MORAL PSYCHOLOGY TODAY

Philosophical Studies Series

VOLUME 110

The titles published in this series are listed at the end of this volume.

MORAL PSYCHOLOGY TODAY

Essays on Values, Rational Choice, and the Will

Edited by

DAVID K. CHAN
University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point, WI, USA

Springer

David K. Chan
University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point
Department of Philosophy
2100 Main Street
Stevens Point WI 54481
USA

Acknowledgements

Contents

Contributors

J. S. Biehl earned his Ph.D. in philosophy from the Graduate School of the City University of New York. He has taught at Baruch College and at University College, Cork, Ireland. His current work is concerned with the significance of normative nihilism for philosophical activity.

Troy L. Booher is an appellate attorney in Salt Lake City at the law firm of Snell & Wilmer, L.L.P.; Adjunct Professor at the S.J. Quinney College of Law (University of Utah); Adjunct Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Utah; and Adjunct Instructor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Utah. His recent publications include *Drugs and Justice: Seeking a Consistent, Coherent, and Comprehensive View* (Battin et al (co-authors), Oxford University Press, 2007), and 'Putting Meaning in Its Place: Originalism and Philosophy of Language,' *Journal of Law and Philosophy* 25 (2006).

Joseph Boyle is Professor of Philosophy, The University of Toronto; Fellow and Former Principal (1991–2002) at St. Michael's College; and Member of the Joint Centre for Bioethics. Boyle received his BA from LaSalle University in Philadelphia, and his Ph.D. in Philosophy from Georgetown. He does research in the area of moral philosophy, particularly in the Roman Catholic moral tradition, and has collaborated with Germain Grisez and John Finnis in developing and applying a distinctive version of natural law theory.

David K. Chan is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point. He studied philosophy at the University of Melbourne in Australia and at Stanford University (Ph.D.). His research interests are in moral psychology, virtue ethics, applied ethics and Greek philosophy, and he is working on *Action Reconceptualized*, a book on human agency.

Stephen Finlay is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the University of Southern California. His research interests are in meta-ethics, ethics, and moral psychology.

Patrick Fleming received his PhD from the University of Connecticut in 2006. He is currently a visiting assistant professor at James Madison University. His work focuses on meta-ethics, practical reason and philosophy of action.

Drew Khlentzos teaches philosophy in the School of Social Science at the University of New England in Australia. He is the author of four books, most recently *Naturalistic Realism and the Antirealist Challenge* (MIT Press, 2004). He has interests in logic, philosophy of logic, philosophy of language, cognitive science and philosophy of mind, and is a member of the Language and Cognition Research Center.

Malcolm Murray is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Prince Edward Island, Canada. His publications include *The Moral Wager: Evolution and Contract* (Springer, 2007), *Liberty, Games, and Contracts* (ed, Ashgate, 2007), *Critical Reflection* with Nebojsa Kujundzic (McGill-Queen's, 2005), and articles on contractarianism in Canadian, American, Australian and European philosophy journals.

Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen teaches in the Department of Philosophy at Lund University in Sweden. He is the author of a book about R. M Hare's moral philosophy, co-editor of 4 books, and has published articles notably in value theory and meta-ethics. He is also an Associate Editor for the journal *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*.

Erik Schmidt is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Gonzaga University. He completed his Ph.D. at Syracuse University in 2003. Erik has written on the topics of moral psychology, rationality, and the philosophy of art. He is currently writing a book entitled *Beyond Comparison*, which explores the limits of economic models of valuation and choice.

Michael Stocker is Irwin and Marjorie Guttag Professor of Philosophy at Syracuse University. He teaches and writes on ethics and moral psychology. He is the author of *Plural and Conflicting Values* (Oxford University Press, 1990) and *Valuing Emotions* (Cambridge University Press, 1996).

James Stacey Taylor is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at The College of New Jersey. He has special interests in medical ethics, ethical theory and action theory. He is the author of *Stakes and Kidneys: Why markets in human body parts are morally imperative* (Ashgate, 2005), and editor of *Personal Autonomy: New essays* (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Crystal Thorpe has a Ph.D. from Stanford University, and has taught at the University of Florida. Her research interests include practical reasoning, moral theory and bioethics.

Introduction

Moral Psychology Today

David K. Chan

Philosophers working in the field of moral psychology concern themselves with issues and questions that straddle across more than one sub-discipline in philosophy. The answers that they propose and the theories that they propound have implications for moral philosophy, the philosophy of mind, epistemology and metaphysics. Philosophers with an interest in the 'will' or the motivational psychology of human action divide between those investigating psychological and behavioral concepts for their own sake, and those working on action theory for the sake of answering larger questions, especially ethical ones. The essays in this volume, all of which were presented at a conference on *Values, Rational Choice, and the Will*, belong largely in the latter category of research.

The essays here contribute to debates and discussions on a wide range of topics that are of current interest in moral psychology. These essays demonstrate both the breadth of the field of moral psychology and the importance of the questions investigated. Artificial boundaries between sub-disciplines of philosophy are crossed in putting these essays together in the same anthology. There are essays here in meta-ethics and in normative ethics. There are essays in ethical theory and in applied ethics. There are essays that draw on discoveries in empirical psychology. There are essays that draw on the history of philosophy and those that analyze concepts and arguments. There has been a tendency in some circles in analytic philosophy to examine concepts and arguments apart from the historical context of these ideas. But not only does the philosophy of action have a long and illustrious history that began with Aristotle, with subsequent contributions along the way from Aquinas, Hume, and Kant, but recent philosophers such as Anscombe have borrowed and developed ideas from the history of philosophy. Some of the essays here reflect a renewed interest in the work of Anscombe among philosophers of action.

Moral psychology today is progressing in several directions at once. Readers of this volume will be exploring a domain of philosophy that is both unified and

D.K. Chan

Department of Philosophy, University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point, Stevens Point, WI 54481, USA, Tel.: 1(715) 346-3735, Fax: 1(715) 346-4215

e-mail: dchan@uwsp.edu

diverse. I shall introduce the papers here by articulating what moral psychology is, and describing some of its many directions of research. I will then highlight the new ideas presented in this anthology and discuss how the essays here contribute to questions and issues that engage philosophers in moral psychology today.

1 From Philosophy of Action to Moral Philosophy

At the heart of moral psychology is the philosophy of action, narrowly construed, as a branch of the philosophy of mind having to do with ostensible behavior. Philosophers of action have focused on two central questions (see p. 1 in Mele 1997). (1) What are actions? That is, how do we distinguish human actions from other things that humans do, such as digesting their food? (2) How are actions to be explained? That is, can human actions be explained in the same way that we explain other events that occur in the natural world, such as planetary motion, earthquakes, or the behavior of insects?

Within the framework of these questions lie a number of further sub-topics. Under (1), questions arise as to what *intentional* actions are, and how these are to be distinguished from other kinds of action. Under (2), questions arise as to the status of explanation by reasons, and how such explanations are related to causal explanations. Answers to these questions are inter-related. The most popular approach in recent philosophy of action takes the form of a *causal theory* of action that accounts for the nature of action in terms of mental antecedents such as beliefs, desires and intentions. The theory also explains action in terms of some of the very same causes of action.

Philosophers of action do conceptual work defining the psychological items necessary for human agency, and articulating the relation between these concepts and the various categories of action, such as trying, intentional action, and unintentional action. They give accounts of the difference between rational and irrational action, and explain how each of these is possible. They explore borderline and problematic examples of action, such as weakness of will, the role played by luck in cases when success is unexpected or in cases known as causal deviance, and the implication of beliefs regarding the outcome and effects of action. They examine whether actions are caused in the same way that non-action events are caused, and whether the story of how an action is caused is necessarily the story of how the action is rationally justified.

The work of philosophers of action draws on but is distinct from empirical studies in psychology. Without the distinction, doubts could be raised about whether moral psychology is possible.[1] Normative ethics is concerned with ideal standards of feeling, thinking and conduct, whereas empirical psychology is concerned with facts about the nature of cognition, reasoning, and behavior. The conceptual work of philosophers suggests ways to think about the agency of human beings. Clearly, such analyses have to be sensitive to the facts about the human psyche, at the micro- and macro-levels. But what the facts are partly depends on the concepts

used to describe and interpret them, and the facts underdetermine the theories of philosophers. For instance, does a person desire to do everything that he intentionally does? The answer depends on our concept of desire. Or how many actions does an agent perform when he moves a lever to activate a pump? The answer depends on how we individuate and count actions.

Philosophers of action contribute to the broader issues of moral psychology when they turn their attention to the implications of their theories and concepts for moral philosophy. A number of questions of interest to action theorists are relevant to ethics. What kind of freedom an agent has regarding whether to act, and what kind of actions an agent can be held responsible and accountable for? What do the agent's actions tell us about her moral character, and what do they contribute to the formation of character? How are moral choices made, and are moral choices always the rational ones to make? Is moral reasoning a form of instrumental reasoning, and is the goal of moral action always something good? What are values, and how are they transmitted or reflected in the agent's choices? How are the causal antecedents of action such as desire, intention and choice relevant for moral evaluation? How do we evaluate an action motivated by a desire that the agent prefers not to have? How does an agent constitute her practical identity, and what sort of self-awareness is required for agency?

2 Current Issues in Moral Psychology

Moral psychology today is a rich and exciting field of research, providing a variety of answers to the questions listed above. The authors in this volume make contributions to ongoing debates by re-working earlier views, challenging popular views, and presenting their own alternatives. In the following chapters, essays are organized around the concepts and issues in moral psychology that they focus on.

The first essays (Khlentzos, Rønnow-Rasmussen) are concerned with what **values** are. In moral discourse, it is assumed that there can be meaningful discussion of values. Are they real and objective? If values are real, should we think of them as natural or invented? If there are objective values, are personal values objective? Since thinking that something is of value is one thing, and acting to bring about what is of value is another, the concept of **choice** provides a crucial link between thought and action. A moral agent is one whose actions are chosen for the sake of what she values. The papers in this volume on choice are concerned with whether and how an agent can choose between competing values (Boyle), and whether a person's choice is sufficient for the moral evaluation of the agent (Biehl).

Concepts of **desire** and **intention** are introduced in causal theories of action as mental antecedents with distinctive roles in human agency. As a motivational state that humans share with many animals, desire seems a bit mundane and the concept of desire has not been given enough attention in the philosophy of mind. But there are problems with the concept when applied in ethics. In the section on desire, the papers deal with the lack of determinacy for the purposes of practical reasoning

(Fleming); the difference between desires that agents own up to and 'alien' ones (Taylor); and whether desires for what is bad are possible and intelligible as reasons for acting (Stocker). Philosophers of action working on theories of intention in recent years have been successful in showing intention's role in practical reasoning and action. To what extent is this concept of intention suited for use in ethical theory? The question to be answered is whether the concept can be used to distinguish between right and wrong actions (Chan).

Desire and intention both have roles in practical reasoning, and intention is itself an output of practical reasoning. **Practical reasoning** is today an important topic in ethics,[2] and there is a debate between Humeans who see moral motivation as desire-based and others who think that practical reasoning can provide reasons for acting independent of desire. Another debate concerns the possibility of incommensurable choices: whether every alternative is comparable for the purpose of practical reasoning, or whether there are moral conflicts irresolvable by reason.[3] Contributors in this volume challenge the assumption that what drives practical reasoning are goals that are set by either a desire or an intention (Thorpe); defend a Humean 'motivation-by-desire principle' against rationalist objections (Finlay); and argue that incomparability is a misdiagnosis of why human choices do not conform to requirements of rational choice theory (Schmidt).

The relation between moral responsibility and **freedom** of the will has been the focus of a lot of work in moral psychology. In this volume, Hume's compatibilist view of free action is examined and defended (Booher). The view of rational choices as self-interested ones poses a serious challenge to moral theorists who need to show that **moral action** is justified by reason. As an alternative to the contractarian response to this problem, an evolutionary model of moral choice is presented here (Murray).

3 The Essays in This Volume

The essays here present new answers to many of the questions arising in contemporary moral psychology. As a guide for readers, the contributions of each author are briefly described below, and placed in the context of the issues that they each address.

3.1 The Nature of Values

Moral actions reflect moral judgments. In other words, moral agents do what they judge to be right. Moral judgments are evaluative judgments, that is, they convey the agent's view concerning the value of doing a thing rather than another. The appreciation of value has normative or action-guiding force on the agent. Meta-ethicists have puzzled about the nature of values. Are these special kinds of facts, and could the reality of values be reconciled with a naturalistic metaphysics? Mackie (1977)

has argued that moral norms and values are too 'queer' to be part of the furniture of the world. Drew Khlentzos in 'Moral Realism, Meta-Ethical Pyrrhonism and Naturalism' points out that moral naturalists have to deal also with an epistemological problem: If there is a natural property of objective impermissibility, and if folk moral judgments can be correctly formed, then 'the folk must unwittingly detect and respond to the relevant natural moral properties.' The question of how they do this is called the Hard Problem. Khlentzos examines Nagel's form of moral realism (Nagel 1997) that is grounded in the objectivity of moral reasoning: The practice of first-order moral evaluations would be incoherent without believing in objective norms and values, and we should prioritize these over second-order moral reflections about how things really are with these values. Taken as an inference to the best explanation (of our inability to think of first-order moral evaluations as anything but objective), Nagel's argument is not fallacious. But Khlentzos suggests that the best explanation is not moral realism but what he calls 'Meta-Ethical Pyrrhonism', the view that 'neither the available arguments for moral realism nor the arguments against are in the end rationally compelling.' He argues however that unlike a religious agnostic, the Meta-Ethical Pyrrhonist should judge and act in accord with folk morality, for he shows that 'it will be irrational to treat moral norms in the context of decision-making as anything other than fully objective.'

Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen in 'Buck-passing Personal Values' makes use of the so-called 'Buck-passing' account of value[4] to provide an analysis of personal values, the kind of value found in a person's cherished objects for instance. As applied to values in general, the account that he calls the Fitting-attitude analysis holds that 'being valuable is being a fitting object of a pro-attitude.' The analysis reduces the evaluative to deontic claims about attitudes towards the valuable objects that we have reason to take up towards the objects. Rønnow-Rasmussen rejects the view that 'personal values are a special subgroup of extrinsic values.' What needs to be introduced in analyzing personal values is a very particular range of attitudes, namely those that have the form 'x favors O for y's sake.' Instances of such attitudes include both favoring O for its contribution to y's welfare, as well as attitudes of respect, admiration, honor, and so forth, that do not necessarily positively impact y's welfare. The proposed Fitting-attitude analysis of personal value defended in the essay is stated as follows: O has personal value for y, if and only if there is reason to favor O for y's sake. There are some problematic examples addressed in his essay, and Rønnow-Rasmussen admits that there are general problems for the buck-passing account as a whole that he does not address. The Fitting-attitude analysis of values does have the advantage of neutrality on the issue of value objectivism.

3.2 Choice

If human thought led directly to action, there would be no need for philosophers to discuss the will. However, the relation between thinking and acting is highly mysterious. Much of human thought comprises of beliefs acquired through perception or reasoning. *How does thinking cause one to act*? There are other states of mind

besides belief. In particular, desires are concerned not with the actual state of affairs in the world, but with a possible state of affairs that the agent favors. But not every desire is followed by action to bring about that state of affairs. It seems that an agent must make a judgment as to which desire is to be satisfied, and when it is to be satisfied. The former requires an evaluation of what is desired, and the latter requires a belief that the opportune time to act has arrived, given the condition of the agent and the surrounding world.

In 'Volitions, Comparative Value Judgments, and Choice,' Joseph Boyle examines what is needed to link value judgments with action, and finds a place for human freedom in his theory of motivation. Boyle distinguishes between the motivations behind the cognitively based behavior of non-human animals, and the volitions characteristic of human action that are 'responsive to specifically human cognition, namely, to knowledge by way of propositions, including their combination in reasoning.' In all voluntary human actions, the agent's judging that it would be good to do x is connected to the agent's doing x by the agent's wanting to do x, and the latter involves 'an interest in a good, an intention of specific goals instantiating the good, and the rational adoption of means to those goals.' Boyle discusses cases where the connection is blocked by a conflict of desires where 'a further initiative of the agent to overcome the conflict' is needed. Human choice is not simply adopting a means to an end, but 'the kind of volition called for to overcome conflicts of motivation that block action.' In comparing the options for action, the agent seeks to uncover common measures for ordering the options. *Free* choice involves the selection of one from a set of options that is judged incommensurable in value: it is 'a choice without sufficient causal conditions prior to the agent's choice itself,' where the rational desirability of the rejected option is not silenced or undercut by the endorsement of the other option. Free choice is not a mysterious twitch or accident, but 'a rational and appropriate, though undetermined, response to the judgment that one proposed action is incommensurable in desirability in relation to other actions the agent has reason to do.'

Choice has always interested moral philosophers. Wrongdoers may be excused for what they do if they did not choose to do it. It is only appropriate to judge a person by his action if that action is one that is chosen by him. Joseph Biehl in 'The Insignificance of Choice' questions such assumptions about choice because he doubts 'our notion of choice is capable of bearing the burden that many want our moral discourse to impose.' He distinguishes between our practices of holding people accountable as objects of moral criticism with the purpose of altering their behavior, and the sense in which moral claims and judgments are normative where there is a standard of correctness by which behavior is measured. The ability to choose a different course of action may have a significant role in the former practices, but Biehl thinks that this is not so in the latter sense of morality. Moral standards, like standards of rationality, are inescapable and not conditional on the aims of the agent. The notion of choice is required to understand rationality; hence if the normativity of morality could be accounted for in terms of rationality, choice would indeed be important for morality. But although this is an attractive idea, it cannot be maintained. Biehl sees choice as 'always a matter of selecting something for an explicit reason.'

The standard of practical rationality is the standard of instrumental reasoning, and not a standard that applies to ends rather than to means. Thus, a person can be rational even in the pursuit of immoral ends. On the other hand, if there were a standard of practical rationality that is concerned with ends, it would not be one that is used to evaluate the agent's choices.

3.3 Desire

Wanting something provides an agent with a starting point for deliberation, and he acts for a reason if he acts to satisfy that desire in accordance with his practical reasoning. Models of practical reasoning assume that the agent's desires can be clearly articulated for the purpose of his deliberation. Against this, Bernard Williams has suggested that there is an essential indeterminacy regarding what an agent has a reason to do (Williams 1981). Patrick Fleming in 'The Indeterminacy of Desire and Practical Reason' examines how the agent's motivational set can be indeterminate, and sheds light on the nature of practical reason. The basis of Williams' claim, that it is indeterminate as to what we have a reason to do, rests on two kinds of indeterminacy. Indeterminacy in procedure concerns what considerations are brought to the agent's mind through the use of his imagination. Indeterminacy of desire concerns the unsettled content of the agent's subjective motivational set. The rationalist response to Williams is 'to introduce formal constraints on desires to yield an account of reasons.' Fleming criticizes the attempt by Michael Smith to constrain desires by what our fully rational selves would be guided by in acting, namely those that can be systematically justified (Smith 1994). But seeking coherence among one's desires may not be rational or achievable in a world of plural and conflicting values. If there are different fully rational selves that we may become, an agent needs to decide what type of person to be. Any hope of settling this by a rational process founders on the indeterminacy of desire. Either the content of the desire is unsettled, or the weight of the desire may be indeterminate. The problem, Fleming suggests, is not merely epistemological. There may be 'no fact of the matter as to what the agent desires or most desires.' This is not the claim that problems of indeterminacy of desire are irresoluble, but that a rational examination of what has value is not always the way to resolve them. The lesson seems to be that there are practical questions that need to be settled that cannot be settled by a narrow form of practical reasoning, and that 'no set of formal principles will answer all the questions that are of interest in practical reason.' In particular, the most important contribution of deliberation has to do with constitutive questions about what kind of practical identity to adopt.

Motivation by desire does not seem to be sufficient for agency, for some desires are ones that a person may rather not have. Harry Frankfurt distinguishes between desires that a person identifies with, and those that are alien to him, depending on whether he reflectively endorses the desires in question (Frankfurt 1971). In contrast, critics of Frankfurt suggest that a structural analysis of identification can provide an objective basis for desires to be the agent's own. James Stacey Taylor in 'The Myth of Objectively Alien Desires' attempts to defend an attitudinal analysis

of identification similar to Frankfurt's by showing that the three most prominent kinds of objective criteria of identification do not succeed in distinguishing between alien and non-alien desires. On the basis of counter-examples, he shows that a desire may be irresistible, uncontrolled, or induced by other agents, and still be one that the agent identifies with. The identification is achieved by the agent's decision 'to act on a desire such that it becomes part of her motivational psychology.' There is a well-known regress objection against Frankfurt's account in its use of higher-order desires to endorse lower-order ones (Watson 1975). Taylor suggests that an attitudinal analysis of identification could avoid the objection on the basis of the idea that 'a person must necessarily be active with respect to her decisions.' No higher-order decisions would be necessary in order to ensure that the endorsed desire is one that the agent identifies with.

The assumption that desires motivate only because they aim at something that an agent finds to be good is challenged in 'On the Intelligibility of Bad Acts' by Michael Stocker, whose views were first presented in an influential paper, 'Desiring the Bad: An Essay in Moral Psychology' (Stocker 1979). Stocker now takes on Joseph Raz, who defends the 'classical' view that 'if there is no good in doing that, there is no reason to do it, and thus, it cannot be done for a reason,' and 'only what is desired or done for a reason is intelligible' (Raz 1999). Stocker argues that some desires for the bad can satisfy the requirement of a desirability condition and thereby provide intelligible reasons for action. There are actions that are done not just from a mistaken conception of the good but which are entirely bad, but which are nevertheless intelligible. Stocker accepts that what makes for intelligibility in action is the answer to the question 'What do you want that for?' But examples such as Augustine's delight in stealing the pears show that citing what is bad or seen as bad can be a satisfactory answer to this question.

Counting himself an Aristotelian, Stocker rejects the line of argument from its being natural for a human to do what is good for him, to the claim that 'we can understand, see as intelligible, how just on its own a human good can attract a human' but not how just on its own a human bad can attract a human. A person's developed (or second) nature can be good or bad, and it can be natural for those who are bad to seek what is bad. The desires and acts that attend sadism, religious fanaticism, and abusive love are intelligible as the result of warped or deformed consciences. Although we do believe many of our acts to be seeking what is good, the pressure on agents to see their actions as good may involve ethnocentrism and narcissism. A further objection to the claim that intelligible action is always *sub specie boni* is that 'there are other ways of seeing oneself and the world,' not necessarily as someone whose desires and acts are good. Here we find people given to spite, malice, and contempt: vices that Aristotle found to be both intelligible and bad.

3.4 Intention

To many philosophers of action, motivation by desire is not sufficient for human agency of the sort relevant to ethics. That is, for someone to perform an action

for which she can be held morally responsible, it is required that her desire led to action in a particular way. A person's moral responsibility is absent or diminished if the desire motivates without her awareness or control in Freudian cases, or against her will in cases of weakness of will. Typically, we hold a person responsible for her *intentional* actions, which are actions motivated by her reasons for acting. As Anscombe puts it, intentional actions are those to which a certain sense of the question 'Why?' has application (see §5 in Anscombe 1957). For an agent to act for a reason is for the agent to have gone through a process of practical reasoning with a conclusion in favor of so acting. Since the agent could make a decision that she either fails to act on, or will only do so at a suitable time in the future, the practical conclusion may either be inert or be future-directed. The mental state that is formed in making a commitment to act now or in the future has a functional role different from the desires that are evaluated by practical reason. This mental state, according to a functionalist account, is an intention (Bratman 1987).

In 'After Anscombe,' I argue that, although Bratman's account of intention 'has provided a conceptual tool for many directions of research in philosophy and cognitive psychology,' it cannot do the work in ethics that moral philosophers, especially Kantians, use it for. This can be shown by considering the problems in using intention to make a moral distinction in cases of double effect. If so, Bratman's is not the same concept of intention that Anscombe had in mind when she wrote her book. I show that Anscombe's account of intention is a much broader concept, with deeper historical roots. This does not mean that Bratman's concept of intention should be abandoned. Rather, we need to make a distinction between desire and intention that is implicit in Anscombe's account. That is, the aspects of intention that make her concept suited for ethics do not belong to Bratman's narrower concept but should be attributed to a concept that can be distinguished from intention. Evidence for what the latter concept is can be found in Aquinas' account of *intentio* from which the concept of intention has borrowed its name. *Intentio* for Aquinas is an act of will in regard to the end, whereas Bratman's intention is of the means that are chosen in practical reasoning. *Intentio* seems to be an intrinsic desire for the end. If this is right, then it is desire that is relevant for ethics, and not intention in its modern use. Recognition that desire and not intention is the relevant concept for ethics, in both Anscombe's and Aquinas' accounts of human agency, dovetails perfectly with their ethical theories, for it is Aristotle's ethics that has guided both philosophers in their ethical writings. After all, Aristotelian virtue ethicists are concerned with moral evaluation of the agent's character, which consists in a set of dispositions to seek ends that are desired for their own sake.

3.5 Practical Reason

The object of desire is a state of affairs, and a person who acts to satisfy that desire is engaged in goal-directed behavior. The 'teleological thesis' that affirms that all intentional action is goal-directed seems to be shared by Humeans and Kantians alike, but Crystal Thorpe in 'The Limits of Teleology' challenges the thesis. The

focus of her essay is the kind of intentional action that is deliberative, 'guided by reasoning, reflection and careful consideration.' Instrumental reasoning is teleological, but non-instrumental reasoning that is concerned with setting the ends of action is non-teleological. When an agent adopts an end, 'the only change she produces in the world is a change in her psychology.' To act is to produce a change in the world outside her mind, and for this, instrumental reasoning is required. Hence, on this standard view of practical reasoning, the teleological thesis turns out to be true. Thorpe considers two alternative conceptions of practical reasoning that include other forms of non-instrumental reasoning, namely moral reasoning mediated by rules, and practical judgment. If such forms can guide reasoning that leads to intentional action, independently of instrumental reasoning, then there is reason to think that the teleological thesis is false. Thorpe argues that subsuming a case under a rule does not necessarily involve the promotion of an end. And when a person discerns through practical judgment rather than rules which moral features are relevant, and which features matter more to the case at hand, there need be no appeal to moral rules at all. Here, 'her action is value-driven rather than goal-directed.' Thus, the plausibility of alternative conceptions of practical reasoning provides a challenge to the teleological thesis.

There is a puzzle involved in deliberation and motivation. Does an agent desire to do what he is motivated to do? If I insert coins in a vending machine, do I desire to do that, or do I just desire the soda? Stephen Finlay in 'Motivation to the Means' discusses the 'Motivation-by-Desire Principle' of orthodox Humean theory. Either there is motivational transfer from the end to the means, or 'there is license for attributing the motivation to sources other than desire, such as rational acceptance of imperatives of reason.' The rationalist objection is that the story of motivational transfer does not account for how rational agents are motivated by reasons, and why they ought to do what they have reason to do. Humeans who simply analyze reasons in terms of desires and beliefs need to explain why the motivation to the means is not merely a contingent psychological fact, but a rationally appropriate response by an agent who recognizes the normative requirement of doing what she has reason to do. Finlay takes Hume and Davidson to have a response to the objection in that they 'deny the existence of any gap between desire for the end and motivation to the means.' The motivation-by-desire principle is defended by showing that 'an agent's desire for some state of affairs necessarily provides that agent with motivation towards believed instrumental means to that state of affairs.' Building on elements of Davidson's account, Finlay constructs his 'argument from the constitutive nature of desire' to fully defeat the rationalist objection.

Accounts of practical decision making that link an agent's desires with her actions provide models of rational choice that are important for two purposes. First, the rationality of the decision to act helps to explain the action. Second, moral actions can be shown to be rational by showing that they are the choices that an agent would make based on desires that reflect ethical values. A problem that Erik Schmidt in 'Thresholds, Vagueness and the Psychology of Small Improvements' draws attention to is that 'people frequently fail to conform to the axioms of rational decision theory.' In his discussion of the problem of incomparability (a term he prefers to

'incommensurability'), he argues that philosophers have misdiagnosed the problem due to their acceptance of 'an empirically inadequate approach to practical reason.' The 'argument from small improvements' is thought to establish that certain alternatives are incomparable in that the relation between them is neither superiority nor inferiority nor equality. Philosophers have appealed to some kind of vagueness to account for the incomparability. But Schmidt borrows from psychological studies of choice that show people to 'compare alternatives in terms of their subjective rather than their absolute value.' A threshold is the minimum amount of evaluative difference required to register a difference in subjective value. Cases that fall under the argument from small improvements can be accounted for in terms of the application of a conflicting pair of thresholds. The puzzle then is not due to incomparability, but is a product of human psychology. Although the intransitivity of our decision procedures may seem irrational, it is to our advantage that human decision-making is flexible in that 'our preferences are not simply elicited or revealed by the choices we make, they are partly constructed during the process of deliberation.' Philosophers neglect psychological studies of choice at their peril.

3.6 Freedom

In explaining human action in terms of intention, choice and desire, philosophers are appealing to causal antecedents of action. But if these mental states are neural states, action can be treated as events in a causal nexus. In order to preserve the kind of freedom required for moral responsibility, libertarians deny that causal necessity applies to free human actions. The compatibilists in the freewill debate criticize as implausible this libertarian account for requiring agents to intervene from outside of the causal nexus. Instead, compatibilists deny that causal necessity rules out human freedom. Free action is distinguished from other events by the type of cause, namely that they are willed or chosen, and not by the absence of causal necessity. But many compatibilists have been in turn criticized for failing to refute the hard determinists who stand on the opposite extreme from libertarians, and who deny that there are free actions at all.

As a prime exponent of compatibilism, David Hume also seems to have exemplified this very failure to provide a positive account of free action. Troy Booher in 'Taking Liberty with Humean Necessity: Compatibilism and Contingency' examines the role, in Hume's discussion of liberty and necessity, of the Humean definition of necessity as 'the constant union of objects and the inference of the mind.' The definition is not needed for the possibility of free action, but to show that there is only one kind of necessity that applies to both free actions and other natural events, in Hume's response to a historical controversy where the possibility of free action is not at issue. How then should Hume be located in current debates between compatibilists and hard determinists? Booher argues that Hume should be viewed as a forerunner of the 'reactive attitudes' camp of compatibilism,[5] and that his positive account of moral freedom is the view that 'ultimately all moral assessments

concerning the fairness of holding one accountable are derived from moral senti-ments.' As a matter of contingent fact, recognition that causal necessity applies to actions considered free has had little effect on how these actions elicit our moral sentiments. But as there is no guarantee that our moral sentiments will not change over time, the disagreement between hard determinists and compatibilists cannot be resolved in the abstract.

3.7 Moral Action

Values are translated into actions by the practical choices that agents make. But doing the morally right thing seems to go against the self-interest of agents when doing so requires the sacrifice of personal interests for the benefit of others or for the sake of duty. The question arises as to whether morality is rational, or there is some other (non-rational) way to justify (and motivate) moral action. Contractari-ans like David Gauthier defend moral rationalism by arguing for the rationality of constrained maximization, in which conditional cooperation with others in society yields the highest utility payoff for the individual (Gauthier 1988). Malcolm Murray in 'Rational Choice and Evolutionary Fit' argues that the rationalist model fails, and suggests an evolutionary model in its place. The evolutionists maintain that agents who follow moral strategies are more likely to pass on their genes to future gen-erations, but this success has nothing to do with rational choice. For 'evolutionary success of irrational strategies is the norm, not the exception, in nature.' To defend the evolutionary model of moral choice, Murray addresses four objections. First, it seems incoherent to advocate irrational strategies. Second, moral behavior is suc-cessful on the evolutionary model only under very narrow and unlikely conditions. Third, evolutionary fit may be aligned with moral strategy, but to say that a strategy will have evolutionary success is not saying that morality, as we understand it, is justified. What is captured by the evolutionary account does not seem to be moral agency in a robust sense. Fourth, there is a gap between the descriptive content of evolutionary theory and the normativity of moral judgments. In reply to the fourth objection, Murray suggests that the idea of a 'real morality' that is not captured in evolutionary accounts should not be any more of an issue than the idea that 'real consciousness' is left out in the explanations of consciousness by cognitive science.

Notes

[1] Such a concern is raised in the 'Introduction' to Flanagan and Rorty (1990).
[2] See, for instance, the papers in Cullity and Gaut (1997).
[3] Recent work on this topic can be found in Chang (1997); Baumann and Betzler (2004).
[4] One of the most recent examples of such an account of value is found in Scanlon (1998).
[5] This compatibilist position was introduced in Strawson (1962).

References

Anscombe GEM (1957) *Intention*. Blackwell, Oxford

Baumann P, Betzler M (eds) (2004) *Practical conflicts: new philosophical essays*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

Bratman M (1987) *Intention, plans, and practical reason*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA

Chang R (ed) (1997) *Incommensurability, incomparability, and practical reason*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA

Cullity G, Gaut B (eds) (1997) *Ethics and practical reason*. Oxford University Press, New York

Flanagan O, Rorty AO (eds) (1990) *Identity, character, and morality: essays in moral psychology*. The MIT Press, Cambridge MA

Frankfurt H (1971) Freedom of the will and the concept of a person. *Journal of Philosophy* 68:5–20

Gauthier D (1988) *Morals by agreement*. Oxford University Press, Oxford

Mackie JL (1977) *Ethics: inventing right and wrong*. Penguin, Harmondsworth

Mele A (ed) (1997) *The philosophy of action*. Oxford University Press, Oxford

Nagel T (1997) *The last word*. Oxford University Press, New York

Raz J (1999) *Engaging reason: on the theory of value and action*. Oxford University Press, Oxford

Scanlon TM (1998) *What we owe to each other*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA

Smith M (1994) *The moral problem*. Blackwell, Oxford

Stocker M (1979) Desiring the bad: an essay in moral psychology. *Journal of Philosophy* 76:738–753

Strawson P (1962) Freedom and resentment. *Proceedings of the British Academy* 48:1–25

Watson G (1975) Free agency. *Journal of Philosophy* 72:205–220.

Williams B (1981) Internal and external reasons. In: *Moral luck*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

Part I
Meta-ethics of Values

Chapter 1
Moral Realism, Meta-Ethical Pyrrhonism and Naturalism

Drew Khlentzos

Abstract This paper argues that naturalistic moral realism is vulnerable to a *Hard Problem* that has gone largely unrecognized. This problem is to explain how natural moral properties are detected by the folk. I argue that Thomas Nagel's persuasive case for moral realism founded on the priority of first-order moral evaluations over second-order reflection is not conclusive—a certain type of moral agnosticism which I call Meta-Ethical Pyrrhonism can account for our inability to think of first-order moral evaluations as merely subjective or relative. Although unsatisfactory as metaphysics, Meta-Ethical Pyrrhonism is arguably all that a moral naturalist is entitled to by way of a meta-ethical theory.

Keywords Hard Problem · Meta-Ethical Pyrrhonism · Moral realism · Moral skepticism · Naturalism

Suppose that there are no non-natural facts—that all that exists is determined by ultimate physical laws and boundary conditions. Can any such naturalistic scheme countenance moral norms and values? Mackie (1977) notoriously thought not. Moral norms and values are simply too queer to be part of the furniture of the world, he contended. The reason was that these norms and values as we construe them are supposed to be objectively prescriptive. Yet objective prescriptivity is a 'queer' property so unlike any other natural property that we could never have any naturalistic ground for believing in it.

Mackie's Argument from Queerness has not convinced naturalistic moral realists. Some hold that Mackie is mistaken in thinking that objective prescriptivity, at least as Mackie himself construed it, is a *sine qua non* of folk moral norms and values, others that the very notion of objective prescriptivity rests upon a confusion of ontological with motivational questions.

D. Khlentzos
Language and Cognition Research Centre, School of Behavioural, Cognitive and Social Sciences, University of New England, Armidale, New South Wales, Australia 2351 Tel.: +61-2-67733208
e-mail: dkhlentz@une.edu.au

My primary purpose in this paper is not to offer a substantial contribution to this debate, although I shall need to say something about objective prescriptivity and its place in folk morality and in this context shall explain why Mackie's notion cannot be lightly dismissed by naturalists. My aim is to first examine from a naturalistic point of view the phenomenon with which Mackie starts: the conflict between our ordinary moral judgments and naturalistically grounded reflections on the nature of those judgments.

I shall argue that Mackie is right to find it extremely difficult to bring first-order ethical judgments into harmony with second-order reflection on those judgments. Furthermore, moral naturalists have not appreciated the complexity of the task they face—they have, I shall argue, largely ignored a foundational problem of naturalistic moral epistemology. This will involve a brief discussion of what naturalistic moral realism is and of why it is vulnerable to a difficulty I label the *Hard Problem*. I shall then argue that Thomas Nagel's persuasive case for moral realism founded on the priority of first-order moral evaluations over second-order reflection is not conclusive—a certain type of moral agnosticism which I call Meta-Ethical Pyrrhonism can account for the phenomenon Nagel emphasizes: namely, our inability to think of first-order moral evaluations as merely subjective or relative. Although unsatisfactory as metaphysics, Meta-Ethical Pyrrhonism is arguably all that a moral naturalist is entitled to by way of a meta-ethical theory.

1.1 Objective Prescriptivity and the Requirements of Naturalism

Suppose you hear a voice instructing you to strangle your cat. Checking to see where the voice is coming from you realize, to your dismay, that it has issued from within your own head. Naturally, you do not think to obey. For as you now realize, you have just experienced a transitory psychotic episode. Schizophrenics hear such voices and, tragically, often obey the instruction conveyed, however bizarre it may be. Why do they do so? Given their condition, sometimes because of the tone or the urgency of the instruction, other times because of the authority they believe to have issued it. The schizophrenic who strangles his cat may well do so because he believes that this *had* to be done. If he believes that God or Satan instructed him to do so, he has identified the source of this *to-be-doneness*. On the other hand, if we can get him to acknowledge that he was merely reacting to the urgency of the instruction or the insistent tone in which it was delivered, we may just succeed in convincing him that he was mistaken in believing the action of strangling his cat really was objectively prescriptive.

Any naturalist who believes that it is straightforwardly and objectively wrong to incarcerate young children who have committed no crime owes us a naturalistic account of the source and nature of this objective wrongness—one founded upon natural, ultimately physical, facts. For a number of reasons, moral naturalists seem not to have fully appreciated the complexity of this task. This is partly because of two misplaced prior commitments—to the metaphysical thesis of moral supervenience