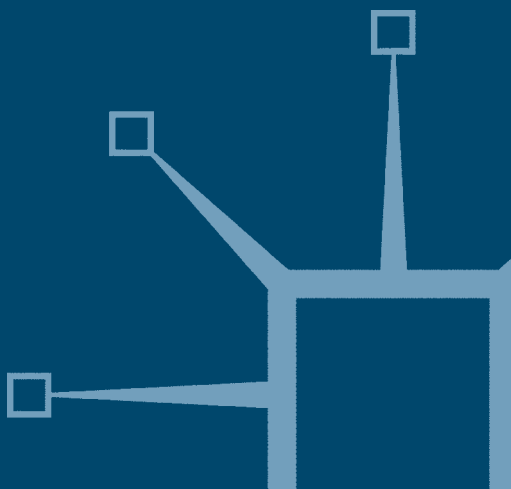


Trust, Risk and Uncertainty

Edited by
Sean Watson and Anthony Moran



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Introduction

Sean Watson and Anthony Moran

From the early 1990s onwards writers like Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens, among many others, have brought home to English-speaking audiences the new conditions of risk and uncertainty faced by everyone living in the contemporary world. Beck, with his pioneering *Risk Society* (1992), established the notion that risk is increasingly globalised and the unavoidable condition of late modern life. Giddens worked a nearby vein, emphasising in books such as *The Consequences of Modernity* (1990) the importance of risk and uncertainty as evermore pervasive aspects of the way that we live our lives, relying on expert systems and established levels of ontological security simply to get by. Writers like Zygmunt Bauman (1991) have emphasised the inevitability of, and the difficulties, dilemmas and resistances to, living with doubt, ambivalence and uncertainty (see also Beck, 1997).

More recently, related debates focusing not so much on risk and uncertainty, but more on the importance of trust, have emerged. These debates are concerned with the possible breakdown of forms of social capital and civil society which make trust possible, for example in the work of Robert Putnam (see Putnam 2001, 2002). Such breakdown, it is suggested, creates new conditions of uncertainty which have profound effects at the psychological, social, political and economic levels.

Most of the literature covering these related areas of trust, risk and uncertainty is highly theoretical in character. This makes it somewhat inaccessible for many readers. This book, while theoretically rigorous, explores these key debates through accounts of current empirical and theoretical applications. This is not a range of papers written by theorists speaking to one another at a high level of abstraction, but by active researchers, from a range of disciplines and specialisms, exploring the applicability of these theoretical speculations to their own areas of work. This grounded, multidisciplinary approach makes it possible for the reader to build up a picture of the dimensions and relevance of the themes of trust, risk and uncertainty in the late/postmodern world.

Trust, Risk and Uncertainty brings together scholars with established and developing international reputations, as well as several new writers, to focus on these 'risk society' debates. We combine theoretical sophistication with close-to-the-ground analysis and new research in the fields of philosophy, education, social policy, government, organisational studies, health and social care, sociology, and cultural and media studies. The empirically-grounded emphasis is, we believe, a real strength which should add to the book's appeal and accessibility, especially for graduate and undergraduate students. Included in the collection are contributions from a number of already distinguished academics and social commentators. Among these are: the feminist critic Alison Assiter, author of *Pornography, Feminism and the Individual* (1989), *Althusser and Feminism* (1990), *Enlightened Women* (1996) and *Revisiting Universalism* (2003); the sociologist Alan Petersen, author of many books on public health, the body and risk, including *The New Public Health* (1996) and *The New Genetics and the Public Health* (2002); the political theorist and psychotherapist Paul Hoggett, author of *Partisans in an Uncertain World* (1992) and *Emotional Life and the Politics of Welfare* (2000); the political philosopher Simon Thompson, author of *The Political Theory of Recognition: A Critical Introduction* (forthcoming), and co-editor of *Richard Rorty: Critical Dialogues* (2001); the cultural studies theorist Stuart Allan, author of *News Culture* (1999); the media studies expert, Alison Anderson, author of *Media, Culture and the Environment* (1997); the social work and social policy expert Harry Ferguson, author of *Protecting Children in Time* (2004); the public management and governance experts Tony Bovaird and Elke Loeffler, authors of *Public Management and Governance* (2003); and the political scientist Anthony Moran, author of *Australia: Nation, Belonging and Globalization* (2005).

The themes of 'trust', 'risk' and 'uncertainty' seem especially pertinent in the context of the current world crisis after September 11. We have encouraged our contributors to be liberal in their approach, however, not necessarily reflecting directly on the impact of September 11, but exploring the broader and longer-term implications of these themes as they arise and gain expression within diverse fields of intellectual inquiry. The book brings together contributions from a wide range of disciplines to the major themes of trust, risk and uncertainty. The remit given to our authors is to reflect on those themes and to write out of their own disciplines in a way that speaks to an audience of non-specialists. The rationale for the project is that the different disciplines have something unique to contribute to the 'risk society' debate, and that the themes resonate well beyond disciplinary boundaries.

The book is divided into three parts which deal more specifically with theoretical, philosophical and moral concerns and those concerned more directly with institutions, organisations, social policy and cultural issues. There are thirteen chapters, each by a different author or authors.

Part One: The theory and philosophy of trust, risk and uncertainty

This part comprises a range of theoretical and philosophical responses to the trust, risk and uncertainty debates in specific contexts. The first two chapters are particularly concerned with theoretical approaches to understanding the conditions of uncertainty in late/postmodernity. Chapters 3 and 4 are concerned with developing ethical responses to, and in the context of, such uncertainty.

In Chapter 1 Paul Hoggett deals with uncertainty. He begins from the recognition that there has been a renewed interest in human agency from both sides of the Atlantic. He deepens our understanding of the nature of such agency by developing a model that draws on the psychoanalytic work of Melanie Klein and Wilfred Bion, among other psychoanalytic and philosophical thinkers. This approach takes account of the human agent as both subject and object, and as one who acts reflexively on some occasions and unreflexively on others. Hoggett develops this line by taking up Zygmunt Bauman's notion of ambivalence as the exemplification of postmodernity, and Bonnie Honig's view of society as radically plural; that is, as one where a babble of different voices constantly interrupt one another, 'one praising what the other condemns'. This, then, is a society where there are no obvious rules that the heteronomous self can simply follow. Following Honig, we can think of such a world as 'dilemmatic space', where certainties are increasingly difficult to sustain or justify.

It is within this reflective context that Hoggett introduces an exploration of the dilemmas of ordinary life. Drawing on his current research into 'regeneration workers' (what we used to call community development workers), the chapter relies on an original case study of a 'regeneration work' manager within local government negotiating his way through a series of public and private dilemmas as he attempts to implement a complex consultative process that is built around an apparently irresolvable contradiction between the values of fiscal restraint and of 'empowering' residents in a disadvantaged area.

Simon Thompson's chapter is concerned with both trust and risk, and draws out the relationship between them and different modes of identity. The intuition he follows is that 'there are interesting and important links between attitudes to risk, types of trust, and certain characteristic forms of political belief and action'. He explores what he calls 'risks with identity', which Giddens, and indeed other third way advocates, argue are necessary and appropriate for late modern risk society. Thompson engages closely with the work of Giddens and Bauman in order to think through the social conditions of trust in late modern society. In doing this, he offers a very clear and critical introduction to some of their important and influential ideas about ontological security, risk and the cosmopolitan self. Thompson

argues that the risk-taking individual is more likely to come from a particular social location of relative privilege, where such attitudes, stances and behaviours are expected and valued. Others, who lack the confidence, or indeed the wherewithal, to take such risks, occupy a different social location, seeking security in the embrace of community. Thompson's chapter raises the important question of whether we are wrong to approach identity in a normative sense. Indeed, he suggests that those who do not risk their identities may have very good reasons for not pursuing 'pure relationships' and the sort of authenticity and autonomy described and, Thompson claims, is approved of by Giddens. Less concerned with ongoing personal revision, their identities are more embedded within community. Such *traditional selves*, Thompson argues, are just as legitimate as risk identities, even if social scientists tend to see them as out of step with the requirements of late modernity. In addition, Thompson relates these issues, themes and arguments to a broader engagement with the politics of recognition, which is his central research focus in political philosophy.

In the wake of postmodern critiques of the foundations of knowledge, postcolonial critiques of ethnocentric discourse, feminist critiques of patriarchal structures and diagnoses of global risk, uncertainty and de-traditionalisation (to name but a few), the search has been on for tenable grounds for a normative philosophy of some kind. Some believe they may have found it in the writings of Emmanuel Levinas. In Chapter 3 Peter Jowers provides a superb introduction to the work of this very complex thinker. He demonstrates Levinas's own deep suspicion of language, knowledge and, indeed, the conscious, intentional subject itself. He shows that, for Levinas, the only possible ground for normative judgement lies in the ethical instincts of the pre-social, and unconscious, 'creature'. Somewhere prior to language, subjectivity and judgements lies a raw 'incarnate' self whose very constitution is presupposed by an ethical moment of engagement with the other. This is *the* moment of supreme risk and uncertainty. The 'creature' has no knowledge, makes no judgement, has no intention – yet it is the very foundation of our being for the other, the moment at which the other shatters our self-enclosed, narcissistic core and constitutes us as an ethical human subject – far from self-reflexivity perhaps (or perhaps a radicalisation of self-reflexivity), but a profound reaching towards ethics in a very uncertain world nevertheless.

In Chapter 4 Alison Assiter outlines a quite different approach to practical philosophy. According to this account, normative uncertainty and fragmentation in late/postmodernity might be attributed to a kind of cultural mind/body dualism. In this context, moral judgements are made without sufficient reflection; rather, they occur as a consequence of reactive responses to moral questions, based on a free-floating emotivism. She claims further that contemporary readings of Descartes as a mind/body dualist are highly simplistic. Instead, she suggests a reading that emphasises the integration of

mind and body, reason and emotion and claims that such a reading could provide more certain grounds for the re-establishment of the moral universalist project which was characteristic of many Enlightenment thinkers. Interestingly, then, both the Cartesian Assiter and the Levinasian Jowers seem to be attempting to counter moral fragmentation and uncertainty, with a grounded ethical/moral universalism. But while Levinas grounds his ethics in the pre-conceptual 'creature' and is deeply suspicious of 'rational' judgement and, indeed, 'knowledge' of any kind, Assiter grounds her universalism squarely in Enlightenment reason.

Part Two: Trust, risk and uncertainty in institutions and organisations

In Part Two the themes of trust, risk and uncertainty are explored through research based in a range of key organisational settings. In some cases the role of the organisation in the context of trust and risk management is explored (e.g. Ferguson); in other cases the issue of identity and self in the context of organisational risk and uncertainty is emphasised (e.g. Baxter and Britton).

In Chapter 5 Harry Ferguson outlines some of the central features of the risk society hypothesis, as developed by Beck and Giddens. He does so in the context of an exploration of the implications of his own research on child protection. He describes the discursive transformations which have occurred since the beginnings of child protection in the nineteenth century. He outlines a period of 'simple modernity' in which child protection expert systems successfully 'sequestered' the reality of their success (and failure) in dealing with child abuse, neglect and death. They did so by suppressing information, but they were able to do so because this was a period of public trust in the ability of expert systems to counter such social problems effectively. Since the 1970s, however, this trust has broken down. Such expert systems have themselves become the object of risk assessment. Risk now seems unavoidable and, therefore, endemic. Success is unattainable, yet, at the same time, accountability for each failure is demanded, together with constant reflection on the dimensions of organisational failure. A culture of scandal and blame has arisen in the face of public anxieties about such contingency and risk. Ferguson looks at the personal strategies engaged in by the experts involved to deal with the anxieties that arise as a consequence of this impossible intolerance of failure. He also emphasises the ambivalence of such developments. While being part of a blame culture, they have also made genuinely safer futures for many children possible.

In Chapter 6, Arthur Baxter and Carolyn Britton examine how mature university students experience and account for the changes that are brought about by education. This experience, which, in many ways, is empower-

ing for students, also brings associated risks to the self which have to be managed. Two such forms of related risk are discussed: those stemming from challenges to established gender roles within the family, and those associated with moving away from a working-class habitus. In this study students had to manage being thought superior and at times feeling superior to family and friends due to changes in vocabulary and perceptions brought about through education. These findings are compared to other studies which, while dealing with similar issues of risk and identity change, focus on issues of guilt and shame. They argue that their findings are specific to the type of subjects these students were studying and to their being at a pivotal point in the transition from old to new identities.

In Chapter 7, Ajit Nayak examines the rise of 'enterprising management' in current management discourse and practice. Nayak argues that it is a basis for the management of uncertainty and creativity, which involves a total, and risky, construction of the self through the consumption of an 'enterprising' working life as a basis for identity. He points out, however, that such responses to uncertainty and risk as the basis for organisational creativity are evacuated of ethical or moral content. Nayak also shows that such responses have a strong tendency to colonise our private existence. What the author describes is a new 'technology of the self', known among management consultants as 'Me Plc'. In establishing his case, Nayak draws on his own research and interviews on the British entrepreneur and organisational guru, Alec Reed.

In Chapter 8, Tony Bovaird and Elke Loeffler argue that it has become conventional to locate the current crisis in the legitimacy of the state within 'Western liberal democracies' in the growing lack of trust felt by citizens in state-funded professional bureaucracies and the representational politics which is supposed to regulate them. At the local level, the withering away of 'social capital', as citizens become used to 'bowling alone', has been postulated by Putnam to have made it even more difficult for civil society to substitute for state action. The communitarian manifesto of Etzioni has contested this, but so far has produced only fragmentary evidence, not coherent counter-examples. This chapter examines ways in which these competing discourses can be systematised to make it possible to test their relevance as a basis for political action at the local level. It reports work currently being undertaken by the authors as part of the Study Group on Local Governance for the European Group of Public Administration.

Part Three: Cultures of risk: the uncertainties of trust

The final part of the book includes work which explores the themes of trust, risk and uncertainty through impressive research into a diverse range of cultural phenomena.

In Chapter 9, Stuart Allan, Alison Anderson and Alan Petersen are concerned with the ways in which expert knowledge and journalistic priorities interact in the presentation of risk to the public. They focus, for the purposes of their chapter, on developments in cloning techniques and attendant concerns regarding the possibilities for human cloning. They present the pro- and anti-cases for human cloning. The former relate mainly to the perceived medical benefits of such techniques, while the latter concern fears relating to both imagined possibilities for human exploitation and objections rooted in religious belief. They then proceed to analyse, in some detail, the rhetorical strategies at work in the presentation of one particular case. This enables them to begin to ask questions regarding the diverging interests of journalists and scientific experts. They conclude by suggesting a need to realign this relationship between experts, journalists and public concerns about risk.

In Chapter 10 Leah Wild examines issues concerned with risk perception and identity construction as they relate to 'New Age' Travellers. She first examines the cultural role of nomadic groups as objects of suspicion, hatred and deep anxiety throughout history. She examines the relationship between outsidership, marginality, liminality and perceptions of risk in the wider society. The chapter then describes the specific form that this anxiety has taken in relation to 'New Age' Travellers. Perhaps most importantly, she challenges much of the contemporary literature in this area by arguing that her research suggests that we must be wary of simplistically casting such groups as victims of unwelcome fantasy, stereotyping and marginalisation. She effectively problematises aspects of the risk hypothesis by showing how Travellers themselves have actively elected this role, that they actively reinforce it and that the experience of outsidership, transgression and risk is central to their identity and libidinal economy.

In Chapter 11, Lita Crociani-Windland focuses on the unique civic structure of Siena, in central Italy. This structure has evolved over centuries in connection with the horse race known as the *Palio*. Crociani-Windland's work on such festivals in northern Italy serves to problematise the risk society theses in a number of ways. First, challenging the notion of de-traditionalisation, she shows how these festivals survive, and indeed thrive, on the basis of centuries-old traditions – traditions which are very much alive to both young and old. She also shows the way in which highly ritualised risk forms the basis of a channelling of collective aggression into powerful and enduring forms of social solidarity/capital which are productive of trust – and which show no signs of weakening under the impact of modernity. There is no sign of the disintegration of trust and civil society anticipated by much of the theoretical literature in this field. This strength derives from adaptability – from the ability of the community to accept a degree of fluidity and change,

while maintaining enough structure for the tradition to hold its charisma. The focus of research for this chapter, then, is the link between affective dynamics and the development of the present structure as a pivotal source of social capital. The overall picture is that of a community that has achieved a balance between being and becoming, where identity, intensity, risk and trust can coexist. The *Palio* is not just the race, but a way of life—in the words of the Siennese, '*nel Palio ci sta sempre tutto*' ('everything can always be contained in the Palio').

In Chapter 12 Anthony Moran considers the way that distrust and uncertainty have shaped relations between Australia's settler and indigenous communities in the past, and in contemporary Australian society. Moran argues that the colonial relationship between settler and indigene has continued into the present. This gives rise to a sense of suspicion about the intentions of the other community, from each side of the racial divide. As he shows, this suspicion is played out in the controversy over Aboriginal land rights and native title, and in recent debates about the 'stolen generations'. Indigenous peoples have, in addition, a sense of grievance about unresolved issues arising from the European invasion and colonisation. Moran argues that this sense of grievance and separation from mainstream Australian life is one factor in what he perceives as a low level of civic engagement between the two communities. Moran draws on his own large-scale interview project with 'ordinary Australians' in order to reflect on the dynamics of uncertainty, suspicion and distrust felt by settlers for Aboriginal communities and causes. Trust between settler and indigene is a difficult achievement and always threatened by larger historical forces. On the other hand, there have been efforts from both sides of the colonial divide to build trust and to improve relations. These efforts have been evident in the reconciliation movement of the 1990s, and even in the much criticised assimilation era from the 1950s to the 1970s.

Finally, Chapter 13 examines certain aspects of the Giddens/Beck hypothesis through David Green's work on pagan magic. The view he develops is that paganism can be accounted for as a response to late modern 'ontological uncertainty' – but one which, as with Wild's account of 'New Age' Travellers, emphasises the creative potential of such risk and uncertainty. He particularly emphasises the central role of embodiment in this response, and points out that this is a theme generally neglected by the risk theorists. As with Crociani-Windland's account of Italian festivals, he suggests that certain historical continuities in pagan practices and identity throw some doubt on the 'late modern' theorists' account of 'de-traditionalisation'. At the same time, Green's research does give added weight to the claim that identities and practices centring on 'reflexivity' are particularly common in 'late modernity'. Finally, Green shows how responses to ontological uncertainty such as this can produce their own environment of risk, leading to high levels of inner group cohesion and secrecy.

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Part One

The Theory and Philosophy of Trust, Risk and Uncertainty

1

Radical Uncertainty: Human Emotion and Ethical Dilemmas

Paul Hoggett

Agency and rationality

In contrast to North America, where interest in the human actor as agent has been around longer, in Europe interest in human agency in the social sciences has been more recent, a consequence of the crisis and decline of structuralist and post-structuralist models of social action. However, both sides of the Atlantic appear to have in common a conception of agency which, to simplify slightly, stresses the conscious choices that unitary subjects make. In recent writings I have sought to question this model of agency and specifically the idea that agency is necessarily reflexive (Hoggett, 2000); that is, that we normally know why we do what we do at the time of doing it. Most recently I have attempted to develop a model of agency which could take account of the human agent as subject and object and as one which acted reflexively on some occasions and unreflexively on others (Hoggett, 2001).

One area where much of the complexity and subtlety of human agency becomes manifest is that of ethical conduct. The idea of the human agent calmly making reasoned choices between ethical alternatives has been subject to considerable challenge recently. A different perspective has emerged which emphasises the dilemmas that ethical actors face in conditions of late modernity where societies are characterised by radical pluralism, ambiguity and uncertainty. This is a perspective which gives emphasis to the more tragic dimensions of ethical life and the pain which so often accompanies moral conflict.

This chapter is based on the early stages of a research project¹ I am involved in which explores the way in which 'regeneration workers' in impoverished areas in the UK negotiate the ethical dilemmas of their job. Regeneration workers operate at the grass-roots interface between government and local communities. We have chosen regeneration workers because they are uniquely situated – caught as they are between conflicting communities in an increasingly plural civil society; and caught between a

state which currently declares its benign intent to tackle social exclusion and a civil society which is often highly ambivalent about the motives and agenda of government. More so than for other street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 1980), these practitioners deliver programmes rather than services. It has become commonplace to talk in terms of 'capacity-building' and the development of 'social capital'. If social capital refers to the 'networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit' (Putnam, 1995: 67), then it has become the task of regeneration workers to deliver this. This is a far less tangible task than service delivery and, as a consequence, practitioners operate with a considerable amount of discretion, not the least because, as Hill (1983: 89) noted, discretion is also enhanced when 'policy makers are far from clear what they really want'.

Ambivalence and moral conflict

In calling for a radical rethinking of ethical action under conditions of postmodernity Bauman (1993) insists on the centrality of ambivalence. According to Bauman, ambivalence is both part of our constitution as subjects (we are torn by contradictory impulses) and a characteristic of a society in which the subject has become disembedded from the taken-for-granted schemata that accompanied tradition or totalising systems of thought of a religious or political nature. As a result, the subject faces her/his moral choices alone, where the values 'rule books' of the past no longer act as a guide, where there are no obvious rules to follow, indeed where there is a plethora of different voices insisting on different rules.

Bonnie Honig (1996) writes in a similar vein, from the context of a society which is radically plural, that is, one where a babble of different voices constantly interrupt one another, 'one praising what the other condemns' as Bauman puts it. Honig suggests that this is a world in which there is no place like home: home as a place free from conflict and difference, home as a place of unity or, rather, union, no longer exists. But this does not stop us from looking for it. Indeed, as Bauman would put it, the more we are condemned to freedom – to having to make our own decisions in the absence of clear rules or signposts on which we can depend – the more anxious we become to find a place like home.

Honig suggests that in radically plural worlds the individual agent no longer inhabits a place where clear choices can be made between contrasting alternatives. Rather, the individual finds herself living out the contradictions and conflicts of the complex, diverse society in which she is situated by being pulled this way and that through a succession of dilemmas. Indeed, Honig argues that the contemporary human agent inhabits a 'dilemmatic space'.

The dilemmas of regeneration work

Ethical dilemmas are central to regeneration work. In the past, regeneration work in the UK was referred to as community development, a practice which has had an ambivalent but distanced relation to successive governments since the late 1960s (Mayo and Craig, 1995). Now this kind of work is located much closer to the centre of strategic interventions, especially 'modernisation' and 'regeneration' (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998). Its methods are a vital contributor to 'modernised' governance, connecting public bodies to each other and to citizens, identifying local need and engaging in dialogue with diverse social groups to improve services. Yet for practitioners much anxiety remains over the potential for incorporation into an agenda whose communitarianism has a strong normative dimension and which offers only a limited acknowledgement of structural inequality (Temkin and Rohe, 1998; Byrne, 1999). There are anxieties too about growing professionalisation (Davies, 1998) and the diminution of the community sector's independent voice (Anastacio *et al.*, 2000).

Regeneration work has also become the object, as well as the agent, of modernisation. The emergent audit regimes have challenged its collaborative and developmental ethic. Often working to unrealistic targets and time-frames, practitioners can become engaged in impression management. Pressure for quick, tangible and measurable outputs appears to deny the realities of development activities, whose impacts are often long-term, subtle and complex in form. Practitioners find they must also convince sceptical local citizens of the value of successive government initiatives.

Undertaking regeneration work in socially and culturally heterogeneous communities is particularly challenging because of the way in which different interests and value systems compete for attention and because the empowerment of some may be experienced as exclusion by others (Harrison, Hoggett and Jeffers, 1995; Miller and Ahmad, 1997). Milder but no less destructive hostilities are often exchanged between neighbourhoods, networks and even other professionals as they compete for scarce resources. Regeneration workers need to be able to work with the feelings of both other individuals and of groups, whether managing cynicism, combating despair or dealing with conflict (Hoggett and Miller, 2000). Such 'emotion work' (Hochschild, 1983) directed at others' feelings is the flipside of the work that regeneration workers need to do on their own feelings when negotiating the dilemmas they face.

Ethical dilemmas and human agency

Practitioners must therefore operate in increasingly complex and ambivalent contexts in which ethical conduct is far from obvious (Bauman, 1993). This 'dilemmatic space' is where choices are no longer clear cut (if they ever

were), but where they are ambiguous, indeterminate and conflictual. Moreover we bring to such choices our own ambivalence, that is, our own internal conflicts and contradictions. Powerful affects, particularly anxiety, are elicited within this space and this may well limit the capacity of individuals to act reflexively (Hoggett, 2001).

Honig develops her argument by using the work of the English moral philosopher Bernard Williams. Williams' account of moral thought is distinctive for a number of reasons. He is keenly aware of the incommensurable nature of many human values such as liberty and equality. Things don't fit together in the way we would like them to; rather, values rub up against each other, pulling us in different directions. Nor are we dealing with conflicts which can somehow be transcended. Some conflicts are to all extents and purposes irresolvable and simply have to be lived with. For Williams most moral decisions assume the form of dilemmas. He argues that dilemmas assume two basic forms:

*I ought to do A and I ought to do B but I cannot do both A and B.
I ought to do C and I ought not to do C.*

Regarding the first type, consider, for example, the dilemma of the whistleblowers described by Robert Jackall in *Moral Mazes: The World of Corporate Managers* (1988). Many of Jackall's whistleblowers found themselves torn between their sense of justice and their anger at the malpractices that they witnessed and, on the other hand, their sense of loyalty to colleagues. By blowing the whistle (choosing A) they often felt (and were made to feel) that they had betrayed their colleagues. (Remaining loyal to colleagues would be choice B.) Susan Mendus (2000) refers to Macintyre's (1985) analysis of the tragic where he notes that, in such situations, 'to choose does not exempt me from the authority of the claim I choose to go against' (Macintyre, 1985: 143). We might note in passing that this type of dilemma exemplifies the conflict between two different kinds of ethic—an ethic of justice and an ethic of care.

The second type of dilemma often occurs as a result of the inability of the other to contain their own ambivalence. Feldman (1989) suggests that such situations are endemic to family life. Young children, for example, are often unable to contain the ambivalent feelings they have towards a parent and as a result they project their inner conflicts into the parent. He describes a young girl who excitedly sits on her father's lap. If he rejects her advances he becomes positioned as a cold and distant patriarch; if he accepts them he colludes with her fantasy of taking her mother's place: 'thus there is no way the father can behave that will not stimulate the child's aggressive and/or sexual phantasies' (Feldman, 1989: 105). In other words, the father finds himself in a 'damned if I do and damned if I don't' situation.

In social policy studies, Mendus (1993) has argued that the lives of many women are marked by a series of conflicting demands (pertaining to both kinds of dilemma) from which there is no escape. You have to disappoint someone, and this imposes real limits on the reflexive agency that women are able to assert. This brings us, according to Honig, to a second valuable element in Williams' thinking. Williams recognises that human emotions are central to moral thought and behaviour. In choosing A I will experience guilt and regret for not choosing B; in choosing C I am torn by doubt as to whether I am doing the right thing. Indeed Williams (1973: 172) argues that in dilemmatic space, 'there is no right thing to do', the best that we can do is 'act for the best'. Williams (1981: 173) speaks of lying awake at night not so much full of regret about what was not done, but tormented by what was done.

Honig adds to Williams a different way of thinking about the human subject. For Williams the subject was still unitary, the conflict and difference was all 'out there'. But Honig argues that the conflicts and disjunctures are not only out there, they are also a constitutive part of our being. There is no place like home inside us. In this way Honig adds a psychoanalytic view of the subject to Williams' uncompromising pluralism.

Now if we take on board this view of life lived through a dilemmatic space, then doubt, shame, guilt and remorse characterise moral agency. In other words, anxiety becomes agency's constant companion. In the work that I am developing I want to explore how people deal with the anxiety at the heart of moral behaviour in contemporary life. The equipment I intend to take with me includes the psychoanalytic thinking that has been inspired by the work of Melanie Klein, in which the impact of anxiety on our capacity for reflexive agency has been a central theme.

Although it may not be immediately obvious, questions of moral value lie at the heart of Klein's picture of the human subject. For Klein our experience of what is good and bad in the world is inextricably bound up with our capacity for love and hate. We find pleasure in our hatreds as well as our loves and we seek satisfying objects for these passions. Nothing gives us more pleasure than an object we can hate unreservedly, which is so full of badness that it can be denigrated and criticised with impunity. This is a primitive morality, one in which the world is split into the good and the bad, and never the two shall meet. In fact, it is probably truer to say that as a result of this splitting goodness and badness both lose their meaning; instead of goodness there is something perfect and flawless, and instead of badness there is something execrable without any redeeming features. Klein reminds us that in the natural as opposed to supernatural world something is good because of our knowledge of its inevitable flaws, it is good only because of our appreciation of the bad within it, which the good somehow manages to transcend.

Unlike rationalist understandings of morality Klein insists on the inseparability of moral thought and feeling. A sound ethical position is not one

that is somehow divorced from passion, but one in which moral feelings (love and hate) are coupled creatively with moral thought. From this perspective, ethical behaviour is both passionate and thoughtful. We choose and act because we feel strongly about something and yet we do this knowing of the complexity of the world, and specifically its mixture of good and bad characteristics. In acting in this way we know we may be doing wrong and yet we have the capacity not to be undermined by this thought.

The problem facing the moral agent in dilemmatic space is that in choosing A and acting for what she hopes is the best, the individual has to cope with both her anxieties about what is bad in the chosen course of action A (the bad within the good) and her anxieties about what is good in the rejected alternative, B. Klein suggests that the weaker our capacity to contain anxiety the less our capacity to face reality with all its painful complexity. This is what defence mechanisms – denial, splitting, etc. – do; they impoverish our thinking. How do we do this? What individual and trans-individual defences are typically deployed in dilemmatic space? What resources does an individual call on in traversing this space? What kind of features typically characterise the relationship between the human agent, 'I', and her/his values?

At this point I want to provide a vignette drawn from one of my pilot interviews.

A case study of an ethical dilemma

X is a manager working in a small British city. Earlier in his career he was a senior community developmental practitioner in one of London's poorest and most ethnically diverse boroughs. In his current job he operates in a corporate role, close to the chief executive and one of the key conduits between the elected politicians and the council's officer caste. He manages a range of corporate projects to do with equalities, regeneration and political and administrative modernisation. X was asked by the council to develop an innovative piece of consultation work with residents on one of the poorest housing estates in the city. This was a new departure for the city, which had no track record of trying to engage in new ways with its local civil society.

X's brief was to ensure that the consultation process reached out to voices that were not normally heard. The consultation was to be open-ended, focusing on what local residents wanted to be done in the area how it was to be done; and how the residents wanted to be involved in the implementation of the proposals that came out of the consultation. From the beginning, some of the committed local councillors and X decided that the key method to be adopted would be to recruit local residents themselves to conduct the consultation. This was an innovative strategy (although not unique), even by the standards of progressive local authorities, let alone his own city. Very quickly X and a junior officer dedicated to