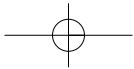
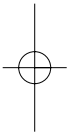


MEMO 1  
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MORALITY



## 1

# Screws and Nails: Paper Tigers and Moral Monsters in *The Office*

*J. Jeremy Wisnewski*

## We're Screwed

The problem with doing what's right is simple: there are too many ways to screw it up, and usually only one way to nail it. From the moment I get up in the morning, I'm ready for something to go wrong—and I don't have to wait long for it to happen.

The odds are just against us. Given all the things that might happen in a day (and there's a *lot* that happens every day), the likelihood that those things will not involve somebody screwing up in some way are just abysmally small. Even given the number of things that *I* do in a day—the number of possibilities I have to choose from—the chance that I'll pick the thing that isn't messed up is pretty much negligible. So, I'm screwed—but so are you—and for some reason, knowing that makes me feel better. I see vindication for my view everywhere—especially in *The Office*. No matter how much people try to get things right, no matter what their intentions are, things are always screwed up; no one seems to nail decency.

We fail to be decent for different reasons. Philosophers generally consider three categories of moral failure: evil (wanting to do wrong), weakness of will (not being able to stop yourself from doing wrong), and ignorance (not knowing that what you're doing is wrong). Knowing *the ways* we mess up, philosophers often contend, might help us limit our propensity to screw things up so completely.

But there's an important category of moral failure missing from this list—one that *The Office* helps us see clearly. This is the category

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of *moral blindness*. Even when we *want* to do what's right, and know what rules we should follow, and have the strength of will to follow these rules, we still botch things up in tremendous ways. My solitary piece of evidence for this category of moral failure is found in one place: the manager's office at Dunder-Mifflin, and his name is Michael Scott.

### Getting to Know Yourself: Some Species of Moral Failure

The rather despairing view of our daily lives that I've been painting (we'll call it the "we're screwed view") has prompted some great work in moral philosophy—the branch of philosophy that is fundamentally concerned with the nature of right and wrong, good and evil, and with our capacity to engage in one sort of action rather than another. Indeed, our most famous moral theories are dedicated to telling us what we can do to *guarantee* that we won't screw things up.<sup>1</sup> Plato (c. 427–347 BCE), for example, thought that all moral failure was the result of ignorance. The reason people fail to do what's right is just that they do not *know* what's right. Once you know what the right thing to do is, you can't help but do it.

Other philosophers have taken darker views of human motivation, recognizing that some people are just downright *malicious*. No amount of moral education will ever enable such people to do the right thing. There are a couple prime candidates for this kind of moral failure in *The Office*: Creed and Andy. Creed is routinely weird, but he's also often surprisingly creepy, and sometimes in a downright malicious way. When Pam begins to dress less conservatively in the office, for instance, Creed loiters at her desk, staring at her chest for several moments. Pam is obviously distressed by Creed's lustful looks, and she asks him to go back to his desk. He ignores her request, continues to ogle her breasts, and says "in a minute . . ." ("The Coup").

In certain respects, Stamford's Andy is even worse. It's Andy, after all, who essentially engineers Dwight's short-lived departure from the office. After botching up a sales call, Andy continues an attempt to convince Michael that Dwight is utterly worthless:

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*Andy:* So sorry man. I really screwed that up.

*Michael:* Oh, don't worry about it.

*Andy:* I really Schruted it.

*Michael:* What?

*Andy:* I Schruted it. It's just this thing people say around your office all the time, like when you really screw things up in a really irreversible way: you Schruted it. I don't know where it comes from though. Think it comes from Dwight Schrute?

*Michael:* I dunno. Who knows how words are formed . . .  
("Traveling Salesmen")

Earlier in the same episode, Andy had compared the staff to the "Superfriends," insisting that in this regard Dwight was the odd man out: "It's like everyone has their own special skill, you know, just like the superfriends . . . except for Dwight, who's more of a super dud. I mean, he'd be a superfriend if there was a superfriend whose superpower was always being late."

When these first efforts at bad-mouthing Dwight fail to get Michael's attention, Andy ups the ante: he breaks into Dwight's car, looking for something he can use against Dwight. He finds a receipt from a New York City toll booth, and uses this to convince Michael that Dwight is attempting another coup. This is obvious malicious self-service: Andy wants Michael's affection to further his own career, and wants to ruin Dwight because Dwight stands in his way (and, well, because he's *Dwight*).

Fortunately for us, malice is not the most common cause of inappropriate action. Much more common is our inability to refrain from acting on our desires. The term philosophers often use for such weakness of will is *akrasia*: when one's desires overpower one's rational decision-making. *The Office* is bubbling with *akrasia*—it occurs here and there in most of the characters on the show. Some of the more striking examples of this are Jan's consistent giving in to her desires for Michael. She admits that he's bad for her, that there's something idiotic about him—but she nevertheless goes home with him time and again, reason be damned. (Eventually, of course, Jan decides to simply stop fighting her irrational and self-destructive desires for Michael, on the advice of her therapist.)

Meredith is an even more striking example of akratic action. Despite a decision to be done with alcohol, she repeatedly comes

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back to it. As the office is spring cleaning, for instance, we see her throwing out an empty bottle of vodka that she had been keeping in her desk (“The Secret”). Likewise, when alcohol is brought to an office party, she quickly gives in to her temptations, despite her decision to stay on the wagon.

The last of the common trio of moral failure is ignorance. Sometimes we fail morally because we just don’t know what the right thing to do is, either because we don’t have all the information, or because we don’t know the relevant moral principles. We see this kind of moral failure in “Christmas Party,” when Pam chooses to take a video iPod from Michael instead of Jim’s heartfelt gift (a teapot full of personal affects, intended only for Pam). Pam isn’t malicious. She has no desire to hurt Jim. Likewise, she’s not just giving in to her desire for a video iPod, despite Jim’s feelings. Rather, she doesn’t *know* how much Jim has put into his gift for her, and so she initially opts not to take it. The key evidence that Pam’s failure is ignorance, of course, is that she trades Dwight her iPod for the teapot as soon as she realizes what’s going on. In any instance where new knowledge will change one’s behavior substantially, it’s likely that the cause of one’s moral failure is ignorance.

But the really interesting examples of moral failure—from my philosophical vantage point, at any rate—are *not* when we are evil, or when we give in to our desires, or even when we are ignorant of all the facts, or of the relevant moral rules. The really fascinating moral failures are failures to *see* that there is even a moral issue at stake.<sup>2</sup> It is this kind of failure, I contend, that we see in Michael Scott.

### Knowing But Not Seeing

Does Michael understand what it means to be offensive? In one respect, the answer must be “no.” Everyone who has even casually watched *The Office* will be quick to recognize that Michael is a master of the art of unintentional offense. But *why* is this so? Is it simply that no one has taught Michael what’s offensive, or is it something deeper? I’ll call this one like I see it: no number of rules will ever help Michael. The problem isn’t failing to know the rules. The problem is a failure to see when the rules are relevant.<sup>3</sup>

Deciding what Michael’s problem is turns out to be a thorny task. In many cases, he really seems just plain ignorant: he doesn’t seem to

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know what's going on, or what he's saying, or how it relates to other things in the world. When Michael decides to run his own diversity day, for example, he immediately kicks Toby out of the meeting for making a joke. "This is an environment of welcoming, so you should just get the hell out of here!" ("Diversity Day"). It's as though there is a short-circuit between the words Michael utters and his ability to comprehend those words—after all, one doesn't need a PhD in philosophy to recognize that kicking someone out of a welcoming environment is contradictory! A welcome environment is one where you welcome people!

In other contexts, Michael attempts to justify his actions by analogy—by relating what a decent person would do in other contexts. Once again, he seems oblivious to what a decent person *would* do. In these situations, it looks like Michael is ignorant of the rules of the moral life. In trying to justify his email forwards to his employees, Michael claims that he doesn't come up with these jokes. He just delivers them, and "you wouldn't arrest a guy who was just delivering drugs from one guy to another" ("Sexual Harassment"). When Toby tells him he shouldn't send out inappropriate jokes, regardless of their source, Michael replies that "there's no such thing as an appropriate joke. That's why it's a joke." When Jan tells Michael that there will be downsizing, Michael doesn't see the point of letting the gang know about the possibility of losing their jobs. "As a doctor, you would not tell a patient if they had cancer" ("Pilot"). Things only get worse when Michael has people wear tags with particular races on them to encourage awareness of diversity ("Diversity Day"). Michael wears a tag that says "Martin Luther King, Jr.," apparently not recognizing the difference between a *person* and a race. Michael explains why he has not included some groups among those named: it would be "explosive" to include Arabs in a diversity exercise, "no pun intended . . . [pauses] . . . Maybe next year. The ball's in their court." In attempting to encourage awareness of diversity, Michael brazenly invokes the very stereotypes he supposedly wants to overcome.

Episodes like this make Michael seem downright idiotic. He just doesn't seem to *know* what doctors should do, or what the law says, or what races are, or even that jokes can be offensive. But, I'll confess, I don't think simply listing some rules would help Michael navigate the murky waters of the moral life. Michael knows *plenty* of rules. His problem isn't that he can't recite what the moral rules are.

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His problem is that he has no idea what they mean, or how they apply, or what the hell to do with them. As a way of dealing with diversity issues, for example, Michael's first idea is to talk about the diverse people you might want to screw!

*Michael:* You know what? Here's what we're going to do. Why don't we go around and everybody . . . *everybody* . . . say a race that you are attracted to sexually. I will go last. Go!

*Dwight:* I have two . . .

*Michael:* Nice.

*Dwight:* . . . white and Indian.

Although Michael quickly realizes this isn't the best route to diversity training, his later ideas are nowhere near representative of the real issues in dealing with diversity in the workplace. Michael claims, for example, that he's "2/15ths Native American Indian." When Oscar says this fraction doesn't make sense, Michael claims that it's painful for him to talk about! He *recognizes* (on some level, anyway), that we should be sensitive concerning race—that we should not say things to make people of other races self-conscious, or that might lead them to suffer. This recognition of a general moral principle comes out clearly when Michael talks to Oscar about his status as a Mexican-American:

*Michael:* Let me ask you . . . is there a term besides Mexican that you prefer? Something less offensive?

*Oscar:* Mexican isn't offensive.

*Michael:* Well, it has certain connotations . . .

*Oscar:* Like what?

*Michael:* Like . . . I don't . . . I don't know.

*Oscar:* [getting irritated] What connotations, Michael? You meant something.

*Michael:* Now I remember . . . honesty . . .

*Oscar:* I'm just curious.

*Michael:* . . . empathy, respect . . .

Michael appeals to a general principle to avoid using offensive terms, but he's got no idea what counts as offensive. He then appeals to certain virtues (honesty, empathy, and respect) while at the same time violating these very values! He cites honesty at the very moment he refuses to be honest about the connotations he thinks the term *Mexican* has! Indeed, the very *cause* of diversity training (Michael



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doing an offensive impersonation of Chris Rock) is totally lost on Michael. While he recognizes, in some abstract way, that diversity and tolerance are important—even essential—to the moral life, he simply does not see that his own actions might violate the respect he owes to his fellow human beings. He’s unable to take diversity training seriously, but yet he knows that diversity is important (in some sense of the term “know”). His problem results from an inability to *see* the morally salient features of a situation.

Thus, even though his employees were offended enough to call corporate to complain about Michael’s antics, Michael fails to recognize that he ought to be more sensitive. Instead, he mocks the very idea that he doesn’t know the importance of diversity. Reading the contract corporate forces him to sign, Michael is obviously oblivious to the issues that underlie his employees’ complaints:

I regret my actions. I regret offending my co-workers. I promise to bring my best spirit of honesty, empathy, respect and openmindedness . . . Openmindedness? Is that even a word? . . . into the workplace. In this way, I can truly be a hero. Signed . . . [Michael holds up the contract] “Daffy Duck” [cackles].

This is not simply a failure to know the rules. If we were to give Michael a multiple choice test on issues of diversity, he would be able to identify some core things to avoid (provided we worded the test the right way!). He would know, for example, that we should promote tolerance, that we should avoid racism, and that sexual harassment was utterly unacceptable in the office. Yet his actions show that regardless of the knowledge he has—regardless of the sentences he would affirm on our imagined multiple choice test—he suffers from a kind of moral blindness. He doesn’t see that some actions conflict with the very things that he says he values. When Michael intervenes to defend Phyllis during one of Todd Packer’s sexually explicit stories, he displays his moral blindness in classic *Office* style:

*Michael:* You know what? I love Phyllis. And you know what else? I think she is gorgeous. [kneels down beside Phyllis, wrapping his arms around her] I think she is an incredibly, incredibly attractive person. [To Phyllis] Come here. Give me a kiss. C’mon [kisses Phyllis on the cheek].

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*Phyllis:* [smiling and laughing] Michael, come on. You don't have to worry. I'm not . . . I'm not gonna report you to HR.

*Michael:* I'm not worried! You know what? The only thing I am worried about . . . is getting a boner [Phyllis looks distraught].

Michael's heart is probably in the right place—but, as usual, his mouth is not. In trying to defuse a pending sexual harassment issue, Michael actually engages in sexual harassment. He is utterly blind to the offense (and disgust) his action causes Phyllis, while also being fully aware of the rule that sexual harassment is morally reprehensible.

In another case, Michael is explaining to Ryan (who's having his first day at Dunder-Mifflin) that he is a friend first, a boss second, and an entertainer third. He then calls Pam in, presumably to reveal what a fun-loving guy he is. The conversation is unforgettable:

*Michael* [to Pam]: As you know, there's going to be downsizing, and you have made my life so much easier in that I am going to have to let you go first.

*Pam* [shocked]: What? Why?

*Michael:* Why? Well, theft. And stealing.

*Pam:* What am I supposed to have stolen?

*Michael:* Post-It Notes.

*Pam:* Post-It Notes? What are those worth, like 50 cents?

*Michael:* Yeah. If you stole 1000 Post-It Notes at 50 cents then you've made a profit . . . margin. You're going to run us out of business Pam.

*Pam:* Are you serious?

*Michael:* Yeah. I am.

*Pam:* Oh, wow . . . I can't believe this. I mean, I've never even stolen so much as a paper clip and now you're firing me.

*Michael:* But the best thing is . . . uh . . . we're not going to have to give you any severance pay because [puts hand over mouth to cover any smile] that's gross misconduct and, uh . . . just clean out your desk. I'm sorry.

[Pam covers her eyes and begins to cry]

*Michael* [now smiling]: You've been x'd punk! Surprise! It's a joke. We were joking around. Ok. He was in on it. He was my accomplice [pointing to Ryan, who shakes his head no]. It's kind of a morale-boosting thing . . . and we were showing the new guy around . . . kinda, kinda giving him a feel of the place. Wow! We totally got you!

*Pam* [in tears]: You're a jerk!

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*Michael:* Uh . . . I don't know about that.  
 [Pam leaves. Michael looks awkwardly at a fax Pam brought in, then tries to get Ryan to look at it. Ryan refuses.]

A friend first indeed! It is his blindness to what matters morally in concrete situations that leads him to fail (morally speaking) again and again. When he orders lunch at Hooters, for example, he says “I will have the chicken breast, hold the chicken” (“The Secret”). He is utterly incapable of keeping Jim’s secret, blurting out Jim’s affection for Pam. When he wants to engage in conflict resolution in the office, he tells Toby (probably the nicest guy in the office) that he’s in no position to resolve conflicts: “What do you know about conflict resolution? Your answer to everything is ‘get divorced’” (“Conflict Resolution”). And the list goes on.<sup>4</sup>

### A Few Cases of Getting Things Right: Getting Unscrewed

But Michael has his good moments too. He’s no moral monster. In fact, he’s more like a paper tiger: he looks ferocious far away, but up-close he’s fragile—and laughable in his attempts to be more than he is. After a dispute with Dwight (involving a trip to the dojo, no less!), Michael tries to make up with Dwight by promoting him from Assistant to the Regional Manager to Assistant Regional Manager (though he insists that the promotion be kept secret). He then confides to the cameraman his motivations: “I told Dwight that there is honor in losing—which is completely ridiculous. But there is however honor in making a loser feel better, which is what I just did for Dwight” (“The Fight”).

Michael has no idea what he’s talking about. He’s trying to make himself look good by talking abstractly of virtues like honor. What’s interesting here, though, is that Michael *did* do the right thing. He has upset Dwight, and he steps in to rectify the situation. The same thing happens in “Drug Testing,” when Michael asks Dwight for his urine (“I want him to have all the urine he needs,” Dwight admits). After Dwight resigns as a volunteer deputy sheriff, Michael recognizes that Dwight has been hurt by the entire affair. As a way of

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making it up to him, Michael decides to make him “the official supervisor of security” (learning that he cannot have a gun, Dwight replies: “Ok. I’ll have to bring my bo staff.”). Finally, Michael shows a truly humane side when he goes to Staples to ask Dwight to come back to Dunder-Mifflin. Again, though, he seems to misconstrue what he is doing. (“It takes a big man to admit when he makes a mistake,” Michael says, “and I’m that big man.”)

What these examples show, I think, is that knowledge isn’t all that important for the moral life. When Michael has knowledge, it doesn’t help him do the right thing (he knows that sexual harassment is wrong, but he tells Phyllis she’ll give him a boner). When he lacks knowledge, it doesn’t hurt him that much (he thinks he’s done something special whenever he tries to right the wrongs he’s committed, when really he’s just done what any decent person would). What’s important is responding to others in the right ways—seeing what’s required when it’s required—and no knowledge of rules will ever enable us to acquire this kind of sight. Much like studying theories of art won’t teach you to paint beautifully, so too studying ethical theory (or ethical rules) won’t help you to act morally. What is required is much more basic: it is *seeing* what a situation requires.

Despite my claim that Michael is a prime example of moral blindness, I do admit that he has his moments (Michael’s support of Pam’s art in “Business School” is unforgettable)—and the other folks in the office have their moments too. Pam, for instance, is particularly sensitive to the emerging (and continuing) relationship between Dwight and Angela—so much so that she goes out of her way to protect their secret. When Dwight gets a concussion and has to go to the emergency room, Pam makes a point to tell *Oscar* that Dwight will be ok, making sure that Angela hears what she’s saying.<sup>5</sup> Pam knows that Angela is worried about Dwight, but she also knows that Angela is trying to keep her relationship with Dwight quiet. Pam is sensitive to *both* Angela’s concern for Dwight *and* her desire to keep that concern a secret (“The Injury”). And Pam doesn’t screw things up. She finds a way to respect Angela’s concern, as well as her desire to keep this concern a private matter.

In this same episode, Jim shows some real decency as well. When Dwight collapses on his desk, Jim jumps to the rescue. He insists that Dwight needs medical attention, ignoring Michael’s ridiculous crying about his foot:

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*Jim* [sees Dwight collapse, walks over to him]: Ok, I think we need to take him to the hospital. I'm pretty sure he has a concussion.

*Dwight* [barely coherent]: No, no, no, no.

*Michael* [on crutches, foot wrapped in bubble-wrap]: Oh, now you feel some compassion *for him*.

*Angela*: He needs to go right now, and you're his emergency contact. I think you should go with him.

*Michael*: Why don't you go with him?

*Angela*: I barely know him.

*Dwight* [moaning]: I want Michael to take me.

*Michael*: I can't take you. I don't have my car and yours is all vomity.

*Meredith*: You can take my van!

*Michael* [irritated]: Oh, ok. That's great. No. I can't drive. Jim, why don't you drive?

*Jim*: Fine.

*Michael*: We'll go. I'm still recovering so let's just . . . Ryan, will you get my coat please?

*Jim* [holding Dwight up]: Slowly, slowly . . . let's just get to the elevator

[Dwight begins to make helicopter sounds.]

*Jim*: What are you doing?

*Dwight*: Vietnam sounds.

Jim steps up to the plate, while Michael doesn't even know what game is being played! On the way to the car, Michael calls shotgun. When Jim replies that Michael should sit in the back with Dwight (to make sure he's ok), Michael responds with indignation. Later, talking to the cameraman, Michael explains his indignation *by citing the rules of shotgun!* "The rules of shotgun are very simple and very clear. The first person to shout 'shotgun' when you're within sight of the car gets the front seat. That's how the game is played. There are no exceptions for someone with a concussion" ("The Injury"). On the way to the hospital, Jim keeps Dwight's best interests in mind (while Michael just sits shotgun, ignoring the severity of Dwight's injury), eventually getting him to the hospital for treatment, and making sure to keep Michael in check on the way (by squirting him in the face with a water gun).<sup>6</sup>

Jim also rescues Michael on occasion: he steps up to the karaoke mic when Michael is stuck singing alone, even though Michael has shown up to a party uninvited. Rather than letting Michael make a fool of himself, or sink to new lows of self-esteem, Jim croons along to "Islands in the Stream" ("Email Surveillance"). In another case,

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Jim recognizes how painful the annual Dundie jokes about Pam's long engagement are. Rather than confront Michael about hurting Pam's feelings (which Michael likely wouldn't understand), Jim gets Michael to tell another joke by pandering to his comedic sensibilities. "Using the same joke every year," Jim says, "just looks lazy." Jim sees what a situation requires, and effectively orchestrates a *different* Dundie award for Pam: she wins "the Whitest Sneakers Award" rather than "the Longest Engagement Award"<sup>7</sup> ("The Dundies"). I'm certain that her joy in getting the award was helped by her alcohol consumption (she drank so much, you'll recall, that the manager banned her from the chain!)—but it certainly wasn't *just* that. Once again, Jim made someone's life a little less messed up.

### Having the Patience of Toby: A Lesson About a Vagina

Is there a moral hero in the office? Well, there are certainly no moral saints. No one nails decency with every action on every day. Nevertheless, there are some downright decent moments in *The Office*—moments when folks aren't utterly self-absorbed, and see the needs of those around them. Consider what happens when Toby announces that he will answer any questions that the office staff might have. Dwight comes to him, very seriously, with a problem (presumably misunderstanding that Toby was volunteering to answer questions about Dunder-Mifflin's sexual harassment policy):

*Dwight* [entering Toby's office]: Hey Toby.

*Toby*: Hey Dwight.

*Dwight*: You said we could come to you if we had any questions.

*Toby*: Sure.

*Dwight* [long pause]: Where is the clitoris? [pauses again] On a website it said, "At the crest of the labia." What does that *mean*?

[Toby looks at Dwight. Dwight looks back.]

*Dwight*: What does the female vagina look like?

[Scene cuts to Toby, talking to cameraman]: Technically, I am in human resources, and Dwight was asking about human anatomy. Umm . . . I'm just sad that the public school system failed him so badly.

[Scene cuts back to Toby, talking to Dwight in his office, clearly in the middle of whatever conversation ensued following Dwight's

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initial questions]: You know, maybe when you get really comfortable with each other, you can ask for that.

*Dwight:* Good. And . . .

*Toby* [slowly and nicely]: I . . . should get back to work.

*Dwight:* Ok.

(“Sexual Harassment”)

This respect and patience is the most we can ask from anyone. Despite not being friends with Dwight, not having sex ed as part of his job description, and having plenty of other things to do, Toby responds to Dwight’s needs—even though Dwight has not been particularly nice to him. If we could all be more like Toby, I think, we’d be nowhere near so screwed.

## NOTES

- 1 Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) and John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) both thought they could identify moral actions by applying their respective theories to particular cases. Kant claimed that a moral action was one done from duty, and that we could check our intentions to determine whether our actions were so motivated by using his “categorical imperative.” Mill claimed that we could determine what course of action was appropriate by asking what actions would increase the total amount of pleasure over pain for all affected by a given action. For Aristotle, who bears some resemblance to the view defended here, see chapter 5 of this volume.
- 2 The notion of moral perception is discussed in a wide variety of places. See, for example, Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of the Good* (New York: Routledge, 1970); Lawrence A. Blum, *Moral Perception and Particularity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); John McDowell, *Mind, Value, and Reality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); and Maurice Mandelbaum, *The Phenomenology of Moral Experience* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1955). For an argument for the importance of this notion, see J. Jeremy Wisniewski and Henry Jacoby, “Failures of Sight: An Argument for Moral Perception,” *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 44:3.
- 3 Dwight has a similar problem. He routinely cites laws and rules as a way of saying what *ought* to happen—but his slavish adherence to the letter of the law often leads him to miss its spirit entirely.
- 4 A failure to see is, of course, a failure to know *in some sense*. This might lead folks to suspect that moral blindness is just a species of ignorance.

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I have no real problem with this, provided we know what we're saying! The kind of ignorance involved in moral blindness is not the kind of ignorance that can be cured by the simple assertion of sentences. The kind of ignorance we've been talking about, however, can. If I don't know the meaning of a word, or the square root of  $-2$ , or the time of my next class, a simple sentence that conveys this information would cure me of my ignorance. Moral blindness is importantly different. Simply telling the morally blind person that they should be sensitive to racial differences won't do any good. Something else is needed to cure this kind of blindness (art, literature, and even pop culture can often get people to see things much more clearly than argument). So, we can call moral blindness ignorance, if we like, but we should know exactly what we mean by this. It isn't the same kind of ignorance as the kind we cure by, say, reading biology textbooks.

- 5 Recall that Dwight gets a concussion when he crashes his car. The car crash is the result of trying to quickly speed off to pick up Michael, who has burnt his foot by stepping on a George Foreman grill. (He really likes to wake up to the smell of bacon!)
- 6 Compare this to Michael's antics in the same episode: he tries to convince the doctor that his foot injury is more serious than Dwight's head injury!
- 7 Both Pam and Jim have their weak points too, though. There are occasions when they're just downright mean. Think, for example, of all of the pranks Jim plays on Dwight. He even tries to get Dwight to quit at one point! ("The Fire").