike Jones, a professional masseur and male prostitute. Jones, who exposed Haggard’s hypocrisy, thought there was a problem with what Haggard preached, rather than with what he practiced. Those in charge of Haggard’s church, in contrast, thought there was a problem with what Haggard practiced, rather than with what he preached. However, both Jones and the church authorities, despite their differing moral outlooks, could agree that there was an additional problem with Haggard: he was a hypocrite. Unlike the other moral objections to Haggard’s behavior, the charge of hypocrisy has to do with the *combination* of what Haggard practiced and what he preached – specifically, his engaging in homosexual sex while at the same time criticizing others for doing so – and not with any element considered on its

own.

There is a debate about what explains the *pro tanto* moral requirement prohibiting hypocrisy, which I'll set aside in this paper.<sup>1</sup> Instead, I'll take up the project of *formulating* that requirement. It's often noted that conditional requirements admit of two different readings: on a *narrow-scope* reading, 'requires' appears in the consequent of a conditional, whereas on a *wide-scope* reading, 'requires' has logical scope over a conditional.<sup>2</sup> Applied to our anti-hypocrisy requirement, we can distinguish the following two (rough) readings:

**Anti-Hypocrisy Narrow:** If you preach it, morality requires that you practice it.  $p \rightarrow Rq$

**Anti-Hypocrisy Wide:** Morality requires that (if you preach it, you practice it).  $R(p \rightarrow q)$

In the right-hand column (where 'p' is 'you preach it', 'q' is 'you practice it', 'R' is the 'morality requires that' operator, and ' $\rightarrow$ ' is the material conditional), we can see the difference in the logical structure of the two readings. Anti-Hypocrisy Narrow would permit the detachment of the consequent by a *modus ponens* inference: one could infer from p and  $p \rightarrow Rq$  that Rq. Anti-Hypocrisy Wide, in contrast, doesn't permit detachment: one could not infer from p and  $R(p \rightarrow q)$  that Rq.

After some preliminaries (§1), I'll argue (§2) that the prohibition on hypocrisy should be understood as a wide-scope requirement. I'll then show (§3) how this result has some advantages for our normative theorizing about hypocrisy – in particular, it allows us to resist many of Daniela Dover's (2019) reservations about the anti-hypocrisy requirement, which assume a narrow-scope formulation of the requirement.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Wallace 2010, Fritz and Miller 2018, and Isserow and Klein 2017.

<sup>2</sup> This distinction is most familiar from the work of John Broome. In particular, see Broome 2000, Broome 2007, and Broome 2013. Other early proponents of the distinction also include Dancy 1977 and Hill 1973. Thomas Hurka (2014: 29–30) reads C.D. Broad as defending a wide-scope interpretation of the hypothetical imperative, in contrast to the narrow-scope interpretations held by both Ross and Prichard – interpretations which led them both to deny that the hypothetical imperative was genuinely normative.

# 1. The Moral Prohibition on Hypocrisy

The requirement to ‘practice what you preach’, which no doubt covers many central cases of hypocrisy, is likely too narrow to cover *every* case that we would pre-theoretically classify as a case of hypocrisy. Some theorists have argued that it’s possible to be hypocritical without even ‘preaching’ at all, however that’s understood. On Jay Wallace’s view, for example, if I blame you for  $\phi$ -ing, where this involves my having negative reactive attitudes towards your  $\phi$ -ing, while nonetheless  $\phi$ -ing myself, then I’m hypocritical, even if I’ve never *expressed* any criticism of your  $\phi$ -ing to you or anyone else (2010: 323–25). It’s clear that these cases will not be covered by the requirement to ‘practice what you preach.’

The requirement to ‘practice what you preach’ is narrow in another way: it applies only to those who criticize others for  $\phi$ -ing while  $\phi$ -ing themselves. But we might want to classify certain people as hypocrites even if they don’t do *the very thing* they criticize others for doing. Think of those people who criticize the minor moral failings of others while disregarding their own serious moral failings. Such cases seem to involve hypocrisy, even though the relevant moral failings may differ in kind. The well-known New Testament passages condemning hypocrisy – in particular, Matthew 7:3 (‘And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?’) – impose no requirement that the relevant moral failings be of the same kind, and seem to suggest that they may not be (with the ‘beam’ being a more serious moral failing than the ‘mote’) (King James Bible 2020: Matthew 7: 3–5).

In this paper, I’m going to consider formulations of the anti-hypocrisy requirement that apply only to cases in which (i) A criticizes B for  $\phi$ -ing, and (ii) A  $\phi$ s herself. This is no doubt too narrow to cover every case that we would pre-theoretically classify as a case of hypocrisy. But working with such narrow formulations will help illustrate the logical issues which would be relevant

to suitably expanded formulations of the requirement. It will also help ensure that my arguments in §3 against Dover, who understands the anti-hypocrisy requirement along similar lines, don't miss their mark due to our employing different understandings of what the requirement forbids.

If there is a moral requirement prohibiting hypocrisy, it is surely at most a *pro tanto* requirement. It may be, as David Hume observed, that there are significant advantages to being hypocritical on particular occasions.<sup>3</sup> To take a somewhat extreme example, if a politician's being hypocritical were somehow necessary to avert a costly war, then surely, all things considered, she ought to be hypocritical. In such cases, the reason to avoid hypocrisy would be outweighed by competing reasons. But sometimes the reason to avoid hypocrisy is 'disabled' (to use Dancy's (2004: 38–52) terminology) rather than outweighed – that is, it could be that in certain circumstances, *there is no reason at all* to refrain from hypocrisy. Consider the case, discussed by both Eva Kittay (1982: 289) and Benjamin Rossi (2021: 75), of the Jewish family who profess belief in Nazi ideology in order to prevent their true identities from being discovered. It's true that they are failing to practice what they preach. But one might think that there's *no* reason to avoid doing so in this case – not some reason that's outweighed. (Similarly, one might think that when one has made a promise under duress, there's no reason to keep the promise – not some reason that's outweighed.) In light of such cases, we should acknowledge that the *pro tanto* anti-hypocrisy requirement (like the *pro tanto* requirement to keep your promises) may be applicable only when certain conditions obtain.

There is also an important diachronic dimension to the anti-hypocrisy requirement. Obviously, very seldom would a case of hypocrisy involve A criticizing B for  $\phi$ -ing while A is  $\phi$ -ing *at that very moment*. For instance, in Haggard's case, there was a mismatch between his behavior on Saturday nights and his sermons on Sunday mornings. Sometimes, hypocrisy might manifest itself

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<sup>3</sup> For an excellent discussion of Hume's view of hypocrisy, see Baier 2007.

across a period of many years. Despite this diachronic dimension to the anti-hypocrisy requirement, we shouldn't think we're forever bound by our past practices of criticism, or our past behavior.

How we presently respond to our past criticism and behavior can make a difference to whether the charge of hypocrisy is appropriate. For instance, we could imagine someone like Haggard sincerely disavowing his past criticism of homosexuality, apologizing and making amends to members of the gay community, and living openly as a homosexual. Were he to proceed this way, it would no longer be appropriate to accuse him of being hypocritical.

## 2. Wide-Scope vs. Narrow-Scope

Let's now turn to conditional requirements. John Broome (2013: 132) observes that we can distinguish between those conditional requirements which are *conditional in application* (narrow-scope requirements), and those which are *conditional in content* (wide-scope requirements). For a requirement to be conditional in *application* is for the requirement to have an antecedent which specifies a condition such that if the condition obtains, the requirement applies.<sup>4</sup> To say that a requirement is conditional in *content*, however, is to say that *what* is required of you is some conditional of the form, if p then q; as Broome (2013: 132) puts it, 'what is required is the compound proposition that if p then q'.<sup>5</sup> Of course, we could have a requirement that is both conditional in application and conditional in content – perhaps a requirement with the following logical structure:  $p \rightarrow R(q \rightarrow s)$ . The requirement would be conditional in application in that the requirement applies when p is true, but also conditional in content since *what* it requires is that  $q \rightarrow s$ .

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<sup>4</sup> We could see such conditions as helping to articulate the *jurisdiction* of the requirement. See Schroeder 2014c and Fogal 2018 for illuminating discussions.

<sup>5</sup> A very closely related view would have the requirement govern a disjunction of *actions* rather than a compound proposition. (See Kiesewetter 2017: 51–58 for discussion.) Such a view would be, as Alex Worsnip (2021: §6.3) puts it, 'wide-scope in spirit.' I have no objection to such views.

As we noted in the previous section, it's plausible to think that the anti-hypocrisy requirement is conditional in application in that it applies only when the 'preaching' isn't done under duress, as shown by the example of the Jewish family professing belief in Nazi ideology to avoid persecution.<sup>6</sup> But, as I'll now argue, the requirement is also conditional in content in that *what* it requires is that if you preach it, you practice it.

Consider a wide-scope requirement:

**A-H WIDE:** Morality requires (*pro tanto*) that if you criticize others for  $\phi$ -ing, you don't  $\phi$  yourself.

We could contrast this with a narrow-scope requirement:

**A-H NARROW<sub>1</sub>:** If you criticize others for  $\phi$ -ing, morality requires (*pro tanto*) that you yourself don't  $\phi$ .

Here the requirement is concerned with one's actions. But we could equally well consider a narrow-scope requirement which is instead concerned with criticism:

**A-H NARROW<sub>2</sub>:** If you yourself  $\phi$ , morality requires (*pro tanto*) that you not criticize others for  $\phi$ -ing.

Whereas there are two ways of complying with A-H WIDE (not  $\phi$ -ing, and not criticizing others for  $\phi$ -ing) there is only one way of complying with A-H NARROW<sub>1</sub> (not  $\phi$ -ing), and only one way of complying with A-H NARROW<sub>2</sub> (not criticizing others for  $\phi$ -ing).

Within the literature on structural rationality, there is a long-standing debate about whether structural rational requirements are wide-scope or narrow-scope requirements. One of the main motivations for narrow-scope formulations is that they avoid the allegedly objectionable

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<sup>6</sup> To save space, I'll leave such application conditions out of my formulations below, but there would be no obstacles to including them.

‘symmetries’ postulated by wide-scope formulations – for instance, that in giving up one’s belief that one ought to  $\phi$ , one would comply just as well with the enkratic requirement as when one comes to intend to  $\phi$ , and that in giving up one’s intention to  $E$  one would comply just as well with the instrumental requirement as when one comes to intend to  $M$ .<sup>7</sup> It seems objectionable to think that, so far as these requirements go, one way of complying is just as good as another. But it’s worth observing that similar worries don’t arise for the wide-scope anti-hypocrisy requirement. After all, we noted above that there are *two* plausible narrow-scope anti-hypocrisy requirements, running in different directions. But nothing comparable can be found when it comes to the enkratic requirement; no one proposes that the formulation include a requirement along the lines of: If you don’t intend to  $\phi$ , rationality requires you not to believe you ought to  $\phi$ . The narrow-scopers think the requirement runs in the other direction. Additionally, it *doesn’t* seem counterintuitive to hold that revising one’s practices of criticism is just as good a means of conformity with the anti-hypocrisy requirement as revising one’s behavior (at least insofar as this anti-hypocrisy requirement goes – they might be better or worse in other ways, perhaps violating other requirements). Both seem perfectly acceptable means of compliance with the anti-hypocrisy requirement. In short, the asymmetry intuitions that draw philosophers toward narrow-scope formulations of some requirements of structural rationality don’t seem to be present in the case of hypocrisy.<sup>8</sup>

I’ll now provide two arguments against the narrow-scope formulations. One argument is that they allow for an implausible ‘bootstrapping’ of reasons.<sup>9</sup> Suppose there’s no reason for me *not*

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<sup>7</sup> For defenses of narrow-scope formulations based on such concerns, see Kolodny 2005, Schroeder 2014b, and Lord 2014. For responses available to wide-scopers and further discussion, see Broome 2013: 138–143, Way 2011, Kiesewetter 2017: 138–44, and Brunero 2020: 76–88.

<sup>8</sup> However, nothing hinges on this point in what follows. Also, if you do happen to think such asymmetry intuitions are present in this case, and think that an argument against the wide-scope anti-hypocrisy requirement can be developed based on these intuitions, then I would likely appeal to the standard replies that have emerged in the rationality literature. But it would take us too far afield to discuss these here.

<sup>9</sup> Versions of such bootstrapping objections can be found in Bratman 1987 (which is the original source of the objection), Broome 2001, and Cullity 2008, among others.

to  $\phi$ . According to A-H NARROW<sub>1</sub>, my merely criticizing others for  $\phi$ -ing generates a *pro tanto* moral obligation not to  $\phi$ . Moreover, if there are no competing *pro tanto* moral obligations to  $\phi$ , it would now come out that I ought, all things considered, not to  $\phi$ . But it seems implausible to think our practices of criticism can make a normative difference in this way. Suppose there's no reason for me not to take a break from writing this paper right now. It's perfectly permissible. But, out of grumpiness or anger, I criticize my friend, who is also writing a paper, for taking a break. Intuitively, the correct normative assessment of the situation is as follows: it's permissible for me to take a break and it's permissible for my friend to take a break. What isn't permissible is my criticizing her for taking a break. But if A-H NARROW<sub>1</sub> is true, we cannot accept this. We must say instead (assuming that no other *pro tanto* obligations are in play) that it's *not* permissible for me to take a break, since I criticized my friend for doing so. But it's implausible to think one's practices of criticism can alter the normative situation in this way.

If we instead adopt A-H WIDE, we aren't forced to abandon that intuitively correct normative assessment. We can say, throughout, that it's permissible for me to take a break, it's permissible for my friend to take a break, and it's not permissible for me to criticize her for taking a break. We would also say that the *combination* of criticizing her and taking a break myself is not permissible. But that's perfectly compatible with it being permissible for me to take a break.

A similar concern can be raised about A-H NARROW<sub>2</sub>. If A-H NARROW<sub>2</sub> is correct, your  $\phi$ -ing generates a *pro tanto* moral obligation to refrain from criticizing others. Suppose I'm part of a group engaging in some immoral activity. Perhaps we're members of a criminal organization or a fascist political party. The intuitively correct verdict is that none of us should continue to engage in our immoral activities, and we should criticize those who do so. Now, proponents of A-H NARROW<sub>2</sub> *could* accept this intuitively correct verdict, since they hold that the 'detached' requirement not to criticize is merely a *pro tanto* requirement, and that *pro tanto* requirement not to

criticize might be outweighed. But proponents of A-H NARROW<sub>2</sub> are still committed to thinking that there is a *serious moral reason* to refrain from criticism in this case. But this strikes me as being incorrect. How can one failure to respond appropriately to reasons (my planning to continue in those activities myself) provide any justification for a second failure to respond appropriately to reasons (my refusal to criticize)?<sup>10</sup>

In contrast, proponents of A-H WIDE will deny that our moral failures when it comes to what we practice provide us with serious moral reasons for *further* moral failures when it comes to what we preach. Instead, they will say that there is an applicable prohibition on the combination of criticizing others for  $\phi$ -ing while  $\phi$ -ing yourself – a prohibition with which you could comply *either* by not criticizing others for  $\phi$ -ing or by not  $\phi$ -ing yourself. They need not endorse the idea that there is a serious moral reason to refrain from criticism in this case.<sup>11</sup>

A second argument in favor of A-H WIDE is that the two narrow-scope requirements, taken together, undermine each other. Suppose that, hypocritically, I criticize others for eating meat while eating meat myself. According to A-H NARROW<sub>1</sub>, morality requires that I refrain from eating meat (since I criticize others for doing so), and, according to A-H NARROW<sub>2</sub>, morality requires that I refrain from criticizing others for doing so (since I don't refrain from eating meat). So, morality requires *both* that I refrain from criticism and that I refrain from eating meat. But there

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<sup>10</sup> This way of putting the point is indebted to Cullity's (2008: 63) remarks on bootstrapping.

<sup>11</sup> One might worry about cases in which it's *impossible* for me to refrain from  $\phi$ -ing. In such cases, there would be only one way of complying with the wide-scope anti-hypocrisy requirement (refraining from criticism) and plausible transmission principles would then generate a *pro tanto* requirement to refrain from criticism. (See Setiya 2007 for relevant discussion.) There are at least three replies available. One reply would be to hold that even if one cannot refrain from  $\phi$ -ing (perhaps due to some compulsion), one could still openly disavow one's  $\phi$ -ing, and make efforts to regain the self-control that's currently unavailable. Such behavior would, in my mind, make the charge of hypocrisy inappropriate, or at least severely diminish its force. A second option would be to take advantage of the *application conditions* of the wide-scope requirement and hold that the impossibility of refraining from  $\phi$ -ing renders the *pro tanto* anti-hypocrisy requirement inapplicable. A third line of reply would be to bite the bullet, and emphasize that such cases are extremely rare, and that there would only be a *pro tanto* requirement to refrain from criticism in such cases, and so it still could come out that one ought to criticize, all things considered. I'm inclined toward a combination of the first two replies, but exploring these lines of reply would take us too far afield.

is something incoherent about these two requirements taken together: in doing what morality requires according to any one of them, I would remove the grounds for the other requirement. (For instance, in refraining from eating meat, I would remove the grounds for the requirement to refrain from criticism. And in refraining from criticism, I would remove the grounds for the requirement to refrain from eating meat.) Given that satisfying any one requirement would remove the grounds for the other, why would morality require *both* refraining from eating meat and refraining from criticism?<sup>12</sup> Intuitively, what morality requires (insofar as the anti-hypocrisy requirement goes) is that I *either* refrain from eating meat *or* refrain from criticism. And our wide-scope requirement, A-H WIDE, again delivers this desirable verdict. It avoids any commitment to mutually undermining moral requirements.<sup>13</sup>

### 3. Dover's Challenge

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<sup>12</sup> This second argument gets a grip only if one endorses *both* A-H NARROW<sub>1</sub> and A-H NARROW<sub>2</sub>. If one instead accepted only one of these two requirements, there wouldn't be mutually undermining requirements. However, it's not obvious which of the two to give up. If one held that the anti-hypocrisy requirement is 'really' about what one practices, one might opt for keeping only A-H NARROW<sub>1</sub>. And if one held that the anti-hypocrisy requirement is 'really' about what one preaches, one might opt for keeping only A-H NARROW<sub>2</sub>. But defenders and critics (including Dover, whose views we'll get to shortly) of the anti-hypocrisy requirement alike haven't opted for understanding the anti-hypocrisy requirement along either of these lines. But, in any case, we should acknowledge that a defender of A-H NARROW<sub>1</sub> could avoid this second objection by rejecting A-H NARROW<sub>2</sub>, and *vice versa*.

<sup>13</sup> The anti-hypocrisy requirements I've been considering so far have been synchronic requirements. But working with diachronic formulations will provide little help to the narrow-scooper. Suppose we consider:

**A-H NARROW<sub>1</sub> DIACHRONIC:** If you criticize others for  $\phi$ -ing at  $t_1$ , morality requires (*pro tanto*) that you yourself don't  $\phi$  at  $t_2$ .

But this view quickly runs into difficulty. For one thing, we could run versions of the two arguments we just considered (concerning bootstrapping and mutually undermining requirements) against this formulation as well. But it also generates new problems. Suppose that at  $t_1$  I (rather stupidly) criticize someone for dancing at a party. According to A-H NARROW<sub>1</sub> DIACHRONIC, morality requires that I not dance at  $t_2$ . But suppose that in the interval between  $t_1$  and  $t_2$ , or at  $t_2$ , I revise my stance about dancing, and apologize for such misguided criticism. Is it *also* true that I mustn't dance at  $t_2$ ? A-H NARROW<sub>1</sub> DIACHRONIC says so. But that doesn't seem right. A wide-scope diachronic requirement generates better results. We could have:

**A-H WIDE DIACHRONIC:** If at  $t_1$  you both criticize others for  $\phi$ -ing and  $\phi$  yourself, then morality requires (*pro tanto*) at  $t_2$  that you either revise your criticism of others or not  $\phi$  yourself.

This view can allow that there is no *pro tanto* moral failure in revising my criticism of those who are dancing, and going on to dance myself, at  $t_2$ .

Let's consider Dover's challenge to the requirement prohibiting hypocrisy. Dover is primarily concerned with the moral status of what she calls 'hypo-criticism', which is any behavior fitting the pattern:

- (1) X criticizes Y for  $\phi$ -ing; and
- (2) X  $\phi$ s herself (2019: 389).<sup>14</sup>

Her central thesis is that hypo-criticism is not in itself morally objectionable. Of course, the person whose behavior fits this pattern could exhibit *other* moral failures for which she is rightly held accountable – perhaps, for instance, she is also insincere or egotistical – but there's nothing wrong, in itself, with behavior fitting this pattern. Dover argues that the widely accepted norm which prohibits behavior fitting this pattern (what she calls the 'anti-hypo-criticism norm') actually 'carries no independent moral weight' (2019: 390), and such behavior is not even *pro tanto* morally wrong (2019: 407).

Dover's argument for this thesis proceeds as follows: she considers several representative cases of hypocrisy, and she argues that our moral objection in each case is traced not to the agent's 'hypo-criticism', but to something else. Additionally, Dover points out that the application of the anti-hypo-criticism norm to these cases will generate implausible results. We'll primarily be concerned with the latter claim, though I'll have some brief remarks on the former towards the end of this section. I won't have space to go through each of Dover's examples. Instead, I'll focus on a

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<sup>14</sup> Dover's introduction of the terminology of 'hypo-criticism' is done partly to register her skepticism about whether there's any interesting unity across the kinds of failures condemned by the supposed requirement against hypocrisy. As she observes, some cases of hypocrisy will involve insincere 'preaching' while others will involve sincere 'preaching' but *akrasia* when it comes to one's intentions and actions. And insincerity and *akrasia* seem to be very different kinds of failings. I'm somewhat sympathetic to Dover's doubts about whether the concept of hypocrisy 'corresponds to a unified moral kind' (2019: 389). But we can put such concerns aside here, since even if the concept doesn't correspond to a unified moral kind, there could still be a *pro tanto* moral prohibition on hypocrisy. (It might be worth noting that similar observations could be made with regard to promises: one may fail to keep one's promises because one promised insincerely in the first place – what Kant (1785) called a 'false promise' [4: 402] – or because one promised sincerely but didn't follow through due to *akrasia*. But that observation is perfectly compatible with the existence of a *pro tanto* requirement to keep one's promises.) And the specific arguments from Dover that we'll consider below don't rely on her skepticism about whether the concept of hypocrisy corresponds to a unified moral kind.

couple of examples (§3.1) to illustrate representative ways in which her arguments rely upon narrow-scope formulations of the anti-hypocrisy requirement, and then (§3.2) briefly consider the significance of this point for Dover’s overall thesis.

Let’s first consider how Dover understands the anti-hypo-criticism norm. There are some passages which suggest Dover would favor the *wide*-scope interpretation of the prohibition on hypocrisy. She notes that those who object to hypocrisy are objecting to the *conjunction* of the hypocrite’s criticism of others for  $\phi$ -ing, and her  $\phi$ -ing herself (2019: 406). This is a central motivation for the wide-scope formulation. Yet Dover also suggests that those who are objecting to hypocrisy will put their criticism using narrow-scope formulations:

As I have noted, the injunction to “practice what you preach” can be used either to discourage “preaching” or to encourage practicing. In other words, it can be used to express the thought: *If you preach it, then you ought to practice it* (call that the “positive thought”). Or it can be used to express the thought: *If you do not practice it, then you ought not preach it* (the “negative” thought) (2019: 413).<sup>15</sup>

However, as we noted earlier, those who favor the wide-scope formulation of the anti-hypocrisy requirement will be on board with *neither* the positive thought nor the negative thought. Let’s now turn to some of Dover’s examples, paying attention to how assumptions about the logical scope of ‘requires’ in the anti-hypocrisy requirement figure into her criticism of that requirement as applied to the examples.

### 3.1 Harold and Harriet

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<sup>15</sup> See also Dover 2019: 405–6, fn. 20, for similar remarks.

One of Dover's representative cases of hypocrisy is Harold the Governor. (This fictional case is based on former New York Governor, Eliot Spitzer.) Harold frequently hires prostitutes for sex, but to win elections, Harold publicly criticizes those who hire prostitutes, and aims to crack down on prostitution. As Dover describes the case, Harold is 'deceitful as well as insincere' in his criticism of prostitution (2019: 409). In her view, we can find fault in Harold's *insincerity*. But she denies that there's anything in itself morally wrong with Harold *criticizing others for hiring prostitutes while hiring them himself*. Let's turn to Dover's argument:

Suppose that hiring sex workers is not OK. Presumably, then, the thing for Harold to do is to *stop hiring sex workers* – not to stop criticizing those who hire sex workers merely in order to render his criticism more consonant with his behavior. If, on the other hand, hiring sex workers is OK, then the thing for Harold to do would be to *stop criticizing those who hire sex workers* – not to stop hiring sex workers merely in order to render his behavior more consonant with his criticism. In either case, then, it is the moral status of the practice of paying for sex that is relevant both to what Harold should practice and to what he should preach; the merely formal constraints expressed by the positive and negative thoughts are red herrings. For in neither case would merely matching his behavior and his criticism (regardless of their substantive correctness) have done the trick; it is better to be half right than all wrong (2019: 414).

The 'merely formal constraints' to which Dover refers in this passage are the same 'positive' and 'negative' thoughts mentioned in the previously quoted passage, but they are here applied to Harold's case:

**The Positive Thought:** 'since he preaches it, he should also practice it'

**The Negative Thought:** 'since he does not practice it, he should stop preaching it' (2019: 414).

Dover goes on to argue that these two thoughts ‘are not just irrelevant here, they also give substantively incorrect guidance’ (2019: 414). Let’s suppose hiring sex workers isn’t okay. The Negative Thought would then issue Harold ‘the wrong advice altogether’ by telling him to stop preaching against prostitution (2019: 414). The Positive Thought would issue the correct advice – to stop hiring sex workers – but ‘for the wrong reason’ (2019: 414). Harold should stop hiring sex workers because it’s wrong, and ‘not because he criticizes others for doing so’ (2019: 414). Let’s now suppose hiring sex workers is okay. Now, the Positive Thought would issue the wrong advice altogether by telling Harold to stop hiring sex workers. And the Negative Thought would issue the correct advice – to stop preaching against prostitution – but for the wrong reason; one should stop preaching against it because it’s permissible, not because one hires sex workers.

Thus, Dover levels two charges against the ‘merely formal constraints’: they are irrelevant ‘red herrings’ and they issue substantively incorrect guidance. Let’s start with the second charge. As you might expect by now, my suggestion for replying to this charge is to replace the Positive Thought and the Negative Thought with what we might call

**The Wide-Scope Thought:** he should either not preach it or practice it.

The Wide-Scope Thought avoids issuing substantively incorrect guidance, regardless of the moral status of hiring sex workers. Let’s first suppose hiring sex workers is not permissible. Adding in the Wide-Scope Thought we’d get: Harold’s hiring sex workers is not permissible, and the combination [Harold’s hiring sex workers and criticizing those who do] is not permissible. We do not ‘detach’ the conclusion that Harold ought not criticize, as we would on the narrow-scoped Negative Thought. Let’s now suppose hiring sex workers is permissible (and so it would be inappropriate to criticize those who do so). If we add in the Wide-Scope Thought, we’d get: Harold’s criticizing those who hire sex workers is impermissible, and the combination [Harold’s hiring sex workers and criticizing those who do] is not permissible. We don’t ‘detach’ the conclusion that Harold ought to refrain

from hiring sex workers, as we would on the narrow-scoped Positive Thought. In short, nothing about the Wide-Scope Thought commits us to offering bad advice.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, the Wide-Scope Thought isn't committed to any views about what Harold's motivating reasons should be. One could think that the reason for which Harold should refrain from hiring prostitutes is that doing so is morally wrong (as Dover seems to want to say of that example). The Wide-Scope Thought simply doesn't come with any commitments on the question of what Harold's motivating reasons should be.<sup>17</sup> All it says is that a certain combination is impermissible.

What about the charge that the anti-hypocrisy norm is a 'red herring' and 'irrelevant'? The idea behind this charge is that the substantive normative question of whether hiring sex workers is permissible is *all we need* in accounting for the normatively relevant features of Harold's situation. (If it's permissible, he should stop criticizing. If it's not, he should stop hiring.) So it's unclear what work would be done by an anti-hypocrisy requirement. How is it relevant?

One answer is that a wide-scope anti-hypocrisy requirement allows us to *correctly count* the moral problems in Harold's case. Let's suppose that hiring sex workers is morally wrong. Harold has one problem: he hires sex workers and ought not to. Harold shares this problem with many others. But, intuitively, Harold has a *further problem*: he hires sex workers and criticizes others for

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<sup>16</sup> It's also worth noting that endorsing the Wide-Scope Thought doesn't commit us to thinking that avoiding hypocrisy always amounts to a moral improvement. Suppose that with respect to some action  $\phi$ , I both ought not preach in favor of  $\phi$ -ing and I ought not  $\phi$ , but, hypocritically, I preach in favor of  $\phi$ -ing, but don't myself  $\phi$ . If I were to resolve my hypocrisy in the 'wrong direction,' by coming to  $\phi$  myself, I would no longer violate the anti-hypocrisy requirement. But I would also come to violate another requirement: the requirement not to  $\phi$ . So, I've just switched out one failure for another. And if we add in considerations about the relative weight or strength of these requirements, we could allow that I'm now in a *worse* moral position, all things considered.

<sup>17</sup> We could even allow that Harold should be motivated *both by* the moral wrongness of hiring prostitutes and by the moral wrongness of hypocrisy (or perhaps by the facts which *explain* the moral wrongness of each). There are several possibilities available to the wide-scope theorist on this question. Thanks to an anonymous referee for helpful comments here.

doing so.<sup>18</sup> Those who believe in a wide-scope anti-hypocrisy requirement can easily account for the intuition that Harold faces a further problem: Harold also violates the wide-scope anti-hypocrisy requirement. But skeptics about that requirement have trouble accounting for it. (Similarly, in the example at the start of this paper, we noted that both Mike Jones and the overseers at Haggard’s church could converge in the assessment that Haggard faces a ‘further problem’. As Jones sees it, in addition to his problematic criticism of homosexuality, Haggard has the further problem of being a hypocrite, and as the Church authorities see it, in addition to his problematic homosexuality, Haggard has the further problem of being a hypocrite. The existence of a wide-scope anti-hypocrisy requirement could explain the shared intuition that there’s a further problem in this case.)<sup>19</sup>

Let’s consider another of Dover’s examples. Harriet criticizes Dave for not making time for her when she was going through a bout of depression, but she did the same thing to Dave recently (2019: 410–11). Here’s a passage in which Dover describes the relevant substantive moral obligations, while critiquing the anti-hypocrisy requirement:

Harriet ought to recognize, take responsibility, and make amends for her previous neglect of Dave. She also ought to take the trouble to articulate her criticisms of Dave’s similar behavior; and to present them to him in anticipation of his response. These are two independent moral obligations that Harriet has in the context of her relationship with Dave; a failure to fulfill the former should not transform the latter from an obligation into a prohibition (2019: 417).

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<sup>18</sup> This particular way of putting the point owes much to Jonathan Way’s (2012: 489) critique of a related kind of skepticism about wide-scope *rational* requirements.

<sup>19</sup> Perhaps someone might not share this intuition that Harold faces two problems. Perhaps there’s just one problem, identified by your substantive views on the moral status of sex work. But, as a dialectical point, it’s worth observing that Dover herself doesn’t seem to want to say that settling those substantive questions about sex work will capture all the morally relevant features of Harold’s situation. After all, as I mentioned earlier, she wants to criticize Harold for his *insincerity*, and not his ‘hypo-criticism’. But *that* moral fault isn’t going to fall out of one’s substantive views on the moral status of sex work. So, I take it that Dover herself wouldn’t reject the intuition that Harold faces two problems.

I agree with Dover that there would be a problem if we understood the anti-hypocrisy requirement such that Harriet's obligation to criticize Dave gets transformed into a prohibition. But there are two points to make in reply. First, only a narrow-scope anti-hypocrisy formulation (roughly, 'If you yourself  $\phi$ , you ought not criticize others for not  $\phi$ -ing') would generate a prohibition on criticism. The wide-scope anti-hypocrisy requirement generates no such prohibition; it prohibits only the *combination* of criticizing others for  $\phi$ -ing while  $\phi$ -ing yourself. Second, Harriet's substantive obligation to criticize Dave doesn't 'transform' into anything. That obligation is present throughout. Defenders of the wide-scope anti-hypocrisy requirement just insist that in addition to her substantive obligation to criticize Dave, there's a wide-scope prohibition against the combination of criticizing others for  $\phi$ -ing while also  $\phi$ -ing yourself. Thus, defenders of the anti-hypocrisy requirement have the resources to deny Dover's allegation that an obligation will be transformed into a prohibition in Harriet's case.<sup>20</sup>

### 3.2 Significance for Dover's Thesis

In discussing Harold and Harriet, we've seen examples of how Dover's skepticism about the anti-hypocrisy requirement depends upon the assumption of a narrow-scope formulation. I've argued that the wide-scope formulation allows us to avoid extensionally inadequate predictions about what Harold, Harriet, and others, ought to do. I'll now consider the significance of this result for the overall project of Dover's paper.

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<sup>20</sup> Although I'm objecting to Dover's particular arguments against the anti-hypocrisy requirement as applied to Harold, Harriet, and others, it's open for me to accept Dover's views about the nature and importance of *criticism*, and her objections to those who (following Wallace) think of criticism as a kind of 'sanction' to be avoided, rather than as a useful way of raising difficult but important moral questions. My defense of the anti-hypocrisy requirement doesn't require me to adopt any particular conception of criticism or understanding of its importance.

As I mentioned earlier, one aim of Dover's paper is to show how in many typical cases of hypocrisy, the moral fault can be found elsewhere. In Harold's case, we can find fault with his *insincerity*. In Harriet's case, we can find fault with her being *overly critical of others* and/or her being *overly complacent about herself*. Similar 'relocations' of the moral fault are given for the other examples of hypocrisy Dover considers in her paper.

One issue is whether the relocation of the moral fault succeeds. This isn't a question I wish to take up here. For the purposes of this discussion, I want to assume that Harold's fault lies in his insincerity, and Harriet's fault lies in her being overly critical of others and/or overly complacent about herself, and so on. The question I wish to raise is whether, granting all this, we've come any closer to establishing Dover's conclusion that there's nothing morally wrong (not even *pro tanto* wrong) with hypo-criticism in these cases. An alternative view would hold that there *is* something *pro tanto* morally wrong with hypo-criticism in all of Dover's examples, but the wrongness is *explained by* some particular feature of the case, with that particular feature varying from case to case (for example, insincerity in Harold's case, and excessive self-complacency in Harriet's case). On this view, we could even endorse Dover's conclusion that the anti-hypo-criticism norm has 'no independent moral weight' since the wrongness of hypo-criticism would be explained by the wrongness of insincerity in some cases, and the wrongness of excessive complacency in others, and so forth. But note that this would also be true of *any* requirement that is explained in terms of some other requirement or requirements. Suppose that Hart (1955) and Rawls (1964) were correct in thinking that the *pro tanto* moral obligation to obey the law could be explained in terms of a *pro tanto* moral obligation (roughly) to contribute one's fair share in a cooperative enterprise. In other words, you're required to obey the law *because* obeying the law is your way of contributing your fair share, and you're required to contribute your fair share.<sup>21</sup> Here, we might also say that the requirement to

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<sup>21</sup> This would be an instance of what Mark Schroeder (2014a) has called 'the Standard Model' of normative explanation.

obey the law doesn't carry any independent weight, since all the weight is borne by the requirement to contribute one's fair share. (The difference between the requirement to obey the law on the Hart / Rawls view and the anti-hypocrisy requirement on the view we're sketching here is that the explanation of the latter would be *disjunctive*: you're required to avoid hypocrisy because you're required to avoid insincerity, required to avoid excessive self-complacency, and so forth, and in being hypocritical, you're *either* insincere, *or* excessively self-complacent, etc.)

Now, it's clear that the view I've sketched here about the *pro tanto* anti-hypocrisy requirement, and the view about the *pro tanto* requirement to obey the law, are *not* skeptical views. Instead, these views *vindicate* the relevant requirements by showing how they are explained in terms of other (hopefully less controversial) requirements. Of course, it's apparent that Dover *doesn't* take herself to be presenting such a vindication of the anti-hypocrisy requirement. But it's worth asking, 'Why not?' Why does she instead arrive at the view that hypo-criticism is not even *pro tanto* morally wrong? Although I won't be able to present a full answer to this question, given the rich, complex, and interesting lines of argument in Dover's paper, it does seem that a large part of the answer is that she thinks the anti-hypo-criticism norm is simply extensionally inadequate. She thinks it generates bad predictions about what Harold, Harriet, and others should do. If that's right, the project of 'relocating' the moral fault (in Harold's insincerity, in Harriet's complacency, etc.) wouldn't *vindicate* the anti-hypo-criticism norm since that norm is simply flawed from the start. In that case, the relocation strategy will at best offer a plausible error theory: we mistakenly thought that there was something wrong with Harold's hypo-criticism, but really the problem all along was with his insincerity, and likewise for the other examples.

If this way of reading Dover's paper is correct, then her claims about the extensional inadequacy of the anti-hypo-criticism norm in the cases of Harold and Harriet is *crucial* to her skepticism about the *pro tanto* wrongness of hypocrisy. And if I'm right that her worries about the

extensional adequacy of the prohibition rest upon her use of a narrow-scope formulation, and can be avoided with a wide-scope formulation, then we may have a principled basis for resisting her skepticism about the *pro tanto* moral wrongness of hypocrisy. It's not clear to me what grounds for skepticism would remain once those extensional concerns are met.

## 4. Conclusion

Let's sum up the main claims of this paper. Although there are a variety of behaviors that are condemned as hypocritical, central cases of hypocrisy involve a failure to practice what you preach. But, following the work of Broome and others on conditional requirements, I've distinguished two ways of understanding the logical scope of 'should' in 'you should practice what you preach.' I've argued that the narrow-scope interpretation runs into difficulties that the wide-scope interpretation can easily avoid. And I've argued that this result has some important upshots for our normative theorizing about hypocrisy. In particular, it allows us to resist the force of several of Dover's arguments in favor of skepticism about the *pro tanto* wrongness of hypocrisy. If that's right, we can rest better assured that hypocrisy is indeed *pro tanto* wrong. Or, at least, that's what I'm preaching.

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