

A Reader's Guide to

The Two Halves of Your Conscience

A Reader's Guide to Eleutherian Hermanism

By

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1 · WHY THIS GUIDE EXISTS

A missing half.

Most readers of moral philosophy finish a book and quietly notice a seam. The author told them what a good person ‘should’ do. Then, three chapters later, the same author admitted the good thing failed and listed what would have worked instead. The reader is left to wonder: were they being asked to be good, or effective? Both?

Eleutherian Hermanism starts from a different premise. The seam is not a failure of writing. It is a failure of vocabulary. We have inherited two ethical languages — Kantian for ‘I should’, consequentialist for ‘it leads to’ — and we treat them as opponents. Eleutherian Hermanism says they are halves of one act. This guide shows you how to read both at once.

WHAT YOU WILL GET IN 12 PAGES

- A vocabulary for the seam where duty and consequence split apart.
- Four named categories of action, so you stop arguing in circles.
- Two hard scenarios worked end-to-end through the unified frame.
- Five questions you can use on the next decision you face.

Duty and consequence, the way you already use them.

Before any philosopher named them, you already had two voices in your head. The first says: ‘I should tell the truth, even when it costs me, because that is what a person of my kind does.’ The second says: ‘If I tell the truth here, my friend will be hurt, and a small lie would protect them. Which is the better outcome?’ You have always heard both. You have never had a clean word for the moment they are talking about the same act.

‘Duty’ names the first voice. ‘Consequence’ names the second. Eleutherian Hermanism insists these are not rivals. Duty is the form an act takes from the inside — the conscience of the agent. Consequence is the same act seen from the outside — its trace in the world. A complete moral judgment is one act witnessed from both viewpoints at once.

‘A complete moral judgment is the same act, witnessed twice — by the conscience that chose it, and by the world it changed.’

Cosán and Culpa: naming what was missing.

Eleutherian Hermanism restores two words that European philosophy let fall out of use. Cosán (Irish: path) is the inner path an act takes through the agent — the conscience-shaped trace. Culpa (Latin: fault) is the outer trace — the consequence the act leaves on others and on the future. When you speak of an act with both names, you stop arguing with yourself.

A small table.

Voice	Term	Question it answers
Inner	Cosán	What kind of person am I becoming by doing this?
Outer	Culpa	What kind of world am I leaving by doing this?

A small taxonomy that does real work.

Any act can be sorted along two axes. Does the act sit on a clean cosán — can the agent say, without flinching, what kind of person is doing this? And does the act leave a clean culpa — can its trace be named, measured, held to account? Cross the two axes and you get four categories. Most moral drama happens in one of them.

- **Aligned acts**

The cosán is clean and the culpa is clean. The agent and the world agree. These do not generate moral stories. They are what we forget about.

- **Wrong acts**

Both the cosán and the culpa are spoiled. The agent betrays their own form and damages the world. Every tradition names these.

- **Moral luck**

The cosán is clean but the culpa rots — the agent was right and the world went badly. The unfairness that drives most ethical anxiety lives here.

- **Duty traps**

The cosán is good but the culpa rots — keeping a rule damages the world it was meant to protect. Heroism and rigidity both die here.

The clean cosán still leaves a broken culpa.

A runaway trolley will kill five workers on the main track. You can pull a lever that diverts it onto a side track, where it will kill one worker instead. By every standard rule of thumb, you pull the lever. Five for one — the calculus is settled.

Now meet the side-track worker. They are not a stranger in the abstract. They are Maya, who works the night shift so her mother can rest. You pulled a lever that placed her body under the trolley. Cosán: clean — the agents of these frameworks will recognize you as a person of integrity. Culpa: rotten. You have a name, a face, and a life you ended.

Eleutherian Hermanism says: do not pretend either voice is inaudible. The duty-track reader has to admit the culpa. The consequence-track reader has to admit the cosán — what kind of person you are by pulling the lever is part of the act. Both halves belong to one event, and a complete judgment names both.

When the kind act is the cruel one.

Your friend trusts you with a piece of news they have not given anyone else: they have been offered a job in another city, and they are going to take it. Tonight, they are telling their partner over dinner. If your friend's partner already suspects and the surprise is the cruel part, do you tell your friend privately, hours before dinner, so they can choose the moment themselves? Or do you stay silent and let the plan unfold?

Duty says honesty. Consequence says: the dinner is the point. Honesty is the *cosán*; the dinner is the *culpa*. A naive duty reading may rupture the *culpa*. A naive consequence reading may rupture the *cosán* — you become the friend who knew.

The Eleutherian habit is to ask, before acting: what kind of friend am I becoming by doing this, and what shape does this leave the friendship in? Both questions get answered, in writing, before any action is taken. Either voice, on its own, would mislead you; together they build a third option — the call you place an hour before, naming what is about to happen and agreeing on the moment with your friend. Two halves, one act.

The two failure modes you already know.

Pure duty ethics, if taken alone, produces rigidity: people who would rather let the world break than violate a rule. Pure consequence ethics, if taken alone, produces drift: people who would rather violate a rule than let the world break. Both groups are real. Both groups think they are right. The cost of the seam is paid in real friendships, real careers, real institutions.

Eleutherian Hermanism treats the seam as the place where moral life happens. Wavum consciousness (Sanskrit root for ‘weaving’) is the practice of holding both threads at once without cutting one. The Owl — a deliberately unhurried thinker — is the inner figure that refuses to choose early. Neither vocabulary is a slogan. They are training wheels for a habit you already felt you needed.

The next five pages give you the smallest possible set of moves: the four categories, two worked cases, and five questions to take with you. None of this asks you to abandon your tradition — Kant and Mill are not wrong, they are partial. Eleutherian Hermanism is the thread that lets you braid them.

Hitobh, Wavum, and the Owl.

Eleutherian Hermanism borrows carefully, on purpose. The point of original vocabulary is to make you slow down long enough to notice your own habits. The terms are not gilding; they are a checklist you can run before the moment closes.

- **Hitobh**

Sanskrit for “becoming.” The direction your inner form is moving toward by an act. Cosán’s verb form. Ask: who am I becoming by doing this?

- **Wavum**

Sanskrit for “weaving.” The act of holding duty and consequence together without collapsing either. The opposite of choosing early.

- **The Owl**

The inner figure of unhurried judgment. Not indecision; the refusal to mistake urgency for clarity. The Owl is what you ask for at 11 p.m. when the noon voice is wrong.

Carry these out of the guide.

Use them before, during, or after a decision. Order does not matter. The point is to keep both voices in the room.

- 01** Cosán — what kind of person am I becoming by doing this, and can I name that person without flinching?
- 02** Culpa — what does the world look like after I do this, and whose name will I have written into the day?
- 03** Hitobh — is the form I am moving toward the form I want to be moving toward?
- 04** Wavum — am I holding both cosán and culpa, or have I let one voice shout the other down?
- 05** The Owl — if I waited an hour, would I still do this? If the answer is yes, the act has cleared its first trial.

The One Moral Law course.

This guide is Volume 1 of the reader series. The companion course, The One Moral Law, builds the same vocabulary into a usable practice. Seven modules of about 2,000 words each. A short quiz at the end of each module. (You are not graded on whether you agree with the author — you are graded on whether you can read both halves.)

The course is for readers who leave a moral philosophy book and want a vocabulary they can still use the next morning. If you have ever closed a chapter and thought, “I agree with the conclusion, but I cannot use the conclusion,” the course is for you.

MODULES, AT A GLANCE

- 01 · The two halves (this guide, expanded).
- 02 · Cosán — the inside of an act.
- 03 · Culpa — the outside of an act.
- 04 · The four categories, in five hard cases.
- 05 · Hitobh and Wavum in daily life.
- 06 · The Owl at the kitchen table.
- 07 · A complete judgment, written out.

Lewis Herman is a philosopher and writer working on Eleutherian Hermanism — a unified ethical system in which duty and consequence describe the same act, witnessed twice. His longer book, *The Physics of Morals*, is in progress. The reader series is the bridge.

Where to go next.

- > **The One Moral Law course** — lewisherman.com/course
- > **The blog** — lewisherman.com/blog
- > **The newsletter (3-email nurture)** — lewisherman.com/newsletter
- > **The Twitter thread / X** — [@lewisherman](https://twitter.com/lewisherman)

Thank you for reading. The seam is not a flaw — it is the place where moral life happens. Name both halves. Take the Owl's hour. You will be surprised how often the act survives it.