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**CONCEPTS OF MORALITY IN *HORUS*
*RISING: THE SEEDS OF HERESY ARE SOWN***

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ABSTRACT

Quentin Davis: Concepts of Morality in *Horus Rising: The seeds of heresy are sown*
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In this Master's Thesis, I am exploring Concepts of Morality in *Horus Rising: The seeds of heresy are sown* by Dan Abnett. The text is the opening book of The Horus Heresy series of science fantasy novels set in the fictional Warhammer 40,000 universe. The thesis opens with an introduction and background knowledge of Warhammer 40,000. The discussion then leads on to the concepts of morality relevant to this thesis and how they are applicable and interpreted within the text.

Horus Rising: The seeds of heresy are sown is an exemplary text for examining the concepts of morality as it blends realism, history and a hypothetical future set in the Milky Way Galaxy. By exploring the moral dilemmas raised in the text and cross-referencing them with examples taken from real-life, it is possible to broaden the reader's understanding of the nuances of morality and its various applications.

The fundamental principles of morality are approached in this thesis with the assumption that there is some form of objective good and evil that people subscribe to in order to function morally admissibly. The examples given highlight the importance of subjective experience in determining whether particular actions are considered morally just in certain scenarios. This thesis aims to shorten the gap between a person's subjective moral experience and their inherent, objective understanding of morality.

The protagonists in *Horus Rising: The seeds of heresy are sown* come from varying backgrounds and as a result, have differing interpretations of what is moral and what is not. Coming from the same organisation binds them by some fundamental moral values but their subjective experiences and upbringing lead to conflicting interpretations of major events that occur in the text. This thesis discovers the extent that deontic ethics may be used to interpret and identify the basic principles underlying perceptions of morality. Furthermore, superstition and its role in maintaining societal moral fabric is explored using narrative frameworks, the musings of Eckhart Tolle and the influence of tribalism on moral belief systems. Individual and collective moral understanding is also explored in the text and the notion is analysed using examples presented throughout the thesis. The main focus is on the effects the ego, social distance and group affiliation have on the formation of both individual and collective moralities.

Warfare is analysed from the perspective that it is dynamic and that there is no clear method of assigning moral accountability for resorting to war and to some extent, conduct during war. The contemporary evolution of medical ethics highlights uncertainty in a period of rapid developments in the fields of genetics and augmentation. The aesthetic presentation of physical augmentation may affect perceptions of morality, especially if grotesque and disparate features are included for literary effect. The conclusions drawn from this thesis are that morality may be defined and regulated by society and the law but the application of moral behaviour in practice is both contextual and subjective.

Keywords: Astartes, doctrine, dystopia, Emperor of Mankind, Horus, Imperial Truth, Imperium of Man, Loken, militarism, morality, reasoning, the Great Crusade, the Horus Heresy, Warhammer 40,000.

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1. Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to explore concepts of morality in Dan Abnett's *Horus Rising: The seeds of heresy are sown* and highlight the challenges that they pose to our understanding of morality. *Horus Rising* is the first book in *The Horus Heresy* series of novels. The events of the novel take place during what is known as the Horus Heresy; a momentous civil war which takes place 10,000 years prior to the Warhammer 40,000 setting of the tabletop miniatures wargame on which the literary canon is based. The events of *The Horus Heresy* play an imperative role in forming Warhammer 40,000 lore. The Heresy is ultimately caused by a Chaos plot to avert the Emperor of Mankind's ambition of reuniting dispersed human colonies throughout the universe by provoking disillusioned Space Marine Legions into starting an internecine civil war during the height of the Great Crusade.

This thesis uses various theories, case-studies and comparisons between real-life and *Horus Rising: The seeds of heresy are sown* by Dan Abnett. For the purposes of this thesis, morality can be defined as a set of archetypal principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behaviour. Morality is broken down and analysed from distinct, theoretical standpoints. These standpoints are moral reasoning, superstition, individual and collective morality, just war theory and bioethics. Moral reasoning is analysed via the lens of deontology in this thesis and is amply supplemented with sections on the principles of deontic ethics. The notion of superstition explores the role belief systems play in forming moral frameworks. The section on superstition is supported by the musings of Eckhart Tolle and discussion on the influences tribalism and hierarchies have on forming a moral basis. The concepts of the ego and hubris are central tenets of both individual and collective morality. Individual morality entails moral evaluations made by individuals and collective morality governs the role group affiliation plays in shaping individual morality. Just war theory is analysed using principles of traditional and revisionist just war theory. Both traditional and revisionist just war theories examine the causes for war, how wars are conducted and in some cases, post-conflict actions. The differences between the two theoretical

approaches relate to how they ascribe accountability for war. Bioethics is explored using current discourse on bioethical, medical developments. These topics are discussed using examples from current medical developments in the field of biotechnology and their hypothetical applications in the future. The section on bioethics is complemented with textual illustrations examined using the notions of grotesque incongruence and disharmony.

I have chosen these approaches to morality as they each have an important role to play in our society. Moral reasoning is essential for understanding the world around us and how our decisions may have a far-reaching impact on our lives and the lives of others. Without any basic framework of moral reasoning to work within, it is difficult for us to lead our lives in a correct and benevolent manner. Just war theory is broken down into two distinct doctrines in this thesis; traditional just war theory and revisionist just war theory. Traditional just war theory is somewhat outdated in contemporary, real-life Western society. However, it is still relevant as it forms the basis of limiting conduct within warfare and it plays an imperative role in the Warhammer 40,000 universe in which *Horus Rising* is set. Revisionist just war theory is still undergoing development and is constantly changing, along with the nature of warfare. In this thesis, just war theory is mostly focussed at the systemic level but does contain elements that are relevant to individuals involved in conflict and post-conflict activities. Bioethics is concerned with the ethical issues raised by the rapidly advancing progress made in modern medicine. Policy on medical procedures is not standardised around the world and this poses problems when controversial operations take place. Limitations and restrictions on procedures may be subjectively interpreted and even ignored in some cases, which may raise questions as to the ethics of particular actions.

The reason I selected *Horus Rising* as a point of comparison, is because it is the first of many novels in the Horus Heresy series, set in the Warhammer 40,000 universe and is a fitting text to explore the concept of morality in a theoretical, futuristic setting. *Horus Rising* provides the reader with an overview of the turning point of the Great Crusade, which would eventually lead to

the Horus Heresy, an event that led humanity into a civil war that has been ongoing for more than ten millennia. The novel provides a detailed depiction of the nature of the Imperium of Man in the 31st millennium and therefore, portrays an arguably viable insight into humanity's moral standpoint in the future. *Horus Rising* is a fitting novel that enables us to explore some of the major moral dilemmas related to the concepts of morality presented in this thesis. Most of the themes present in this thesis are drawn from the 20th and 21st centuries. *Horus Rising* draws influence from various ancient cultures. It is suitable that the text blends motifs of ancient civilisations with a futuristic setting, as the text can be used to cross-reference a large span of human history, particularly related to the themes discussed in this thesis.

Horus Rising contains elements which are reminiscent of ancient mythology. The narratives mentioned within *Horus Rising* are implied to offer insight into Imperial society before the unification of humanity by the Emperor of Mankind. Kyril Sindermann, the primary iterator of the 140th Expedition Fleet refers to one of the “boisterous fictions and bloody histories” as “raw-headed and robust, and quite bawdy in parts. The work of over-excited poets trying to turn the matter of their own, wretched times into myth” (Abnett 240–241). Myths function as distorted versions of real-life events, blown hugely out of proportion and in some cases, are used to form and shape social identities and customs. It is ironic that Sindermann is so cynical of past poets trying to glorify their time in history as “almost four point three million remembrancers were sent abroad” (Abnett 46) as accompaniment to the expedition fleets of the Great Crusade. In this respect, we can use *Horus Rising* as a kind of allegory which we can use as a point of comparison to measure our own sense of morality. It is surprising that despite its rich content, *Horus Rising* has not been used in any previous research exploring concepts of morality.

Morality is predominantly approached in *Horus Rising* via the actions of the two main protagonists, Horus and Loken. Their roles in the text are central as they demonstrate how cause and effect plays out during conquest. There are a few subplots within the text which use human

characters, iterators and remembrancers, that function as a literary device to explore the aftermath of Imperial conquest and raise questions about the legitimacy of the aims of 63rd Expedition. Moral thinking in *Horus Rising* is highly utilitarian. All actions must be taken with the well-being of the greatest number of people in the long-term, regardless of any short-term costs this may have. In some instances, in *Horus Rising*, there are discrepancies between actions and the rationale behind those actions. This thesis explores concepts of morality in *Horus Rising* in order to better understand the nuances of underlying morality in the text.

It is important to explore the concepts of moral reasoning, superstition, individual and collective morality, just war theory and bioethics, as they are imperative notions that contribute to contemporary developments in society. The use of *Horus Rising* as a fictional text for comparison allows us to take alternative, hypothetical approaches towards moral concepts via willing suspension of disbelief in cases concerning science fiction and inward reflection when engaging in textual passages that evoke contemplation in the reader. In essence, one may gain a greater understanding of morality through future, hypothetical applications of moral practice, brought about by drawing comparisons between hypothetical scenarios and the practical, real-life applications of contemporary moral thinking. Moreover, the correlation between events in *Horus Rising* and real-life examples are intended to highlight the discrepancies in our contemporary moral thought processes and force us to re-evaluate our stances on the issues explored in this thesis.

1.1. Background: Warhammer 40,000

The following background details about the core aspects of the Warhammer 40,000 universe are included for the reader's benefit. The information provides any reader unfamiliar with the Warhammer 40,000 universe with the necessary information needed to understand the references made to *Horus Rising* in this thesis. The information can be accessed at Lexicanum, the online encyclopaedia for the Warhammer 40,000 universe. Warhammer 40,000, or 40K for short, is originally a tabletop miniature wargame, created by Games Workshop in 1987. The game world of

the Warhammer universe is based on the Milky Way Galaxy. By basing the fantasy Warhammer universe on our own galaxy, readers are more easily able to visualise and associate with the fictional events in the text than would be possible if they had to interpret a completely alien setting for the events in the *Horus Rising*.

The science fantasy setting has easily recognisable features of the Gothic. The inclusion of supernatural and unexplained events, madness and romance are all found within *Horus Rising*. Gothic literature developed in an era when the fields of science, religion, and industry were rapidly expanding. *Horus Rising* reflects this aspect of Gothic literature in the sense that it is set in a time period which is at the apex of humanity's cultural, technological and military development, and thus serves as a platform for exploring the hypothetical outcomes of advanced scientific and technological advancements in the real-world. There are various key features of historical eras intertwined in the universe – most notably, World Wars, Imperial Rome and the Spanish Inquisition. There are seven different races in the galaxy, none of which are inherently good. The humans are the dominant force in the universe (“Warhammer 40,000”). Arguably, the reverence of tradition, conquest and glorification of past victories in *Horus Rising* are features of Neoclassicist, imperial thinking.

Amongst the vanguard of the Imperial forces are the Adeptus Astartes, also known as Space Marines, who operate as mobile strike forces, used to carry out the most dangerous and highly sensitive missions. In real-life, there are many legal barriers to genetic modification. Many of these barriers are in place because of the risks associated with undertaking procedures that may have unknown outcomes. The Astartes are manifestations of extreme human augmentation. Their genes are edited to make them resistant to disease, genetic defects and to improve mental capacity. The existence of the Astartes raises the question of whether they can be considered human anymore. They have forfeited their biological evolution in favour of human-induced evolution. In the context of the Warhammer universe, the extreme bodily modification of the Astartes may be deemed

beneficial for the whole of humanity as they form the bulwark of humanity's defence against the physical threats of the universe. Despite the fact that in the real world we are far from the being able to replicate the extent of genetic modification present in *Horus Rising*, it is important to bear in mind that with genome editing technology, such as the CRISPR-Cas9 tool, it is possible to edit somatic cells in humans to correct gene mutations and eliminate some diseases. It is not unlikely that in the near future, germline engineering human genetic codes in order to eradicate genetic disorders from existence will be a commonplace occurrence in society. If genetic engineering is taken farther to enhance desirable characteristics in humans, would such actions be deemed beneficial for humanity and therefore, considered morally acceptable?

The events in *Horus Rising* take place during what is known as the Great Crusade. The Great Crusade (beginning c. M30 and continuing for around two hundred years) "was a brief age of rebuilding and reunification following the complete regression of mankind during the Age of Strife. It was a time when the Emperor still lived in the conventional sense and led his race in person" ("The Great Crusade"). The theme of a crusade is prevalent in postcolonial literature. Whereas postcolonial literature focusses on the process of decolonisation and its aftermath, *Horus Rising* draws attention to active colonisation of new worlds and the subjugation of their peoples by brute force.

One of the protagonists of *Horus Rising* is Garviel Loken.

Garviel Loken was the Captain of the 10th company of the Luna Wolves Space Marine Legion during the latter half of the Great Crusade. After distinguishing himself in battle, he was inducted into the Mournival, the advisory council to the Warmaster Horus, and from this position was a first-hand witness to the series of events that would result in Horus' damnation and the beginning of the Horus Heresy ("Garviel Loken").

Loken is torn between his duty as a soldier and his increasing curiosity as to the purpose and morality of the actions of the 63rd Expedition. Loken is an important literary device as the reader is given an insight into the thought processes of a loyal Astartes warrior as he partakes in the engagements of the text. Without his inclusion, questions would not be raised throughout the text

and the reader would not be encouraged to explore the moral dilemmas Loken experiences in *Horus Rising*.

Warmaster Horus plays an integral role in *Horus Rising*. Horus (also named Lupercal)

was one of the twenty Primarchs created by the Emperor in the earliest days of the Imperium, just after the end of the Age of Strife. Like the other Primarchs, Horus was sucked from Terra by the Gods of Chaos and was placed on a far-away world in an attempt to prevent the coming of the Age of the Imperium (“Horus Lupercal”).

Horus is an immensely popular character in *Horus Rising*. He is depicted as being immensely popular amongst his fellow Primarchs and the favourite son of the Emperor. However, he eventually succumbed to the corruption of Chaos and initiated the Horus Heresy against the very Imperium he helped build. It is possible that the inspiration for the backstory of Horus and the Primarchs came from the story of Romulus and Remus. There are certain similarities between *Horus Rising* and the tale of Romulus and Remus which are near identical to each other. First, the shepherd Faustulus, raised Romulus and Remus, just as each of the Primarchs were raised on distant planets, remaining unaware of their true identities. Secondly, in both stories, the Primarchs and Romulus and Remus were natural leaders who were popular on their adoptive planets and mustered many supporters from their local communities. Finally, the most obvious influences of the tale of Romulus and Remus on *Horus Rising* are the use of the name Lupercal as Horus’ nickname and Horus’ attempted murder of the Emperor during the Horus Heresy. Horus’ regicidal endeavour to please the Chaos Gods, is reminiscent of the murder of Remus in a bid for divine approval.

Warmaster Horus utilised an advisory council, known as the Mournival, which was made up of four captains of the Luna Wolves Legion. The Mournival “carried no official weight, was considered to be outside the official command structure and was a position purely internal to the legion. At the end of the Great Crusade, it was composed of Ezekyle Abaddon, “Little” Horus Aximand, Tarik Torgaddon and Garviel Loken” (“Mournival”). The existence of the Mournival emphasises the need for an informal forum for counsel in an environment of rich ceremony,

rigorous formality and strict hierarchy. Arguably, the Mournival's formation may be viewed as contradictory to Imperial Truth, as it is an unofficial organisation shrouded in secrecy.

The Emperor of Mankind appointed Imperial Iterators to spread the doctrine of Imperial Truth (also known as empirical truth in the novel) among his people.

Imperial Iterators were public speakers, and masters of manipulating crowds and altering public opinion . . . They were most prevalent among the fleets of the Great Crusade, where they would not only lecture and rally the Imperial troops and Astartes legions, but also educate the vanquished human civilisations on the values and virtues of the Imperium ("Iterator").

The iterators are redolent of real-life fifth columnists. Their inclusion in *Horus Rising* indicates that the Imperium of Man is preparing for a peaceful future, as they have no military function. This perspective is supported by Warmaster Horus, who "admired the Iterators' work, so much that he asked them to also tutor his Captains and Legionaries; Horus believed that, once the Crusade was completed, there would be an end to war and the Astartes would need to find a peacetime vocation" ("Iterator"). Primary iterator Kyril Sindermann was the most renowned iterator of the Great Crusade and "served aboard Horus's flagship, the Vengeful Spirit at the head of the 63rd Expeditionary Fleet" ("Iterator").

The 63rd Expedition was accompanied by a group of historiographers known as remembrancers. "The Remembrancer Order was a group of poets, journalists, imagists and writers that were sent to accompany the Imperial forces during the later years of the Great Crusade, once the Emperor had returned to Terra" ("Remembrancer"). Remembrancers were tasked with piecing together the feats of Imperial expeditions and collating the information into formal volumes to be submitted to the Imperial government based on Terra. "The remembrancers were tasked by the Emperor to record, for posterity, mankind's greatest triumph, the Great Crusade. However, they were generally disliked by both the regular troops and the Astartes" ("Remembrancer").

Horus Rising is the first book of a series that describes the events of Horus' fall to Chaos. The events in the novel explain how the build up to the greatest tragedy in human history takes

place. The Emperor of Mankind has conquered the galaxy in what is known as the Great Crusade, in the 31st millennium. At the peak of the Great Crusade, the Emperor retires from the frontlines, presumably to demilitarise the government of the empire he has created and focus on administrative tasks. This fact, coupled with the resentment amongst the Primarchs regarding the promotion of Horus to Warmaster, planted the seeds of heresy in their minds. The Primarchs' weakened psyches allowed them to become influenced by the Warp and Chaos. The Warp is a mirror dimension of random energy known as Chaos. It is parallel to our universe and very little is known about it in the 31st millennium. The Imperial forces use the Warp to traverse vast expanses of the universe in a fraction of the time it would take in the material universe ("Warp").

1.2. Features of *Horus Rising*

The authoritarian nature of the Warhammer 40,000 universe provides the perfect environment for analysing concepts of morality. The issues raised within *Horus Rising* are loyalty, honour, duty and sacrifice, each of which are required to contribute to the nascent Empire of Man. As dissidence creeps into the picture, when the Emperor retires from the Great Crusade in favour of forming a civilian government and peaceful administration, the empire faces internal challenges and becomes susceptible to the powers of Chaos.

Russ's sour attitude reflected well the demeanor of the martial class. From primarch down to common army soldier, there was a general unease about the Emperor's decision to quit the crusade campaign and retire to the solitude of his palace on Terra. No one had questioned the choice of First Primarch Horus as Warmaster to act in his stead. They simply questioned the need for a proxy at all (Abnett 46).

Arguably, the moment the Emperor abandons the Great Crusade, the tide of the universe turns. The Primarchs become disheartened at the prospect of the Emperor abandoning them for his secret project on Terra, leaving mere mortals and despicably, civilians to rule over them. Throughout the text, there is clear rivalry between the martial classes and those not associated with the military. The waning influence of martial prowess in *Horus Rising* widens the rift within the ranks of the

Astartes. To explore the growing dissonance in *Horus Rising*, it is important to explore the central moral features of the text.

2. Moral Reasoning

This chapter explores the relationship between moral reasoning and its metatextual application to *Horus Rising*. Moral reasoning is a subjective concept and its application to various scenarios, both real and fictional are explored in this section. Moral reasoning is our ability to discern what is right from wrong and forms the basis of our moral thinking. It is an important factor which affects our everyday behaviour. We can use theories of moral reasoning to interpret and identify the fundamental principles underlying our perception of morality. One specific branch of moral reasoning is known as deontic reasoning. Deontic reasoning does not exclusively refer to morality but also includes general conduct and codes of behaviour which may be regulated by a sense of duty and respect for authority. The concept of moral reasoning is explored in *Horus Rising* by using the characters of the Mournival and the deeds of a few select remembrancers in the text. There is a class division between the genetically engineered Astartes and the civilian, unadulterated, human remembrancers. The Astartes are arrogant and proud of their military feats. They look down on those who have no military function as serving an auxiliary purpose within the Great Crusade. With this in mind, the text presents the reader with a dichotomous insight into Imperial society. The Captains Abaddon and Torgaddon represent the old guard elite of the Astartes and always favour military action over diplomacy. On the other hand, Captain Loken represents new blood and his questioning of the old ways is what led to him being inducted into the Mournival. Upon learning of the existence of a secretive warrior lodge, frequented by Astartes of all ranks, Loken questions the members' devotion to Imperial Truth. The lodge members confide in Loken that the Warmaster accepts that the Astartes cannot always be bound by doctrine if they are to be successful. "He's always known, and he turns a blind eye, provided we remain closed and confidential in our activities" (Abnett 286). Alternatively, the remembrancers represent humanity, a view of the direct

action of the Empire unabridged and unadulterated, albeit within the strict regimen of Imperial hierarchy.

The benefits of deontology are that you can streamline morality to a few set principles that may not be deviated from as opposed to focussing on the consequences of the actions themselves or the motivations of the actor. On the contrary, the downsides of deontic reasoning are that the path of action may follow absolutist principles, the results of which may have disastrous consequences. Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative suitably highlights this issue. A key tenet of the categorical imperative is that one must not lie under any circumstances. "The categorical imperative would be that one which represented an action as objectively necessary for itself, without any reference to another end" (Kant 31). To demonstrate the rationale behind this philosophy, we can take the example of an assassin turning up at a man's house. The wife of the man opens the door and tells the assassin that the man is not at home. The assassin then leaves the building and bumps into his intended target, who had left the building, and subsequently murders him. According to the rules of the categorical imperative, the wife of the man is morally liable for his murder as his death is the direct result of her lie. This example is rather crude. A better alternative would be to act how you would like others to act towards you.

Bucciarelli and Johnson-Laird state that "Deontic assertions concern what one ought to do, may do, and ought not to do. The meanings of deontic assertions refer to sets of permissible and impermissible states" (Bucciarelli and Johnson-Laird Abstract). In the West, what are defined as permissible and impermissible states are regulated by law. The United Nations definition of law refers to

a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards (United Nations, Security Council 4).

In order for laws to be respected and abided by, they must be fairly applied. For this to happen, the notion of justice comes into play. For the United Nations, the concept of justice is “an ideal of accountability and fairness in the protection and vindication of rights and the prevention and punishment of wrongs” (United Nations, Security Council 4).

Bucciarelli et al. identify four principles of moral reasoning which may be adequately applied to this thesis. The four principles are as follows:

First, no simple criterion picks out propositions about morality from within the larger set of deontic propositions concerning what is permissible and impermissible in social relations, the law, games, and manners. Second, the mechanisms underlying emotions and deontic evaluations are independent and operate in parallel, and so some scenarios elicit emotions prior to moral evaluations, some elicit moral evaluations prior to emotions, and some elicit them at the same time. Third, deontic evaluations depend on inferences, either unconscious intuitions or conscious reasoning. Fourth, human beliefs about what is, and isn't, moral are neither complete nor consistent (Bucciarelli et al. Abstract).

2.1. The First Principle of Deontic Reasoning

The basic premise of these four principles is “the principle of moral indefinability: No simple principled way exists to tell from a proposition alone whether or not it concerns a moral issue as opposed to some other sort of deontic matter” (Bucciarelli et al. 125). The principle of moral indefinability may be applied to the context of contemporary Western Europe. We can apply the factors of law, custom and societal norms to define what is acceptable and correct in society. If an action deviates from social norms but is not illegal, it may be labelled counterculture or if the action can be deemed illegal, delinquency. Over time, societal norms may change. Arguably, one of the most significant changes in societal norms is the concept of divorce. King Henry VIII wished to have his marriage to Catherine of Aragon annulled because of her inability to produce a male heir. The refusal of the pope to grant the annulment led to the passing of the Act of Supremacy 1534, thereby allowing Henry VIII to annul his marriage. The result of the annulment led to the reformation of the Church of England and divorce became more acceptable in society.

Horus Rising, can be used to adequately illustrate the application of Bucciarelli et al.'s first principle of moral reasoning. Imperial Truth determines what is permissible and what is not in Imperial society. For example, when deliberating whether to wage a long and costly war against a humanoid species, known as the interex, an Astartes captain named Aximand states the following:

we prosecute this crusade according to certain doctrines. For two centuries, we have done so. Laws of life, laws on which the Imperium is founded. They are not arbitrary. They were given to us, to uphold, by the Emperor himself (Abnett 352).

The Warmaster, Horus, responds that he has “made two. Or been party to two” (Abnett 356) mistakes which resulted in unnecessary friendly casualties. Horus further elaborates that he will “not make another rash or premature decision” (Abnett 357). In doing so, Horus reinforces Bucciarelli et al.'s first principle of moral reasoning, that there are many factors determining which actions are morally acceptable in a specific context, by not following Imperial doctrines in their literal sense, as Aximand suggests should be done. Instead, the Warmaster takes an alternative course of action; negotiation with the interex as opposed to war with them based on his own subjective interpretation of Imperial Truth.

2.2. The Second Principle of Deontic Reasoning

Bucciarelli et al.'s second principle of moral reasoning, “the mechanisms underlying emotions and deontic evaluations are independent and operate in parallel”, may be explained using the doctrine of double effect. Philippa Foot elaborates that the doctrine “is based on a distinction between what a man foresees as a result of his voluntary action and what, in the strict sense, he intends” (Foot 1). Philippa Foot uses multiple examples to demonstrate the various applications of the doctrine of double effect; one of which is the analogy of a runaway tram that is heading for a group of five workmen working on the track. The driver has the opportunity to divert the tram onto a parallel track where a lone workman is working. The driver of the runaway tram in this example uses the deontic evaluation that it is better to sacrifice one workman's life in order to save five.

Alternatively, an emotions response may be elicited before a moral evaluation can be made in this

example if the lone workman is a friend or relative of the tram driver. It is then possible that the tram driver would refuse to divert the tram, thereby allowing it to strike the five workmen. Some may argue that this would be morally acceptable in the sense that the tram driver refuses to take any action and acts as a bystander, which may absolve himself of blame for not interfering in the tram's motion. However, the dilemma becomes more intricate if the situation were reversed and the tram was originally heading for the lone workman and the driver decided to divert the tram into the group of five workmen. Could this be considered manslaughter or transferred malice, knowingly inflicting more damage than would be necessary? It would be rather likely that diverting the tram into a group of five workmen as opposed to letting the tram hit a lone workman would have severe legal consequences. In the above example, the doctrine of double effect is present in the fact that the driver will not be able to prevent a loss of life regardless of the decision taken regarding the tram's direction.

A contrarian deontic argument could be that "killing and letting die are equally bad" (Rachels 1). This debate can be simplified and boiled down to the fact that the outcomes of both killing and letting die are the same; the victim ends up dead. However, Rachels alludes to four possible explanations of why killing is worse than letting someone die. The first explanation is that "when we kill someone, we cause the death; whereas if we merely let someone die, something else causes the death, and so we are less blameworthy" (Rachels 2). A prominent example of this distinction revolves around active and passive euthanasia, where the patient is either allowed to die as a result of their underlying disease or to be actively killed at the hands of a medical practitioner. In order to make the argument more fitting, we may refer back to the tram example mentioned earlier. If the driver of the tram acts as a bystander and does not alter the path of the vehicle as it rams into five workmen, the workmen may die as a result of the accident. Alternatively, if the tram driver alters the path of the tram so that it runs over the lone workman, the death is a result of the driver's action in changing the vehicle's path. The tram driver faces the dilemma of doing what may

seem morally the correct thing to do and divert the tram into the lone workman and face potential legal ramifications afterwards. The alternative is to suppress his emotional disposition to divert the tram and subsequently allow it to plough into the five workmen but avoid any possible charges of manslaughter or transferred malice.

In *Horus Rising*, the actions of the 63rd Expedition illustrate the doctrine of double effect. The expedition aims to unite the whole of humanity under the rule of the Emperor of Mankind and spread empirical truth throughout the galaxy. Despite the fact that the Astartes and the civilisation on Sixty-Three Nineteen were fundamentally identical, the inability of Horus to overlook the fact that they did not share the same emperor led to a time-consuming and costly military campaign. During the expedition, the Space Marines are on a mission to unite the galaxy under the banner of the Emperor of Mankind and the doctrine of Imperial Truth. The iterator, Sindermann, explains to Captain Loken that the expedition aims to unite the galaxy peacefully but is able and willing to use force if necessary.

Just because the Imperium has the Astartes, and thus the ability to defeat and, if necessary, annihilate any foe, that's not the reason it happens. We have developed warriors like you, Garviel... because it is necessary (Abnett 65).

Sindermann elaborates that the Warmaster uses might when all other channels have been expended. “Only with a heavy heart and a certain determination does he unleash the Astartes. The Adeptus Astartes is the last resort, and is only ever used that way” (Abnett 65). Compliance is the ends to which the expedition strives to achieve, and war is an unfortunate means used to attain that objective. The fact that Sindermann proclaims that Mankind’s message must be conveyed, even with the use of force if necessary, indicates that he comprehends the possible destruction of an entire civilisation as a result of their actions, yet the intention behind spreading Imperial Truth is for the ultimate benefit of mankind. This factor does not go unnoticed as Loken points out

How can we draw the lost outposts of man back into one harmonious whole if all we bring them is conquest? We are duty-bound to leave them better than we found them, enlightened by the communication of the Imperial Truth and dazzlingly made over as august provinces of our wide estate (Abnett 116).

The paradox of possibly bringing an entire civilisation to ruin, supposedly for their own benefit is unlikely to lead to a positive outcome. The rational alternative would be to leave the uncooperative civilisation alone, yet this would go against the objectives of the expedition, to unite the galaxy under the banner of the Emperor of Mankind. The doctrine of double effect is once again present as it is impossible for the Imperium of Man to spread their message peacefully using a military force designed to annex any society unwilling to be voluntarily amalgamated into the empire.

2.3. The Third Principle of Deontic Reasoning

One example of deontic evaluations depending on inferences in *Horus Rising* can be best demonstrated in chapter eight. Xavyer Jubal, an Astartes and Sergeant of Hellebore Tactical Squad, claimed to be a daemon named Samus and murdered some of his fellow Astartes. Despite seeing this happen, none of the Astartes could shoot Jubal as “not one of them could break the sworn code of the Astartes and fire upon one of their own” (Abnett 176). Jubal was clearly a threat to his brethren but Loken and his battle-buddies were too affected by the psychological stress of the possibility of having to commit fratricide that they failed to neutralise Jubal and prevent further killings. Loken’s reaction reflects Bucciarelli et al.’s third principle of deontic reasoning, that “deontic evaluations depend on inferences, either unconscious intuitions or conscious reasoning” (Bucciarelli et al. 121). During the aftermath of the conflict, Loken deliberated with his mentor, primary iterator Sindermann about the cause of Xavyer Jubal’s heresy. Two possible conclusions were reached. The first conclusion, deduced by Loken, was that Jubal was possessed by a daemon. ““He was possessed. He claimed he was Samus”” (Abnett 186). In order for Loken to remain consistent in his beliefs, he must reject what he previously believed to be true, that daemons do not exist and instead accept the possibility that daemons may actually exist via deductive reasoning. Alternatively, Sindermann attempts to outweigh Loken’s dissonant belief, that daemons exist, using

inductive reasoning. In order to accomplish this, Sindermann reinforces his own attitude towards daemons by stating to Loken that

Legends, Garviel. Only legends. Myths. We have learned much during our time amongst the stars, and the most pertinent of those things is that there is always a rational explanation, even for the most mysterious events (Abnett 187).

Sindermann proceeds to analyse the corpse of Xavyer Jubal and determines that the most probable cause of his abnormal behaviour was a plague. Loken challenges Sindermann as to why Jubal was the only victim affected by the supposed plague and Sindermann concludes that ““Perhaps some tiny flaw in his gene-code?”” (Abnett 188). Sindermann uses inductive reasoning to reach the most plausible conclusion as to why Xavyer Jubal turned on his own men whilst still adhering to previous held positions on empirical truth. For Loken to remain consistent in his beliefs, he must rationalise all experiences according to Imperial Truth to be able to ensure that all of his subsequent actions adhere to morally sound principles. The examples above highlight the importance of the balance between emotions and logic in shaping our understanding of the world around us.

2.4. The Fourth Principle of Deontic Reasoning

Fourth, the subjective, inconsistent nature of human attitudes towards morality can, in part, be explained by the assumption that morality is context specific. In an attempt to reduce the disparity in our moral beliefs, we can use the four-step procedure for formulating moral decisions, alluded to by Bucciarelli et al.

First, you formulate a maxim capturing your reason for an action; second, you frame it as a universal principle for all rational agents; third, you assess whether a world based on this universal principle is conceivable; and, fourth, if it is, you ask yourself whether you would will the maxim to be a principle in this world. If you would, then your action is morally permissible (Bucciarelli et al. 122).

For example, there is a general understanding that one should not kill, as to do so would end someone’s life and cause despair for their family. This understanding is an acceptable universal principle where a world based on this principle is both feasible and already exists; thus, the principle that one should not kill can be considered a moral one. However, there are exceptions to

this generalisation. The two most common examples of intentional killing being morally permissible can be demonstrated with the notions of self-defence and abortion. The prospect of self-defence is fairly straightforward, the premise being that one has the right to defend themselves using the minimum force necessary. The use of force in the face of an immediate threat is generally measured in terms of necessity and proportionality. This framework satisfies the conditions laid out in the four-step procedure for making moral decisions. It is important to note that the maxim may not cover all situations related to self-defence as the concepts of necessity and proportionality cannot be empirically measured and are, therefore, subjective and are not universally transferrable.

The second example of intentional killing being morally permissible can be explored using the concept of abortion. Abortion is one of the most divisive subjects that may be used to demonstrate the complexities of moral reasoning. Some countries, such as El Salvador, ban abortion outright under all circumstances. Some countries allow selective abortion due to issues such as birth defects or risk to the other's health and other countries allow abortion on demand during the first trimester of a pregnancy. In this hypothetical example, a mother is in the late stages of pregnancy and doctors are presented with a choice. In order to "save the mother we must kill the child, say by crushing its skull, while if nothing is done the mother will perish but the child can be safely delivered after her death" (Foot 7). In this example, the conflict is between who is allowed to live, the mother or the child, "since the child's death would be directly intended while the mother's would not" (Foot 7). While some countries outlaw abortion outright, even if it affects the life of the mother, in doing so the life of the foetus is prioritised over the life of the mother. The legislation is intended to protect human life but in its unconditional state may end up enabling the deaths of both mother and child. One of the reasons the concept of abortion is so controversial is because of the differences of opinion as to whether a foetus is considered a human being or not. The perception of abortion as either murder or birth control have distinctly opposite moral connotations attached to them.

In *Horus Rising*, moral inconsistencies can be found in the Imperial Truth proclaimed by Sindermann. He states in his lecture, promulgation of the living truth, that “Religion damned our species for thousands of years, from the lowest superstition to the highest conclaves of spiritual faith. It drove us to madness, to war, to murder” (Abnett 58). The irony of this statement lies in the fact that the Empire of Man wages countless wars based on their interpretation of truth and blind faith in doctrine. Arguably, Sindermann is comparing the epistemic truth of the false emperor and imposing the Imperial, alethic truth onto the galaxy. Either way, the practical execution of the doctrine of Imperial Truth is so weak in nature that it does not satisfy the fourth principle stated above. The parallel ideology is the false emperor disproving the theory in its hypocrisy as you can’t prove the impossibility of the opposite maxim's universality. Using an empirical approach, it is evident that if a challenger can argue the exact same case; your truth is not universal. This example illustrates the relativity of morality, its dependence on context and subjective frame of reference.

3. Superstition

Superstition will be defined in this thesis as the excessively credulous belief in and reverence of the supernatural, which affects morality in both real-life and in *Horus Rising*. The predicament with religion or superstition is that it creates in the believer a certainty that “I am right; you are wrong” (Tolle 69), which is detrimental to society when it is applied to the extent that it “perpetuates separation and conflict between human beings” (Tolle 125). The root of “separation and conflict” that Tolle refers to lies in the concept of tribalism. The collective identity of cultures in *Horus Rising* and in real-life have goals and doctrines that are to varying degrees, incompatible with other cultures and societies. *Horus Rising* presents the reader with an alien community, the keylekid, who “considered war to be the most abhorrent activity a sentient race could indulge in” (Abnett 173). Alternatively, the megarachnid, found on the planet murder are the complete antithesis of the keylekid.

To some extent, tribes are formed as a result of hierarchies. Generally speaking, our loyalties lie with family, both close and extended. This feeling of friendship and loyalty weakens the farther away from daily interaction it gets, as the scope of interpersonal relations is limited. In politics, particularly partisan politics, tribalism is expressed as the differences between people on each end of the social and political strata are vast. There is no connection between those on opposing ends of each spectrum. The threats posed to the opposing parties are radically varying ideas and, in some cases, physical conflict. On the other hand, the exposure to new ideas possibly portrayed by new cultures may be incredibly useful if assimilated into the original culture. An example of this can be demonstrated by the explanation of the nature of Chaos, or Kaos, given to Loken by an interex commander called Mithras Tull.

Tull frowned. ‘Yes, captain. *Kaos*. You say the word like you’ve never heard it before.’

‘I know the word. You say it like it has a specific connotation.’

‘Well, of course it has,’ Tull said. ‘No star-faring race in the cosmos can operate without understanding the nature of Kaos. We thank the eldar for teaching us the rudiments of it, but we could have recognised it soon enough without their help. Surely, one can’t use the Immaterium for any length of time without coming to terms with Kaos as a...’ his voice trailed off. ‘Great and holy heavens! You don’t know, do you?’ (Abnett 392).

Mithras Tull and the interex’s belief in ‘Kaos’ contrasts starkly with Loken and the Astartes’ perception that daemons and Chaos are the product of superstitious belief systems. The fact that the Astartes use the Immaterium but do not understand its relation to Chaos is news to the interex and has a direct impact on Tull’s perception of the Astartes. “‘I know it. I see it now. Truly. We have made a mistake in our delays. There is no taint in you. There is only the most surprising innocence’” (Abnett 394). The interex had feared that the Astartes may have been tainted by Chaos and had come to wreak havoc on interex territory. Loken may choose to learn from the new information presented to him about the nature of Chaos. This is especially true if he adheres to the doctrine of empirical truth where science determines what is true based on evidence. With technological advancements and the introduction of new knowledge, a deeper truth may be attained.

Both the interex and the Astartes use the Immaterium for travel but have differing understandings of the nature of its existence.

In order to understand our world, we need a fundamental narrative framework which is intelligible to all and in which our tribal affiliations are placed. In the West, the Judeo-Christian narrative is the most familiar structure of society. Within this structure there is a belief that humanity is based on the image of God and fulfils the role of separating good from evil in the world. However, when moral principles are upheld as absolutes, any deviation from these principles lead to dissidence and possible conflict. In a real-life context, the most conspicuous examples of tribalism in action can be seen in the current conflicts in the Middle East, fuelled by religious differences, just as conflicts have done for centuries in human history. Ethno-centrism has played an imperative role in human development and historically speaking, the unknown of other cultures has been a threat to the status-quo of the hegemony of the dominant factions of society. Such fundamental differences between cultures may lead to a collective expression of differences in the form of warfare. Collective expression of group identity is problematic in the sense that it removes the sovereign individual from the group dynamic and forces the collective to reiterate whatever ideology they are associated with. As a result, reasonable communication between tribes is not possible due to these competing power dynamics.

The ethos of the groups mentioned by Eckhart Tolle, popular writer and public speaker, via the attitude of “I am right; you are wrong” (Tolle 69), is exemplified by Loken’s comments to a subordinate officer during the campaign on Sixty-Three Nineteen. “Superstition. We know this world has temples and fanes. They are dark-age in their beliefs. Bringing light to that ignorance is part of why we’re here” (Abnett 155). Furthermore, with this belief in mind, Loken orders his men to destroy the shrine dedicated to the chaos daemon, Samus. ““They’ve been deceived,’ Loken said. ‘That’s why we’re here. Destroy this,’ he instructed and turned away” (Abnett 164). Loken’s dedication to Imperial Truth, the belief that the “true purpose of mankind is to bear the torch of

truth aloft and shine it” and that the Empire of Man is duty bound to share its “forensic, unforgiving, liberating understanding with the dimmest reaches of the cosmos” (Abnett 60), has given him the moral authority to infringe on others’ beliefs in a rampant act of politico-theologically inspired iconoclasm. In doing so, Loken perpetuates the separation and conflict between human beings that Eckhart Tolle warned of. For example, the “Emperor” highlights the contradiction in Loken’s actions in his reply to truth being amoral, with “in serving your fine truth, invader, you make yourself immoral” (Abnett 39). This justifies the claim that Imperial Truth is “considered more important than human life” (Tolle 70). From a moral perspective, it could be argued that morality is focussed on actions and beliefs that promote the well-being of the whole of humanity and society in general. If Imperial Truth is more important than human life, can it be considered a moral doctrine to ascribe to?

The worship of the macabre can be defined as a type of superstition – it is an obsessive attitude towards death that plays a central role in *Horus Rising*. For instance, the creation of an empire would typically be met with resistance. However, the Astartes are built for war and this fact is well understood within its own ranks. Whilst scrutinising the text, it became evident that the Astartes are sometimes blasé towards death: “‘Durellen’s dead. So is Martius,’ Lucius announced casually” (Abnett 211). In other instances, the concept of death causes distress amongst the warriors. “‘There have been deaths today. Six brothers of Brakespur squad, including Udon. Another barely clinging to life. And Hellebore... Hellebore has vanished, and I fear they are dead too’” (Abnett 186). Loken is distraught at the fact that one of the Astartes killed his own men, a concept which is unfathomable within the ranks of the Adeptus Astartes. “Astartes do not fight Astartes. Astartes do not kill their own. It is against all the rules of nature and man. It is counter to the very gene-code the Emperor fused into us when he wrought us” (Abnett 186). Similarly, there is also the effect of superstition on the Astartes’ perception of death. When a warrior falls in battle under conventional circumstances, his battle-brothers understand that it is just a consequence of

warfare. In contrast, the distress caused by the deaths at the hands of one of their own Astartes, Jubal, is a result of a possible supernatural influence, Samus. “No mistake. I saw him do it. He was a madman. He was possessed.” And “He was possessed. He claimed he was Samus” (Abnett 186). Loken’s fears are based mostly on his ignorance regarding the suspicious circumstances surrounding the deaths of his men. “An Astartes draws his weapon and kills his own, whilst claiming to be a daemon from hell? Rationalise *that*, sir” (Abnett 187).

Loken has been bred to live using logic and science and yet he is faced with the possibility of daemonic possession, which challenges the absoluteness of the Imperial Truth he so fervently believes in. Loken experiences severe cognitive dissonance and engages in a process of dissonance reduction to bring his cognitions and actions back in line with one another. Loken has three possible dissonance reduction techniques he could apply to his situation. The first option would be for Loken to change his behaviour or cognition to accommodate the new information presented to him, that daemons exist. His second option could be to justify his behaviour or cognition by adding new cognitions. In this instance, Loken could consider possible alternatives that could explain why he is considering the possibility that daemons exist, contrary to Imperial Truth. The final course of action Loken could take could be to ignore or deny the information that conflicts with his existing beliefs. He could ignore the possibility that daemons exist and maintain focus on his mission and other operational activities. In this particular example, Loken changes his cognition by asking his mentor the following question. “I’m going to ask you this once. Are spirits real?” (Abnett 187). Despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary, Loken's mentor, Sindermann, appears to not be convinced of the existence of daemons and refutes the information that conflicts with the doctrine of Imperial Truth. ““These marks,’ said Sindermann. ‘These vile signs of wasting. Could they be the traces of disease or infection?’” (Abnett 187). Sindermann, does not attempt to reduce dissonance and instead attempts to restore consonance. Sindermann refuses to accept the existence of daemons and instead rejects the new information presented to him. Instead, Sindermann attempts to persuade

Loken that there is a rational explanation for the deaths of his men and fellow Astartes. Sindermann's attempts to rationalise the events in the Whisperheads reinforce the view that our world views are rationally constructed as a result of our beliefs, assumptions and self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is a defining feature of humanity. Self-consciousness results in a search for meaning and this is a principle foundation for the creation of belief systems. People view the world via the framework of perception, which is realised in the form of belief systems. These belief systems may or may not be theologically based or even loosely draw any influence from religion. However, it is commonplace that on a global scale, axiomatic assumptions made by us are religious in nature. Similarly, in *Horus Rising*, Loken's uncertain stance on the existence of daemons reveal that even the Astartes make axiomatic assumptions in opposition to the official doctrine of Imperial Truth, which adamantly denies the existence of the supernatural.

The focus of our rationale may take the form of a deity in a theological setting or a similar concept occupying the same role in a secular setting. The events of the Horus Heresy which occur in *Horus Rising* demonstrate this phenomenon by following an archetypal pattern. The fratricide committed by Jubal in the Whisperheads is an event which disrupts the state of being by undermining the infallibility of Imperial Truth. The Warmaster explains to Loken that the primary iterator Kyril Sindermann "was even speaking of spirits, you know? Sindermann, the arch prophet of secular truth, speaking of spirits" (Abnett 197). Sindermann's transgression against secular truth is the result of a lapse in rational thinking. In a bid to return homogeneity, Sindermann takes to study to understand the truth of his experiences and others, such as Euphrati Keeler take to faith.

One issue with the nature of morality in *Horus Rising* is that morality is deeply rooted in belief systems. Imperial morality is not specifically, not doing what is fundamentally wrong, it is striving to do better in serving the needs of humanity and the expansionist Imperial agenda. If we make the assumption that morality is striving to do what is inherently good, it is not necessarily a realistic and achievable goal due to multiple external and internal factors. Alternatively, a realistic

perception of morality is that by actively transforming our beliefs in what is good, we can constantly aim for doing what is right. The most effective method for aiming for grace is by constantly searching for empirical truth and using that knowledge to pursue reality. The reason why it is essential to strive for truth is because although it may cause discomfort, it is morally right. If the intended outcome of our actions is just, true suffering becomes endurable. Suffering becomes especially endurable if it is supported by a belief system. Belief systems are imperative to functioning societies as they instil a moral framework within which to work in. In *Horus Rising*, the adherence to the doctrine of Imperial Truth is the guiding constitution of Imperial endeavours. In real-life, religion is a type of moral framework and the Abrahamic religions, in particular, focus on the archetype moral values of good and evil. From a religious standpoint, these binary values transcend our lives, as they have a lasting effect in the afterlife. In practice, this means that observers of faith have an incentive to strive to act morally in line with their religious guidelines as the consequences of not doing so will be felt after death.

In summary, superstition in *Horus Rising* is a realisation of the fact that morals are principally dependent on belief systems. The unwavering adherence to the belief systems of both parties in the conflict on the planet Sixty-Three Nineteen cause nothing more than friction, discord and death. The strength of Imperial Truth in *Horus Rising* lies in its unity of thoughts and actions; to stray from the unity of thought promoted by the doctrine leads to fragmentation and disharmony. The Emperor of Mankind takes the persona of the saviour of humanity, to be revered by all fanatically. He represents the ideal model of humanity from which no one may deviate in action and virtue. It is in the Emperor's name that the Astartes roam the galaxy spreading their collective, colonial values.

4. Individual and Collective Morality

The concepts of individual and collective morality play a central role in *Horus Rising*. Individual and collective morality connect with moral questions as they encompass multiple levels of value

associated with moral decision making. Individual morality entails moral evaluations made by the individual. Collective morality deals with the nuances of group morality and the societal frameworks which govern the scope of an individual's moral actions. The differences between individual morality and collective morality are not always explicit and to the contrary, may even be paradoxical. This paradox may be explained in terms of the relativity of morality. Moral relativism is the perspective that moral judgements are valid based on a relative standpoint. Usually, specific social settings or historical periods are used as bases of morality. The fact that morality is tied to a specific setting or time in history means that it cannot hold precedence over morality set in other periods of history or social settings. One of the most prominent claims about moral relativism is that it denies the existence of universal moral values. Instead, moral relativism champions the notion that morality is socially bound in the sense that different cultures exhibit vastly different moral values. In effect, moral relativism promotes the idea that it is not feasible to evaluate the moral actions of a differing culture as they are exercising a different, relative morality.

One example of moral relativism in *Horus Rising* is presented in the form of differences in opinion by the interex and the Astartes as to the treatment of alien cultures.

‘Therein lies the difference between our philosophy and that of the interex,’ Aximand said. ‘We cannot endure the existence of a malign alien race. They subjugate it but refrain from annihilating it (Abnett 357).

Aximand is referring to the absolutist moral principles of Imperial Truth when he states that humans and aliens may not coexist; the Astartes follow an absolute model of moral thinking. Their promulgation of Imperial Truth is an attempt to spread an ideology composed of singular, objective and universal sets of moral principles that humanity must abide by in order to remain united against adversity; the most prominent tenet of which is the renunciation of the acceptance of alien races. In contrast to moral relativism, absolute morality can be defined as a form of morality in which all rules, regulations and actions can be evaluated as being right or wrong, regardless of context and external circumstances. However, the contentious debate between Horus and Aximand about

whether to wage war on the interex or not implies that morality also has a situational aspect to it, relative to an individual's personal moral compass. Aximand claims that “tolerance is weakness. The interex is admirable, but it is generous and forgiving in its dealings with xenos breeds who deserve no quarter” (Abnett 357). He is trying to win the debate with Horus and does not care for any argument to the contrary which may be useful, accurate and truthful. In contrast, Horus understands that he has made mistakes in the past by not engaging in any discussion that may broaden his moral horizon. Subsequently, Horus concludes that “I will understand the interex, and learn from it, and parlay with it, and only then will I decide if it has strayed too far. They are a fine people. Perhaps we can learn from them for a change” (Abnett 357). Horus clearly considers the fact that because the interex can accept the inclusion of aliens in society, maybe he can too. This is in direct contrast to his previously held opinion about waging war against the megarachnid on the planet Murder.

‘So an alien war is a delight to me,’ the Warmaster continued, still smiling. ‘A clear and simple foe. An opportunity to wage war without restraint, regret or remorse. Let us go and be warriors for a while, pure and undiluted’ (Abnett 216).

Horus' attitude towards the megarachnid, calling them a “clear and simple foe” (Abnett 216), is an expression of tribalistic group identity. Tribalism may be used as a method of classifying groups encountered throughout the galaxy using tribal boundaries to make normative judgements in all aspects of life. This means that in terms of tribalism, epistemological judgements made by the Astartes about the galaxy are modelled around an expression of group identity. Similarly, in contrast to the pleasure Horus felt about the concept of waging war against the megarachnid, his comments about the war on Sixty-Three Nineteen are more sombre as the opposition was composed of humans.

Proud as I am of our accomplishments on Sixty-Three Nineteen, that was a painful fight to prosecute. I can't derive satisfaction from a victory over our own kind, no matter how wrong-headed and stubborn their philosophies. It limits the soldier in me, and inhibits my relish of war, and we are all warriors, you and I. Made for combat. Bred, trained and disciplined (Abnett 216).

Horus' contrasting comments about the joy felt about waging an alien war and the disdain at having to fight a war against humans is a consequence of species polarisation. Species polarisation is a form of ethnocentrism, a disposition to view one's own ethnic group, or in the case of the Astartes in *Horus Rising*, species as superior. All individuals not belonging to the primary group identity are viewed as inferior or as a possible threat. Furthermore, the Astartes are anthropocentric in their crusade across the galaxy, which means that no matter how similar the cultures that they encounter may be to humanity, there will always be larger perceived differences based on species identity. This causes a moral dilemma as exploring the galaxy with preset notions of morality based on group identity is not a viable solution. This epistemic isolation from the outside world leads to an inward-looking culture. It sets the precedent that everyone who is not an Imperial, human subject is not trustworthy or equal.

After the conflict with the interex, Horus decides to widen the gap in social distance between the Astartes and all other races in the galaxy, including humanoid species. The increasingly inward focus of Horus is reinforced with the renaming of his legion as his own personal legion. The immediate results of the decision are increased unity and solidarity felt within the collective identity.

The news was well-received. In the quiet corners of the flagship archives, Kyril Sindermann was told by some of his iterators, and approved the decision, before turning back to books that he was the first person to read in a thousand years. In the bustle of the Retreat, the remembrancers – many of whom had been extracted from the *Extranus* by the Astartes efforts – cheered and drank to the new name. Ignace Karkasy sank a drink to the honour of the Legion, and Captain Loken in particular, and then had another one just to be sure (Abnett 411).

The temporary and internal effects of strengthened in-group solidarity are sacrificed in favour of out-group animosity. The initial benefit the Astartes feel in terms of their new, strengthened bond will ultimately cause greater animosity with the non-group members they will encounter during their future expeditions. In terms of morality, the newly named Sons of Horus will be kept on edge as they are more wary of any who do not fit into the collective identity of Imperial humans, which

may result in increased vigilance and hostility towards non-group members. In effect, Horus has segregated his legion so that it does not have to interact with any non-Imperial factions. The danger accompanying the renaming of the legion is increased species polarisation.

In *Horus Rising*, moral conclusions are drawn from in-group affiliations. There are multiple levels of this group affiliation, ranging from larger notions of collective human identity to individualism. For example, when coming to the aid of stranded Astartes from a rival legion, the Blood Angels, on the planet Murder, the rescuing Astartes, the Emperor's Children, ensured that the honour of the legion in distress remained intact.

THE PLANET'S OFFICIAL designation in the Imperial Registry was One Hundred and Forty Twenty, it being the twentieth world subjected to compliance by the fleet of the 140th Expedition. But that was inaccurate, as clearly the 140th had not achieved anything like compliance. Still, the Emperor's Children had used the number to begin with, for to do otherwise would have been an insult to the honour of the Blood Angels (Abnett 220).

The Emperor's Children have a strong enough inter-legion collective group identity to ensure that they show compassion for the Blood Angels in distress and keep their honour intact. On the other hand, the in-group bond within the Emperor's Children is substantial enough that they would rather sacrifice waiting for reinforcements in favour of trying to secure glory for their own legion.

Tarvitz knew Lord Eidolon had no intention of sharing any glory with the Warmaster's elite. His lord was relishing the prospect of demonstrating the excellence of his company, by rescuing the cohorts of a rival legion (Abnett 223).

Lord Eidolon's selfish pride is an outward expression of his inflated, individualistic ego. At the core of individualist expression is the notion of the ego. The ego connects with morality as it is realised and expressed in the form of actions. Issues may arise when a healthy ego develops into an egocentric one and the credibility of others is discounted, as demonstrated by Lord Eidolon's attitude regarding the reinforcements sent to relieve the stranded Blood Angels on the planet Murder. In this particular example, Lord Eidolon's ego is responsible for collective morality as he commits his company to the rescue mission not under the premise of providing assistance to the Astartes in distress, but to exhibit the martial prowess of his company. Subsequently, the Emperor's

Children Space Marines sent down to the planet Murder as reinforcements were annihilated. Once the Warmaster and his expedition arrived at the scene, he conducted a thorough debriefing with the leadership of the rescue mission and the Mournival.

‘What of the Emperor’s Children?’ Loken put in. ‘Did they not even consider waiting?’

‘For what, exactly?’ asked Eshkerrus.

‘For us,’ smiled Aximand.

‘An entire expedition was in jeopardy,’ replied Eshkerrus, his eyes narrowing. ‘We were first on scene. A critical response. We owed it to our Blood Angels brothers to—’

‘To what? Die too?’ Torgaddon asked.

‘Three companies of Blood Angels were—’ Eshkerrus exclaimed.

‘Probably dead already,’ Aximand interrupted. ‘They’d showed you the trap was there. Did you just think you’d walk into it too?’

‘We—’ Eshkerrus began.

‘Or was Lord Eidolon simply hungry for glory?’ asked Torgaddon (Abnett 275).

The above interaction between the Mournival and Lord Eidolon’s equerry, Eshkerrus demonstrates how the hubris of the Astartes can be held responsible for collective morality. The officers of the 140th Expedition Fleet who originally attempted to rescue the stranded Blood Angels Space Marines on the planet Murder act as the moral agents of the collective. As officers, the decision makers are expected to interpret their commander’s intent using doctrinal guidelines, rational thinking and a clear vision of the intended result of their commander’s actions. To some extent, the collective thought processes associated with such mission-type tactics ignore the notions of autonomy and free-will in the decision-making process. Horus recognises this paradox as he claims that

Captain Frome was right to assault this world, for it is clearly a nest of xenos filth. We applaud his courage. Master August was right to support the captain, even though it meant he spent the bulk of his military formation. Lord commander Eidolon was right to engage, without support, for to do otherwise would have been cowardly when lives were at stake (Abnett 276).

Even though Horus and the Mournival believe that the officers of the 140th Expedition Fleet were wrong for expending the bulk of their resources on the planet Murder, Horus does not hold each individual group member accountable for their failures. Alternatively, the ego can be held

responsible for collective morality as the officers functioned collectively when conducting their failed operations on the planet Murder.

The Astartes represent the apex of humanity in the sense that they are fearless, abnormally large and strong and lack the common needs and wants desired by lesser humans. Their functional stability indicates that the Astartes have a strong sense of self-actualisation. The Astartes' belief in their own superiority is reinforced through their own autonomy and ability to act without social constraints. Autonomous figures are brave, staunch figures essential to mould humanity's path. In contrast, the Imperial bureaucrats are pawns of the Imperium of Man, simply following the dictates of the Terran Council. When trying to explain to the high administratrix, Aenid Rathbone that taxing newly conquered worlds would be counterproductive and untimely, Aenid Rathbone repeated her stance that "The Emperor has insisted this be so" (Abnett 371). Evidently, the autonomy enjoyed by the Astartes within the Imperial hierarchy is threatened by rigid, empowered bureaucrats. Horus may be the Emperor's proxy in name, but he has been relegated to the sidelines in favour of civilian administrators sent throughout the galaxy to enforce the Emperor's commands.

Imperial society is structured in a way that it is composed of multiple hierarchies of social organisation based on administrative function. Their physical and social distance from one another results in disdain and a lack of effective communication. The problem with the Astartes' way of thought is that they assume that hierarchies are based on physical prowess. The withdrawal of the Emperor from the vanguard of the Great Crusade and the promotion of the role a civilian administration plays in the running of the Empire indicates that the perceived value of the Astartes and their military objectives are in decline. The Astartes are bred and conditioned almost exclusively for war and so the reduction of military authority reduces their influence in Imperial society. Horus expresses his anguish visibly after explaining to Loken that the Emperor left "the crusading work in the hands of the primarchs so that he might be freed to undertake a still higher calling" (Abnett 201). "Loken sensed a terrible hurt in his commander, a wounded pride that he,

even he, had not been worthy enough to know this secret” (Abnett 201). The Emperor is no longer focussed on military matters and is instead, attempting to harbour the power of the warp. Horus reinforces this position when he comments that “I believe that I am Warmaster because the Emperor is occupied in unlocking its secrets” (Abnett 201). The consequence of such a loss of influence in the Imperial hierarchy is that Horus is lead down a path of nihilism, which generates a sense of hopelessness as a result of the loss of authority to civilians and the lack of guidance and communication from the Emperor himself.

Eckhart Tolle holds the view that the ego is part of a collective, and this is how it shall be defined in this thesis. In some respects, Eckhart Tolle’s opinion of the collective ego has the connotation that the ego also defines collective morality. This viewpoint is validated when we take into consideration the dichotomous nature of collective morality; groups may be collectively held accountable for something even if not all the members of the group are involved. Similarly, the actions of certain individuals belonging to a collective may cause their entire collective to be held responsible for the actions of the individuals at fault.

In *Horus Rising*, there are many instances throughout the text where characters are offended or displeased. It is their reactions in these circumstances which highlight the hubris of the Astartes. For example, whilst being questioned by Mersadie Oliton, Loken airs his offence at the fact that the Warmaster is not referred to by his official title. “He is *Warmaster* Horus. You’re a remembrancer. Remember that” (Abnett 44). Loken is offended not so much because the reference itself bothers him, but because a member of a lower, subordinate class of Imperial, a remembrancer, dared to refer to their leader as anything other than by his formal title. Loken’s hubris is a projection of his internal insecurities resulting from the Astartes’ dwindling influence within the Imperial hierarchy. Horus attained his position of Warmaster based on merit and competence. Loken feels that this fact must be recognised and therefore, requires the use of honorific speech when addressed by anyone outside of Horus’ immediate sphere of influence. The dangers of using the ego to compensate for

insecurities, low self-esteem and as an expression of jealousy may lead to weakened morality. This is especially true when power is used to maintain prestige and dignity. In a bid to remain dominant in the shifting Imperial hierarchy, Loken resorts to degrading Mersadie Oliton. If Loken's egoism serves the common Imperial agenda, it may be considered just and beneficial for the good of Imperial society. However, with the dwindling prominence of martial prowess and warfare, Loken's inflated ego may be considered harmful to morality.

The interaction with the remembrancer highlights the importance of the role hierarchies play in Imperial society. The function of the Astartes is to conquer the galaxy and spread the influence of humanity via conquest, a hierarchical structure that they dominate; due to their military aptitude and competence. However, the reorganisation of Imperial society in the direction of a civilian government reflects the progressive diminishing of the Astartes' power. Resources previously allocated interminably to the Great Crusade are a thing of the past as Imperial administrators begin levying taxes on newly conquered worlds to sustain the civilian government on Terra. In terms of the ego, Loken is no longer concerned with his personal ego, but is now obsessed with the collective mindset of his brothers in arms. "A collective ego manifests the same characteristics as the personal ego, such as the need for conflict and enemies" (Tolle 125). Despite the fact that the remembrancers and the Astartes are members of the same faction, their purposes as part of the 63rd Expedition differ fundamentally. The collective purpose of the Astartes is to wage war without question and to fight and die at the whim of their commanders. The Astartes fulfil this role with extreme prejudice and hubris, which is a direct product of their egos. Alternatively, the remembrancers are tasked with documenting the feats of the Astartes and hold a purely civilian position. Eckhart Tolle accurately predicts that "sooner or later, the collective will come into conflict with other collectives, because it unconsciously seeks conflict and it needs opposition to define its boundary and thus its identity" (Tolle 125). Conservative societies built around rigid hierarchies are resistant to change. The egos of those with an averse attitude towards the revision of

social structures will likely become unsettled when faced with the prospect. Anger and tension may develop if unwanted change is forced upon the society. This anger and tension, if not relieved, may escalate into conflict.

The society encountered on Sixty-Three Nineteen had an almost identical ethos as the Astartes and therefore, came into conflict with them. Furthermore, Tolle's claim that the members of collectives "will then experience the suffering that inevitably comes in the wake of any ego-motivated action" (Tolle 125), is evidently supported by Loken's reaction to the inevitability of waging war on Sixty-Three Nineteen. "'And so,' Loken would sigh, 'we made war upon our brethren, so lost in ignorance'" (Abnett 44). During the conflict in "the mountain massifs of the southern hemisphere . . . called the Whisperheads in the local language" (Abnett 151) on Sixty-Three Nineteen, effectively demonstrate the differences in group identities between the two warring factions. The Space Marines promote a human identity free from religion, superstition and the supernatural. In a crude display of group identity, Loken chastised a subordinate who claimed that the Whisperheads were haunted, "you are admitting to a belief in spirits and daemons . . . We're not barbarians" (Abnett 155). When researching the history of Sixty-Three Nineteen, Sindermann explains to a remembrancer that the Whisperheads are

a sacred place to the people of Sixty-Three Nineteen. A holy, haunted place, where the alleged barrier between reality and the spirit world is at its most permeable. This is intriguing. I am endlessly fascinated by the belief systems and superstitions of primitive worlds (Abnett 160).

Both Sindermann and Loken display arrogance in their comparisons of the local population with "barbarians" and being "primitive". Despite their demeaning attitude towards the religion and superstition of the locals on Sixty-Three Nineteen, there are some within the Imperial ranks who share a similar level of religious fervor towards the Emperor. After the trauma on the Whisperheads, Euphrati Keeler claims that the Emperor physically protects mankind from the dangers of the galaxy and worships him as a god.

She opened the first page and, bowed before the makeshift shrine, she began to read. ‘The Emperor of Mankind is the Light and the Way, and all his actions are for the benefit of mankind, which is his people. The Emperor is God and God is the Emperor, so it is taught in the *Lectio Divinitatus* (Abnett 330).

It is evident that despite any belief to the contrary, the local population and the Astartes have parallel belief systems, making them more similar than different in terms of ideology. The outcome of this analysis raises the question, would it not be better to take no action whatsoever than to engage in conflict with other collectives and harm both parties involved? We can see from the aforementioned example that neither of the collectives involved in the conflict on Sixty-Three Nineteen came out of it any better than before it was started. In fact, the informal discourse between Loken and the iterator Sindermann, after his lecture to the other iterators, raises multiple arguments that question the morality of the Empire they serve. The first and most important issue, is why the Astartes could not leave their enemy alone and continue their expedition. This prospect is voiced by the false “Emperor”, who stated that “if our philosophies are so much at odds, you could have passed us by and left us to our lives, unviolated. Yet you did not. Why?” (Abnett 39). The Astartes’ expeditionary fleet found “Terra” or planet Sixty-Three Nineteen by chance and could have easily ignored it. Instead, the Astartes had to force their “truth” onto the inhabitants of the planet. One cannot help but wonder how such a course of action could be justified. Arguably, the answer lies in the values of Imperial Truth. If the Astartes do not adhere to their doctrine and impose their ideology on others, their doctrine would have little value and the purpose of their expedition would be rendered pointless.

The final issue raised in Loken and Sindermann’s conversation, is the concept of empirical truth. The empire scours the galaxy preaching their “truth” and bringing worlds into compliance with their views. The “Emperor’s” statement and Mersadie Oliton’s reiteration of the fact “Could we not have just left them alone?” (Abnett 44), highlight the clear lack of moral conscience in the Empire’s doctrine. Loken shows some humanity by admitting to Sindermann that this question has been plaguing his mind ever since the interview with Mersadie Oliton in his private arming

chamber. “If we encounter a person, a society in this cosmos that disagrees with us, but is sound in itself, what right do we have to destroy it?” (Abnett 64). The Astartes could have let the citizens of Sixty-Three Nineteen live their lives in peace, as they had been doing so before the arrival of the expedition. It is difficult to morally justify the conquest of Sixty-Three Nineteen, especially as the only argument for bringing them to “compliance” is a spurious argument made by primary iterator Sindermann.

Mankind has a great, empirical truth to convey, a message to bring, for the good of all. Sometimes that message is spurned and denied, as here. Then, and only then, thank the stars that we own the might to enforce it. We are mighty because we are right, Garviel (Abnett 65).

Sindermann’s words give no indication of what exactly is the empirical truth that mankind is supposed to convey. Similarly, he does not give any explanation as to why their message is “for the good of all” or why they should enforce that message. At this point in the novel, the reader is posed with the question, is this so called “empirical truth” truly justification enough to threaten, attack, dominate and ultimately subjugate all species and cultures in the known galaxy?

To sum up, it is made evident in this section that the concept of a collective ego is destructive in its very nature. Both within the Imperial hierarchy and without, there are identity politics at play. There are differences in collective ideology between external groups due to differing allegiances and ideals, yet, within the Imperial ranks, the identity differences stem from the role purpose plays in group identities. Martial prowess is the ideal character trait to strive for in Astartes society, yet civilian occupations are slowly gaining favour in Imperial society, demonstrated by the presence of unprecedented numbers of iterators and remembrancers sent to accompany the Imperial expeditions engaging in the Great Crusade. However, it is important to note that despite the differences in function, ideology and identity of the various groups across all strata of Imperial society, they all share the same fundamental moral values based on Imperial Truth.

One possible method to alleviate fragmentation within collectives could be to raise the importance of the individual in society and within hierarchies. Free thought and freedom of action can prevent the destructiveness brought about by a blind adherence to hegemony. The Astartes' constant need for conflict and enemies reflects the ego-motivated actions of collective egos which Eckhart Tolle warned of. The need to impose their "empirical truth" on unwilling, civilised societies is a physical manifestation of the Imperium's egotistical agenda. Only by adopting individual responsibility can the Astartes prevent unnecessary war and bloodshed in the name of a forlorn cause, domination of the galaxy.

5. Just War Theory

Just war theory is a branch of ethics which is used when determining whether there is a cause for war, *jus ad bellum*, how to conduct that war, *jus in bello* and arguably, how to conduct post-war activities, *jus post bellum*. In the context of this thesis, just war theory will be broken down into two approaches, traditional just war theory and revisionist just war theory. All three aspects, the cause for war, conduct of warfare and post-combat activities will also be explored in this section.

Traditional just war theory treats *jus ad bellum* actions and *jus in bello* activities as separate, parallel entities. Alternatively, revisionist just war theory treats the two approaches to warfare as dichotomous parts of a whole. The purpose of this section is to explore the different attitudes towards just war theory, the justification for going to war and the consequences of that decision. To some extent, just war theory is one facet of moral reasoning as it is rooted in the moral decision-making process specifically regarding warfare.

In real-life, there are numerous reasons for resorting to war, some more arbitrary than others. The connection between moral decision making and resorting to war stem from the same subjective sense of morality and decision-making. However, in *Horus Rising*, the main justification for war and the Great Crusade in general, is based on the Emperor's absolute vision of human unification throughout the Galaxy; a concept not prevalent in real-life just war theory. This

dogmatic adherence to ideology is prevalent amongst fanatical groups with strict hierarchical structures.

The origins of just war theory are rooted in Ancient philosophy, as can be demonstrated in

De officiis by Cicero:

As for war, humane laws touching it are drawn up in the fetial code of the Roman People under all the guarantees of religion; and from this it may be gathered that no war is just, unless it is entered upon after an official demand for satisfaction has been submitted or warning has been given and a formal declaration made (Cicero 39).

Cicero alludes to a basic form of just war theory with the premise that wars should only be fought after an initial declaration of war has been made. It is important to note that the theory was developed and refined over time by subsequent religious influencers such as Saint Augustine of Hippo, who promoted the view that war can only be justified in a defensive capacity and not instigated for any other reason. Based on this premise, later theorists such as Saint Thomas Aquinas and Immanuel Kant wrote out written conventions outlining the intricacies of just war theory and expanded its scope. In contemporary Western society, we rely on more secular approaches to morality in just war theory. The duty falls on international bodies and agreements such as the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, Geneva Conventions and International Law to monitor and regulate the cause and conduct of warfare.

In *Horus Rising*, the decision to resort to war and even less so, restrictions on how wars are conducted are arbitrary at best. The implication in *Horus Rising* is that the Warmaster may wage war justifiably for two reasons: to unite humanity and to spread Imperial Truth throughout the Galaxy. The Warmaster's discretionary criteria for resorting to war raises many questions as to the justification for warfare within the text and also highlights the importance of the existence of just war theory in real-life, especially when using the Warmaster's dilemmas as an analogy for the necessity for guidance and regulations on the conduct of warfare.

Contrary to the lax restrictions on the conduct of war by the Astartes, in the real-world, we have a certain just war theoretical framework within which the process of warmaking should adhere

to. This includes international conventions, treaties and national legislation. For example, at the international level, signatories adhere to the treaties of the Geneva Conventions. On a national level, countries use other guidelines to regulate conduct. One such example is the use of a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) or a Status of Mission Agreement (SOMA) used by the UN to determine the rules of conduct in a host country.

A Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) or a Status of Mission Agreement (SOMA) is an agreement between a host country and the United Nations which embodies the consent of the host State to the presence of the peacekeeping operation on its territory and regulates the status, privileges and immunities of the peacekeeping operation in the host country (United Nations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations 51).

By concretely outlining the objectives and limitations of a military mission, it is easier to monitor and control the conduct of personnel within the parameters of the mission and ensure that no breaches of law occur. One key purpose of just war theory is to limit the use of arbitrary justifications for warfare, such as those illustrated in *Horus Rising*.

Both traditional just war theory and revisionist just war theory have the same approach towards *jus ad bellum* principles and accountability. For a war to be deemed just Kewley states that a conflict must fulfil six criteria:

- 1) having a good reason to go to war (just cause)
- 2) ensuring that a declaration of war is an appropriate response to the situation (proportionate cause)
- 3) having legitimate aims, such as founding a more enduring peace than would otherwise have been founded without a full-scale conflict (right intention)
- 4) being initiated by a legitimate power, such as a head of state or government (right authority)
- 5) achieving a realistic victory (reasonable prospect of success)
- 6) being used only when all diplomatic attempts have failed (last resort) (Kewley 1).

When applying these six criteria to the campaign on Sixty-Three Nineteen in *Horus Rising*, it is evident that the conflict does not meet all the preconditions necessary to be deemed just. The first criterion, having a good reason to go to war is disputable. The nature of the Great Crusade is to bring truth and enlightenment to human settlements throughout the galaxy. However, the campaign on Sixty-Three Nineteen “was a case of blood spilled from misunderstanding” (Abnett 13).

Assuming the cause for war on Sixty-Three Nineteen was just, a declaration of war may be considered an appropriate response to the situation as diplomatic efforts had failed. Sejanus, Horus' ambassador was massacred for not showing the correct fealty to the newly met "Emperor" on Sixty-Three Nineteen. Horus began his interaction with the new civilisation by sending "Hastur Sejanus to meet with the Emperor and deliver greeting" (Abnett 15). This action implies that the Warmaster had benevolent intentions and so fulfils the requirement of "having legitimate aims, such as founding a more enduring peace than would otherwise have been founded without a full-scale conflict" (Kewley 1). The fourth condition, that conflict should be initiated by a legitimate power, such as a head of state or government is satisfied as the Warmaster has the authority to lead the Great Crusade as the Emperor's proxy. The Astartes satisfy the prospect of achieving a realistic victory as "the Astartes were superior to anything they had ever met or would ever meet" (Abnett 19). With a force as dominant as the Astartes, very few threats to the 63rd Expedition may be deemed credible. The final and arguably the most important aspect of a just conflict, fighting being used only when all diplomatic attempts have failed, appear to stand correct in this example. Horus "determined that a second embassy would be despatched" (Abnett 16) to Sixty-Three Nineteen in a bid to resolve the situation peacefully. Horus "detested resorting to war, and always sought alternative paths away from violence, where such were workable" (Abnett 16). Horus' second envoy came under attack and subsequently led to a full-scale invasion of Sixty-Three Nineteen.

According to Jeff McMahan, traditional just war theory supports the position that "a soldier does no wrong by fighting in an unjust war, provided that he or she obeys the rules regulating the conduct of war" (McMahan 2013). One rationale for this line of thinking lies in the notion of responsibility. Arguably, combatants cannot be held accountable for violations of *jus ad bellum* rules because those principles are only applicable to state decision makers. Furthermore, providing they abide by the rules of war, it is possible for a combatant to conduct a war justly, even if the overall aim of the conflict is unjust. The rationale behind this thinking lies in the fact that the

individual combatant does not hold enough authority to affect the conflict on a large scale. In some respects, combatants may be viewed purely as instruments being used by political bodies to resolve conflicts, they are not responsible for the cause of their conflicts, only for their execution. A similar attitude is demonstrated in *Horus Rising*. Sindermann claims

You are a weapon, Garviel, an example of the finest instrument of destruction mankind has ever wrought. There must be no place inside you for doubt or question. You're right. Weapons should not think, they should only allow themselves to be employed, for the decision to use them is not theirs to make (Abnett 64–65).

In line with this mode of thinking, combatants are morally absolved of their actions, providing that they adhere to the rules of conduct assigned to them. A combatant cannot fight a just war unjustly because then he will no longer be a just combatant.

In revisionist just war theory, the differences between the resort to war and conduct within war are not necessarily distinct and separate from each other. If a combatant participates in a conflict where their party is the aggressor, they are not fighting for a just cause and so cannot be held morally exempt from the repercussions of fighting in that war.

The third aspect of just war theory, post-conflict resolution and peacebuilding, may be demonstrated using the concept of transitional justice. Transitional justice refers to the political transformations towards democracy. The International Center for Transitional Justice defines the concept as follows:

Transitional justice is a response to systematic or widespread violations of human rights. It seeks recognition for victims and promotion of possibilities for peace, reconciliation and democracy. Transitional justice is not a special form of justice but justice adapted to societies transforming themselves after a period of pervasive human rights abuse. In some cases, these transformations happen suddenly; in others, they may take place over many decades (International Center for Transitional Justice).

In *Horus Rising*, the 63rd Expedition completely destroyed Sixty-Three Nineteen and brought it to compliance. The Imperial iterators are tasked with rebuilding and reshaping newly conquered territories so that they may be amalgamated with the Empire of Man. Primary iterator Sindermann claims in his lecture, promulgation of the living truth that ““Their culture was constructed upon lies.

We have brought them the keen edge of truth and enlightened them. On that basis, and that basis alone, go from here and iterate our message” (Abnett 61). The iterators are tasked with winning over conquered populations to the Imperial cause through the promotion of Imperial Truth and a sense of belonging within the Empire. These actions may be viewed as a transition from one form of government to another and the subsequent assimilation of society into that new structure.

Similarly, in a bid to aid the peaceful transition, the Warmaster grants recognition for the victims of the conflict by allowing a state funeral for their fallen leader. “The Warmaster had agreed to a state funeral for the ‘Emperor’. He declared it only right and proper, and sympathetic to the desires of a people they wished to bring to compliance rather than crush wholesale” (Abnett 48). The decision of the Warmaster to appease the wishes of the newly conquered population of Sixty-Three Nineteen indicates some form of familiarity with the concept of transitional justice and its role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

Despite the fact that transitional justice as a concept only surfaced explicitly in the 1980s, an example of transitional justice in effect may be demonstrated in the surrendering of the German Army in May 1945.

However, the cooperation and organization of the German military greatly aided Canadian efforts. For the most part, German military formations remained intact and functional. At Julianadorp, the Germans "marched in fully armed, wheeled into the airfield along one road and halted." 18 Canadian soldiers merely collected and stacked German weapons. German war material was sorted, stored, and guarded, pending final destruction or distribution to Allied military and civil sources (Madsen 4).

The willingness of the German forces to cooperate with the occupying forces indicates their transition from fighting force to out-processing organisation. Such willingness demonstrates a genuine desire to enact conflict resolution and uphold peace. The transition was still rocky as despite the combatants’ designation as prisoners of war, the Germans were allowed to retain their own justice systems, despite Article 44 of the 1929 Geneva Convention which made prisoners of war “subject to the laws, regulations, and orders in force in the armies of the detaining Power” (Madsen 11).

This section on just war theory highlights the intricacies and difficulties of determining whether there is a cause for war. In *Horus Rising*, there is no accountability for the decision to resort to war and very little guidance on how to conduct that war. Arguably, the autocratic and imperialistic nature of the Warhammer 40,000 universe removes the necessity for accountability, which is an essential cornerstone of maintaining peace in the real-world. One similarity between the real-world and the fictitious environment of *Horus Rising* is the notion of transitional justice. Transitional justice is implemented to ensure lasting peace in both the real-world and in *Horus Rising*.

6. Bioethics

Bioethics plays an important role in contemporary society. The advancement of modern medicine has increased the life expectancy of humans dramatically. Similarly, those who suffer from grievous bodily injuries may receive replacement limbs or augmentations to defective body parts. However, the future application of procedures may go beyond repairing bodily damage and into the realm of advanced cosmetic procedures. To better understand the contentious role bioethics plays in contemporary society, it is advantageous to explore the concept using posthumanist theory. Jay David Bolter describes posthumanism as “a new way of understanding the human subject in relationship to the natural world in general” (Bolter 1). In effect, posthumanism theory allows us to view the world from a non-anthropocentric standpoint. This new perspective defies the separation of human, beast and technology when analysing the natural world.

In order to understand the concept of posthumanism, we must first determine what its predecessor, humanism entails. Humanism is an anthropocentric philosophical perspective which emphasises the values of empiricism and rational thought over superstition. Humanism in a contemporary context, refers to a non-religious, ethical orientation to the world. It is not a formal doctrine with prescribed rules and regulations on how to act and behave in society but an approach to life based on human nature, experience, individual responsibility and free choice.

Posthumanism breaks away from humanism to the extent that

Posthumanist theory claims to offer a new epistemology that is not anthropocentric and therefore not centered in Cartesian dualism. It seeks to undermine the traditional boundaries between the human, the animal, and the technological (Bolter 1).

The non-anthropocentric focus of posthumanism gives non-humans equal standing with humans in their relevance and roles in society. In *Horus Rising*, the theories of humanism and posthumanism permeate the cultures of the Astartes and interex respectively. On the one hand, the Astartes maintain an emphasis on the importance of anthropocentric values. The aim of the Great Crusade is to amalgamate all human cultures into the Imperium of Man under the earthly rule of the Emperor of Mankind. Upon making contact with the interex in person, Horus declares that “‘It is our purpose in the stars,’ . . . ‘to find all the lost families of man, cast away so long ago’” (Abnett 362). Horus specifically states the anthropocentric goal of the 63rd Expedition is to reunite humanity throughout the universe. On the other hand, the interex does not share this anthropocentric viewpoint and to the contrary, after a century-long war, welcomed an alien race known as the kinebrach into their society. The interex envoy, Diath Shehn, elaborates:

It taught us a great deal. It taught us about our place in the cosmos, and certain values of compassion, understanding and empathy. The aria developed directly from it, as a tool for use in further dealings with non-human parties. The war made us realise that our very humanity, or at least our trenchant dependence on human traits, such as language, was an obstacle to mature relations with other species (Abnett 364).

Not only has the interex embraced the kinebrach into their society, it evolved new traits beyond human in order to improve not only cross-cultural, but cross-species communication as well. The aria mentioned by Diath Shehn is “a fundamental part” (Abnett 358) of interex communication. The interex

still used language – indeed, their spoken language was an evolved human dialect closer in form to the prime language of Terra than Chtonic – but they had long ago formulated the aria as an accompaniment and enhancement of speech, and as a mode of translation (Abnett 358).

The widespread use of the aria in interex society draws strong parallels with posthumanist theory.

The notion that speech may be enhanced and even translated by a tool is similar to the

contemporary development of speech recognition technology and artificial intelligence in real-life.

A similar conclusion is reached by Jay David Bolter in his chapter on Informatics and posthumanism.

The neural nets of early cybernetics evolved in the 1980s into more sophisticated forms, which eventually led to effective algorithms and techniques for pattern-matching applied to contemporary digital services such as voice recognition and language-processing (Bolter 4–5).

Despite the contending anthropocentric values held by the Astartes and the interex, the uniting feature of their cultures is the shared human history of the distant past. It is based on this common ancestry that they share a mutual interest in each other and exchange regular diplomatic missions.

For the purposes of this thesis, bioethics will be defined using Chase Anders Manuel's definition of the concept:

Bioethics is the division of applied ethics that researches the philosophical, social, and legal issues which arise in medicine and the life sciences. It is mainly focused upon human life and human well-being, though it at times also views the ethical questions relating to nonhuman biological environments (Manuel 1).

This definition of bioethics is suitable for the aim of this thesis as it approaches the concept from multiple theoretical standpoints. On a macro level, the purpose of bioethics is to ensure that our actions do not threaten the integrity of maintaining a compassionate, humane world. If we do not have any ethical framework to work within, there is a credible threat that future generations will suffer as a result of our actions. Bioethics aims to further the aims of humanity and the good of human society. However, in *Horus Rising*, the extent of genetic augmentation is at a point not yet attainable, if at all in real-life. Using fictional examples of hypothetical, controversial bioethical procedures brought about by advances in biotechnology and medicine sets the scene for subjective speculation regarding the development of medical ethics in current discourse. This section on bioethics is relevant to this thesis as the utilisation of genetic enhancement in *Horus Rising* has no restrictions regarding the augmentation of humans. In contrast, genetic augmentation is not only acceptable but is also desirable and in some cases, revered. The prowess of the Space Marines is

brought to light when they are compared with the inferior enemy on Sixty-Three Nineteen. The “enemy lacked one essential quality . . . the genetically enhanced flesh and blood of the Imperial Astartes. Modified, refined, post-human, the Astartes were superior to anything they had met or would ever meet” (Abnett 19). This description of the heavily augmented Astartes sufficiently encapsulates Donna Haraway’s definition of a cyborg. “A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction” (Haraway 5).

It is important to note that the majority of genetic augmentation efforts in *Horus Rising* are focussed on military applications. This section on bioethics explores a range of bioethical considerations surrounding genetic modification and other forms of unconventional augmentation.

From a philosophical standpoint, it can be generally agreed upon that if humanity will benefit from a specific course of research and not suffer from it, the research should be sanctioned. This rationale is reinforced by the World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects. The declaration states that “The primary purpose of medical research involving human subjects is to understand the causes, development and effects of diseases and improve preventive, diagnostic and therapeutic interventions” (World Medical Association 2191). The artificial induction of immunity in the form of a vaccine is an exemplary manifestation of medical research that involves human subjects and adheres to the World Medical Association principle stated above. However, with rapid advances in modern medicine and research, it is relevant that we re-examine current guidelines and legislation to further clarify what would be considered ethically viable. To explore this issue, it may be fitting to explore the concept of human genetic modification. “Human genetic modification is the direct manipulation of the genome using molecular engineering techniques” (Center for Genetics and Society). There are two different applications of genetic modification. The first method is called somatic genetic modification. This variant of gene editing has been in use for decades and forms the basis of medical research. The method involves the insertion of genes into the cells of a patient

which cannot be inherited by offspring. The technique is used to treat severe diseases such as thalassaemia and cystic fibrosis. This method is not particularly controversial as the purpose of the action is to help understand diseases and aid in their prevention and cure. However, the second application of genetic modification is known as germline modification. Germline cells may pass their alteration on to offspring, which makes their modification highly controversial. Some countries, such as Germany, have laws forbidding germline modification. “The artificial alteration of the human germline is criminalized by the Embryo Protection Law (art. 5, par. 1) (Germany, The Genetics and Public Policy Center). Despite this fact, the law is not universal and in China, He Jiankui used the genome editing tool known as CRISPR-Cas9 to edit the DNA of twin baby girls, born to an HIV-positive father, to make them HIV-resistant (Associated Press). The result of the treatment sets new precedents for the application of gene editing in the future. He Jiankui’s efforts are to some extent comparable with the Emperor using his own DNA as a template from which the Primarchs were created.

If germline genetic modification becomes commonplace in the world, it is possible that it will make its way into the field of military science. The development of bioweapons such as the megarachnid serve as a vivid warning, telling us not to explore that avenue of biotechnology. A more human comparison can be made with the character of Regulus of the Adeptus Mechanicus, who is a fitting illustration of the connection between humanity and physically fused machine:

The man, if it were a man, lurked at the rail of the strategium deck, gazing out across the chasm of the bridge. He was a machine, it seemed, much more a machine than a man. Vague relics of flesh and muscle remained in the skeletal fabric of his mechanical body, a fabulously wrought armature of gold and steel (Abnett 114).

The Adept Regulus is not only a hybrid of machine and organism being “much more a machine than a man” but he is also a functionary of the Imperial war machine. His augmentation is so advanced that he is more machine than human. In real-life, we are far from such a level of bodily modification. However, arguably the first steps in that direction have already been taken. For

example, the DARPA Warrior Web program is designed to improve soldiers' performance, creating a kind of super soldier who has improved strength and endurance as a result of mechanical and technological enhancements to their bodies.

The Warrior Web Alpha effort examines five key Technology Areas: core injury mitigation technologies; comprehensive analytical representations; regenerative actuation; adaptive sensing and control; and suit human-to-wearer interface (United States, Department of Defense).

The current project focusses on integrating an augmented suit with a human wearer. It is possible that as technology improves, and augmentation becomes a mainstream phenomenon, the concept of a suit will be abandoned in favour of bodily augmentation. Perhaps, therefore, we are on the path towards creating fully integrated cyborgs. If this approach towards augmentation becomes widely accepted and promoted, soldiers' humanity will be sacrificed for technological supremacy. The Astartes in *Horus Rising* are examples of the results of genetic enhancement. "A prospective Astartes had to be sturdy, fit, genetically receptive, and ripe for enhancement. A chassis of meat and bone upon which a warrior could be built" (Abnett 56). The Astartes are incapable of feeling fear, resistant to disease and have two hearts to support their massive frames. From an ethical perspective, concern can be summarised by Maxwell Mehlman, who claims that "genetic enhancement could represent a transcendent evolutionary step in which mankind finally seizes its biological destiny from its former molecular masters, the genes" (Mehlman 124). The existence of the Astartes warriors are a realisation of Mehlman's fears as they are genetically wrought from the genetic material of the Emperor's Primarch sons.

One of the major concerns regarding bioethics stems from the lack of regulatory and ethical guidelines surrounding biomedical research. In an unstable political environment, it is not unlikely that the application of biomedical research may become concentrated on the creation of potentially harmful biological agents or products. The deliberate or unintentional misuse of such technology may have irreparable consequences.

The vivid literary descriptions of grotesque elements in *Horus Rising* affect meaning and enhance our perception of the depravity of the warring factions in the text. The “Emperor’s” comments on Loken’s appearance, “You are some imposter, some evil daemon-” and “You are an imposter. Made like a giant, malformed and ugly” (Abnett 38), do not create a positive image of Loken and the Astartes. In some respects, this description reinforces the perception of the Astartes as draconian oppressors, as opposed to the mighty defenders of humanity that they perceive themselves to be. Furthermore, we have to consider the rationale behind the creation of these super warriors. In general, people fear advanced technology, such as cyborgs and robots. It is possible that this fear stems from the potential malevolent applications of advance technology. The creation of the genetically augmented Astartes is a physical manifestation of such fears. The notion of genetic enhancement is a sensitive topic in current politics and such a concept does not appeal to most people. The basis of this fear lies in the concept of grotesque incongruence. Grotesque incongruence entails the blending of elements that do not normally belong together, the dismantling of elements that are supposed to be inseparable from each other or, excess of any sort; as is the case with the Astartes. The Astartes are subject to the concept of norm-breaking corporeality, in the sense that “generally any kind of excess, mental as well as physical, is characteristic of the grotesque” (Perttula 28). Grotesque incongruence includes elements that are no longer “normal” and can arouse negative feelings in the reader, such as distress or anxiety.

Grotesque incongruence is made up of three categories. The first category, “the norm-breaking combination of human and animal or human and an inanimate, distinct physical object” (Perttula 36), can be somewhat exhibited using the example of the megarachnid found on the planet Murder. Although these creatures are not a combination of human mixed with animal or technology, they are in fact, the perfect combination of beast and technology. In many respects, therefore, they can still be viewed as the archetypal grotesque manifestation in the text, as they are

“the combination of heterogeneous, disparate elements that do not belong together” which has been “persevered as the defining structural feature of the grotesque” throughout history (Perttula 35).

Even after he'd slain a fair number of them, Saul Tarvitz was still unable to say with any certainty where the biology of the megarachnid stopped and their technology began. They were the most seamless things, a perfect fusion of artifice and organism. They did not wear their armour or carry their weapons. Their armour was an integument bonded to their arthropod shells, and they possessed weapons as naturally as a man might own fingers or a mouth (Abnett 207).

The megarachnid are certainly creatures of nightmares and one cannot help but suspect that they were created for war. It is not specified where these creatures came from or why they are present, but Diath Shehn, an ambassador of the interex; long lost cousins of humans, states that “they existed only to reproduce and develop territory” (Abnett 365). The fact that the megarachnid have weapons and armour does not indicate that they have ever been peaceful creatures. Ironically, the megarachnid can be seen as a parallel of the Empire of Man. They are both technologically advanced and strive to eradicate everything that does not belong to their own species. The brutal single-mindedness of the megarachnid in their unrelenting goal to eradicate all sentient life on the planet Murder draws a close comparison to the Empire's inexorable drive to wage war across the galaxy. In contrast, the interex decided that instead of being annihilated, compassion was shown to the megarachnid and after a long war, they were marooned on the planet Murder, also known as Urisarach by the interex.

We gathered all the megarachnid remaining into captivity, and transported them to Urisarach. We also deprived them of all their interstellar technology, or the means to manufacture the same. Urisarach was created as a reservation for them, where they might exist without posing a threat to ourselves or others (Abnett 365).

In terms of morality, the reader should ponder whether the actions of the Empire are any better than the seemingly mindless destruction caused by the megarachnid and whether the interex's compassionate approach towards alien societies would be preferable.

The second feature of grotesque incongruence includes collisions in genre, such as between “the realistic and the fantastic” which serve to “illustrate how the essence of grotesque is not

harmony, but disharmony. Different levels of presentation “repel” each other and deform each other, and the reader may not know how exactly to react” (Perttula 36). The mixed sentiments of atheism (as an aspect of the realistic) and spiritualism (as the realisation of the fantastic) in the dialogue between Loken and his dying foe, highlight the conflict in their respective ideologies and creates an atmosphere of disharmony, not only between the characters but also within the reader of the text:

‘Bless me...’ the man whispered.
 ‘I can’t.’
 ‘Please, say a prayer and commend me to the gods.’
 ‘I can’t. There are no gods.’
 ‘Please... the otherworld will shun me if I die without a prayer.’
 ‘I’m sorry,’ Loken said. ‘You’re dying. That’s all there is.’
 ‘Help me...’ the man gasped.
 ‘Of course,’ Loken said. He drew his combat blade, the standard-issue short, stabbing sword, and activated the power cell. The grey blade glowed with force. Loken cut down and sharply back up again in the mercy stroke, and gently set the man’s detached head on the ground (Abnett 163).

In terms of morality, this excerpt could be difficult for a reader to comprehend. Loken clearly has some sense of pity as he stops to console the wounded man. However, his words do not correspond with normal, human, empathetic disposition. We are troubled by the fact that Loken refuses to bless his enemy. He could bring the man peace of mind by granting him this final wish. However, instead of consoling the insurgent, he imposes his own truth on the poor soul and dispatches him according to his own ideology. We are left wondering why Loken had to remain so adamant in his views and not concede to the vanquished foe in his final moments of life. In refusing to bless the man, Loken did not diverge from his own strict moral convictions, therefore, one could argue that he forfeited a significant portion of his humanity.

The third feature of grotesque incongruence is the “incongruence between content and form, what is portrayed and how it is presented, the subject and its representation, or story and discourse” (Perttula 36). In lay terms, it is the depiction of a dramatic event using an inappropriate register, not commonly associated with the specific context in which it is used. During the conflict on Sixty-

Three Nineteen, Captain Ekaddon's reaction after detonating an elderly man's ribcage in the "Emperor's" tower is highly inappropriate judging by the gravity of his actions. "'I've never killed an emperor before,' he laughed" (Abnett 41). Loken had made special provisions for the "Emperor" to surrender with dignity. "I request you surrender to me, sir" (Abnett 39). However, Ekaddon gave no thought to the dignity of his foe and instead revelled in his act of slaughter. This is in stark contrast with Loken's accommodating actions in this example. Even within the Legion, therefore, there appears to be variation between the Astartes in terms of their moral disposition and levels of compassion shown towards their enemies.

In summary, the concept of grotesque incongruence and disharmony can be split into three distinctive features in relation to morality. Although each feature, norm-breaking corporeality, collisions in genre and incongruence between content and form may be treated as separate entities of grotesque incongruence and disharmony, when combined, they highlight numerous instances of paradox, hypocrisy and physical abnormality, which evoke mixed responses in the reader. The incongruous and incoherent behaviour of the Astartes reflect the inconsistencies of our own behaviour and justifications for contentious aspects of our lives. The events in *Horus Rising* are intentionally ambiguous to allow for the reader to come up with their own, subjective interpretation of the events in the text and to draw their own moral conclusions.

7. Conclusion

This thesis explored key concepts of morality; moral reasoning, superstition, individual and collective morality, just war theory and bioethics. It also touched upon the notions of deontic ethics and grotesque incongruence and disharmony as they supplement our understanding of the concepts of morality in *Horus Rising*. Moral reasoning was explored using the theory of deontic ethics to interpret and identify the basic principles underlying our perceptions of morality. Examples of general conduct and codes of behaviour which may be regulated by a sense of duty and respect for authority were used to illustrate these deontic principles and *Horus Rising* used examples of loyalty,

leadership and doctrine to further these points. This section proved to us that although morality can be defined as a set of principles “concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behaviour” (“Morality”), the application of our moral thinking is based on context and our subjective judgement.

Superstition was approached from the perspective of an excessively credulous belief in and reverence of the supernatural. Tribalism is used to explore the effect differing belief systems have on the moral disposition of communities. These belief systems were put in a narrative framework which encompasses the principles on which morality is formed. Narrative frameworks have been essential to the development of moral beliefs throughout history, yet problems arise when these moral beliefs do not adapt and evolve over time and are regarded as absolute assumptions to be abided by without question. It is imperative to challenge superstitious beliefs in the face of empirical evidence that contradicts previously held presuppositions if a society intends to develop and improve its moral integrity.

Individual and collective morality is comprised of the moral evaluations made by individuals and collectives respectively. The divide between individual and collective morality is not always clear and may overlap in certain aspects. Moral relativism is a philosophical position which may be used to analyse moral judgements from differing, subjective standpoints. The balance between collective group identity and individual free thought is essential for maintaining some form of definitive moral framework. If individuals have too much autonomy and weak moral guidelines, hubris and an inflated ego may lead them to behave amorally. Similarly, if a collective is repressive in regard to its member’s adherence to doctrine, the search for truth will be restrained and compromised.

The just war theory section was broken down into two approaches, traditional just war theory and revisionist just war theory. Traditional just war theory distinguishes between the cause for war, *jus ad bellum* and how to conduct that war, *jus in bello*. This theory was prominent

throughout the 19th century but gradually fell out of favour due to developments in accountability for conduct. The theory that followed traditional just war theory was revisionist just war theory. The main difference between the two approaches is that revisionist just war theory treats both the resort to war and the conduct of war as dichotomous parts of a whole. Individual accountability is more prominent in revisionist theory and a just cause must be had in order to enter into a conflict. A relatively recent development has been the consideration of how to conduct post-war activities, *jus post bellum*. This section concludes that the main feature of just war theory is the notion of accountability. The notion of accountability covers the appropriation of moral responsibility for the decisions made as to the cause, conduct and outcome of warfare.

The concept of bioethics has an ever-increasing role in contemporary society. Recent developments in the fields of genetics and augmentation leaves questions about how the role of medical ethics will take shape in the future. The concept was explored using humanist and posthumanist theory, as well as excerpts from current medical ethics journals regarding current developments in biotechnology and the possible application of biotechnology in the future. Grotesque incongruence and disharmony is used in *Horus Rising* to enhance a break from physical norms and how they are portrayed. Our perceptions of morality may be affected by the disparate depiction of events in the text and the discrepancy between thoughts and actions.

Horus Rising invites a reading based on moral reasoning, superstition, individual and collective morality, just war theory and bioethics as all concepts are linked to the extent that they are all defined by subjective, cognitive thought processes. Our ability to decide which actions are moral and which are not are limited by our subjective sense of duty and respect for authority. The application of just war theory is an expression of an individual's sense of accountability for the decision to resort to war and level of personal involvement in the conduct of that war. The lack of regulatory and ethical guidelines surrounding biomedical research may be abused in an unstable political environment. Those in positions of power who have a limited or no sense of personal

accountability for their actions may decide to abuse the lack of concrete regulations surrounding the field of bioethics for malevolent purposes; such as for use in warfare.

The result of the discussion of the aforementioned topics indicates that they are more closely linked to each other than may be initially expected. Real-life experiences have limitations as to how far they can be used to demonstrate viewpoints of morality. These limitations relate to the fact that real-life examples are either current or in the past. We can hypothesise about their possible future developments, but this is restricted by the bounds of a realistic timeframe. To successfully break away from this timeframe issue, we may engage in suspension of disbelief and use a fictitious text to illustrate and test hypotheses. *Horus Rising* is a fitting text for this purpose as it pushes the boundaries of moral thinking much farther than is currently possible in real-life. By comparing the examples in this thesis with real-life experiences, we can reflect on our own interpretation of the concepts of morality.

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