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Essentialism and Anti-Essentialism in Feminist Philosophy

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This article revisits the ethical and political questions raised by feminist debates over essentialism, the belief that there are properties essential to women and which all women share. Feminists' widespread rejection of essentialism has threatened to undermine feminist politics. Re-evaluating two responses to this problem—'strategic' essentialism and Iris Marion Young's idea that women are an internally diverse 'series'—I argue that both unsatisfactorily retain essentialism as a descriptive claim about the social reality of women's lives. I argue instead that women have a 'genealogy': women always acquire femininity by appropriating and reworking existing cultural interpretations of femininity, so that all women become situated within a history of overlapping chains of interpretation. Because all women are located within this complex history, they are identifiable as belonging to a determinate social group, despite sharing no common understanding or experience of femininity. The idea that women have a genealogy thus reconciles anti-essentialism with feminist politics.

The heated feminist debates over 'essentialism' of the 1980s and early 1990s have largely died away, yet they raised fundamental questions for feminist moral and political philosophy which have still to be fully explored. The central issue in feminist controversies over essentialism was whether there are any shared characteristics common to all women, which unify them as a group. Many leading feminist thinkers of the 1970s and 1980s rejected essentialism, particularly on the grounds that universal claims about women are invariably false and effectively normalize and privilege specific forms of femininity. However, by the 1990s it had become apparent that the rejection of essentialism problematically undercut feminist politics, by denying that

* This article is a substantially revised version of my essay, 'On the Genealogy of Women: Against Essentialism in Feminist Philosophy', in Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie and Becky Munford (eds.), *Third Wave Feminism: A Critical Assessment* (London: Palgrave, 2004). I thank Gillian Howie, Vrinda Dalmiya, and the anonymous referee for the *Journal of Moral Philosophy* for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this article.

women have any shared characteristics that could motivate them to act together as a collectivity. An 'anti-anti-essentialist' current therefore crystallized, which sought to resuscitate some form of essentialism as a political necessity for feminism.¹ One particularly influential strand within this current has been 'strategic' essentialism, which defends essentialist claims just because they are politically useful. In this article, I aim to challenge strategic essentialism, arguing that feminist philosophy cannot avoid enquiring into whether essentialism is true as a descriptive claim about social reality. I will argue that, in fact, essentialism is descriptively false, but that this need not undermine the possibility of feminist activism. This is because we can derive an alternative basis for feminist politics from the concept of 'genealogy' which features importantly within some recent theoretical understandings of gender, most notably Judith Butler's 'performative' theory of gender.

To anticipate, I will develop my argument for a 'genealogical' and anti-essentialist recasting of feminist politics in the following stages. I begin by reviewing the history of feminist debates surrounding essentialism, identifying in these apparently highly disparate debates a coherent history of engagement with an 'essentialism' that carries a relatively unified sense. My overview of these debates will trace how anti-essentialism came to threaten feminism both as a critique of existing society and as a politics of change. I shall then assess two attempts by feminist thinkers to surmount the problems posed by anti-essentialism without reverting to the idea that all women share a common social position and form of experience. These attempts are, first, strategic essentialism and, second, Iris Marion Young's idea that women comprise not a unified group but an internally diverse 'series'. Both these attempts, I shall argue, are unsatisfactory, because they continue tacitly to rely on a descriptive form of essentialism, even as they explicitly repudiate it. Nonetheless, Young's rethinking of women as a series is important in indicating that we need to overcome the problems generated by anti-essentialism by reconceiving women as a specifically non-unified type of social group. Building on this point, I shall argue that feminists could fruitfully reconceive women as a particular type of non-unified group: a group that exists in virtue of having a genealogy. The concept of genealogy, as I understand it, provides a way to reject essentialism (and so to deny that women have any necessary or common characteristics), while preserving the idea that women form a distinctive social group.

My project of reconceiving women as having a genealogy is loosely derived from Judith Butler, whose declared aim in *Gender Trouble* is to outline a '*feminist genealogy* of the category of women'.² By briefly tracing out the Nietzschean background to recent feminist appropriations of the concept of

1. I take the locution 'anti-anti-essentialism' from Cressida Heyes, *Line Drawings: Defining Women Through Feminist Practice* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), pp. 67-72.

2. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 5; italics original.

genealogy, I will suggest that women always become women by reworking pre-established cultural interpretations of femininity, so that they become located—together with all other women—within a history of overlapping chains of interpretation. Although women do not share any common understanding or experience of femininity, they nevertheless belong to a distinctive social group in virtue of being situated within this complex history. This rethinking of women as having a genealogy entails a concomitant rethinking of feminist politics as coalitional rather than unified. According to this rethinking, collective feminist activities need not be predicated on any shared set of feminine concerns; rather, they may arise from overlaps and indirect connections between women's diverse historical and cultural situations. I hope that my exploration will begin to show how a genealogical rethinking of women could enable feminists to oppose (descriptive) essentialism while retaining belief in women as a group with a distinctive, and distinctively oppressive, history—an ongoing history which is an appropriate target of social critique and political transformation.

Feminist Debates around Essentialism

The first step towards any defence of an anti-essentialist, genealogical perspective within feminist philosophy is to recall what was centrally at issue in the controversies over essentialism that dominated much 1980s and 1990s feminist writing. Identifying any central themes within feminist discussion of essentialism is complicated, however, as this discussion contains a bewildering variety of strands. Given this variety, the notion of essentialism itself has taken on a correspondingly wide range of meanings for feminists, leading some commentators, such as Gayatri Spivak, to conclude that 'essentialism is a loose tongue'.³ Reviewing the huge body of literature on this question, Cressida Heyes has highlighted four different senses of 'essentialism', all regularly criticized within feminist discussion: (1) metaphysical essentialism, the belief in real essences (of the sexes) which exist independently of social construction; (2) biological essentialism, the belief in real essences which are biological in character; (3) linguistic essentialism, the belief that the term 'woman' has a fixed and invariant meaning; and (4) methodological essentialism, which encompasses approaches to studying women's (or men's) lives which presuppose the applicability of gender as a general category of social analysis. Heyes suggests that the first two 'forms of essentialism [which are] premised on metaphysical realist claims about pre-social truths have been marginalized within the typology of essentialism', and that feminists have most regularly addressed and opposed methodological essentialism.⁴

3. Gayatri Spivak, 'In a Word: Interview with Ellen Rooney', in N. Schor and E. Weed (eds.), *The Essential Difference* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 159.

4. Heyes, *Line Drawings*, p. 37. Charlotte Witt argues that feminist critiques of essentialism have four similar targets: (1) the metaphysical belief that gender and sex are core

Heyes's typology helpfully clarifies the range of possible varieties of essentialism, but, because she introduces precise distinctions into the 'essentialism' which feminists have generally discussed and criticized as a relatively unified phenomenon, her account obscures how feminist debates around essentialism have actually developed. Despite the variety of strands within these debates, retrospectively they can be seen to be engaged with an 'essentialism' that has a relatively unitary meaning, deriving from the traditional philosophical understanding of essentialism. This relatively unitary sense of essentialism gives feminist debates a coherent history, within which different contributions can be recognized to interweave with and build upon one another. To support this assertion, I shall briefly reconstruct this history, starting from the philosophical sense of essentialism which forms the point of departure for feminist explorations.

Philosophically, essentialism is the belief that things have essential properties, properties that are necessary to those things being what they are. Recontextualized within feminism, essentialism becomes the view that there are properties essential to women, in that any woman must necessarily have those properties to be a woman at all. So defined, essentialism entails a closely related view, universalism: that there are some properties shared by, or common to, all women—since without those properties they could not be women in the first place. Essential properties, then, are also universal. 'Essentialism' as generally debated in feminist circles embraces this composite view: that there are properties essential to women and which all women (therefore) share.⁵

It is notable that, on this definition of the 'essentialism' with which feminists have been concerned, the properties that are essential and universal to all women can be either natural or socially constructed. This is reflected in that critics of essentialism from the later 1980s and 1990s typically attack any view that ascribes necessary and common characteristics to all women, even if that view identifies those characteristics as culturally constructed. Equally, though, it must be acknowledged that feminist thinkers often use 'essentialism' and 'biological essentialism' as interchangeable terms (apparently precluding the possibility that essential characteristics of women could also be

attributes of the self; (2) biological determinism; (3) the belief that the word 'feminine' has a fixed meaning; (4) the practice of making false generalizations about women; see Witt, 'Anti-Essentialism in Feminist Theory', *Philosophical Topics* 23.2 (1995), pp. 321-44.

5. Naomi Schor stresses that essentialism and universalism differ in 'This Essentialism Which Is Not One: Coming to Grips with Irigaray', in N. Schor and E. Weed (eds.), *The Essential Difference* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 24. One might, for instance, argue that there are certain characteristics which all women share, but which are accidental rather than essential (that is, these features could be changed without women thereby ceasing to be women)—such as, perhaps, the feature of being disempowered relative to men. Yet, though universal features need not be essential, essential properties are necessarily universal, hence 'essentialism' and 'universalism' are generally assimilated in feminist discussion.

cultural). There is an obvious reason for this elision: if there are properties necessary to and shared by all women, these properties, *qua* necessary, can most readily be identified as natural. Thus, essentialism easily slides into biological essentialism because women's necessary properties are most readily identified as biological.

Such simple, biological essentialism was commonly held prior to second-wave feminism, typically as the view that all women are constituted as women by their possession of wombs, breasts and child-bearing capacity. Arguably, this view played a crucial ideological role in justifying women's confinement to the domestic sphere as natural and necessary. Second-wave feminists therefore opposed essentialism in its pre-feminist, biological incarnation. However, feminist antipathy to essentialism rapidly extended to elements of biological essentialism perceived to persist *within* feminism. In the 1970s, socialist feminists criticized the essentialism they detected in the work of some radical feminists who urged reevaluation of women's allegedly natural features, such as their child-bearing capacity.⁶ Within these socialist feminist critiques, (biological) 'essentialism' was typically contrasted to 'social constructionism', which relies on the distinction between biological sex and social gender. On the social constructionist view, sexed biology is both different from, and causally inert with respect to, gender—an individual's socially acquired role and sense of identity. So, while being *female* may require certain anatomical features, being a *woman* is something different, dependent on identification with the feminine gender—the social traits, activities and roles that make up femininity. Following this recognition of the gap between gender and sex, social constructionists could reject biological essentialism for confusing these two levels of analysis and consequently making a fallacious—and ideologically motivated—attempt to read off the contingencies of social arrangements from the necessities of biology.

Despite repudiating biological essentialism, many influential feminist theorists of the 1970s and early 1980s went on to endorse non-biological forms of essentialism. Having identified femininity as socially constructed, these theorists sought to identify an invariant set of social characteristics that constitute femininity and that all women, *qua* women, share. Possibilities included women's special responsibility for domestic, affective or nurturant labour (as Nancy Hartsock argued), their construction as sexual objects rather than sexual subjects (according to Catherine MacKinnon) or their relational, contextual and particularist style of ethical and practical reasoning (Carol Gilligan).⁷

6. For a classic socialist feminist critique of radical feminism, see Lynne Segal, *Is the Future Female?* (London: Virago, 1987).

7. See, respectively, Nancy Hartsock, *Money, Sex, and Power: Toward a Feminist Historical Materialism* (New York: Longman, 1983); Catherine MacKinnon, 'Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State: An Agenda for Theory', *Signs* 7 (1982), pp. 515-44; Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982). Gilligan has subsequently revised her ethical theory to mitigate the exclusive tendencies that critics detected in

My claim that theorists such as MacKinnon are essentialists might sound odd, given the frequent contrast between essentialism and social constructionism. Yet social constructionists can readily *be* essentialists if they believe—as do these influential feminist theorists—that a particular pattern of social construction is essential and universal to all women.

Moreover, in the later 1980s, a large number of feminist thinkers began to attack the positions of Gilligan, MacKinnon and others as—precisely—essentialist. These critics argued, in considerable detail, that universal claims about women's social position or identity are invariably false. It cannot plausibly be maintained that women's experiences have any common character, or that women share any common location in social and cultural relations, or sense of psychic identity. Essentialism, then, is simply false as a description of social reality. Moreover, critics pointed out that the descriptive falsity of essentialism renders it politically oppressive as well. The (false) universalization of claims about women in effect casts particular forms of feminine experience as the norm, and, typically, it is historically and culturally privileged forms of femininity that become normalized in this way. Essentialist theoretical moves thereby end up replicating between women the very patterns of oppression and exclusion that feminism should contest. This point has been pressed particularly forcefully by Elizabeth Spelman, whose classic critique *Inessential Woman* castigates recurring tendencies within feminism to take certain privileged women's experiences or situations as the norm.⁸

One might wonder whether we could defend essentialism without postulating any social or cultural characteristics common to all women if we instead identified women's essential properties with their biologically female characteristics. This need not entail returning to the traditional, misleadingly anatomical, definition of womanhood: one might hold that femininity is socially constructed in diverse ways, but that all these constructions are united in that they build upon and interact with individuals' biologically female characteristics. This option was foreclosed by feminist philosophies of embodiment which developed in the 1990s. Judith Butler, Moira Gatens and Elizabeth Grosz, in particular, argued that bodies are thoroughly acculturated, and therefore participate in the same diversity as the social field that they reflect.⁹ These thinkers argued that our bodies are first and foremost the bodies that we live, phenomenologically, and the way we live our bodies is culturally informed and constrained at every point. Sexed embodiment is therefore not external but *internal* to the gendered realm of social practices

it: see J.M. Taylor, Carol Gilligan and A.M. Sullivan, *Between Voice and Silence: Women and Girls, Race and Relationship* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

8. Elizabeth Spelman, *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (London: The Women's Press, 1988).

9. See Butler, *Gender Trouble*; Moira Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies* (London: Routledge, 1996); Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

and meanings. Consequently, one cannot appeal to any unity amongst female bodies to fix the definition of women, since the meaning of bodies will vary indefinitely according to their socio-cultural location.

Following this recognition of the cultural character of bodies, a growing number of theorists in the 1990s rejected the previously popular essentialism/constructionism antithesis. They argued that constructionism remains unduly close to essentialism, since it accepts the existence of natural bodily properties but simply denies them any role in constituting the essence of woman. According to these critics, constructionism remains problematic because, in retaining the belief in natural properties of female bodies, it leaves permanently open the possibility of making a (spurious) appeal to these properties in the attempt to ground unity amongst women. The most consistent form of anti-essentialism, then, which developed in the 1990s, denies that any features—natural *or* social—are common to all women, who are fully socially and corporeally diverse.

The increasingly radical rejection of essentialism prompted a counter-tendency within feminist thought, however, emphasizing the neglected importance and political potential of essentialism. Feminists became increasingly concerned that accusations of essentialism often silenced thinkers, condemning their arguments out of hand. Naomi Schor, famously, complained that these accusations had become ‘the prime idiom of intellectual terrorism and the privileged instrument of political orthodoxy...endowed...with the power to reduce to silence, to excommunicate, to consign to oblivion’.¹⁰ This prompted a reconsideration of whether essentialism might be philosophically or politically fruitful. Notably, feminist rejection of essentialism had posed several interwoven problems. First, it had ‘cast doubt on the project of conceptualizing women as a group’.¹¹ By denying women any shared features, anti-essentialism seemed to imply that there is nothing in virtue of which women could rightly be identified as forming a distinct social group. This undermined feminism as a critique of existing society, insofar as this critique is premised on the claim that women constitute a distinctly disadvantaged or oppressed social group. Anti-essentialism appeared also to have undermined feminist politics: if women do not share any common social location, then they cannot be expected to mobilize around any concern at their common situation, or around any shared political identity or allegiance. Thus, anti-essentialism seemed to undermine feminism both as social critique and as a political movement for social change.

Faced with these problems, ‘anti-anti-essentialists’ reconsidered how far some form of essentialism might be necessary for feminist social criticism and political activism. One of the most important strands in this reconsideration has been ‘strategic’ essentialism: the defence of essentialism not as a

10. Schor, ‘This Essentialism Which Is Not One’, p. 42.

11. Iris Marion Young, ‘Gender as Seriality: Thinking about Women as a Social Collective’, *Signs* 19.3 (1994), p. 713.

descriptive claim about social reality, but merely as a political strategy. In the next section, I will argue that strategic essentialism is unstable: although it attempts to avoid endorsing essentialism as a description of social reality, it ultimately remains forced to rely on descriptive essentialism to support its claim to political efficacy. I will then assess how a similar instability infiltrates Iris Young's suggestive attempt to reconceive women as a 'series', an attempt which nonetheless paves the way for my subsequent argument that women might productively be reconceived as having a genealogy.

Strategic and Descriptive Essentialism

Despite their concern to reappraise the political fertility of essentialism, few 'anti-anti-essentialists' have sought to reinstate the belief in shared social characteristics common to all women. Rather, anti-anti-essentialists have tended to defend essentialism by arguing that it can take multiple forms, some more complex and subtle—and defensible—than its familiar ones.¹² In particular, it has been argued that essentialism need not take the form of a *descriptive* claim about social reality. According to 'strategic' essentialism, which became increasingly popular in the later 1980s and 1990s, feminists should acknowledge that essentialism is descriptively false in that it denies the real diversity of women's lives and social situations.¹³ Nonetheless, in delimited contexts, feminists should continue to act *as if* essentialism were true, so as to encourage a shared identification among women that enables them to engage in collective action. To take a controversial example, many of the bold statements in Luce Irigaray's later work have often been construed as strategically essentialist. In *Thinking the Difference*, she claims that women share certain bodily rhythms which give them a deep attunement to nature, and which mean that women are particularly adversely affected by ecological disasters such as the Chernobyl accident.¹⁴ It seems plausible to think that, rather than attempting to describe women as they really are, Irigaray is encouraging women to *think* that they suffer particularly from environmental problems, as a strategic identification that will galvanize them to collectively resist ecological degradation.

An objection immediately arises to this strategic essentialist position. Any political strategy is effective only inasmuch as it allows agents to recognize and intervene into the real social events, processes and forces which make up the social field. But it seems reasonable to think that a strategy can be effec-

12. See, especially, Schor, 'This Essentialism Which Is Not One', p. 43.

13. 'Strategic' essentialism is, of course, primarily associated with Gayatri Spivak, who coined the term in 'Feminism, Criticism and the Institution', *Thesis Eleven* 10/11 (1984–85), pp. 175–87. Spivak, however, introduced strategic essentialism in relation to subaltern studies: her term was taken up within feminist contexts in ways she did not intend.

14. Luce Irigaray, *Thinking the Difference: For a Peaceful Revolution* (trans. K. Montin; London: Athlone Press, 1994), pp. 24–26.

tive, in this sense, only insofar as it embodies an accurate understanding of the character of social processes. This implies that a strategy of affirming fictitious commonalities among women will fail to facilitate effective action given a world where women do *not* really have any common social characteristics or locations. Rather, such a strategy appears destined to mislead women into fighting against difficulties which are either non-existent or—more likely—really affect only some privileged subgroup of women.

This objection can be resisted, however, as it (implicitly) is by Denise Riley in *'Am I That Name?'*. Riley claims that 'it is compatible to suggest that "women" don't exist—while maintaining a politics of "as if they existed"—since the world behaves as if they unambiguously did'.¹⁵ In other words, for Riley, the fiction that women share a common social experience is politically effective because the social world actually does treat women as if they comprise a unitary group. Riley accepts that women are *not* a unitary group and that the socially prevalent idea that they are unified is false. Nevertheless, this false idea informs and organizes the practices and institutions that shape women's experiences, so that those—very different—experiences become structured by essentialist assumptions. A strategy of affirming fictitious commonalities therefore *will* be effective given this world in which (false) descriptive essentialist assumptions undergird women's social existence.

Riley's argument has a problem, though: she cannot consistently maintain both that women's social experience is fully diverse and that this experience is uniformly structured by essentialist assumptions. If essentialism informs and organizes the structures that shape women's social experience, then this experience will be organized according to certain shared models and will acquire certain common patterns and features. More concretely, the idea that women are a homogeneous group will structure social institutions so that they position all women homogeneously, leading to (at least considerable areas of) shared experience. Thus, Riley (and other strategic essentialists) may be right that essentialist constructions are socially influential, but they cannot, consistently with this, also maintain that descriptive essentialism is false. Furthermore, it is not obviously true that any uniform set of essentialist constructions informs all social experience. These constructions may all identify women as a homogeneous group, but they vary widely in their account of the context of women's homogenous features. Consequently, these constructions will influence social structures in correspondingly varying directions, against which no counter-affirmation of common experience can be expected to be effective.

Strategic essentialists, then, have attempted to resuscitate essentialism by arguing that it can take a merely political and non-descriptive form. But this attempt proves unsuccessful, because one cannot defend essentialism on strategic grounds without first showing that there is a homogeneous set of

15. Denise Riley, *'Am I That Name?': Feminism and the Category of 'Women' in History* (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 112.

essentialist assumptions that exerts a coherent influence on women's social experience—which amounts to defending essentialism on descriptive grounds (as well). Advocates of essentialism therefore need to show that it accurately describes social reality. Here, though, critics can retort that essentialism is descriptively false, since women do not even share any common mode of construction by essentialist discourses. Yet this retort reinstates the problem of anti-essentialism: its paralysing effect on social criticism and political activism. Strategic essentialism has not resolved this problem, for it has not stably demarcated any merely political form of essentialism from the descriptive essentialism which critics have plausibly condemned as false and oppressive.

Women as a Series

To resolve the problems posed by anti-essentialism, feminist philosophers need to oppose essentialism as a descriptive claim—that is, to recognize the diversity of women's lives and social characteristics—and yet to continue to identify women as a distinctive (and distinctly disadvantaged) social group. This conjunction of anti-essentialism with feminist social ontology appears difficult to achieve, but could be accomplished if we reconceive women as a social group of some specifically *non-unified* type. Iris Marion Young takes this step in her paper 'Gender as Seriality'.

Young urges us to reconceive women as a *series*, where a series is a kind of group that is non-unified: 'vast, multifaceted, layered, complex and overlapping'.¹⁶ Employing the terminology of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Young distinguishes series from groups in the strict sense: the latter are collections of individuals who mutually recognize significant areas of shared experience and orientation to common goals. In contrast, membership in a series does not require members to share any attributes, goals or experience. Instead, the members of a series are unified, passively, through their actions being constrained and organized by particular structures and constellations of material objects. Women, for example, are passively positioned in a series by the particular cluster of gender rules and codes which infuse everyday representations, artefacts and spaces. Young's understanding of women as assembled into a 'series' allows her to deny women any common identity or characteristics, by arguing that they take up the constraints of gender structures in variable ways, within the contexts of entirely different projects and experiences. At the same time, Young can consistently claim that women retain the broad group status of a series insofar as the same set of 'feminizing' structures remains a background constraint operative upon them all. Having secured women the status of a determinate social group—in this broad, non-unified sense—Young concludes that it is possible for women to become conscious of their group status and so to become motivated into co-operating together politically.

16. Young, 'Gender as Seriality', p. 728.

Unfortunately, Young's approach has a drawback which is structurally similar to that of strategic essentialism: her defence of women's group status tacitly reinscribes the descriptive essentialism from which she explicitly distances herself. Although she denies that women share a common experience or identity, she does maintain that all women's activities and lives are 'oriented around the *same* or similarly structured objects [and]...realities'.¹⁷ From Young's perspective, there must be some features that unify these social structures and realities such that they can be said to co-operate in constituting women as a single, distinct gender. As Young says, it is from the sameness of the objects structuring women's activities that the 'loose unity of the series...derives'.¹⁸ Although, as she admits, the content of these objects and realities varies contextually, she still maintains that, despite their diversity, these realities share certain unifying characteristics. In particular, for Young, they all embody the expectation, first, of normative heterosexuality—which, she claims, 'constitute[s] women cross-culturally'¹⁹—and, secondly, of a sexual division of labour—the content of which, Young observes, 'varies with each social system, [although in each case] a division of at least some tasks and activities by sex appears as a felt necessity'.²⁰ Of course, she also insists that women experience these expectations differently given their diverse situations and activities. Yet the claim that these expectations organize the realities of all women's lives is itself ambiguous. Insofar as all women's lives are organized by a sexual division of labour, the *content* of this division varies widely, as Young herself admits. Likewise, the meaning of heterosexuality is highly varying (although, as a minimum, normative heterosexuality expects women to desire men, the meaning of this expectation will vary greatly relative to changing conceptions of masculinity and of desire, sexuality, and their social significance). So, Young's claim is plausible only if it acknowledges that the expectations that ultimately organize all women's lives are themselves varied; but, consequently, these expectations cannot be said to unify the structures by which women are serially positioned.

Young, however, needs to identify this unity because she can only retain a coherent feminine gender by arguing that, although women have no common features, there *are* common features—common expectations—organizing all the social realities that constrain women's lives. Hence she has to maintain, for example, that normative heterosexuality has a universal, cross-cultural meaning. This brings Young into a difficulty, parallel to that of the strategic essentialists—she continues, ultimately, to rely on a descriptive form of essentialism, insofar as she has to affirm that there are certain universal norms that constitute all women as women (even though women do not share a common experience of those norms). Young's residual essentialism

17. Young, 'Gender as Seriality', p. 728; emphasis added.

18. Young, 'Gender as Seriality', p. 728.

19. Young, 'Gender as Seriality', p. 729.

20. Young, 'Gender as Seriality', p. 730.

can be traced back to the Sartrean framework from which she derives her concept of a series. Sartre insists that series should not be equated with groups in the strict, unified sense. Groups in the strict sense involve shared goals and experience, so that series count as groups only in a broad or, as Sartre puts it, 'neutral' sense.²¹ Yet the reason why Sartre continues to identify series as groups in this broad sense is because he regards series as *self-alienated* versions of strict, unified groups. For Sartre, series are self-alienated groups in that their unity is located outside them, in the objective artefacts or structures by which their members are constrained and organized.²² Thus, from Sartre's perspective, series only count as groups at all to the extent that they remain unified, albeit in a relatively indirect, exteriorized way.

Young's Sartrean concept of the series proves inadequate to the task which she wishes it to play: that of enabling her to reconceive women as a specifically non-unified type of social group. Despite this failing, the importance of Young's argument lies in her more basic insight that reconceiving women as a non-unified type of social group could surmount the problems generated by feminist critiques of essentialism. I therefore propose to develop Young's insight, by jettisoning the idea that women constitute a series, and instead rethinking women as having a genealogy—that is, as constituting a group that is internally diverse, and yet remains a group in virtue of having a complex history composed of multiple, overlapping threads of interpretation.

Women as Having a Genealogy

In this section, I will argue that an appropriation of the concept of genealogy can provide a way to reinstate the idea that women comprise a distinct social group even in the absence of any common properties that constitute them all as women. Several prominent feminist thinkers have already drawn on the concept of genealogy: for example, in *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler proposes to outline a genealogical understanding of what it means to be a woman.²³ Similarly, Moira Gatens praises the 'project of charting a genealogy of the category "woman" or "women"'. On this approach "women" itself is understood to have a history, a genealogy, a "line of descent"...a genealogical approach asks: how has "woman"/"women" functioned as a discursive category throughout history?'.²⁴ These approving references to genealogy by Butler and Gatens imply that ideas of femininity should be understood as historically constructed in multiple, shifting ways, their fluctuations in meaning registering changes in social relations of power. In this, though, Butler and Gatens appear concerned to trace the history of the concept

21. Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. I. *Theory of Practical Ensembles* (trans. A. Sheridan-Smith; London: New Left Books, 1976), p. 256.

22. Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, pp. 258-59.

23. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 5.

24. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, p. 76.

'woman' rather than the history of women themselves. Yet the concept of genealogy can only provide a way of grasping women as a distinct (albeit non-unified) social group if women *themselves* have a genealogy—that is, to anticipate, if their experiences and psychologies are shaped in overlapping and historically interconnected ways. Thus, any anti-essentialist appropriation of the concept of genealogy must clarify the relationship between the genealogy of ideas concerning femininity and the genealogy of women themselves.

To do this we can return to Nietzsche, from whom both Butler and Gatens derive their concepts of genealogy. Gatens draws deliberately upon Nietzsche,²⁵ and, although Butler draws more explicitly upon Foucault than Nietzsche, she herself repeatedly stresses that Foucault's practice of genealogical enquiry is deeply indebted to his interpretation of the concept of genealogy in Nietzsche.²⁶ In *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887),²⁷ Nietzsche sketches a distinctive form of historical enquiry which traces how historically changing concepts—such as 'guilt', 'duty', 'community', 'good' and 'evil'—shape lived social experience. He also traces how the power relations that are at work within people's social experiences lead them to reshape those concepts in turn. In explicating Nietzsche's approach, I shall draw on Foucault's presentation of it in his important methodological essay 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History' (1971).²⁸

In *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche denies that any common characteristics unite all the institutions, practices and beliefs normally classified under the rubric of morality. Nietzsche thus adopts an anti-essentialist approach to morality, taking its constituent practices and beliefs to be highly diverse,²⁹ and to fall under the single rubric of morality solely in virtue of belonging within a distinctive history. Foucault stresses that, for Nietzsche, this history is not to be studied through 'traditional' modes of historical enquiry, which misleadingly presuppose an underlying unity among moral phenomena. Instead, the history of morality should be approached through a novel mode of enquiry—'genealogy'—which attends to the fluctuating and

25. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, pp. 76-77.

26. See, especially, Judith Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), pp. 226-28; *Gender Trouble*, pp. 20-21, 150, 161.

27. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality* (trans. Carol Diethe; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

28. Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', reprinted in J. Richardson and B. Leiter (eds.), *Nietzsche* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 341-59. On the importance of this paper for Foucault's subsequent work, see, *inter alia*, Michael Mahon, *Foucault's Nietzschean Genealogy: Truth, Power, and the Subject* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992).

29. See Raymond Geuss, 'Nietzsche and Morality', in Raymond Geuss (ed.), *Morality, Culture and History: Essays on German Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 167-69.

internally heterogeneous character of its object of study.³⁰ In particular, the genealogist traces how some contemporary practice (for example, punishment) or experience (for example, guilt) has arisen from an indefinitely extended process whereby earlier forms of that practice or experience have become reinterpreted by later ones. Thus, the genealogist treats any historically arisen phenomenon as the reinterpretation of a pre-existing phenomenon, upon which the new interpretation 'has impressed...its own idea of a use function'.³¹ A genealogy takes shape as a practice or experience becomes subjected to repeated reinterpretations which impact upon its 'meaning [*Sinn*], purpose and expectation'.³²

According to Nietzsche, any reinterpretation must install itself by accommodating, as far as possible, the meanings embedded in the pre-existing phenomenon,³³ though necessarily it sheds the elements of those meanings that remain incompatible with its own agenda. This makes reinterpretation a conflictual, agonistic process, in which present forces strive actively to take over recalcitrant elements of the past. The outcomes of these conflictual activities of reinterpretation are always variable and contingent, as Foucault particularly stresses.³⁴ A key point, though, is that any practice or experience that succumbs to reinterpretation has itself already taken shape as the sedimentation of earlier layers of interpretation. No common core of significance persists through all these layers of interpretation. Because incompatible elements of meaning become shed upon each occasion of reinterpretation, a process of attrition takes place through which earlier layers of meaning gradually get eroded away altogether. For example, Nietzsche traces how the experience of bad conscience becomes reinterpreted by Christianity—and consequently re-experienced, re-lived—as sinfulness.³⁵ In similar fashion, the earlier meanings of all the constituents of the institution of morality are gradually and continuously being etched out by new acts of reinterpretation.³⁶

30. Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', p. 346.

31. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, p. 55.

32. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, p. 57.

33. As Geuss explains, Nietzsche's conflictual model implies that no reinterpretation will ever 'encounter...just a tabula rasa, but a set of actively structured forces, practices etc. which will be capable of active resistance' (Geuss, 'Nietzsche and Genealogy', in *Morality, Culture, and History*, p. 13). This resistance ensures that new interpretations will 'not in general be so fully successful that *nothing*...remains' of the pre-existing meanings (p. 11).

34. Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', pp. 347-48.

35. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, p. 100.

36. This insight underlies Nietzsche's claim that genealogists trace the 'descent' (*Herkunft*) of phenomena rather than their putative 'origins' (*Ursprünge*). Because any historical phenomenon arises gradually through the concatenation of an indefinite multiplicity of events, there is no definitive point at which that phenomenon can be said to have 'originated' (see Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, pp. 4-7; Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', pp. 342-43).

Nietzschean genealogy, then, traces how concepts such as 'guilt' and 'evil' undergo varying interpretations, where these interpretations—and the concepts which they organize—continually reshape our experience and practices. To study these experiences and practices genealogically is to situate them within a particular group—for example, the group 'morality'—not because of any essential characteristics that they share with all the group's other members, but just because each member in the group stands in the appropriate historical relationship to (one or more of) the others. More specifically, a set of such items is grouped together only in virtue of the fact that each takes shape through the reinterpretation of one or more of the others. The items in this group need not have anything in common, but need only be connected together through a complex process of historical drift in meaning. From a Nietzschean perspective, any set of concepts, experiences or practices that become related in this overlapping way has a genealogy.

Nietzsche's idea that any chain of historically overlapping phenomena has a genealogy makes it possible to reconceive women as a determinate social group without reverting to the descriptive essentialist claim that all women share a common social position or mode of experience. Any such 'genealogical' analysis of women must start by recognizing that concepts of femininity change radically over time, and that these changing concepts affect women's social position and lived experience. In particular, a genealogical analysis of women is premised on the view—articulated in Judith Butler's work—that women only become women, or acquire femininity, by taking up existing interpretations and concepts of femininity. As Butler puts it, taking on a gender involves finding 'a contemporary way of organizing past and future cultural norms, a way of situating oneself in and through those norms, an active style of living one's body in the world'.³⁷ As this remark suggests, the taking on of femininity consists not merely of a process of mental identification with existing concepts, but—more fundamentally—of a process of acquiring a feminine way of living one's body, of inhabiting one's physiology. Moreover, this does not entail being passively moulded by exterior cultural forces; rather, women become women through active appropriation and personalizing of inherited cultural standards.

Butler also stresses, however, that each appropriation of existing standards concerning femininity effects a more or less subtle alteration of their meaning: individuals always 'interpret received gender norms in a way that organises them anew'.³⁸ In actively appropriating existing standards, individuals necessarily adapt them with reference to the varied contexts, power relationships and personal histories within which they are located. Received meanings regarding gender continuously become subjected to practical reinterpretation,

37. Judith Butler, 'Variations on Sex and Gender: Beauvoir, Wittig and Foucault', in S. Benhabib and D. Cornell (eds.), *Feminism as Critique* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 131.

38. Butler, 'Variations', p. 131.

which individuals undertake with tacit reference to their differing personal and cultural experiences. That the meaning of femininity undergoes incessant modification implies that it is considerably less unified than one might, at first glance, assume. There is no unitary meaning of femininity on which all women agree: for, even although all women may identify with femininity, they will always understand and live their femininity in different ways. Nonetheless, according to a genealogical approach, all women remain identifiable *as* women. Although they do not share any characteristics simply *qua* women, in each case they become feminine by reworking pre-established interpretations of femininity with reference to their specific situations. In virtue of carrying out this reworking, each woman becomes located within a historical chain of women, a chain composed of all those who have successively engaged in reinterpreting the meaning of femininity. All women thus become located within this ongoing chain of practice and reinterpretation, which brings them into complex filiations with one another. The genealogy that arises through this process is not only a history of concepts of femininity, but is also, simultaneously, a history of women themselves, as individuals who become women by taking on and adapting existing concepts of femininity.

Since genealogical reinterpretation is an agonistic process, each reinterpretation of femininity must overlap in content with the interpretation that it modifies, preserving some elements of that pre-existing interpretation while abandoning others. Through the resulting process of attrition of meanings, each woman will find herself in a series of gradually diminishing connections with women of previous generations. Moreover, within a single generation, each woman's reinterpretation of femininity will overlap in content, to varying degrees, with other women's reinterpretations; these overlaps must arise, insofar as all these women are engaged in reworking the same set(s) of pre-existing meanings. An understanding of women as having a genealogy thus entails that, instead of forming a unitary group, they are connected together in complex ways and to varying degrees, and, in particular, that they are linked by their partially and multiply overlapping interpretations of femininity.

This genealogical conception of women might be criticized on two, closely interrelated, grounds. First, one might object that it is not ultimately very different from Young's idea that women form a series. Just as Young preserves women's status as a group by arguing that their lives are shaped by a universal set of normative expectations, likewise the genealogical view argues that women participate in a unitary history. This history is unitary in virtue of the continuity between its constituent phases, a continuity that arises insofar as every reinterpretation of femininity—and every re-experiencing of womanhood—builds upon, and so retains a partial overlap with, pre-existing interpretations and experiences. But, just as the expectations that Young believes to organize women's lives are more plausibly seen as diverse than singular in content, likewise the history of femininity and women might be most plausibly seen as *dis*continuous. Arguably—and this is the second objection—the genealogical view over-emphasizes overlaps and continuities between different

interpretations and experiences of femininity, ignoring the deep chasms that regularly open up between understandings of femininity—the breaks in the chain of (re)interpretation. This objection takes on special importance because such discontinuities will typically reflect exactly those asymmetries of power that appear to impede the possibility of women achieving any solidarity as a group.

Against these objections, I suggest that the strength of the genealogical approach is that it can accommodate the reality of historical discontinuity alongside that of continuity. According to this approach, successive modifications in the meaning of femininity necessarily build upon one another, leading to the formation of distinct historical patterns of interpretation of femininity, which branch apart from one another in particular directions. This branching, moreover, will typically follow along differentials in power (which lead women to modify the meaning of femininity in particular ways). As the branching occurs, the process of attrition whereby earlier elements of meaning get worn away will ensure that quite separate cultures of femininity emerge. Women located within these separate cultures—cultures that occupy different positions within relations of power—will have ceased to share any experience as women, even though they all identify themselves as feminine. In such cases, women remain connected together only indirectly—via the long chains of overlapping meaning and practice that span the gulf between them. Thus, a genealogical approach itself implies the inescapability of both continuities *and* discontinuities within the history of femininity.

As a consequence of these discontinuities in the meaning of femininity, women must be considered not merely as an internally diverse group but also, more strongly, as a group fractured and torn apart by divisions in power. Recognizing this, for instance, Butler refers to the incessant occurrence of ‘rifts among women over the content of the term’ (that is, ‘woman’).³⁹ Yet, however severe this rift, it remains compatible with women’s existing as a distinctive social group. This is because women remain defined by a single history, even though this history is extremely complex and follows multiple branches. Women’s history should be understood on the model of a tree, which remains singular even as it continually ramifies into innumerable (multiply interwoven) branches. Properly understood, then, the genealogical view avoids reinstating descriptive essentialism because it holds that what unites women—their history—is internally complex. At the same time, this view insists that this complex history remains singular, and hence does constitute women as a group whose history, and consequent social positions, can be identified as distinctively oppressive.

This rethinking of women and femininity as having a genealogy opens up the possibility of an anti-essentialism that supports, rather than paralyses,

39. Judith Butler, ‘Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of “Postmodernism”’, in S. Benhabib *et al.* (eds.), *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 50.

feminist politics. To the extent that women remain a social group (united in their participation in a single history), they can mobilize together in pursuit of distinctive concerns. Nonetheless, since women's history is internally complex, and women's concerns are correspondingly diverse, the only mode of collective activity appropriate for women must be similarly diversified—allowing women to pursue concerns that are specific to them as women, yet which differ from one another as well. This mode of political activity must, in addition, be capable of accommodating deep rifts and divisions among women, by providing them with the space for difficult negotiation over their divisions. These two conditions suggest that a coalitional politics is uniquely appropriate for women. This is, indeed, the political practice generally endorsed by advocates of a genealogical approach.⁴⁰ But what is a coalitional feminist politics?

Coalitions may be said to arise when different women, or sets of women, decide to act together to achieve some determinate objective, while yet acknowledging the irreducible differences between them and the often highly divergent concerns that motivate them to pursue this objective. On the basis of the idea that women have a genealogy, we can explain why women might, despite these irreducible differences, reasonably seek to mobilize together on such a coalitional footing. First, each woman's historically shaped experience inevitably overlaps in content with that of at least some other women, which gives them areas of commonality that they might reasonably seek to transform together, despite being very different in other respects (and so approaching these objectives from quite disparate perspectives). Second, in each woman's case, there will be many other women with whose experience her own has no direct overlap, and with whom she is only indirectly connected (through the whole web of overlapping relations between women). These might typically be women to whom she stands in a deeply asymmetrical power relationship. Nonetheless, there might be many cases in which she could reasonably seek to act in concert with those women, because she could expect improvements in either of their situations to indirectly have positive repercussions for the other. Since women remain connected indirectly by long chains of reinterpretation of femininity, an improvement in the situation of any of the women should impact positively upon those women whose interpretations of femininity overlap, so that, through a kind of wave effect, even the women at furthest remove could anticipate some indirect benefit. Those women might, at least, be benefited in the sense that any change exposes the meaning of femininity as contingent and malleable, making it easier to undertake transformative reinterpretations of the meanings of femininity that have become sedimented within their own cultures. Certainly, such potential gains would be obstructed if privileged groups of women respond to improve-

40. See, for example, Nancy Fraser and Linda Nicholson, 'Social Criticism Without Philosophy: An Encounter Between Feminism and Postmodernism', in L. Nicholson (ed.), *Feminism/Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 35.

ments in their situations in ways that reinforce hierarchies between women. Nonetheless, a genealogical conception of women and femininity at least suggests ways to reflect upon the spectrum of motivations that might lead women to enter coalitions, different motivations that correspond to women's varying degrees of cultural overlap and connectedness.

Conclusion

I have attempted to reassess feminist debates around essentialism in a way that brings out the philosophical, ethical and political significance of the questions they have raised. As I have traced, these debates pose a central, and widely acknowledged, dilemma: essentialism is plausibly seen as false as a descriptive claim about the social reality of women's lives, yet appears necessary to feminist politics and social criticism. I have argued that this dilemma cannot be solved by endorsing essentialism merely as a political strategy, since essentialism can only be defended on strategic grounds if it is held to be descriptively true as well. Instead, the dilemma should be solved by accepting that essentialism is descriptively false, but reconceiving women as a specifically non-unified sort of social group. From this perspective, I have suggested that we might rethink women, and femininity, as having a genealogy. This provides a way to identify women as a definite social group without falsely attributing to them any common characteristics that constitute them all as women.

According to my argument, every woman becomes a woman by taking over and reinterpreting pre-existing cultural constructions of femininity, constructions which in turn exist as a result of preceding activities of reinterpretation, so that all these interpretations of femininity—and all the women who produce and experience them—come to belong within overlapping chains. These chains make up a unique—albeit complex and multiply branching—history within which all women are situated. Thus, although women do not share any common characteristics, they are defined as a group by their participation in this history. This opens up various ways in which women might become motivated to engage in collective action organized coalitionally. I suggest, then, that the idea that women have a genealogy overcomes the dilemma posed by feminist critiques of essentialism, explaining how—despite their lack of common characteristics—women can still exist as a determinate group, susceptible to collective mobilization.

Neither Generalism nor Particularism: Ethical Correctness is Located in General Ethical Theories

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In this article I shall be supporting two main claims. The first is that the essence of the difference between particularism and generalism lies in where they locate ethical correctness. The second is that generalism, although to be preferred to particularism, is not the final resting place for ethical correctness. Ultimately, ethical correctness resides in ethical theories that provide the rationale for generalism. Particularism is presented as a theory that allows attention to be paid to specific cases and shows a sensitivity to the particular case. Generalism, with its appeal to moral principles, is supposed to lack this sensitivity to specific cases. I argue that although this might be true of subsumptive generalism, it is not true of what I call judgmental generalism. This latter type of generalism retains an appeal to moral principles while *requiring* sensitivity to the particular case. I consider Kantian ethics as an example of this sort of generalism. Furthermore, I support the claim that this judgmental generalism is to be preferred to particularism. I argue against a prominent form of particularism, put forward by Jonathan Dancy, based on an appeal to the holism of reasons. This doctrine involves the claim that the value of a complex whole is not necessarily identical with the value of its parts. I show that Dancy's discussion of this involves inconsistencies and also appears to incorporate subsumptive generalism. This statement of particularism is ultimately incoherent.

In order to evaluate the merits of particularism and generalism, we need to isolate precisely what is the main point of contention between the two views. This is not an easy matter and there have been many attempts at

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capturing this difference.¹ I shall argue that the difference lies in what is taken as the locus of ethical correctness. The particularist takes this to lie in judgments about particular cases and the generalist denies this and claims that the priority is located in general principles. I shall dispute both these claims by arguing that ethical correctness is located in ethical theories and that these should not be equated with a list of general principles.

I need to clarify two points about this claim before proceeding. In talking about ethical correctness, I am not claiming that there is always a uniquely correct answer to every moral problem. Indeed, my discussion of judgmental generalism in the third section of this article indicates some of the areas where there could be moral disagreement. Second, I am not suggesting that the task of moral judgments is solely to identify correct answers in an impassive, theoretical way. Judging morally is intimately connected with how we live our lives and the sort of people that we are. It is because of this that it is so important to identify where ethical correctness lies.

Roger Crisp has noted that 'generalism is now the standard term for the contrary to particularism'.² While I accept this, in order to locate the precise nature of the difference between the two doctrines, I argue that it is necessary to distinguish two types of generalism: subsumptive and judgmental generalism. This latter form of generalism allows us to locate much more precisely the essential point of difference between particularism and generalism since it allows such a large scope for attention to the particular case without it being a particularist doctrine. Jonathan Dancy, for example, considers that a particular danger of generalism is that it allows insufficient attention to the particular case. He writes,

It is this sort of *looking away* that particularists see as the danger of generalism. Reasons function in new ways on new occasions, and if we don't recognise this fact and adapt our practice to it, we will make bad decisions. Generalism encourages a tendency not to look enough at the details of the case before one.³

As I will show, judgmental generalism *requires* a detailed examination of the particular case. This discussion of judgmental generalism which, I argue, is to be preferred to subsumptive generalism, naturally leads to the reason for going beyond this and locating ethical correctness in ethical theories. These theories provide the guiding rationale for what is regarded as ethically correct.

I will show then that generalists, *per se*, are not debarred from paying attention to the specific case. Principles can be applied to specific cases and this does not involve a 'looking away' from the particular case. The kind of sensitivity that particularists claim is necessary for judging the morality of specific cases is not something that is denied to generalists. Dancy, for

1. For example, see B. Hooker and M. Little (eds.), *Moral Particularism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000).

2. R. Crisp, 'Particularizing Particularism', in Hooker and Little (eds.), *Moral Particularism*, p. 23 n. 4.

3. J. Dancy, *Moral Reasons* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), p. 64; italics in original.

example, writes of the person on whom we can rely 'to make sound moral judgments', that he or she will have 'a broad range of sensitivities' and 'to have the relevant sensitivities just is to be able to get things right case by case'.⁴ John McDowell makes a similar point, 'Occasion by occasion, one knows what to do, if one does, not by applying universal principles but by being a certain kind of person: one who sees situations in a certain distinctive way.'⁵ Sensitivity to particular cases, seeing situations in a distinctive way, is something that generalism can allow. This is not to say that all generalist theses allow this but just that this sort of attention to particular cases is not incompatible with generalism *per se*, understood as involving, in some sense, the application of universal principles.

I shall take Kant's view as an example of judgmental generalism and use this to illustrate what I mean by claiming that ethical correctness is located in ethical theories rather than in the perception of particular situations. My aim is not to provide a defence of Kant's view *per se*, but rather to argue for the advantage of looking to ethical theories for the locus of ethical correctness, rather than judgments about particular situations.

Particularism

I shall concentrate on particularism as a thesis about reasons, at least initially, in order to locate the essence of the difference between particularism and generalism. There are two reasons for this. First, the essence of the doctrine is clearly stated by Dancy in this form.⁶ Second, if this is accepted, similar arguments apply to all other versions of particularism since they are all based on the same argument for holism that Dancy advances. Dancy indicates that he supports particularism on the basis that holism as a theory of normative reasons is correct when he writes: 'particularism (which is merely an application of holism in the general theory of reasons to the moral case)'.⁷ It is this holism in the theory of reasons that generalists, by their acceptance of moral principles, have to reject. In particular, in discussing particularism about reasons, reference will be made to principles that are cited as reasons, so a separate section devoted to particularism in rules or principles is not included.⁸

Dancy emphasizes that his ethical particularism is based on a commitment to holism in a theory of normative reasons. He expresses this thesis as follows:

4. Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 64.

5. J. McDowell, 'Virtue and Reason', in R. Crisp and M. Slote (eds.), *Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 162.

6. Dancy, *Moral Reasons* and J. Dancy, 'The Particularist's Progress', in Hooker and Little (eds.), *Moral Particularism*, pp. 130-56.

7. Dancy, 'The Particularist's Progress', p. 136.

8. Dancy, 'The Particularist's Progress'. Dancy writes, 'Moral Principles, however we conceive of them, seem all to be in the business of specifying features as *general* reasons', p. 135; original italics.

1. What is a reason in one situation may alter or lose its polarity in another.
2. The way in which the reasons here present combine with each other is not necessarily determinable in any simply additive way.⁹

In the specific case of morality, Dancy makes it clear that moral principles specify the features that are the reasons to which generalists appeal. He writes,

Moral principles, however we conceive of them, seem all to be in the business of specifying features as *general* reasons. The principle that it is wrong to lie, for instance, presumably claims that mendacity is always a wrong making feature whenever it occurs (*pro tanto*, of course, not necessarily absolutely).¹⁰

If moral reasons function holistically in the way indicated in the general specification above, then: 'it cannot be the case that the possibility of such reasons rests on the existence of principles that specify morally relevant features as functioning atomistically. A principle-based approach to ethics is inconsistent with the holism of reasons.'¹¹ If we take the example of the reason that it is wrong to lie, Dancy's point expressed in (1) above is that it might not always have the polarity of being a wrong-making characteristic since it could, in some contexts, turn out to be a right-making characteristic or even to have no significance at all, in the sense of not being regarded as a reason at all in some contexts.

The second point is not wholly clear since Dancy provides no explanation of it in the section of his article devoted to holism in the theory of reasons.¹² However, what he appears to have in mind, and what I shall assume he intends, is clarified by the discussion of organic wholes that occurs in his discussion of holism in the theory of value. The value of the parts of the whole cannot be looked at atomistically and from this a deduction made about the value of the whole. Although this view of Dancy's sounds the same as Moore's doctrine of the value of organic wholes, Dancy's explanation of this feature involves, as we shall see, rejecting Moore's view.

Before examining Dancy's thesis and supporting arguments in more detail, which I do in the section on 'Dancy's Particularism' below, I should like to point out some implications of this view. The first concerns the notion of priority. Dancy's view implies that the particular is prior in at least the following senses:

9. Dancy, 'The Particularist's Progress', p. 132.

10. Dancy, 'The Particularist's Progress', p. 135; original italics. *Pro tanto* duties are duties that are overridable. This term is used in preference to *prima facie* duties since this implies that what may at first glance be a consideration is not in fact so.

11. Dancy, 'The Particularist's Progress', p. 135.

12. Dancy, 'The Particularist's Progress', pp. 131-37.

1. The particular determines what will count as a reason. The particular situation needs to be inspected first to determine what is a reason in this situation and what value and importance it has.
2. The particular is prior in the sense that the evaluation of the particular has authority over any general reason with which it might conflict. The locus of ethical correctness lies in the particular.

A second implication implicit in Dancy's characterization is that we clearly need to exercise judgment about the case before us. I will be showing that this feature is not distinctive of particularism, since it is also essential for the form of generalism that I call judgmental generalism.

A third implication is that this account of particularism implies the falsity of the universalizability thesis. This is because the thesis of universalizability incorporates the claim that if we judge one action to be right then we must judge any relevantly similar action to be right, 'An action is said to be relevantly similar if, roughly, it shares with the first all the properties which were reasons why the first action was right.'¹³ Given Dancy's thesis about the holism of reasons—whereby what is a reason in a particular case might change its polarity or be no reason at all in another case—we can see why the rejection of universalizability might lead to particularism. I shall be discussing this issue in the section on 'Universalizability and Billy Budd' below.

I shall be defending the version of generalism that I call judgmental generalism in opposition to this characterization of particularism. My defence will show that this form of generalism incorporates the second implication noted above and therefore that this is not distinctive of the difference between generalism and particularism. I shall also defend the universalizability thesis by considering the case of Billy Budd, which is sometimes taken to provide a reason for rejecting the universalizability thesis. If this defence is successful, it will provide an argument against particularism. In the section, 'Dancy's Particularism', below, I shall return to Dancy's support for his thesis and my criticisms, if correct, will provide further support for generalism understood as the contrary of particularism. This will leave the priority point as the main point of contention between generalism and particularism. In arguing against locating ethical priority in the particular, I shall show, by using the example of Kant's ethics, that ethical priority should be located not in generalism *per se*, but in the ethical theory in which such generalism is grounded.

I will begin by outlining the two types of generalism—subsumptive and judgmental—to show the senses in which the latter requires judgment of the particular case.

13. Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 57.

Subsumptive Generalism

As I mentioned above, generalists *per se* are not debarred from paying attention to specific cases. However, what I will call subsumptive generalism, as opposed to judgmental generalism, does preclude sensitivity to particular cases. Subsumptive generalism is a form of generalism that involves equating principles with rules. Rules apply in an all-or-nothing fashion and, as Dworkin writes, 'If the facts a rule stipulates are given, then either the rule is valid, in which case the answer it supplies must be accepted, or it is not, in which case it contributes nothing to the decision.'¹⁴

As an example, if we have the general rule 'one ought to tell the truth' and a particular case where this is an issue, then it automatically follows that in this case one ought to tell the truth. This moral judgment is deduced from the general principle.

This sort of generalism is deeply implausible. There might be many occasions where, for example, to tell the truth would cause immense distress, but the mechanical application of the rule 'one ought to tell the truth' would dictate that the truth ought to be told. It suffers from the further implausibility that situations can arise where two conflicting rules could apply when it cannot be our duty to do both. My claim is not that there are generalists advocating subsumptive generalism, but that this sort of picture of generalism is what is implied by some particularists when they are criticizing generalism. An example of this would be Dancy's remarks quoted earlier when he claims that generalist doctrines 'look away' from particular cases.

Judgmental Generalism: Kantian Ethics

I shall be using Kantian ethics as an example of judgmental generalism. This will be used to show that this form of generalism includes an ineliminable role for judgment and, thus, that this feature noted as the second implication of Dancy's characterization of particularism cannot be taken as a feature that distinguishes generalism from particularism. Far from encouraging 'a tendency not to look enough at the details of the case before one',¹⁵ judgmental generalism *requires* a detailed examination of the particular case.

However, since my ultimate thesis is that the locus of ethical correctness lies in ethical theories, I shall give a rough idea of the distinction within Kantian ethics of what I mean by distinguishing ethical theory and general principles. I will accept, in an initially uncritical way, Bernard Williams's definition of an ethical theory. He says: 'An ethical theory is a theoretical account of what ethical thought and practice are, which account either implies a general test

14. R. Dworkin, *Taking Rights Seriously* (London: Duckworth, 1978), p. 24.

15. Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 64.

for the correctness of basic ethical beliefs and principles or else implies that there cannot be such a test.¹⁶

The general test for correctness incorporated in Kantian ethics is encapsulated in the Categorical Imperative: 'Act only on that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.'¹⁷ While this might be used as a test of specific maxims, there are certain general principles or maxims that Kant suggests pass this test. In the infamous four illustrations of this test in practice we have generated the following general principles: 'One ought not to commit suicide', 'One ought to keep promises', 'One ought to utilize one's talents' and 'One ought to help others'.¹⁸ The first two principles are examples of perfect duties, recognized by the fact that there is a contradiction in the universal form of their denial. The infringement of perfect duties would seem then to be something that is never allowable and, therefore, might seem to allow no room for judgment. The latter two examples express imperfect duties recognized by the fact that the contradiction in their denial is not a contradiction in the universal form of the maxim, but a contradiction in willing it in the universal form.¹⁹

The first role for judgment in this example of judgmental generalism is a role that is common to all principles, whether they express perfect or imperfect duties. Kant explicitly recognizes that the application of principles requires judgment and that this cannot be explained in terms of the application of a further general rule or principle. He writes:

So judgment itself must provide a concept, a concept through which we do not actually cognize anything but which only serves as a rule for the power of judgment itself—but not as an objective rule, to which it could adapt its judgment, since then we would need another power of judgment in order to decide whether or not the judgment is a case of that rule.²⁰

Principles cannot be applied without a judgment to determine their applicability to a particular case and this cannot be formulated in general terms but is determinable by the particular case. Kant makes this completely explicit when he says:

It is obvious that between theory and practice there is required, besides, a middle term connecting them and providing a transition from one to the other, no matter how complete a theory may be; for, to a concept of the understanding, which contains a rule, must be added an act of judgment by which a practitioner

16. B. Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (London: Fontana, 1985), p. 72.

17. I. Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* (trans. J.W. Ellington; Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993 [1785]), 421.

18. Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 422-23.

19. I am not entering into details of this aspect of Kant's doctrine and what exactly is meant by the contradiction in conception test and the contradiction in willing test since this is not necessary for my argument. My aim is just to show that in both the case of perfect duties and imperfect duties, judgment has an ineliminable role.

20. I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (trans. W.S. Pluhar; Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987 [1790]), p. 169.

distinguishes whether or not something is a case of the rule; and since judgment cannot always be given yet another rule by which to direct its subsumption (for this would go on to infinity).²¹

If we take the perfect duty not to commit suicide or, put positively, to preserve our life, then this does not imply that in a particular case someone should never take their life. Judgment is required to determine whether or not the particular case is an example of suicide. Kant makes this clear in his discussion of the casuistical questions that follow his discussion of killing oneself in *The Doctrine of Virtue*. He says: 'Is it murdering oneself to hurl oneself to certain death (like Curtius) in order to save one's country?—or is deliberate martyrdom, sacrificing oneself for the good of all humanity, also to be considered an act of heroism?'²² Judgment of the particular case, which is a difficult matter as Kant makes clear from these examples, is necessary to know whether the general principle applies in this case. It is clearly not the case that all acts of killing oneself are deemed to be wrong, but only those that are judged to be cases of suicide rather than cases of heroism, martyrdom or some other case. The duty encapsulated in the prohibition on committing suicide is absolute but we need judgment to determine when we have a case of suicide. A similar point can be made with the perfect duty to tell the truth where we can see that this does not imply that one should never tell an untruth. We need to exercise judgment to determine whether the particular case is a genuine case of a lie. As Kant writes, 'Can an untruth from mere politeness (e.g., the "your obedient servant" at the end of a letter) be considered a lie? No one is deceived by it.'²³

In the case of the imperfect duties, the necessity for judgment in particular cases is built into them at the general level in Kant's account of what it is to be an imperfect duty. The necessity for judgment arises from two features of the general account given of imperfect duties. The duty to develop our talents and help others that were isolated in the *Groundwork* are further specified in the *Metaphysics of Morals* and labelled the two duties of virtue. The duty we owe to our own perfection is specified as not just developing our talents but also as morally perfecting ourselves. The duty of virtue that we owe to others is the duty to seek their happiness.²⁴ However, there is no ranking given to these two within the general theory and so judgment would be needed in the particular case if we had to choose between imperfect duties generated by these two duties of virtue.

The second feature of the general account of imperfect duties that implies the necessity for judgment in the particular case arises from the nature of an

21. I. Kant, 'On the Common Saying: That May Be Correct in Theory, But It is of No Use in Practice', in *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy* (trans. M.J. Gregor; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999 [1793]), 8:275.

22. I. Kant, 'The Metaphysics of Morals', in *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, 6:423.

23. Kant, 'The Metaphysics of Morals', 6:431.

24. Kant, 'The Metaphysics of Morals', 6:385–6:388.

imperfect duty. There is no specification, at a general level of, for example, what talents we should be developing or how much we should be developing them. Kant writes,

No rational principle prescribes specifically *how* far one should go in cultivating one's capacities... Then too, the different situations in which human beings may find themselves make a human being's choice of the occupation for which he should cultivate his talents very much a matter for him to decide as he chooses.²⁵

Similarly, there is no general account about who we should be helping or how much we should be helping them. These duties are wide ones that incorporate a latitude in their application that is determined in the particular cases.²⁶

Finally, judgment is also needed where we think that two general principles are applicable in a particular case, but the performance of one precludes the other. We have to determine by a consideration of the particular case what is our actual duty. Kant distinguishes between what he calls 'grounds of obligation' which would refer to the two principles that we consider apply to this particular case, and 'obligation' to reflect this difference. Kant maintains that a conflict of duties is impossible:

a subject may have, in a rule he prescribes to himself, two *grounds* of obligation (*rationes obligandi*), one or the other of which is not sufficient to put him under obligation (*rationes obligandi non obligantes*), so that one of them is not a duty.— When two such grounds conflict with each other, practical philosophy says, not that the stronger obligation takes precedence (*fortior obligatio vincit*), but that the stronger *ground of obligation* prevails (*fortior obligandi ratio vincit*).²⁷

I shall have something more to say about the rationale governing this judgment of particular cases when supporting my claim that the locus of ethical correctness lies in ethical theories. However, before considering this question, I shall defend the thesis of universalizability by considering the case of Billy Budd, which has been advanced as a counter example to this thesis. If Dancy is correct to claim that particularism is incompatible with universalizability, then, if I can defend universalizability against attack, this will provide indirect support for generalism.

Universalizability and Billy Budd

Dancy considers that generalism in the theory of reasons embodies a commitment to universalizability. This is because the thesis of universalizability incorporates the claim that if we judge one action to be right then we must judge any relevantly similar action to be right. He says, 'An action is said to be relevantly similar if, roughly, it shares with the first all the properties

25. Kant, 'The Metaphysics of Morals', 6:392; original italics.

26. Kant, 'The Metaphysics of Morals', 6:393.

27. Kant, 'The Metaphysics of Morals', 6:224.

which were reasons why the first action was right.²⁸ Given Dancy's thesis about the holism of reasons whereby what is a reason in a particular case might change its polarity or be no reason at all in another case, we can see why the rejection of universalizability might lead to particularism.

However, this still leaves open the question of whether or not universalizability should be rejected as a theory. A case that has been discussed frequently in the literature that appears to cast doubt on universalizability is the case of Melville's *Billy Budd, Sailor*.²⁹ I will show in my discussion that this case does not damage Kantian generalism and therefore does not damage generalism *per se*.

The case described by Melville is where Captain Vere is faced with the decision of whether or not to execute Billy Budd. Budd has been falsely accused of attempted mutiny by Claggart, a corrupt Master of Arms, and while attempting to defend himself against the charge, strikes Claggart with a blow that kills him. Although Captain Vere believes in Budd's innocence, since he has killed Claggart he feels unable to prevent him from hanging. Indeed, he takes the decision immediately before the court hearing and subsequently makes it clear at the hearing that his first obligation is to martial law and that would decree death for what is viewed as a capital crime. Winch's discussion of this case provides the starting point of the debate. Winch claims that Vere's decision to have Billy Budd hung was the right thing for him to do but Winch claims that, by appealing to the same considerations to which Captain Vere appealed, he would not have found it possible to condemn Budd.

This example is illustrative of two features. The first is that we have a case where there is a genuine moral dilemma and the considerations are very finely balanced. There is no clear 'right' answer. These finely balanced cases are the sort that Kant discusses in the casuistical questions referred to earlier, where it is not clear from a consideration of the ethical theory alone which decision should be taken. In Kantian terms, if what is taken to be of ultimate value is rational nature, it is not clear what course of action will constitute respecting rational nature. These are the sort of cases I had in mind when I mentioned at the start of the article that I was not claiming that ethical correctness implies that there is a uniquely correct answer to every moral problem.

Second, we have a case where there is a difference between the first-person evaluation of the case and a third-person evaluation of the case. Winch recognizes the same considerations that Captain Vere recognizes and appreciates

28. Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 57.

29. H. Melville, *Billy Budd, Sailor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998 [1924]). This case was discussed originally by P. Winch in 'The Universalizability of Moral Judgments', in P. Winch (ed.), *Ethics in Action* (London: Routledge, Kegan Paul, 1972). It is also discussed in both Joseph Raz's 'The Truth in Particularism' and Roger Crisp's 'Particularizing Particularism', in *Moral Particularism*.

that it was right for Vere to have Budd hung; but, Winch, while appealing to the same considerations, would have found it impossible to condemn Billy Budd. Budd's innocence of both plotting mutiny and of intentional murder would not be overridden by the dictates of martial law for Winch.

The point at issue is that we cannot retain universalizability by claiming that the situations would be relevantly different if it was Winch or Vere making the decision because their differences of character are not a consideration to which either are appealing. However, it is their different characters that make it right for Vere to condemn Budd and for Winch not to be able to.

This leads Joseph Raz to argue that since they are appealing to the same considerations or the same reasons, this case shows, as Winch points out, that reasons for action are not universalizable.³⁰ However, Raz retains universalizability by claiming that the difference between Vere's decision and Winch's decision is explicable in terms that are universalizable but are not reasons. These are the different characters of Vere and Winch and the fact that they decided as they did.³¹ Crisp takes a different line by concentrating on the fact that this is a finely balanced case and universalizability can be retained by claiming that either evaluation is permissible.

I disagree with both of these analyses. The mistake made by Winch, Crisp and Raz is to claim that Vere and Winch are appealing to the *same* considerations or reasons. This allows the anti-universalists too much. In the sort of judgmental generalism that I was illustrating by referring to Kant's ethics, judgment is needed when these casuistical questions arise to determine what sort of case it is. Is it, for example, a case of innocent self-defence or is it a case of intentional murder? What will determine what will count as reasons will depend on the judgment taken at this point and this will vary depending on the judgment made.

What I have in mind can be illustrated in the following case taken from Kant's *Metaphysics of Morals*. Kant says,

A man who had been bitten by a mad dog already felt hydrophobia coming on. He explained in a letter he left, that, since as far as he knew the disease was incurable, he was taking his life lest he harm others as well in his madness (the onset of which he already felt).³²

These reasons make perfect sense as those given by a man who considered that the right action to take was to take his life because he judged the case to be that of preventing harm to others. However, these 'same considerations or reasons' would not have been appealed to by someone who considered that

30. Raz, 'The Truth in Particularism', p. 71.

31. Raz, 'The Truth in Particularism', pp. 70-78. Raz argues that the third-person perspective taken by Winch would have to be supplemented by the personal perspective of Winch imagining himself in the situation so that he can confront the problem personally. His evaluation cannot be simply read off from his character because the decision he takes in this situation forms part of the character-determining process.

32. Kant, 'The Metaphysics of Morals', 6:423-6:424.

this was primarily a case of suicide and as such unjustified. Rather, the case would have been judged as, for example, a case of removing something of intrinsic value; debasing humanity. One only has to imagine how strange it would be for someone who judged this to be a case of suicide and therefore wrong, but gave as their reasons for this judgment those considerations cited by the person who judged it to be a case of not harming others. The wrongness of suicide and the duty we have not to harm others are universalizable, but first judgment needs to be exercised to determine what sort of case we have in this particular instance. In these finely balanced cases, a general theory can be held while recognizing that this might result in different evaluations in these sorts of cases.

If this defence of universalizability from this sort of attack is accepted, then this gives a further reason for rejecting particularism since, as we have seen, particularism implies the falsity of universalizability. In the next section, I want to argue against particularism directly by criticizing the support that Dancy provides for this thesis.

Dancy's Particularism

As I mentioned in the first section of this article, Dancy expresses his thesis as follows:

1. What is a reason in one situation may alter or lose its polarity in another.
2. The way in which the reasons here present combine with each other is not necessarily determinable in any simply additive way.³³

In his book *Moral Reasons*, Dancy argues for the first point in his characterization of the holism of reasons by way of examples. He gives an example where something that would usually be a reason is not a reason at all in a particular case. He also gives an example where a reason changes its polarity.

Dancy puts forward an example to illustrate a case where something that was a reason in other cases would not be a reason in the example he is considering. If I have borrowed a book from you, then I have from that perspective a reason to return it. However, if the book was stolen by you from the library, then I have, from that perspective, a reason to return it to the library rather than to you. This, according to Dancy, might be how one might characterize the situation from a generalist's perspective. However, Dancy claims that I have no reason at all to return it to you since it was stolen. That is not a reason in this sort of case that has to be weighed against the other considerations.³⁴

However, it is surely not correct to attribute this view to the generalists. To describe the fact that I have a reason to return the book to you from the

33. Dancy, 'The Particularist's Progress', p. 132.

34. Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 60.

perspective that I borrowed it from you is not correct. It could not be described accurately as a case of borrowing since I cannot borrow a book from you unless you lend it to me. However, you cannot lend what is not yours and so since the stolen book is not yours, you do not lend it (although you may act as though you were doing that) and therefore I do not borrow it. Generalists look at the case and consider what moral principles are applicable and clearly this would not be regarded as a genuine case of borrowing. Dancy, with no supporting argument, has just not allowed this information to be included, forcing the generalist to view it as a simple case of borrowing. This is an example of a particularist characterizing all generalism as though it has to be the implausible subsumptive generalism that I mentioned earlier. Without a supplementary argument to show that generalists cannot consider the specific case and make a judgment about whether or not a principle is applicable here, Dancy has not proved his case.

Yet, Dancy also provides an example where a reason changes its polarity. 'One ought not to lie' might on many occasions be taken to be a reason against telling an untruth but there are occasions when lying is required and the fact that something is a lie is a reason in favour of the action. The example is one of a game where the whole purpose would be destroyed if the participants did not lie. However, this is surely not a problem for generalists. Again, the only way for Dancy's argument to work is if the situation is wrongly described. We do not have here a case where lying *simpliciter* is being taken as a reason in favour, but where lying in the strictly defined context of a game is being recommended. Kant, for example, is quite clear that judgment is needed in particular cases in order to determine what principles are applicable. In his discussion of the casuistical questions, for example, he writes, 'Can an untruth from mere politeness...be considered a lie?'³⁵ We could rephrase Kant's casuistical question here and ask, 'Can an untruth in the context of a game that requires lies be considered a genuine lie?'

The replies to these examples illustrate that judgment is involved in particular cases to determine an interpretation of the case to see whether or not we really have, for example, a case of borrowing. Acceptance of generalism does not commit us to some mechanical, unthinking application of principles to particular cases, as might be suggested in subsumptive generalism, but allows for judgment in interpreting the case. On the basis of these examples, Dancy has not shown that reasons either change their polarity or cease to be reasons in new cases.

What about the second point in Dancy's characterization of the holism of reasons? The claim here is that the way in which the reasons here present combine is not necessarily determinable in any simply additive way. What Dancy has in mind, at least in the connection with the thesis of the holism in the theory of value,³⁶ is expressed by him as, 'The value of a complex or

35. Kant, 'The Metaphysics of Morals', 6:431.

36. Dancy, 'The Particularist's Progress', p. 139. There are grounds for claiming that

whole is not necessarily identical with the sum of the values of its elements or parts.³⁷ Moore also held this view and gave, as an example, that the consciousness of a beautiful object is more valuable than the separate value of the consciousness and the value of the beautiful object added together. The thought being that the value of the object, if no one were conscious of it, would be very little. Similarly, mere consciousness does not always confer great value.³⁸

The difference between Moore and Dancy, as well as the difference that concerns us, is that they provide different explanations for this phenomenon. Moore holds that these separate components always retain the same value although the value of the whole may be greater than the value of the parts. Dancy, on the other hand, is arguing that the value of the parts cannot be viewed atomistically. Moore's view assumes a particular doctrine of supervenience whereby the value of each of the parts remains the same. These values are dependent on the separate parts of the whole but when these qualities are combined in a complex whole, the value of the whole is not necessarily the same as the sum of the value of the parts.

While still supporting a doctrine of supervenience, whereby value supervenes on other qualities X, Dancy considers that the value can change even if X has not changed on this occasion. It can change because of other qualities in which this value forms part of a complex. He writes,

intrinsic value is value that results from intrinsic properties of the object concerned, but...that value can vary because of changes elsewhere, that is, in those properties whose presence or absence can make a difference to the ability of the intrinsic properties to generate the value they do.³⁹

He summarizes his position in the following claim, 'My doctrine, then, is a sort of global supervenience, since the supervenience base is cast so wide, while Moore's is a sort of local supervenience.'⁴⁰

This explanation is damaging to Dancy's account since it would appear to involve a denial of the second point of his characterization of holism in the theory of value. The value of the complex whole will be identical with the value of the parts because the value of the parts will be determined in part by the context of this particular whole of which they form a part. Consequently, we do not have a case where the value of the whole is not identical with the value of the sum of its parts. This is essentially because the values of the parts have changed because of the particular whole in which they are

Dancy is making essentially the same point in discussing point two in the holism of values since he quotes them both on this page and claims that they are analogous. Also, that the same point is being made is quite explicit in J. Dancy, 'Are there Organic Unities?', *Ethics* 113 (2003), pp. 629-50.

37. Dancy, 'The Particularist's Progress', p. 139.

38. G.E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903), p. 28.

39. Dancy, 'The Particularist's Progress', p. 140.

40. Dancy, 'The Particularist's Progress', p. 140.

located, and therefore this allegedly second feature of the holism of value or reasons seems to have collapsed into the first point. It just seems to be an explanation of the claim that the polarity of reasons or value might vary from occasion to occasion. Presumably, this variation is explicable in terms of Dancy's 'global supervenience' and, if this is the case, the second point in the characterization of holism of reasons is not a distinct point from the first, against which I have already argued.

It might be considered that Dancy could reply to this argument in terms of a refinement that he makes to his position in a recent article.⁴¹ Here, instead of asserting without qualification that 'The value of a complex or whole is not necessarily identical with the sum of the values of its elements or parts' (henceforward to be referred to as NI, the Non-Identity Claim), he claims,

But it is also true that some features that have value in that context do not contribute that value to the value of the whole. Their value cannot be put toward the value of the whole. In that sense, the value of the whole is not identical to the sum of the value of all the parts. But the value of the whole is identical to the sum of the values of the contributing parts, as we might put it. Any part, then, that contributes value must have that value to contribute, but some valuable parts do not contribute their value to the whole, even though their presence is necessary for the whole to have the value it does.⁴²

The essence of this later position is the distinction that is now being drawn explicitly between:

- (i) A part of a whole that does not contribute value to the whole but its presence is necessary for the whole to have the value that it does.
- (ii) A part of a whole that does contribute value to the whole.

In terms of this then, NI will remain true if by parts we intend either (i) or both (i) and (ii) but if we just mean (ii) then NI become false. In other words, interpreted in this latter way, Dancy will no longer be holding the same view as Moore, since Moore's claim applies to all the parts of the whole. Although, of course, even when Dancy held NI in *Moral Reasons* the reason that he advanced for this claim was different from Moore's reason.

It is therefore crucial to understand the distinction that Dancy is drawing between (i) and (ii). The sort of parts that Dancy has in mind when describing (i) as 'necessary for the whole to have the value it does' are what he describes as enabling conditions. Dancy takes the example of friendship as it occurs in the film *The Truman Show*, where everyone, except Truman, is aware that they are actors. Although friendship generally has a positive value, in this case it does not because all Truman's relationships are based on a sham. Dancy claims, 'what is of value about a friendship would have no value if that friendship was a sham, but that it is not a sham is not part of what makes the

41. Dancy, 'Are there Organic Unities?', pp. 629-50.

42. Dancy, 'Are there Organic Unities?', p. 635.

friendship worthwhile. Genuineness is an enabling condition here, not a ground.⁴³

Presumably, the idea is that the value of the friendship in this particular context or whole can change from its normal value without there being any change in the grounds or features of the relationship that make it a friendship but on the basis of something else about this context, namely that it is a pretence or a sham. The thought would be that Moore could not accept this since in holding 'local supervenience' he could not allow for a change in the value of friendship without positing a change in the features that grounded that value. However, Dancy's doctrine of 'global supervenience' allows a change in the value of friendship if there are other changes in the context but these need not be changes in the features that grounded the value but in other features such as these enabling conditions instead. In this case then, as we can see in the quotation above, 'that it is not a sham' is not part of the ground for friendship.

If we interpret parts in the sense of (ii) when NI becomes false then, as I mentioned in discussing Dancy's position in *Moral Reasons*, the second part of his characterization of particularism will no longer be correct. It would only be correct if by parts we mean either (i) or both (i) and (ii). However, to distinguish between (i) and (ii) seems itself to be atomistic. Why should these parts be separated? A judgmental generalist approaching this situation would not have to take it as a case of friendship and then point out that in fact the friendship is a pretence as though this is some separate component that counts against the positive value that friendship might be thought to contribute otherwise. The generalist, as I mentioned earlier, would exercise judgment and come to the global judgment that Truman's relationships are not genuine friendships where there is no reason to divide this into two components. Friendship has not changed its polarity here because this is not a case of genuine friendship just as in the borrowing-book case this was not a genuine case of borrowing.

In fact, Dancy's atomistic analysis of the parts of the whole is a feature of his view that appears to be more generalist than the one that I am advocating. This becomes apparent when he makes it clear that he is advocating a moderate form of holism where certain features can possess what he calls 'default value'. Thus, for example, friendship could be supposed to possess a positive default value, 'causing needless pain', a negative default value and 'the train is about to leave' which does not have a default value.⁴⁴ The context might change the values of those features that have a default value or result in the acquisition of value by those features that do not have a default value.

This seems remarkably like the form of generalism that I have called subsumptive generalism where we have certain general principles such as 'friendship is a virtue' and 'causing needless pain is wrong' and these are uncritically

43. Dancy, 'Are there Organic Unities?', p. 633.

44. Dancy, 'Are there Organic Unities?', p. 638.

assumed to be applicable to the particular situation. After they have been entered in this form, Dancy's particularism kicks in with the claim that the overall context might lead them to have a different value to their normal one. The form of generalism that I was proposing was one where the judgment about what sort of case we have is made prior to the application of principles rather than applying these principles (or default values) and then claiming that if their value changes from their normal default value then this can be explained by other 'parts' of the overall context that can be labelled 'enabling conditions'. Indeed, further remarks by Dancy reinforce this impression of generalism because a special explanation is required if a feature that has a default value does not have that value in a particular context. His analysis of particular situations involves an initial 'looking away' from the particular situation and then evaluating the particular case in terms set up as a result of this initial 'looking away'.

A possible reply that Dancy might make to this point can be taken from his recent discussion of these issues in the area of reasons.⁴⁵ Here Dancy has presented an even more complicated picture than that which we have so far been considering in his discussion of the value of wholes and their parts. I shall take the following example of practical reasoning that he gives to illustrate some of these new complexities.

- (1) I promised to do it.
- (2) My promise was not given under duress.
- (3) I am able to do it.
- (4) There is no greater reason not to do it.
- (5) So I do it.⁴⁶

Here (1) is described as a reason in favour or, as Dancy describes it, a 'favourer' and is the only *reason* in this case. In the language of the value of wholes, this would presumably be equivalent to those parts that I earlier labelled (ii), being those parts of the whole that do contribute value to the whole. (2) and (3) are both enabling conditions and thus similar to the parts that I earlier labelled (i). The distinction between (2) and (3) is between a specific enabler and a general enabler where the former is something specific to promising and the latter would apply to the larger class of all my actions. Condition (4) is neither a favourer nor an enabler but is described by Dancy as being verdictive because it is a judgment on the balance of reasons present in the case.

One reason that Dancy gives for this sort of breakdown is that if we took a more global view initially such that, for example, the overall favourer would be that I freely made a promise to do something that I am able to do and there are no other conflicting considerations, then this would not capture something that Dancy thinks we would wish to capture when the enabling

45. J. Dancy, 'What Do Reasons Do?', *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 41 (2003), pp. 95-113.

46. Dancy, 'What Do Reasons Do?', p. 101.

conditions fail. So, to take Dancy's example, if a promise was deceitfully extracted then Dancy claims that people would

often feel some compunction in not doing what they promised, even though they themselves recognise that in such circumstances their promise does not play its normal reason giving role. I think their attitude would be different if what plays the reason-giving role were not that one promised but that one 'freely' promised.⁴⁷

The thought would be that there would be no favourer if the case were described in the second sort of way in the deceitful promise example and, therefore, no explanation of the feeling of compunction that Dancy says would be felt.

Now this argument does not sit very happily with the original position developed by Dancy in *Moral Reasons*. In his analysis of the book-borrowing case, he claimed that I have no reason at all to return the book that I had borrowed from you if you had stolen it. This was not described as a case where we have an unchanged favourer, returning that which we have borrowed, but that the enabling conditions for this favourer are absent in this case. The analysis that he has now moved to is almost precisely the sort of analysis that he claimed in *Moral Reasons* would be given by a generalist. It is not *precisely* the same since Dancy is drawing a distinction between reasons and enabling conditions, but the essence of the point is the same. Dancy clearly claims in *Moral Reasons* that I have no reason at all to return the book since it was stolen by you.

My criticisms of Dancy then need to be distinguished to reflect the change of view between *Moral Reasons* and these two later articles and can be summarized as follows:

- (A) If the analysis given in *Moral Reasons* is accepted, then Dancy will not be able to hold NI since then the value of the whole will be the same as the contributory parts. In this case, his characterization of particularism is just based on the first point, what is a reason in one situation may alter or lose its polarity in another, against which I have argued.
- (B) If he adopts the sort of position characterized in his later articles then this smacks of the sort of subsumptive generalism that I have criticized. The breakdown of cases into favourers, enabling conditions, verdictive judgments and even further complications⁴⁸ encourages an initial 'looking away' from the particular situation and the application of favourers such as promise-keeping which are then

47. Dancy, 'What Do Reasons Do?', p. 102.

48. Dancy in 'What Do Reasons Do?' indicates that intensifiers and diminishers can also figure as relevant considerations. An intensifier might intensify my reason to help someone if I am the only person that can help her. Similarly, if someone requires help but she got into this situation through her own fault 'trying to spite someone else' (p. 104) then this is a diminisher.

reduced in value by the presence of 'disabling' conditions such as the promise was not freely given. However, there is still a reason to keep the promise, according to the later Dancy, since he considers that this explains the feeling of compunction that he alleges we feel when we do not keep promises. So he would have retained NI of contributing parts and wholes but at the expense of incorporating a deeply implausible subsumptive generalist analysis of the situation. The analysis would require him to reject the first point in his characterization of particularism in *Moral Reasons* since the reasons bring with them their normal default value to the situation.

Hence, neither (A) nor (B) will allow him to retain the initial characterization of particularism given in *Moral Reasons*. In addition, Dancy himself admits that there is no way at a theoretical level to determine whether his or Moore's account of supervenience is correct in isolation from the consideration of particular cases. However, if my interpretation of Dancy's second point in his characterization of holism is as characterized in (A) above, then this just collapses into the first point. Since, as I have argued, the first point has not been established then there is no reason to accept Dancy's explanation of supervenience.

The Locus of Ethical Correctness Lies in Ethical Theories

These arguments against particularism leave open the possibility that generalism, at least if this is understood as judgmental generalism, is correct. Why not accept this rather than claiming that the locus of ethical correctness lies in ethical theories? Indeed, what is the distinction between generalism and ethical theories, since both seem to be advocating applying something general to particular cases? In the course of explaining this, more detail will be given about what is involved in the judgmental part of judgmental generalism.

I have already shown that judgmental generalism is a more plausible form of generalism than subsumptive generalism, where moral principles are equated with rules that apply in an all-or-nothing fashion. Judgmental generalism has the ineliminable role for judgment in the particular case in the respects that I have outlined earlier in the article. However, this still leaves open the question of how this judgment is to be exercised. What rationale is being employed to make these judgments? This rationale, I will argue, is embodied in the ethical theory from which the general principles arise.

I shall clarify this point by returning again to an example in Kant's ethical theory. According to Kant, ultimate value is located in rational nature, or, as he also calls this, humanity. Indeed, one of the formulations of the Categorical Imperative makes this explicit: 'Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means.'⁴⁹ In terms of Williams's

49. Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 429.

definition of an ethical theory given earlier, the appeal to rational nature as the ultimate end supplies the 'general test for the correctness of basic ethical beliefs and principles'.⁵⁰ Rational nature will be appealed to as both the ground for our general principles and for the judgment about the appropriate description to be given to the particular case so that the appropriate general principle is applied. As noted earlier, Kant writes, 'an act of judgment by which a practitioner distinguishes whether or not something is a case of the rule'.⁵¹

So, if we take an example mentioned earlier of whether or not killing oneself after having been bitten by a rabid dog counts as a case of suicide or not harming others, then our guiding rationale will be to consider which of these would count as respecting rational nature in this particular case. It is the ultimate standard of ethical correctness embodied in Kant's ethical theory that provides the rationale for the general principles that we bring to the particular cases and for the judgment necessary to understand which principles are applicable in a particular case.

Why should we accept that this is where the locus of ethical correctness is to be located? It seems to be a natural extension of judgmental generalism in its explicit inclusion of the rationale for this form of generalism. I have also given reasons for rejecting the support that Dancy offers for particularism. However, there may be the lingering suspicion that somehow a direct confrontation with the particular case without any intervening ethical theory is where ethical correctness lies.

However, as Martha Nussbaum has convincingly pointed out, this direct confrontation, with what she calls concrete ethical practice, is itself based on theory. She says:

People who don't think about the Kantian/Rawlsian theory...do not therefore simply go out and relate to one another in accordance with refined particular perceptions. Their mutual interactions are governed by a variety of theories, some metaphysical and religious, some customary.⁵²

Some of these theories are, she claims, bad theories. They are often neither explicitly formulated nor been subjected to critical reflection. Discovering the locus of ethical correctness in an explicitly articulated theory is clearly to be preferred to this. This will enable consistent judgments to be made based on explicitly articulated theory. Indeed, in order to distinguish the sort of ethical theory that I am advocating from the uncritical acceptance of theories built into concrete ethical practice, Williams's definition, given earlier, needs to be supplemented to make it clear that the ethical theory is one where we have a general account that is explicitly articulated.

50. Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, p. 72.

51. Kant, 'On the Common Saying', 8:275.

52. M. Nussbaum, 'Why Practice Needs Ethical Theory: Particularism, Principle, and Bad Behaviour', in Hooker and Little (eds.), *Moral Particularism*, p. 249.

Where I disagree with Nussbaum is in the contrast that she draws between this concrete ethical practice that is based on bad theories and 'refined ethical practice', where she appears to suggest that we can dispense with theories altogether. Indeed, the implication is that the 'sphere governed...by fine-tuned Jamesian perceptions'⁵³ is not influenced by any theories whatsoever. These fine-tuned perceptions are appealed to as a necessary supplement to the Aristotelian theory since they 'make out the force of such obscure claims as the claim that "the discernment rests with perception".'⁵⁴ However, no argument is advanced for why these should be distinguished from concrete ethical practice, some of which is based on bad theories or, at the very least, unexamined implicit theories. Why should the 'finely tuned perception' in the novels of Henry James be uninfluenced by bad theories? Indeed, given some of the conclusions reached in his novels, he is advocating what might be viewed both critically and uncritically as immoral behaviour.⁵⁵ There is no reason to take these as standards of ethical correctness.

Nussbaum points out that these novels give us both a horizontal and vertical extension of ordinary life and enable an appreciation of the emotions involved without the distraction of personal jealousies or biases. However, why should we suppose that reading these novels would give us the fine-tuned perception necessary to get things right in ordinary life? Why should we assume that this sort of training in 'right perception' has not incorporated bad theories? Are we to suppose that novelists such as James, Dickens or Proust are immune from the bad theories that characterize other areas of concrete ethical practice? There is no argument advanced why this finely tuned perception should be taken as the standard of ethical correctness any more than what Nussbaum calls ethical practice, which, by her own admission, is based on bad theories.

Conclusion

I have argued that the essence of the dispute between particularists and generalists lies where ethical correctness is located. The arguments advanced have rejected locating this in the particular. However, generalism alone is not enough. The guiding rationale of an explicitly articulated ethical theory in which these general principles are located is where we should look for our standard of ethical correctness.

53. Nussbaum, 'Why Practice Needs Ethical Theory', p. 250.

54. M. Nussbaum, 'Exactly and Responsibly: A Defense of Ethical Criticism', *Philosophy and Literature* 22.2 (1998), pp. 343-65 (349).

55. I have in mind, for example, the advocacy of deceit in *The Golden Bowl* when Maggie lies directly to Charlotte. Another example, taken from *The Wings of the Dove* would be Kate Croy deceiving her friend Milly about the true nature of her feelings for Merton Densher.

Politics and the Economist-King: Is Rational Choice Theory the Science of Choice?

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This article is another unapologetic contribution to ‘the gentle art of rational choice bashing’. The debate over rational choice theory (RCT) may appear to have tired out; yet RCT is as dominant in political sciences as ever. The reason is that critics typically take aim at the symptoms of RCT’s failings, rather than their root cause: RCT’s very ambition of being the ‘science of choice’. In this article I argue that RCT fails twice, first as a science of *choice* and then as a *science* of choice. Both failures suggest that political sciences need an epistemologic (re)conversion away from the Platonic ideal of a deductive and universal science of choice toward a more inductive and pluralist paradigm. While advocates of RCT rightly insist that ‘you can’t beat something with nothing’, I take their advice, with a grain of salt: in order for alternatives to appear, the frame of references needs to be modified. I draw a few perspectives for the political sciences.

The rational choice scholar William Riker attributes the ‘disparity in development’ between natural and social science to the fact that the latter ‘has not been based on rational choice methods’.¹ Underlying statements like Riker’s is the conviction that the economic approach taps the most fundamental levels of social reality, and that all social sciences—political sciences to begin with—should consequently endorse some form of rational choice

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1. William H. Riker, ‘Political Science and Rational Choice’, in James Alt and Kenneth Shepsle (eds.), *Perspectives on Positive Political Economy* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 177.

thinking. Rational choice theory (RCT) is presented not as one set of theoretical tools among many, but rather as an overarching and transdisciplinary paradigm, the true and only 'science of choice'. This methodological imperialism has important political implications. Just as Plato, in his *Republic*, considered philosophers to be the most appropriate rulers because they knew the laws of a well-ordered cosmos, similarly, if RCT is the science of choice, then, so it seems, economists should govern. Acknowledging RCT as the 'science of choice' is thus bound to justify not only an economic approach to politics, but also, practically, the rule of the economist-king.

I do not discuss, in this article, the immediate political aspects of the current supremacy of economists, nor do I address its sociological and historical conditions of emergence.² I will therefore steer clear of political and sociological analyses in this paper, both for reasons of space and logic. Not only would developing an analysis of the role of economists in modern politics considerably lengthen this paper, it can only come after the epistemological question of the relation between political sciences and economics has been clarified. I therefore focus on the epistemological aspect of the domination of rational choice thinking addressing what is, in my view, a more fundamental question: is rational choice theory the 'science of choice'? The answer to that question conditions the status of RCT as a unifying paradigm for social sciences in general, and a model for political sciences in particular. It also conditions the legitimacy of the economist-king's laws and prescriptions, forming the political horizon of this discussion.

In the first section of this paper, I explain the concept of 'a science of choice' and the reasons why RCT may seem authorized to claim such a title. In the second section, I question RCT's ambition to explain choices, even only so-called 'rational choices'. In the third section, I show that RCT fails to fulfill its own hard criteria of what science should be. In the fourth and last part, I conclude that RCT does not provide a transdisciplinary methodology for social sciences and suggest that political sciences turn to a more inductive and pluralist paradigm of a theory of choice.

Rational Choice Theory: What Legitimizes its Claim as the Science of Choice?

While this article may be interpreted as another unapologetic contribution to 'the gentle art of rational choice bashing',³ it does not take aim at RCT's attempt to express human choices in terms of laws. The notion of a 'science

2. Readers interested in the ideology of RCT and its historical conditions of emergence, see S.M. Amadae, *Rationalizing Capitalist Democracy: The Cold War Origins of Rational Choice Liberalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

3. Bernard Grofman, 'On the Gentle Art of Rational Choice Bashing', in B. Grofman (ed.), *Information, Participation, and Choice: An Economic Theory of Democracy in Perspective* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), pp. 239-42.

of choice' is perhaps problematic on face value, suggesting a conflict between a metaphysics of human freedom on the one hand and the cold determinism of science on the other hand. But that is true only if science is identified with the discovery of deterministic laws and the concept of choice refers to a pure act of freedom, with no thickness, no temporality, and, what is most important, no cause.⁴ There need not be anything oxymoronic about the concept of a 'science of choice'. Even when science is understood as an explanatory and predictive enterprise, as long as the notion of choice is conceptualized as one of the actions we perform every day, and therefore subject to the same type of constraint that conditions most human behaviours, it makes sense to try to identify the regularities in the patterns that govern human individual and collective choices. I find this caveat necessary to establish that my point is not to criticize what I take to be the scientific, rather noble, goal of RCT, but rather its methodological frame and the assumptions behind it.

Once this point about the compatibility between freedom and science has been settled, it must be observed that rational choice theorists are usually committed to a rather demanding notion of science. Rational choice theorists present themselves as scientists sharing many common principles with natural scientists, whom they seek to emulate in terms of methodology and results. RCT is thus presented as having the hard goals of a natural, empirical science, seeking to *explain* and *predict* its objects—human decisions—by deducing the laws ruling them from a small set of axioms and then testing the predictions of the latter against the reality of observed behaviours.⁵ In political sciences, specifically, the hope is to produce a 'map' of the way individual decisions aggregate, rendering politics a more scientific field. Literary descriptions are meant to be replaced with, or at least crucially complemented by, formal models and predictive calculus, the latter being possibly, though not necessarily, supported by statistical inferences. Human choices are thus, to some crucial extent, treated as mathematical objects that can be abstracted from a given context and put into formulas and equations.

4. This antinomy, faced by all the social sciences, perhaps explains their tendency to substitute for the 'hard' goals of explanation and prediction the 'softer' goals of description and interpretation. The suspicion is that, while freedom can be *understood*, it cannot be *explained*, according to an opposition familiar to Wilhelm Dilthey, Karl Jaspers and Max Weber. It is important, however, to underline that for these authors, the dichotomy between natural sciences, which explain (*Erklären*) and social sciences, which understand (*Verstehen*), was not strict.

5. The fact that, in practice, most rational choice theorists in fact begin with an empirical puzzle and attempt to build a somewhat ad hoc model to explain it, does not change the fact that, in theory, the ideal remains that of a deductive science. While a more data-driven theory is precisely what I advocate in the last section of this article, I think that the philosophy of this practice should be spelled out explicitly. Why keep alive in social sciences the myth of a purely deductive *a priori* science, which is moribund even in natural sciences?

While contemporary philosophy of science has trouble finding a good definition of what science is,⁶ RCT apparently lives up to the ideal of physics, with its mathematical foundations and deductive nomo-logical structure. RCT also shares with physics the ambition of being value-free, a property allegedly guaranteed by the 'thin' or instrumental nature of the concept of rationality. Even the prescriptive side of RCT—which recommends certain means to reach given ends—supposedly escapes passing a moral judgment on the pursued ends.

RCT's ontology, however, is that of a soft science. RCT is thus aptly described as a '*non reductive* [or non reductionist] empirical social science'.⁷ Rational choice theorists aspire at explaining choices in terms of beliefs and desires, or, in the lingo of the theory, 'expectations' and 'preferences'. They thus seem to appeal to a type of cause that hard scientists ignore and that soft scientists are usually content merely to interpret, namely, to put it this time in philosophical terms, 'reasons'. In RCT's explanations, the *cause* of an action is thus identified with the *reason* that an agent has to act.⁸ Of course, there are strong philosophical difficulties in identifying expectations and preferences with reasons. On the face of it, there is a reflexive dimension about reasons that expectations and preferences seem to lack. By reflexive dimension, I mean the fact that reasons are preferences passed through the filter of judgment. They are reflectively and critically endorsed, while preferences are just felt or expressed in a more immediate way. At the very least, while all reasons may ultimately correspond to some preferences, not all preferences necessarily turn into reasons. Similarly reasons may be absolutely independent of any kind of expectations, especially in moral judgments if the latter are supposed to be made on a non-consequentialist basis. Thus, while expectations about a course of action depend on a reasoning about probable outcomes, reasons may have nothing to do with a calculus of probability and a consideration for consequences. It is not clear, however, that rational choice theorists actually draw a distinction between these concepts. They often seem to miss the point of the distinction probably because they only care about the formal coherence and consistency of the motivations behind a choice—be they preferences, expectations or 'reasons'—while philosophers would insist on some moral difference between them, particularly between preferences on the one hand and reasons on the other.⁹ I come back to this problem in the third section of this article.

6. See for example Philip Kitcher, *The Advancement of Science: Science Without Legend, Objectivity Without Illusions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

7. James Bohman, *New Philosophy of Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 67; emphasis added.

8. As in Donald Davidson's philosophy of action, from a RCT point of view, reasons can be causes. See D. Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

9. This seems to be what John Ferejohn and Debra Satz say when they describe the received view of RCT as one for which '[i]t does not matter what reasons the agent has for

In any case, cause or consequence of endorsing such a soft ontology in their approach to human choices, rational choice theorists are methodologically committed to two important assumptions: the assumption that the explanatory unit of all choices, including collective choices, is the individual choice (this assumption is also referred to as methodological individualism¹⁰); and the assumption that a choice is caused by the 'reasons' an agent has to act. The latter assumption implies that a choice is something voluntary, which emanates from the individual defined as an agent. Methodological individualism and the focus on the causality of the will together exclude as irrelevant supra-individualist levels of explanations, such as institutions or groups, and infra-individualist levels of explanations, such as genes or emotions.

It is important to notice that RCT's methodological commitment to the notion of individual choice is compatible with the theory's wide scope, this for a number of reasons. First, the concept of rationality brings a limit to the scope of the theory that is only superficial. Contrary to what the adjective 'rational' suggests, RCT is not only about choices that might be described as reasonable or wise, but about all choices that satisfy an instrumental fit between means and ends. In that respect, RCT theoretically covers choices that range from those of Hitler to those of Mother Teresa. Second, RCT is about choices both in their individual and collective dimension, the collective level being interpreted as the aggregation and result of the individual level. In fact, the theory is best suited to the prediction of collective behaviour, whose complexity is conveniently reduced to the simplicity of a few differential equations. Finally, while sometimes described as the 'Theory of Rational Action', RCT not only covers choices that result in actions, but also choices that result in the absence of an action, or simply in mental dispositions or thoughts. RCT is in fact even broader than a theory of *decision*. While a theory of decision explains choice within the constraints imposed by a given choice situation, RCT also encompasses game theory, that is, the theory of choice within constraints imposed by the choices of others. Rational choice theory is thus a science of choice, in which the term of choice is given its maximal extension, covering all kinds of individual and collective actions and decisions. Despite the technical distinction between the terms just established, I will follow the common usage and use the terms action, decision and choice interchangeably in this article. The looseness in terminology should be compensated, hopefully, by the intuitive clarity of the context.

her preferences or indeed why she has come to hold them at all' (J. Ferejohn and D. Satz, 'Rational Choice and Social Theory', *The Journal of Philosophy* 91.2 [February 1994], pp. 71-87 [73]).

10. Cf. John Ferejohn and Debra Satz: 'On the received view, one cannot be a rational choice-theorist without also being a methodological individualist' ('Rational Choice and Social Theory', p. 73). The authors impute this 'received view' to philosophers, but they acknowledge that this interpretative option is legitimate. In my view this reading is in fact not only legitimate, but also the most 'mainstream' reading of RCT.

It is sometimes argued that RCT is in fact *more* than a science of choice, namely, as Becker is often quoted for saying apropos economic science, 'a theory of all human *behavior*'.¹¹ Few rational choice theorists seriously endorse this view. For one, this definition tends to transform economic theory itself into an empty tautology. *A posteriori*, any action can be re-described as motivated by the maximization of one's expected utility. Many critics have thus denounced the emptiness of such unfalsifiable claims.¹² Second, applied to the enterprise pursued by rational choice theorists, it raises two different kinds of issues: one is that it begs the question of the identification between RCT and economics, making RCT at best the theoretical core of economics, at worst one of its subdisciplines. Second, Becker's universal claim contradicts the idea that rational choice theory accounts for *voluntary* actions. If it is true that neoclassical economics does not require that decision-units are necessarily conscious of their effort to maximize, this is where RCT departs from over-generalized economic theories of behaviour such as Becker's. In order to remain a science of *choice*, RCT cannot be about all types of *behaviour*. This also suggests that in order to remain a science of choice, RCT cannot be merely a sub-discipline of economics, at least not of economics as defined by people like Becker.

Why RCT is Not a Science of *Choice*

In this section, I challenge the notion that RCT is about *choice* at all. First, I show that, in order to be successfully predictive, RCT can only apply to a sub-variety of human choices, namely economic choices or choices that can be shown to be motivated by self-interest. Second, while the notion of choice refers both to a decision-making process and its end result, RCT is only interested in choices as 'revealed preferences', namely end results. As far as the *process* of choice is concerned, RCT is content with the description provided by 'as-if models' which are irrealist in several respects. While the unrealistic nature of choice as *process* is usually defended in the name of the predictive results of those models, it turns out that RCT fails to account for choices as *end results* as well. I postpone the question of whether RCT truly deserves the title of a *science* to the next section.

11. Gary S. Becker, *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 7, my emphasis.

12. For a good summary of this criticism, see James Bohman, *New Philosophy of Social Sciences* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1991), pp. 72-73. An example of the tautological nature of Becker's claim is given by Becker's theory of marriage, according to which '[a] person decides to marry when the expected utility from marriage exceeds that expected from remaining single or from the additional search for a more compatible mate'. Such a claim can never be falsified insofar as any decision, whether to marry or not, can always be re-described as maximizing the expected utility of the agent. Becker does not give the conditions under which his 'economic' law of marriage could be falsified. Any reason to marry fits the model, but thus empties it of any predictive content.

Despite the universal ambition in terms of its object of study analysed above, RCT is, it is worth noticing, technically equipped to deal with only one particular type of choice, namely self-interested choice. As acknowledged by most practitioners of RCT, the concept of utility is practically always identified with that of self-interest, and this on what seems to be sound methodological ground. The rationale is that some kind of thickness has to be given to the concept of rationality if RCT is to avoid the tautological claim that all human behaviours are purposeful. Since the only thing that can be properly quantified is self-interest, which is easily measured in monetary units, it just so happens that RCT is technically limited to the study of a certain type of choice, that for which a common standard—money—is available. This is why RCT's object happens to intersect with that of economics. Of course, to preserve the universal scope of RCT, some argue that all rational motivations are self-interested and can therefore be measured by the common yardstick of money—including actions whose motive is admittedly something else, like obedience to tradition, altruism, ethnic identification, and so on. This is the perspective of the Chicago school, represented by Gary Becker, according to which, 'there is no behaviour that is not interpretable as economic [understand "self-interested"], however altruistic, emotional, disinterested, and compassionate it may seem to others'.¹³

The problem with this universalistic approach is that it is not only implausible, but also empirically wrong. While self-interest cannot intuitively account for the richness of human motivations, studies have shown that this assumption is almost systematically violated, not only in non-Western settings, for example, small-scale, pre-industrialized societies,¹⁴ but also within Western societies. Experiments conducted in behavioural economics¹⁵ have thus brought into relief systematic discrepancies between the predictions of RCT and observed behaviours. The importance of self-interest and individualism in Western ideology may render RCT particularly powerful to explain human choices in Western societies and it is truly one of the great appeal of the theory that it starts from a human trait—self-interest—that is undoubtedly more frequent than, or at least as frequent as, the opposite motivation of altruism (since even altruism presupposes some form of minimal self-interest to begin with). However RCT's universal claims are hardly general enough to help explain, let alone predict, all of human choices, everywhere.

RCT is in fact caught between a rock and a hard place. If utility is the open-ended concept economists pretend it is, then the theory itself is indeterminate to the point of uselessness. As an empty frame, it cannot claim

13. Cited in Alan Wolfe, *Whose Keeper? Social Science and Moral Obligation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 32.

14. Joseph Heinrich *et al.*, 'In Search of Homo Economicus: Behavioral Experiments in 15 Small-scale Societies', *American Economic Review* 91.2 (May 2001), pp. 73-78.

15. E.g. Daniel Kahneman, Paul Slovic and Amos Tversky (eds.), *Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

explanatory and even less predictive power. If, on the other hand, the theory is made more substantive and utility is defined as self-interest technically identified with the amount of money one can expect, then the theory's scope is limited to those rare domains of choice where economic self-interest is the only plausible motivation. Trying to avoid indeterminacy and emptiness, RCT is thus bound to have a universality that is at best *partial*, explaining only part of each type of human choice, and at worst *segmented*, explaining only choices, or part of choices, that are similar to economic choices.¹⁶

Not only is RCT ill equipped to deal with all types of human action, it is also descriptively wrong as far as choices as *processes* are concerned. While this may not have any impact on the predictions of the theory—but, as I will argue later, in fact it does—this is still a problem for a theory that has descriptive ambitions. The assumption of maximization is particularly inaccurate. Advocates of more plausible approaches to human decision-making argue that 'satisficing', as opposed to 'maximizing', is a much more faithful account of the way people choose under constraints of time, information and cognitive limitations. Whereas maximization somewhat implies the existence of, and search for, a 'best' solution, the notion of satisficing invented by Herbert Simon¹⁷ accounts for the fact that people pick the alternative that satisfies a given level of aspirations without looking necessarily for the best possible option. Simon's theory of bounded rationality thus contrasts the rationality of *Homo Economicus* with that of *Homo Heuristicus*. While the latter is based on calculus and complicated Bayesian probabilities, the former resorts to simple and efficient rules of thumbs, or 'heuristics'.¹⁸ Bounded rationality applies in fact in all cases where there is no rational way to determine what is the best, or even second-best option, which is in fact the case in most, if not all, situations of choice. The notions of satisficing and bounded rationality thus seem particularly apt in the context of political choices, where maximization is rarely an option. What would be indeed a 'best' option in terms of tax policy, education or even foreign policy? From the point of view of bounded rationality, we should, and actually do rely, in political judgments, not on complicated economic equations, but on simple collective decision procedures, such as democracy (the rule of the majority).

It has been argued that the difference between bounded rationality and economic rationality is minimal since the latter can be reinterpreted as a species of the former, call it 'maximization under constraints'. Proponents of bounded rationality give convincing reasons why this is not the case.¹⁹ The

16. According to the terminology of Donald Green and Ian Shapiro in *Pathologies of Rational Choice: A Critique of Applications in Political Science* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994).

17. Herbert Simon, *Models of Man: Social and Rational* (New York: Wiley, 1957).

18. Gerd Gigerenzer, Peter Todd and the ABC Research Group, *Simple Heuristics That Make Us Smart* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

19. Gigerenzer *et al.*, *Simple Heuristics That Make Us Smart*.

main difference between the two approaches resides, in my view, in the normative ideal of rationality that the two approaches respectively foster. While economic rationality sets as the paradigm of rationality an *a priori* set of axioms, or a kind of abstract coherence, bounded rationality takes its cue from what people actually do in a given environment. Conversely, economic irrationality comes with the violation of one or more of the axioms in the theory. In bounded rationality, the question is more whether or not a given choice provides the best answer to a given problem in a given context. Bounded rationality is thus much more context-sensitive and empirical than the *a priori* and rigid notion of rationality advocated by economists, even behavioural ones.

RCT is also descriptively flawed in that it cannot account for actions that require a non-instrumental type of rationality. Voting, for example, creates a paradox from an RCT's point of view for reasons that have more to do with the rigidity of the theory than with the so-called 'irrationality' of the voters. On utility-maximizing grounds, it is pointless to vote in a large election because the cost of voting outweighs the expected utility and because it is unlikely that a single voter casts the decisive ballot. However, the fact that most people bother voting ceases to be paradoxical when voting is understood, no longer as a way for a voter to get the policy he or she wants, but in terms of 'self-expressive rationality', for example. Where rational choice theorists discover a paradox, one is tempted to see a false problem, and perhaps a failure on their part to acknowledge what most social scientists knew all along, namely that voting is an action in which the means matter more than the outcomes, or, rather, are the end in itself.

Jon Elster also showed the limits of the notion of instrumental rationality as it fails to capture actions in which the reasons to act cannot be the causes of the action, or can even represent serious obstacles to the action. Elster gives the examples of wanting to fall in love and wanting to fall asleep.²⁰ In such cases, the end of the action can only be achieved as the by-product of some other action (meeting new people, reading in bed) and requires a form of oblique rationality that works on the circumstances of the action rather than on the means. In politics an equivalent of these actions would be, perhaps, the problem of implementing a fair society. Contrary to the suggestion of economists such as Kaplow and Shavell,²¹ who propose to endogenize fairness as a taste into the social utility function and to maximize it the way one maximizes a taste for wine or shoes (*their* analogy), it is almost certain that any attempt to internalize fairness in the utility function would ultimately entirely disrupt it as a value. Just as falling asleep or falling in love, implementing a fair society might well require an indirect form of rationality. If it can be

20. Jon Elster, *Sour Grapes: Studies in the Subversion of Rationality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 21.

21. Louis Kaplow and Steven Shavell, *Fairness Versus Welfare* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

achieved at all, it is probably not as the direct result of some maximizing process than as the by-product of some other action (for example, placing a set of external constraints on the maximization of collective welfare).

A last unrealistic assumption in the way RCT pictures human choices is the assumption of stable preferences. This assumption is reflected, for instance, in the way game theory, a sub-branch of RCT, represents human decision-processes. However long the decision tree, in those game-theoretic representations, the payoffs are given once and for all on the basis of what the players' conditions are at the beginning of the game. Yet it seems wrong to assume that one can go down a decision tree without being affected by the steps taken and without affecting in return the type of alternative offered in the following round. The relevant metaphor for human decisions is not that of an immutable tree, but rather of an ever-changing forest, or, as the poet has it, that of a folding and unfolding 'peacock-fan' of options.²² In a poem that not only deplores the exclusive nature of marital choices but can also be interpreted as a critique of game theory representations, Philip Larkin points out that, in real life, '[c]hoice ... shuts up that peacock-fan/[t]he future was ...', and that '[s]imply to choose stopped all ways up but one'. Contrary to what the imagery of game trees suggests, there is no such thing as an infinitely preserved array of options. Every choice, including that of a spouse, is a loss.

The latter inability of RCT to take into account the evolving nature of both the context of choice and the preferences is not contingent on a lack of computation power, concepts or technology. It resides in RCT's *a priori* definition of rationality as mere logical consistency of preferences—a definition that neglects the contextual, or 'ecological', dimension of rationality. To the autistic rationality of *Homo Economicus*, psychologists more plausibly oppose rationality defined as 'an adaptative toolbox'.²³

In fact, attempts to integrate elements of context into RCT's framework have been made. Evolutionary game theory, for example, the study of infinitely repeated games, accounts for the long-term success of certain behavioural strategies (famously Tit-for-Tat²⁴) in terms of 'survival'. Certain strategies prove successful because they are optimal given the circumstances. The problem with this type of approach, so critics argue, is that it tends to disrupt the notion of choice, since the reference to the intentions accom-

22. The complete strophe, which I cannot resist giving in its entirety, reads as follows: 'Choice of a wife shuts up that peacock-fan/The future was, in which temptingly spread/All that elaborative nature can./Matchless potential! But unlimited/Only so long as I elected nothing;/Simply to choose stopped all ways up but one/And sent the tease-birds from the bushes flying'. Philip Larkin, *Collected Poems* (London: Marvel Press and Faber and Faber, 1988), p. 54.

23. Gerd Gigerenzer and Reinhard Selten (eds.), *Bounded Rationality: The Adaptative Toolbox* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001).

24. Cf. the results of tournaments opposing different strategies summarized by Robert Axelrod in *The Evolution of Cooperation* (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1990).

panying the strategy is entirely left out of the account. As Elster puts it, an evolutionary account 'provides a rationality explanation, but not a rational choice explanation'.²⁵ However, if one admits, along the lines of Davidson's peculiar philosophy of free actions and agentless causes, for example, that there is more of a continuum between choices and behaviours than is acknowledged by RCT, it becomes possible to account for a variety of choices, from the most conscious and free to the more purely adaptive and determined. The question of where the line should be drawn need not be insolvable and can perhaps be decided empirically.²⁶

All of the previous objections to the unrealistic nature of RCT's 'as-if' models of choices as processes have long been lodged against the theory. They are usually brushed aside in the name of the models' predictive value, following Friedman's instrumentalist approach to economic science.²⁷ Indeed, it would not matter so much that RCT misrepresents choices as processes if only RCT was capable of saying something about choices as end-results. But is it the case?

Why RCT is Not a *Science of Choice*

Despite its ambitions as an empirical science, RCT's predictive results are far from impressive, being oftentimes either wrong or indeterminate. In fact, even in economic choices, it turns out that far from acting along 'rational' principles people are subject to all forms of 'cognitive biases' (such as base-rate neglect, framing, the sunk cost effect, overconfidence bias, hyperbolic discounting etc.). These divergences from what economics label 'rational' choices have proved to be so systematic and irreducible as to render necessary the emergence of a new discipline, behavioural economics, which is specifically devoted to the listing and critique of these biases.

While rational choice theorists conclude from the existence of these systematic biases that people have structural difficulties in processing certain things, proponents of bounded rationality suggest that the problem might

25. Jon Elster, *Rational Choice* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 26. Noteworthy is the fact that public choice raises somewhat similar problems for RCT. As far as it attempts to combine the individualist and institutionalist, or holist, approaches, it is not entirely consistent; but where the theory is successful, it can no longer be said to be purely 'rational choice'. Cf. Lars Udehn, *The Limits of Public Choice: A Sociological Critique of the Economic Theory of Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 173.

26. For Davidson, relating an action to an agent is not a necessary condition for the action to be considered free or intentional. Indeed, he argues, there exist 'agentless causes ... which, because they are reasons as well as causes, constitute certain events as free and intentional actions'. These agentless causes are 'the states and changes of state in persons', such as emotions, desires and passing moods. Contrary to RCT, Davidson's philosophy of 'actions, reasons and causes' suggests a subtle continuum, rather than a clear-cut divide, between a choice and a behaviour.

27. Milton Friedman, *Essays in Positive Economics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953).

reside with the model of rationality applied. Gerd Gigerenzer thus suggests that ‘a systematic deviation from an “insane” standard should not automatically be called a judgmental error, should it?’²⁸ The alternative model of rationality behind that criticism is that of rationality as ‘ecological’, namely as a fit between a set of mind and a given environment. According to Herbert Simon, rationality is best conceptualized as a pair of scissors, with the mind as one blade and the environment as the other. Therefore, to understand a choice as rational or irrational one needs to analyse the environment, because a strategy is rational or irrational only with respect to an environment, physical or social.²⁹ The mistake of RCT, which is also that of the study of cognitive illusions and errors, is to focus exclusively on the mind, the cognitive blade, and compare it with laws of probability rather than with the structure of the environment. As Gigerenzer has it, ‘one blade alone does not cut well’.³⁰

Besides the problems raised by the existence of systematic ‘biases’ in peoples’ rationality that tend to falsify the theory’s predictions, there is another reason to worry about the predictive power of RCT. Where RCT is not blatantly wrong indeed, it sins by indeterminacy. Rational choice theorists’ predictions are notoriously too indeterminate to be either confirmed or falsified. In fact, even its most fervent advocates acknowledge the general predictive weakness of RCT.³¹ The question is thus not whether RCT is accurately predictive—it is not—but whether it could be, and at what cost. In other words, the puzzle is whether the lack of predictive power of RCT is contingent (on time, computation power etc.) or structural, that is, built in the theory itself. One may thus wonder what RCT is worth as a potential *science* of choice.

28. Gerd Gigerenzer, ‘Striking a Blow for Sanity in Theories of Rationality’, in M. Augier and J.G. March (eds.), *Models of a Man: Essays in Memory of Herbert A. Simon* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, in press).

29. Herbert Simon, *Administrative Behavior: A Study of Decision-Making Processes in Administrative Organization* (New York: Macmillan, 2nd edn, 1957).

30. The interesting fact is that looked at in this novel way, apparently stable cognitive illusions can be made to disappear and reappear by varying crucial structures of the environment. For instance, research has pointed to the ecological reasons for people’s difficulty in following Bayes’s rule when reasoning about conditional probabilities. Bayesian reasoning can be strongly improved when the information is not presented in probabilities but rather in natural frequencies, which correspond to the environmental input that humans have received during most of their evolution. Cf. G. Gigerenzer and U. Hoffrage, ‘How to Improve Bayesian Reasoning Without Instruction: Frequency Formats’, *Psychological Review* 102 (1995), pp. 684-704.

31. James D. Johnson, for example, denies any convincing success to RCT as a positive science and proposes to redefine it as a ‘reconstructive theory’ with no predictive ambition. Cf. J.D. Johnson, ‘Rational Choice as a Reconstructive Theory’, in Kristen Renwick Monroe (ed.), *The Economic Approach to Politics: A Critical Assessment of the Theory of Rational Choice* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), pp. 113-42 (119).

Two main reasons can account for why RCT is bound to fail as a 'physics' of choice. These reasons apply to economics as well, as it is analysed by the philosopher Alexander Rosenberg. The first reason, so Rosenberg argues, is the non-reductive nature of economic theory itself. This non-reductive nature makes RCT, if the latter is considered the theoretical core of economics, structurally unable 'to divide nature at the joints'.³² Unlike molecules, genes, neurons, synapses or other natural 'joints' linked through biological or neuro-scientific theories; beliefs and desires, or preferences and expectations, cannot be measured by these natural joints, nor linked to them in any way. While sticking to Folk psychology was initially one of the main appeals of the theory, it is eventually what condemns rational choice theory to indeterminacy of predictions.

Another reason why RCT fails as a predictive science, according to Rosenberg, is the feedback effect of its 'laws' on its object of study. In political sciences, for example, the publication of predictions of future phenomena such as voting behaviour is often the cause of these predictions coming out true or false. Whereas a meteorologist's prediction of continued rainfall has never led to the occurrence of a drought, nor have predictions of the return of Halley's comet influenced its orbit,³³ the problem of reflexive predictions and their self-fulfilling or self-refuting nature is unavoidable in RCT, as in all social sciences. As Kant, to some extent the father of their separation from natural sciences, remarked apropos historical predictions, reflexivity is indeed a common feature of all sciences devoted to the study of social phenomena.³⁴ This reflexivity is also what makes social sciences irreducibly normative. RCT, in that respect, is no exception.

The specificity of human beings, as opposed to inanimate objects or even animals, is that they can be rule or norm guided. Whereas physics does not, or rather cannot, prescribe to comets the orbit they should follow, RCT creates a sense of what people ought to do if they were rational. If we compare, more aptly perhaps, social sciences to the study of animals, the difference between them is that although both have for objects 'intentional systems', characterized by their ability to act upon intentions, as opposed to being just moved by external factors, only social sciences deal with objects that can actu-

32. Alexander Rosenberg, *Economics: Mathematical Politics or Science of Diminishing Returns?* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 235.

33. Examples given by Robert Merton, cited by George D. Romanos, 'Reflexive Predictions', in Michael Martin and Lee C. McIntyre (eds.), *Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), p. 149.

34. Immanuel Kant, *Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 180: 'For we are dealing with freely acting beings to whom one can *dictate* in advance what they *ought* to do, but of whom one cannot *predict* what they actually will do, and who are capable, if things go really badly and they experience evils incurred through their own actions, of regarding these evils as a greater incentive to do better than they did in the past' (original italics).

ally reflectively and consciously decide to follow a given norm. RCT is reflexive, and consequently normative, in its application to human beings. It sets standards of rationality that human beings understand and can choose or not to adopt. This is where the difference between preferences and reasons kick in, setting human beings apart from animals, say rats or pigeons, which might happen to satisfy the axioms of choice but never consciously or voluntarily do so.³⁵ Only human beings have the ability to turn their preferences into reasons to act (when these preferences are reflectively endorsed) or to choose to act along reasons that overcome these preferences (when the preferences are reflectively rejected). Because rational choice theorists systematically translate reasons into preferences, they miss the reflexive dimension of human motivations. But of course they cannot ultimately prevent this reflexive dimension from cropping up and messing their predictions.

Failing the criteria of predictive power and axiologic neutrality, RCT cannot adequately be characterized as a 'physics of choices'. In fact, Rosenberg argues,³⁶ RCT is not an empirical science. It is best conceptualized as a branch of applied mathematics. Rosenberg's explanation of why RCT fails as a *science* of choice, where science is defined by reference to the natural sciences, suggests two possibilities: either the definition of choice is too narrow, or the paradigm of science too demanding. We already saw in the section, 'Why RCT is Not a Science of *Choice*', above, that while there are clearly some problems with the *a priori* notion of choice endorsed by rational choice theorists, there are few ways in which this notion of choice may be sophisticated that would not end up dissolving it into a mere behaviour. In fact, while RCT's notion of choice demands to be somewhat refined, the main problem with RCT is the paradigm of science on which it operates.

Before turning to the shift in paradigm which social sciences, and particularly political sciences, stand in need of, it is however necessary, and fair, to acknowledge that RCT is not only just that: a failed natural science. When its results are measured by any other standard than predictive power, for example James B. Rule's criterion of 'first-order questions' and substantive progress,³⁷ RCT appears a relatively successful discipline.

35. Cf. J. Kagel, 'Economics according to the Rat (and Pigeons too): What Have We Learned and What We Hope To Learn', in A. Roth (ed.), *Laboratory Experimentation in Economics: Six Points of View* (New York: Cambridge, 1987), cited in Ferejohn and Satz, 'Rational Choice and Social Choice', p. 77. This type of study suggests that a good theoretical reason to support the axioms of choice in their applications to human beings, even when the latter are repeatedly empirically falsified, is that they work well to describe and predict animal behaviour. But why would one want human beings to act as rats or pigeons? It seems that the legitimacy of this type of study for economics needs to be supported at least by a normative theory justifying the endorsement of animal rationality to not only describe and predict, but also prescribe human behaviours.

36. Rosenberg, *Economics*.

37. James B. Rule, *Theory and Progress in Social Science* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

According to Rule, answering, or contributing to answering first-order questions, which are defined as the social equivalent of basic questions in ethics and more generally as questions of interest to the whole community of social scientists,³⁸ is the nature of 'substantive progress'. By contrast, second-order questions are of interest only to restricted intellectual constituencies, produce only formal progress, and are only legitimately pursued, in Rule's view, if they can be proven to satisfy an 'or-else clause', according to which these second-order questions represent necessary programmes of research 'or else' we would miss crucial elements or tools of analysis to resolve first-order questions. From that perspective, it is clear that most achievements of RCT fall into the category of formal progress. Even Anthony Downs's spatial theory of voting, 'the most illuminating ideal types in the history of social sciences' according to some, is little more, in the end, than the formalization of a common-sense intuition.³⁹ The question is then: Has all the formal progress accomplished in RCT contributed to answering first-order questions? And if so, which ones and how?

We already saw that phantom dilemmas, such as the so-called 'voter's paradox' and all the repair-programmes developed to solve this problem from an RCT's point of view, however ingenious and sophisticated, hardly qualify as contributions to substantive progress, since the structure of the theory can be blamed for the existence of a problem in the first place. There are, however, elements in RCT that can be said to have contributed, if only indirectly, to answering first-order questions in the social sciences. The formal achievements that RCT has permitted, in game theory particularly, have thus forged analytic tools and generated hypotheses that are now necessary to a better understanding of first-order questions. RCT's overall approach has renewed the questions of political obligation, military deterrence or collective action, by tightening up political vocabulary and crystallizing in clear concepts what was previously expressed in vague, intuitive terms. When relevant, the notions of path dependency, Tit-for-Tat, dominant strategies, Nash equilibrium, and so on, have provided a new common vocabulary for social scientists. There are certainly other areas, beside that of political-science vocabulary, in which RCT can be proven to have contributed to the substantive progress of social sciences.⁴⁰

RCT has thus undeniably produced enlightening results and concepts. No matter how positive one may be about its contribution to the progress of social sciences, however, the fact remains that these results are not sufficient

38. In politics, for example, a first-order question would be: 'What conditions foster international peace, and which lead to war and other forms of conflict?' (Rule, *Theory and Progress in Social Science*, p. 45).

39. Udehn, *The Limits of Public Choice*, p. 124. The gist of the theory is that, in a two-party system, parties tend to converge on the centre of an ideological continuum to suit the median voter.

40. The Gibbard-Satterthwaite theorem, for example, is a core result for all theories of constitutional implementation. Thanks to Mathias Risse for this example.

for grounding the ambition of RCT to be a transdisciplinary paradigm for social sciences, at least not on the traditional instrumentalist view of science. One could, perhaps, come up with a weaker version of instrumentalism that would justify the unrealistic nature of RCT's assumptions, no longer on the demanding basis of accurate predictions, but on the basis of Rule's softer standard of 'contribution to substantial progress'. This would require proof that RCT is indeed the greatest contributor of all approaches to human actions. This type of weak instrumentalism remains, however, to be both spelled out and vindicated. In any case, although a valuable approach to human choices, RCT is not the science of choice it promised to be.

Towards a More Inductive and Pluralist Paradigm for the Social Sciences

Confronted with previous criticisms of RCT as a failed science of choice, exasperated rational choice theorists or their advocates usually appeal to their favourite argument of last resort: 'you can't beat something with nothing'. The argument goes as follows: 'RCT might not be very convincing as a science of choice, but that is all we have, in political sciences as elsewhere, and so that will have to do until you, critics, come up with a better paradigm.' This is the gist of Elster's reply to the proposals of satisficing or a theory of norms as alternative approaches to RCT. According to Jon Elster, indeed, there are elements of ad-hoc-ness in those alternative theories, which reduce them to being mere 'thick description'.⁴¹ Because of this, neither bounded rationality, for example, nor a theory of norms, are alternatives on the level at which RCT looks for competitors. Elster concludes:

Neoclassical economics will be dethroned if and when satisficing theory and psychology join forces to produce a simple and robust explanation of aspiration levels... Until this happens, the continued dominance of neoclassical theory is ensured by the fact that one can't beat something with nothing.⁴²

This analysis, which, incidentally, revealingly identifies RCT and neoclassical economics, assumes that the type of science that can compete with RCT has to *compare* with RCT (and therefore neoclassical economics). Although a theory of preference levels is certainly something that should be developed, the judgment passed on satisficing theory and psychology seems unduly harsh. For one thing, as has hopefully been established by now, it is not sure that there is much to be beaten, at least in terms of a 'science of choice'. Another point is that what is looked down upon as 'nothing' according to the scientific criteria that RCT failed to satisfy itself, might turn out to be

41. The element of ad-hoc-ness in bounded rationality, for example, is the level of aspirations. Bounded rationality does not explain why some people stop searching for an apartment after they have seen only three or four, while other people go on until they have visited at least thirty.

42. Elster, *Rational Choice*, pp. 26-27.

something in a different epistemological frame, and something *other* than a variant of RCT. The problem thus resides not so much in the absence of competitors for RCT but in the expectations of what a science of choice should be. The economist Stephen Marglin calls this frame 'an ideology of knowledge'.⁴³ One may merely identify it as the prejudice, Platonician at the bottom, that all science, including the science of political choices, is and ought to be of only one type, namely the deductive and universal kind.⁴⁴ I want to argue that social sciences stand in need of an epistemologic (re)conversion away from this ideal of science as mathematical or axiomatic toward a more inductive and pluralist paradigm. They also need to assess scientific achievement less by the standard of formal progress and more by that of objective contribution to questions presenting an interest to the whole community of social scientists.

A more inductive science of choice needs not abandon deduction. Deduction and induction being two sides of the same coin, such a sacrifice could not make any sense. The point is simply to reach an equilibrium between these two complementary poles. Given the excessive weight given to deduction in social sciences recently, the emphasis should now be shifted from the principles and *a priori* axioms towards the actual empirical object at stake, namely human choices, both as given preferences (end-results) or decision-making (processes). Social scientists should try to start from choices as they are, rather than from choices as they ought to be ('rational'). This probably means occasionally dropping the assumptions that set descriptive limitations to the theory (utility maximization, instrumental rationality, stable preferences). It may also mean abandoning the use of identical initial axioms for all types of choices.

The shift toward a more inductive paradigm of science implies revising the predictive goals initially ascribed to the theory, or, rather, raising local generalizations to the status of noble scientific achievements. Science, in social studies, needs not attain universal, context-free laws. Cautious generalizations from case-based studies, valid in a certain time and place, are in themselves valuable scientific results. Giving up on the model of physics thus entails reconsidering, among other things, the predictive status of 'thick descriptions'. Do they have any predictive value, if only local, and if so, are they, or not, the best a theory of choice can aim at? This is an open question. The next question would be whether abstracting from a series of thick descriptions, or of 'heuristics' as local predictive tools, would yield the same type of general

43. Stephen Marglin, 'Economics as an Ideology of Knowledge', in *idem*, *Economic Myths* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2003), ch. 9.

44. Interestingly, most critics of RCT themselves share this paradigm of science. Green and Shapiro, for example, although they insist on the importance of *empirical* testing and complain about the lack of confirmation of the theory, reinforce in fact, by the very nature of their criticisms, the narrow standards of scientificity at the heart of RCT. It should be clear by now, however, that neither RCT nor any alternative approaches can fulfil scientific criteria only applicable to physics.

laws as those proposed by RCT. These questions can probably be answered empirically.

More object-driven, a science of choice would also be bound to be methodologically plural. RCT, as we saw, is only a partial key to a limited type of human choice. A science of choice may not necessarily require methodological individualism nor the uniqueness or even primacy of the causality of the will. It might thus be the case that choices follow different laws at the individual and at the collective levels. It might also be the case that at least some choices are better conceptualized as the mixed product of emotions and reasons rather than as the product of reason alone. There is therefore no rationale for ignoring the lessons of other disciplines, such as psychology, the cognitive sciences or sociology, which each tackle choices from a different angle and with different tools. In this new perspective, there is no reason why RCT cannot represent a welcome element of methodological pluralism, as long as it does not tend to crowd out other approaches and renounce unsupported claims to universalism.

How would such an epistemological conversion translate, concretely speaking, in political sciences? First, political scientists would have to rediscover the 'ecological' nature of rationality. While RCT has favoured an impoverished approach to politics in the name of universality, it seems time to swing the pendulum in the other direction, back to field study, geography, history and languages—in other words, context. Because human choices are as much the product of individuals' wills as that of a set of external constraints, no political science can afford to work without a well-defined environment.

Taking lessons from other disciplines, political scientists might use the notion of heuristics developed by the intellectual heirs of Herbert Simon to shed a new light on old problems. Reinterpreted as fast and frugal shortcuts for decision-making, certain political behaviours seen as problematic from a RCT point of view would appear perfectly sensible. RCT's vision of the average elector as 'rationally ignorant', for instance, suggests that direct democracy is a bad thing and that issues of public policy should better be left to more informed and competent citizens. In fact, the rationally ignorant voter can be branded 'ignorant' only if the benchmark of knowledge is *l'homme éclairé* of Bayesian probabilists. If the benchmark is the much more realist *Homo Heuristicus*, who votes based on simple heuristic cues, such as 'party idea' (the notorious ideology of a party) or which interest groups support which parties, then most voters turn out to be sufficiently informed. From the normative point of view, this means that direct democracy is not necessarily a problem. Instead of trying to transform the ignorant citizen into a fully informed and information-maximizing voter, it might be better to encourage and even subsidize the public advertisement and diffusion of political cues in the public.⁴⁵

45. In other words, the key to a well-functioning society need not be the replacement of direct democracy with a committee of expert voters; or the education of the electorate, which generally lacks the time and inclination for town-hall meetings and the reading of

This change of paradigm, however, would mean very little if rational choice theorists were not also willing to take into account the intrinsically normative nature of their enterprise. This implies more than paying lip service to the reflexive nature of social sciences. It requires providing, if not a complete meta-theory of RCT, at least a convincing rationale for why the definition of rationality on which RCT rests should be endorsed in preference to any other alternative. Political sciences, for example, could reflect on and start developing more idiosyncratic concepts of political rationality and political choice, instead of uncritically endorsing the economic definitions of rationality and choice as the only objective and legitimate ones. Political choices are about different things than economic choices. They are about whom we are, the world we live in (the 'ecology' of our choices, i.e. our culture) and the things we want, which might be very different from maximizing welfare. Politics may also require a form of oblique rationality that is not instrumental. If these approaches have any value, then a task for political theory is to develop a concept of political choice and political rationality that defines an autonomous field for political sciences, and sets politics clear from the rule of economist-kings.

Last, but related to the previous point about the normativity of social sciences, it is important that the criterion of progress in social sciences remains linked to what human beings as social animals are actually interested in. The criterion of 'first-order questions' proposed by James B. Rule is in that respect an appealing alternative to that of formal progress or predictive power, which rational choice theorists have self-defeatingly privileged. Political sciences, in particular, should remember their social vocation. The heavy stress upon quantification that has recently characterized political sciences needs to be counterbalanced by a greater attention to the questions: 'What should we do?', 'What should we choose?' and 'How should we achieve it?'

Conclusion

Despite its promises, RCT is not the physics of choices it initially purported to be. I have argued that the theory fails both as a science of *choice* and as a *science* of choice. This double failure suggests the necessity for social sciences in general, and political sciences in particular, of an epistemological conversion away from the Platonic ideal of a deductive and universal science toward a more inductive and pluralist paradigm. In this new frame, RCT can be interpreted not as a unifying, transdisciplinary paradigm, but as one analytical tool among others in a plural science of choice that remains to be built. As a

political prospectus. It might be instead to focus on the dissemination of heuristic cues that have proved able to elevate the slacker to the level of a more informed voter. I borrow these suggestions from a proposal by Michael S. Kang, 'Democratizing Direct Democracy: Restoring Voter Competence through Heuristic Cues and "Disclosure Plus"', *UCLA Law Review* 50.5 (1993), pp. 1141-88.

consequence, RCT should no longer crowd out other approaches, such as those of psychology, the cognitive sciences, anthropology, sociology, history, or...a new kind of political sciences, emancipated from the tutelage of economics. In the recent years, in fact, the field of economics has grown more willing to consider the explanatory strategies and concepts of other disciplines. It is curious and unfortunate that political sciences remain caught up in the opposite trend of focusing on only one methodology.

The epistemological conversion also demands a greater awareness of the normative nature of social theories, which raises obvious political questions. If there is no such thing as a deductive, universalistic type of science of choice, if choices are more a matter of heuristics than of calculus, and if moral values can and should contribute to our definition of rationality, that is actually good news for democracy. At the political level, this means that, no more than Platonic guardians, do we need rational choice- or economist-kings.

Naturalized Virtue Ethics and the Epistemological Gap

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The proponent of the epistemological gap maintains that value claims are justified in a different way than are nonvalue claims. I show that a neo-Aristotelian naturalized virtue ethics does not fall prey to this gap. There are ethical claims concerning human beings that are epistemically justified in a way logically identical to the way in which are justified certain nonethical claims about human and nonhuman organisms. This demonstration (1) lends credibility to naturalized virtue ethics, (2) calls into question the very notion of an epistemological gap, and (3) confronts anti-naturalists with a dilemma.

The proponent of an epistemological gap maintains that value claims are justified in a different way than are nonvalue claims. The existence of such a gap would pose a significant problem for the project of ethical naturalism. This is because, generally speaking, ethical naturalists reject any sort of 'autonomy of ethics' thesis. But, if value and nonvalue claims are justified differently, and this difference is radical enough, such a fact could be understood as providing evidence for the autonomy of ethics. Ethical naturalism would then seem to be impossible.

One might ask who has the burden of proof here. Must the antinaturalist prove there is an epistemological gap, or must the naturalist prove there is not? I propose to take on the burden, and show that, in a specified class of cases, there is no epistemological gap. It will then be up to the proponent of such a gap to show where my reasoning has gone wrong. I will show that a

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neo-Aristotelian naturalized virtue ethics does not fall prey to an epistemological gap. There are ethical claims concerning human beings that are epistemically justified in a way logically identical to the way in which are justified certain nonethical claims about human and nonhuman organisms. The justification spoken of here should be understood in the following way. A belief is justified for a thinker, in certain circumstances, given certain background beliefs, when there is good enough evidence to believe it to be true. Provided there is such evidence, she can say, 'I am justified in holding this belief', and she will be.

This demonstration serves three important ends. First, it lends plausibility to the kind of naturalized virtue ethics endorsed in this article. Second, it calls into question the very notion of an epistemological gap. Third, it confronts antinaturalists with a difficult dilemma. In what follows I first explicate the epistemological gap. Then I show how naturalized virtue ethics, which depends upon a version of Aristotle's *ergon* argument, surmounts this alleged difficulty. Next I present the dilemma that confronts antinaturalists. In the final section I address an additional concern about the theoretical adequacy of naturalized virtue ethics.

Five Supposed Gaps

We can define ethical naturalism, broadly, as any ethical theory maintaining that ethics is grounded, somehow, in natural facts. I leave the notion of *grounding* at an intuitive level, to accommodate other kinds of ethical naturalism besides the sort I am advocating. The big question, from the point of view of theory construction, lies in the 'somehow'. Different ethical naturalisms will give different accounts of that 'somehow', accounts that, in effect, will be the naturalistic ethical theory.

It has been thought, however, that there is some unbridgeable gap that spells doom for the whole project of ethical naturalism, a gap the existence of which entails that a plausible 'somehow' is not available. This amounts to an 'in principle' objection to the project. This alleged problem has loomed in the literature and seminar room at least since David Hume called attention to a gap between 'is' and 'ought' in his *Treatise of Human Nature*, and especially after G.E. Moore in *Principia Ethica* argued that 'good' is simple and indefinable.¹ Many supposed the door on ethical naturalism to be closed for

1. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978 [1739–40]), III.I.1, pp. 469–70; G.E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (ed. Thomas Baldwin; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993 [1903]), §§6–15. Other classic and contemporary expressions of antinaturalism can be found in C.L. Stevenson, 'The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms', *Mind* 46 (1937), pp. 14–31; Richard M. Hare, *The Language of Morals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952); J.L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (New York: Penguin, 1977); Allan Gibbard, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings* (Cambridge,

good. That door was closed too abruptly, however, as many others have argued.²

There are actually at least five supposed gaps, each of which raises a special concern not only for ethical naturalism but for any ethical theory. They do not all pose equally difficult issues, nor do all of these 'gaps' fall in the same sort of place, as it were. However, each can be thought of as a special problem in inference. The 'somehow'—in the form of a kind of theoretical bridge—is said to be lacking at some crucial place. Briefly, these gaps are as follows: (1) *The logical gap*: ethical propositions are not deducible from nonethical ones. (2) *The semantic gap*: ethical concepts are not definable in terms of nonethical ones. (3) *The motivational gap*: ethical propositions can motivate someone to act while nonethical ones alone cannot. (4) *The ontological gap*: ethical properties are different in kind from nonethical ones. (5) *The epistemological gap*: ethical claims are justified in a way different from the way in which nonethical claims are justified.³

I think that naturalized virtue ethics has the resources to deal with each of these gaps at least as well as competing theories.⁴ However, I will focus only on the epistemological gap.⁵ I will show that, for naturalized virtue ethics, it is no problem. In fact, its nonexistence actually presents a problem

MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); and Simon Blackburn, *Ruling Passions: A Theory of Practical Reasoning* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

2. See, e.g., Nicholas L. Sturgeon, 'Moral Explanations', in D. Copp and D. Zimmerman (eds.), *Morality, Reason, and Truth* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Allanheld, 1985), pp. 49-78; Peter Railton, 'Moral Realism', *Philosophical Review* 95 (1986), pp. 163-207; Richard N. Boyd, 'How to Be a Moral Realist', in Geoffrey Sayre-McCord (ed.), *Essays on Moral Realism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 191-228; G. Sayre-McCord, 'Moral Theory and Explanatory Impotence', *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 12 (1988), pp. 433-57; and David O. Brink, *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

3. The seminal paper on the semantic gap—the supposedly illicit bridging of which is usually called, after Moore, 'committing the naturalistic fallacy'—is William K. Frankena, 'The Naturalistic Fallacy', *Mind* 48 (1939), pp. 464-77. He provides a tripartite taxonomy that includes the logical, the semantic, and the ontological gaps. A paper mainly concerned with the epistemological gap that divides the gaps into four types is Javier Rodríguez-Alcázar, 'Naturalized Epistemology and the Is/Ought Gap', *Dialectica* 50 (1996), pp. 137-52. David O. Brink, *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), suggests the motivational gap, which he calls the 'internalist is/ought gap', for perhaps obvious reasons.

4. Certainly, theory choice is comparative. The purpose of this article is not to compare naturalized virtue ethics to other (plausible) ethical naturalisms.

5. Discussing moral realism, of which naturalized virtue ethics is a species, Peter Railton under the heading 'Empiricism' puts the thought as follows: 'Do we come to know moral facts in the same way we come to know the facts of empirical science, or are they revealed by reason or by some special mode of apprehension?' Peter Railton, 'Moral Realism', *Philosophical Review* 95 (1986), pp. 163-207.

for antinaturalists. Note that the epistemological gap is not a chasm to be bridged, but a supposed difference that the naturalist must show not to exist.

Although they do not say so explicitly, given their ethical views both Hume and Moore can be seen as subscribing to the existence of an epistemological gap. If the 'derivation' of values from facts requires the addition of some affective state, as Hume maintains; or if values and facts are radically different in kind, the apprehension of the former requiring some special faculty of intuition, as Moore seems to think, then it stands to reason that the way in which we justify belief in factual claims should differ from the way in which we 'justify' belief in evaluative claims.

The epistemological gap can come in stronger and weaker forms. The stronger form is the position that value claims are justified in a way different from the way in which nonvalue, merely factual, claims are justified. I call this a type 1 epistemological gap. The gap in question here is between two ways of reasoning, one of which leads to factual conclusions, the other to evaluative ones. If there is good enough evidence for a certain factual (nonvalue) claim, we say that it is justified. But the proponent of a type 1 epistemological gap will say, either there exists no good enough evidence for any value claims, or there can be evidence for value claims but what counts as good enough evidence for value claims is of a different sort from that which would be good enough to support a nonvalue claim.

The weaker form of the epistemological gap, on the other hand, restricts the scope to the realm of values. The proponent of the type 2 epistemological gap maintains that ethical value claims are justified in a way different from the way in which nonethical value claims are justified. Here the antinaturalist is such only in regards to ethical claims. This person will see little problem with utterances such as, for example, 'That's a good hammer', but will have problems with those such as, 'She's a good human being.'

I argue that, in at least one general sort of case, there is no type 2 epistemological gap. This requires showing that the logical structure underlying a certain class of nonethical value claims is identical to the logical structure underlying a certain class of ethical claims. However, showing this also throws into question whether there is, in this general sort of case at least, a type 1 gap.

The logical structure involved here is *teleological*. Living things have ends relative to which individuals and their traits can be evaluated. The locus of evaluation, in any particular case, is an individual and its traits. Following Aristotle, I will show that a certain way of evaluating living things is consistent across domains—whether the organisms being evaluated are human or non-human and whether the evaluations are ethical or nonethical. By showing this I also show that, in this particular case, there is no epistemological gap. All it will take to show this is an explication of naturalized virtue ethics. Let us turn now to that demonstration.

The Ergon Argument

In *Nicomachean Ethics* I.7, Aristotle presents what we have come to know as his *ergon* or function argument. Certain sorts of things, it is commonly agreed, have functions. A carpenter has the function of building things such as houses, the eye has the function of seeing, and so on. For such things as have functions, what it means for such a thing to be a good example of its kind is for it to perform its function well.⁶ A good carpenter makes houses well, a good eye sees well, and so on. Therefore, if in addition to its parts and roles a human being *qua* human being has a function, then a good human being *qua* human being will be one who performs that function well. Schematically put, the argument is as follows:

1. For any kind of thing *F* that has an *ergon*, if the *ergon* of *F*s is ϕ , then a good *F* is one that ϕ s well.
2. The *ergon* of *F*s is ϕ .
3. Therefore, a good *F* is one that ϕ s well.⁷

Premise (1) is a general principle. It can be thought of as a definition of sorts. It tells us, for any class of things that has an *ergon*, what it means to say that a member of that class is a good one of its kind. If we know what the *ergon* of a thing is, we can judge whether that thing is good. The things that can rightly be said to have *erga* are of two sorts: living things and artefacts made by living things. The primary focus is therefore on living things.⁸

Many have rejected the *ergon* argument. One objection is that Aristotle is mistaken in his identification of the human *ergon* or function.⁹ Another is that it is absurd to think that a human being *qua* human being has a function. Assuming a restricted understanding of what it means for a thing to have a function, both of these objections are correct.¹⁰ However, they do not really touch Aristotle's main point. If we do not translate '*ergon*' as 'function', or if

6. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (trans. Terence Irwin; Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, c. 350 BC [1985]), 1097b25.

7. Aristotle continues the *ergon* argument from there by claiming that for a human being to perform its function well is for it to be *eudaimôn* (or flourishing, as the word is often nowadays translated). The connection between what it is to be a good *F* and what is good for *F*s is a point of contention, and each step in the move from *ergon* to *aretê* to *eudaimonia* has been challenged. For a defense of Aristotle see Jennifer Whiting, 'Aristotle's Function Argument: A Defense', *Ancient Philosophy* 8 (1988), pp. 33-48.

8. For the distinction between primary and secondary goodness, see Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), pp. 26-27.

9. For Aristotle's account of how we determine the function of something, see *Nicomachean Ethics* 1097b35-1098a4; cf. Plato's *Republic* 352d-353e.

10. The two major naturalistic accounts of function in the philosophy of biology literature are the etiological and the goal-directed systems accounts; see Collin Allen, Marc Bekoff and George Lauder (eds.), *Nature's Purposes: Analyses of Function and Design in Biology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998).

we do so but do not understand 'function' in a restricted technical sense, then we should see that there is something important and even true in what he says.¹¹ The human *ergon* is our 'form of life'.¹² That is the foundation upon which we shall end up grounding our evaluations in naturalized virtue ethics.¹³

We should, then, read Aristotle in the following way. Human beings, like other organisms, have a certain species-specific form of life. This involves nutrition and growth, sensation and perception, practical and theoretical reason, and so on. What it means for an instance of this form of life to go well is for these processes to be carried out excellently. A good human being, therefore, is one who performs the function(s) of human beings well.¹⁴

The main idea here is that we evaluate living things relative to their form of life. The parts, characteristics and operations of any such being have (biological) functions that ideally enable their possessor to realize the form of life of its species. We can justifiably call a living thing a good specimen of its kind if its parts, characteristics and operations enable it to realize its form of life. We should keep in mind that a species' form of life ought not to be understood as mere statistical normality; nor is the notion itself evaluative; it is supposed to denote a kind of biological normality of a sort.¹⁵ Thus we see how the notion of form of life allows us to derive norms. The idea should become clearer as we move along.

Discussing this idea, Philippa Foot writes:

[E]valuation of an individual living thing in its own right, with no reference to our interests or desires, is possible where there is intersection of two types of

11. In the glossary appended to his translation of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Terrence Irwin writes: 'The best single translation for "*ergon*" would be "work"' (p. 404). Besides function, *ergon* can also refer to the process of production, the outcome of a certain process, achievement of any sort, activity, and, contrasted with *logos* as 'mere speech', what we do as opposed to what we say.

12. 'Form of life' comes from the English translation of Wittgenstein's '*lebensform*', an expression occurring five times in his *Philosophical Investigations* (trans. G.E.M. Anscombe; New York: Macmillan, 3rd edn, 1958 [1953]), §§19, 23, 241 and pp. 174, 226. Following Philippa Foot I use the term in what I take to be a relatively uncontroversial—and perhaps not particularly Wittgensteinian—way. See above.

13. This interpretation of Aristotle is advanced by Anthony Kenny, 'Happiness', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 66 (1965), pp. 93-102; and by Martha C. Nussbaum, 'Nature, Function, and Capability: Aristotle on Political Distribution', in J. Annas and R.H. Grimm (eds.), *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 145-84.

14. Granted, this interpretation of Aristotle captures the spirit of his thought, though perhaps not the letter, hence the affixing of 'neo-' to 'Aristotelian' when referring to it.

15. An interesting implication of this account of form of life is that, if the environment happened to change drastically enough, what counts as a good specimen of a kind could also change. I see this as a benefit of the view rather than a liability. Not only does it give the theory a more naturalistic 'flavour' in accord with neo-Darwinian evolutionary thinking, it also accounts for why in a different time what we might now consider vices were then considered virtues.

propositions: on the one hand, Aristotelian categoricals (life-form descriptions relating to the species), and on the other, propositions about particular individuals that are the subject of evaluation.¹⁶

In evaluating a living thing relative to its form of life we do something like the following. First, we describe the life cycle of the species, which includes certain ends. Then we specify a set of propositions that detail how members of this species characteristically secure these ends. From these specifications we derive norms. By application of these norms to an individual of the relevant species we can evaluate that individual. That is, Foot says, we can 'judge [an instance of the species] to be as it should be or, by contrast, to a lesser or greater degree defective in a certain respect'.¹⁷

To illustrate, let us consider a pair of nonhuman examples. Oak trees have the ends of development, survival and reproduction. In order to actualize these ends, an oak tree needs a strong root system. From these specifications of the ends and the ways in which those ends are characteristically realized, which together partially make up the oak tree *ergon*, we can derive the following norm: 'A good oak tree is one with a strong root system.' We can then apply this norm to individual oak trees and evaluate them *qua* oak tree. Such evaluations properly belong to the naturalistic discipline of botany.

The wolf form of life includes getting adequate nutrition, which requires hunting in packs. Specifying these aspects of the wolf *ergon*, we can infer that a good wolf is one that hunts with the pack. A lone wolf, then, is a defective wolf. Depending upon the source of the wolf's defect, this evaluation might belong to the naturalistic disciplines of animal physiology or ethology.

We can apply the same sort of structure of evaluation to nonethical attributes of human beings, which include the merely physical functioning of each individual's body, its parts and processes. Thus, for example, we can evaluate an individual's heart as good or bad relative to how well it performs its function of circulating nutrients in the individual's body. We might also wish to evaluate the psychological aspects of human beings. If we are speaking of the (merely) physical aspects of human beings, the judgment belongs to physiology or medicine. If we are speaking of the psychological aspects, it belongs to psychology.¹⁸

So far, I have said nothing about ethical evaluations. In order to show that there is no type 2 epistemological gap, the virtue ethical naturalist must show that the preceding logical structure of nonethical evaluation is identical to the logical structure of a certain kind of ethical evaluation. We can demonstrate

16. Foot, *Natural Goodness*, p. 33; cf. Michael Thompson, 'The Representation of Life', in R. Hursthouse, G. Lawrence and W. Quinn (eds.), *Virtues and Reasons: Philippa Foot and Moral Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 247-96; and Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

17. Foot, *Natural Goodness*, p. 34.

18. Where we draw the line between the mental and the physical is not always so easy to do, though the above should not be seen as endorsing any sort of psychophysical dualism.

this identity of structure in the following way. Following Elizabeth Anscombe, Foot argues that ‘much human good hangs on the possibility of one person being able to bind another’s will by something in the nature of a promise or other contract’.¹⁹ It seems that, given the limitations of human powers, cooperation would for the most part be impossible for us were it not for the fact that we can usually count on others to keep their promises and others can usually count on us. This all seems straightforwardly true. Given the sort of beings we are and the way our lives generally go, it is necessary for much human good that promises are kept and contracts honoured *and* that we can generally count on these things being so.²⁰ Moreover, it seems that certain dispositions of the will—call them ‘virtues’—are generally necessary for such objectives to obtain. The list of required traits would include loyalty, justice and fidelity.

Foot shows that the sort of derivation we go through in showing the necessity of our being able to count on one another in this way is *identical* to the sort of derivation we go through, for example, in showing that oak trees need a strong root system or that wolves need to hunt in packs.²¹ First, we specify the *telos* involved. In the human case it is cooperation. The characteristic way that human beings achieve this end is through the ‘institutions’ of promising and contract-making. From these two specifications—the end and the ways that end is characteristically realized—we are able to derive norms. The norms could be of various sorts. They could take the form of rules about making and keeping promises;²² they could take the form of norms about which traits are good to have; or they could be norms about what sorts of people are good or bad. We can then apply these norms to individual human beings as well as to their traits and actions. Someone who always breaks promises might have the character trait of being untrustworthy. If that is so, we are warranted in calling such a person—relative to *that* disposition of the will—‘bad’ or ‘defective’. If we are speaking of the dispositions of the will, our evaluation properly belongs to ethics.²³

19. Foot, *Natural Goodness*, p. 45; G.E.M. Anscombe, ‘On Promising and Its Justice, and Whether It Need be Respected *in Foro Interno*’, in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, III (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), pp. 10-21.

20. For this special use of ‘necessary’, see Foot, *Natural Goodness*, pp. 15, 17. Note that this is neither metaphysical nor logical necessity, though it is in some sense a physical necessity; that is, given the way we are and the way things work we have right now no other physically possible options.

21. Or that bees need stings; see Peter Geach, ‘Good and Evil’, *Analysis* 17 (1956), pp. 33-42.

22. Rules and laws can be thought of as artefacts, such as the robin’s nest or the beaver’s dam (see Foot, *Natural Goodness*, pp. 26-27). They serve ends of our choosing, of course. But if we are rational we will choose those that, all things considered, promote or encourage the sustaining at or above the threshold level those traits of human beings that make them good specimens of their kind.

23. For the present project to be a virtue ethics and not some form of virtue consequentialism (or just consequentialism) it must be the case that the virtues are not merely

I have explicated the logical structure of a way in which we justify certain kinds of nonethical evaluations of nonhuman organisms. I am not claiming that this is *the* way or even the *best* way to justify such claims. It is, however, one way that we attempt to justify such claims. Moreover, it appears that such a logical structure is tacit in much of our reasoning about, say, whether a particular oak tree is a good one or whether a particular human being is a good one. Perhaps it is the case that such a way of thinking cannot be justified externally, from a vantage point outside of our form of life, but I must leave this interesting consideration aside.

It is not clear to me that I have smuggled anything evaluative into the basic structure. That is, the evaluations are not there as premises, but rather come out as conclusions. A critic might, however, contend that I have smuggled in an evaluative claim as a premise. This premise may be expressed generally as follows: 'For any kind of thing *F* that has an *ergon*, if the *ergon* of *Fs* is ϕ , then a good *F* is one that ϕ s well.' However, although this claim contains evaluative terms, the claim is not itself evaluative. It is a certain kind of bridge principle.²⁴

That such a principle plays a crucial role in the structure of evaluation of naturalized virtue ethics might appear to raise the spectre of a semantic gap. We could certainly here ask Moorean sorts of 'open questions'. For example, we might ask 'with significance', as Moore says, 'Is an oak tree with a strong root system a good oak tree?' 'Is a wolf that hunts with the pack a good wolf?' 'Is a human being who keeps her promises a good human being?' More generally, we might ask, 'Is a good *F* one that realizes the *erga* of *Fs*?' I suggest that the answer to all of these questions is 'Yes'. Furthermore, the fact that we can sensibly ask such questions can be taken to show that these claims express synthetic identities rather than analytic ones. I must stand firm, however, that this is not the problem with which I am dealing here.

A Dilemma for Antinaturalists

In this way of naturalizing virtue ethics we demonstrate a naturalistic structure, in this case one that allows us, along with other relevant facts, to justify our nonethical evaluations of living things as good or bad specimens of their kind relative to their species-specific forms of life. We then show that we can

instrumental to some further good. If they are, then we can bypass the virtues, as it were, in evaluating human action. For then we could determine whether an action is right or wrong by appealing to its promotion or demotion of the specified consequences; see Thomas Hurka, 'The Three Faces of Flourishing', *Social Philosophy and Policy* 16 (1999), pp. 44-71 (54). I leave open the possibility that some ways of realizing ends might themselves be constitutive of the ends.

24. For an interesting analysis of various sorts of bridge principles that different sorts of ethical naturalism might utilize, see Robert B. Scott, Jr, 'Five Types of Ethical Naturalism', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 17 (1980), pp. 261-70.

also use such a structure, along with the relevant facts, to justify our ethical evaluations of human beings, their traits and their character. We thereby show that there is, in this case, no type 2 epistemological gap.

We can summarize the argument against the existence of a type 2 epistemological gap as follows:

1. If there is a type 2 epistemological gap, then the way we justify ethical claims is different from the way we justify nonethical value claims.
2. But the logical structure underlying a certain class of ethical evaluations of human beings relative to their form of life is identical to the logical structure underlying a certain class of nonethical evaluations of human and nonhuman organisms relative to their forms of life.
3. Therefore, there is no type 2 epistemological gap.

I have not tried to show that there is no difference between the way we might epistemically justify all factual claims and the way we might epistemically justify all evaluative claims. I have shown, rather, that the logical structure underlying a certain kind of ethical value claim is identical to the logical structure underlying a certain kind of nonethical value claim. Underlying—or *grounding*—both sorts of evaluations is a natural teleological structure. Recall the definition of ethical naturalism offered at the outset. It is the view that ethics is, somehow, grounded in natural facts. What naturalized virtue ethics does is provide an account of that ‘somehow’.

There are a few options available to the antinaturalist. Someone trying to defend the existence of an epistemological gap might suggest weakening the principle underlying belief in such a gap. The principle is, put bluntly, that *in all cases* the way in which we justify ethical claims is (fundamentally, radically) different from the way in which we justify nonethical claims. The antinaturalist might suggest replacing the italicized words by ‘in most cases’ or ‘in some cases’ or perhaps ‘in all but one sort of case’. The virtue ethical naturalist, however, should have no problem with this suggestion. For it does not touch anything so far said, as long as we are clear that the sort of teleological structure of evaluation just demonstrated is one case that the weakened principle of the epistemological gap leaves alone. This response, then, can safely be ignored.

The antinaturalist might, however, bite the bullet and concede that, in the case of naturalized virtue ethics at least, there is no epistemological gap, but there is some *other* remaining gap with which the virtue ethical naturalist must deal. As I said above, I think that the naturalized virtue ethics of the sort discussed here has the resources to deal with each of the other gaps, at least as well as can its nearest theoretical rivals. I have also noted that a semantic gap is possible, though unlikely. Suffice to say here that I think it a bit much to expect the virtue ethical naturalist to address all the supposed theoretical problems at once.

To consider a third reply that the antinaturalist might attempt, let us return to oak trees for a moment. This will call attention to an interesting implication of the preceding demonstration and also allow me to challenge the antinaturalist's possible reply by confronting her with a dilemma. Say we have judged that a particular oak tree is a good oak tree, an evaluation arrived at by means of the logical structure discussed above along with certain facts about oak trees and about this particular oak tree. One way to think of the resultant claim is as a value judgment based upon certain facts. If we think of the conclusion in this way, given what has already been shown, there is no epistemological gap of type 2: certain ethical and nonethical value claims are justified in the same way. But another way to think of the conclusion is as a factual claim based upon certain other factual claims. If we think of the conclusion in this second way, given what has already been shown, there is no epistemological gap of type 1: certain value and nonvalue claims are justified in the same way. It turns out that what we thought were value claims are actually factual, nonvalue claims.

I want to point now to a dilemma facing the antinaturalist. In defending the antinaturalistic position against the onslaught just waged, the antinaturalist might decide upon one of a pair of argument strategies. It might be claimed that the evaluations of the parts and processes of plants and nonhuman animals and those of human dispositions of the will are either (a) all ethical or (b) all nonethical. If option (a) is taken, it must be shown, for example, that 'x is a good tomato plant' is an ethical evaluation. That is a difficult position to maintain, however, for it just does not seem that we would count 'x is a good tomato plant' as an ethical claim. On the other hand, if option (b) is taken, it must be shown, for example, that 'John is a good human being' is a nonethical evaluation. That position, however, is equally problematic. The claim 'John is a good human being', where 'good' is understood as describing or attributing a property to some aspect of John's character, looks like a paradigmatic ethical claim. If the antinaturalist wishes to stand firm in this way, it must be claimed either that our evaluations of plants and animals are ethical evaluations or that our evaluations of human beings' characters are nonethical evaluations.

We do not have to make such a choice, and I think to do so would be a mistake, but let us suppose that we have to take one or the other of the antinaturalist's proposed options. But, if 'x is a good tomato plant' is a conclusion we arrive at by analysing certain biological facts about tomato plants and facts about a particular tomato plant *and* it is an ethical evaluation, then we have arrived at an ethical evaluation through consideration of facts. In that case, there is no epistemological gap. And, if 'John is a good human being' is a conclusion we arrive at by analysing certain facts about human beings and facts about John *and* it is *not* an ethical evaluation, then we have arrived at a nonethical evaluation through consideration of facts. In this case, it seems we must have been mistaken when we called our evaluation of, say, John's

ability to keep his word an *ethical* evaluation. Once again, as in the former case, there is no epistemological gap.

A Final Concern

A critic might say something like the following. The foregoing is, at best, merely another version of an idea in *Nicomachean Ethics* spelled out in more detail than Aristotle did. Yet there are other reasons to believe that such a naturalized virtue ethics is, despite a recent revival, now quite moribund. The problem is that someone could be a good human being according to the standards of the theory and yet, by commonsense standards, turn out to be morally reprehensible. The objection is that we cannot ‘derive’ or ‘ground’ or ‘justify’ our ethical discourse by appeal to those traits that make us good human beings, in the previously specified naturalistic sense of that term. In effect, the appeal to *erga* ‘radically underconstrains the normative space’.²⁵ Consider Bernard Williams on this count: ‘There is also the figure...who is horrible enough and not miserable at all, but by any ethological standard of the bright eye and gleaming coat, dangerously flourishing.’²⁶

This is a common objection, to which I have a two-pronged response. First, the ethological standard of the ‘bright eye and gleaming coat’ is no more exhaustive for humans than it is for wolves. Social animals have behavioural traits relative to their conspecifics, traits that are subject to evaluation.²⁷ A wolf that does not hunt with the pack is ‘unhealthy’ by these standards—even though it might be healthy in regards to its merely physiological functions—and so is not, all things considered, a good wolf.

Second, the ground-level account I have given of naturalized virtue ethics says nothing about the sort of higher-level ethical theory that is to be ‘derived’, or if any such thing is to happen. Given this fact, of course what I have presented here radically underconstrains ethical discourse. It should go without saying that ethical discourse involves quite a bit more than evaluating individuals as more or less good specimens of their kind. My goals in

25. Thanks to an anonymous referee for *Journal of Moral Philosophy* for this apt phrase.

26. Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 46.

27. An objection to virtue ethics in general is that there are no virtues, at least not in the robust Aristotelian sense; see John M. Doris, ‘Persons, Situations, and Virtue Ethics’, *Noûs* 32 (1998), pp. 504-530; and Gilbert Harman, ‘Moral Philosophy Meets Social Psychology: Virtue Ethics and the Fundamental Attribution Error’, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 99 (1998), pp. 315-31. I am certainly willing to concede that, if there are no character traits to evaluate, then such a theory as I present above has no chance as an ethical theory, though it could be a contribution to philosophy of biology or engineering. However, along with others, I do not think the evidence shows this; for replies to Doris and Harman see Maria Merritt, ‘Virtue Ethics and Situationist Personality Psychology’, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 3 (2000), pp. 365-83; and Christian B. Miller, ‘Social Psychology and Virtue Ethics’, *The Journal of Ethics* 7 (2003), pp. 365-92.

the foregoing were modest. I did not set out to provide a complete ethical theory, only to bring to light the tacit logical structure of a specific mode of ethical discourse and show its implications.

Review Article:
Ethical Pluralism and Common Decency

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Richard Madsen and Tracy B. Strong (eds.), *The Many and the One: Religious and Secular Perspectives on Ethical Pluralism in the Modern World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003). 382 pp. ISBN 0609199936 (pbk). Hardback/Paperback. £42.95/£14.95.

The ancient Greeks carried on a complex debate as to the real structure of the natural world, attempting in various ways to account for the One and the Many, the Permanent and the Variable, that which exists eternally as opposed to that which emerges and passes away in myriad ever-changing manifestations. As early as the sixth century BC, for example, Anaximander of Miletus conceived nature as a substance whose only attribute was the unlimited power of generating and arresting changes of phenomena: the substance existed only in and for those phenomenal changes. The Permanent was thus merged and lost in the Variable—the One in the Many. In contrast, his contemporary, Xenophanes of Kolophon, whose followers appear to have included the Eleatic philosophers Parmenides and Zeno in the succeeding century, conceived nature as one unchangeable and indivisible whole, animated, endowed with reason, and inseparable from the divine. Xenophanes denied the objective reality of all change: there could not be real generation or destruction of anything in nature. Rather, that which people took for change was apparently only some alteration in their own feelings and ideas, a merely subjective change that might be different in different individuals. Nature was really the Permanent without the Variable, the One without the Many.

Debate over the One and the Many in nature has continued ever since. The terms of the discussion have gradually shifted, however, as mankind has arguably moved unevenly through what Auguste Comte called theological, metaphysical and positivist stages of intellectual development, or what John Stuart Mill called (as he thought, more precisely) voluntarist, ontological and phenomenalist or empirical stages. According to those thinkers, when theology or divine will predominates in the study of the natural world, debate

centres on whether nature is controlled by one or many gods; at the ontological stage, the issue of divine will is left aside, and debate revolves around whether nature is essentially one fixed and completed substance or an unlimited power that endlessly manifests itself in many ever-changing phenomena; and at the empirical stage, the issue of essences is bracketed together with theology, and debate focuses on whether the natural world is completely determinate in terms of one seamless web of mutually compatible laws of the succession and coexistence of phenomena, or instead involves some radical indeterminacy due to irreducibly plural sets of unconnected and perhaps even mutually incompatible laws. Even if Comte and Mill are right that mankind has tended to progress in some such fashion, however, there is no denying that the languages of earlier stages have actually persisted into later ones, such that discussion of the One and the Many in an advanced empirical age continues to be marked to some extent by references to divinity and essences which are strictly irrelevant to scientific laws of phenomena.

An analogous debate has been carried on as to the One and the Many in the context of the real structure of the moral world of human beings. Moreover, there has arguably been the same tendency of the human mind to advance through theological, ontological and empirical stages of intellectual progress. At the theological stage, moral value is seen as the product of divine command or will belonging to a higher realm than human desire and judgment, and debate centres on whether there is one perfect god or many in conflict. At the ontological stage, certain virtues or rights are held to be essential to human nature for it to function properly or normally, and discussion revolves around whether these natural norms are reducible to one unchangeable good that is complete in itself or they are the irreducibly plural manifestations of an indefinite power that endlessly transforms itself in different ways. At the empirical stage, the focus is on discovery of psychological theorems that explain how feelings of desirability and worthiness are regularly produced from other antecedent phenomena, and debate centres on whether there is one unified system of psychological laws or plural unconnected and incompatible sets of such laws. Again, even if history more or less supports this picture, there is no denying that the languages of earlier stages have actually persisted into later ones.¹

It is difficult to discern whether the ancient Greek philosophers tended to favour any particular way of resolving the ethical debate. The late Sir Isaiah Berlin insisted, however, that they came down in favour of ethical monism, since they apparently conceived the moral universe to be rationally ordered in terms of One objective standard, to wit, *eudaimonia* (happiness or well-

1. In the present volume, for example, William Galston claims that 'moral equality' has been justified historically 'by three quite different (and not wholly consistent) considerations', namely, 'theological', 'metaphysical' and 'empirical' considerations (p. 26). But I do not mean to imply that Galston would agree with my characterization of the three stages of intellectual development.

being). His view is not groundless. In this regard, Socrates, who was extremely sceptical that humans could ever acquire knowledge of any portion of nature other than human nature, and his successors Plato and Aristotle, all seem to have been strongly influenced by the dialecticians Parmenides and Zeno, who conceived the natural world (including human nature) as in essence one rational organism. Moreover, in the classical teleology as set out by Plato and Aristotle, human nature's all-encompassing essential end or ultimate potential value does appear to be *eudaimonia*, although any individual must develop his or her inherent intellectual and moral capacities to fully attain that natural end, and different individuals are endowed with unequal capacities such that some are born slaves, for example, whereas others have the ability to become philosopher-rulers. Various commentators, including George Grote and Mill, have drawn the conclusion that, as employed by Socrates, the dialectic was intended to critically evaluate the many competing moral and political opinions that are voiced in a given society, with a view to discovering accurate definitions of justice, charity, loyalty, courage and other virtues so as to permit the arrangement of these various moral goods into a rational pattern that promotes *eudaimonia* for all members of the community. If this is correct, perhaps Socrates and his successors did subscribe to an ethical monism in which the good life for any human being is rationally structured in terms of One objective end, despite the Many conflicting merely subjective opinions and customary norms that might be voiced in society.

Berlin went on to claim that rationalistic monism has remained the dominant Western ethical tradition ever since. He seems to have dismissed the possibility that the ancient Greeks and at least some of their Western followers (including natural law theorists) may have favoured a rationalistic brand of ethical pluralism, in which the good life is conceived in terms of a rational arrangement of irreducibly plural concrete values or virtues and *eudaimonia* is nothing but that rational arrangement, in other words, an abstract idea whose content is given by the rational pattern of plural goods, like a hidden substrate that is merged and lost in the pattern of pluralism. Rather, he was apparently more impressed by a 'tragic' brand of pluralism which the Greek philosophers (unlike the tragic poets) show no signs of endorsing. According to tragic pluralism, the moral world is comprised of many objective goods and bads, some of which are mutually incompatible and 'incommensurable' in the (not indisputable) sense that the conflicts among them can never be rationally resolved in terms of an ultimate objective end like *eudaimonia*. Different individuals or groups ought to choose among the plural goods as they see fit, there being no single supreme good or rational pattern of virtues which is best for all human beings. Empirically, the claim seems to be that there is no evidence to support the hypothesis of a fully determinate human psychology whose theorems are fit to be converted into rules because they explain how some single ultimate end or single rational pattern of irreducibly plural ends can be achieved by any human beings in given situations. Rather, since different people are ultimately motivated by many different irreconcilable basic

ends, good behaviour must be explained in terms of many different sets of unconnected and even mutually incompatible psychological laws. Morality must allow for radical indeterminacy when different individuals or groups pick conflicting objective goods, because there is no scientific basis for a rational resolution of the conflict in terms of a unified body of psychological laws that relate all human conduct to some single ultimate good such as happiness (however conceived). Given this denial of any objective basis for a single rational way of settling conflicts among incommensurables, tragic pluralism holds that such basic value conflicts can only terminate either in violence and war or in a *modus vivendi*, that is, a contingent compromise that all parties simply choose to accept as 'reasonable' from their own particular perspectives in that each can preserve as much of his system of value as his relative bargaining power allows.

Berlin is the most well-known recent proponent of tragic ethical pluralism, glimmerings of which he claimed to find in Machiavelli and the German Romantics. Although he was apparently unaware of the fact, however, his defence of such a pluralistic emphasis in ethics was fully anticipated by others across the Atlantic. As early as 1920, long before Berlin published anything on the topic, Sterling P. Lamprecht, a student of both John Dewey and Frederick Woodbridge at Columbia, provided a particularly clear and forceful statement of tragic value pluralism and its political implications.² Lamprecht claimed to be elaborating the ethical and political aspects of a naturalistic metaphysical doctrine—'pluralistic realism'—that was apparently accepted for the most part by leading American pragmatists as a new 'science of being'—a neo-Aristotelian science of the general features of existence as such. Tragic pluralism was thus situated within the more general philosophical outlook shared by William James, Woodbridge and even Dewey.

Remarkably, as Donald Moon points out in a thoughtful concluding chapter in which he highlights the main themes of the volume under review, 'none of the perspectives presented here, including liberalism, advocates or is based on ethical pluralism' in Berlin's sense (p. 344). The editors suggest at one point that Berlin's tragic pluralistic doctrine is correct (pp. 2-3) but this is puzzling since, if so, why take seriously traditional monotheistic religions that order the good life in terms of obedience to the rational will of God, or versions of liberalism or libertarianism that rely on some broad notion of autonomy or freedom to critically assess and arrange all other norms and institutions? Why not simply reject all ethical monisms and rationalistic pluralisms as false, just as utilitarianism is often rejected for recommending the promotion of happiness as the one ultimate all-encompassing super-value?

2. Sterling P. Lamprecht, 'The Need for a Pluralistic Emphasis in Ethics', *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 17.21 (7 October 1920), pp. 561-72; and 'Some Political Implications of Ethical Pluralism', *The Journal of Philosophy* 18.9 (28 April 1921), pp. 225-44.

Despite what they say, the editors are apparently referring to ethical pluralism in some other sense when they speak of 'existential pluralism', namely, something akin to Michael Walzer's idea that any modern society actually features multiple spheres of activity, each governed by its own distinctive customary norms. Similarly, the editors apparently do not mean to claim that Berlin's theory of the sources of moral value is true when they speak of 'cultural pluralism' and 'civilizational pluralism' (pp. 4-15). They mean merely that different societies actually do display their own distinctive cultures or traditional systems of value, just as many different systems of civil institutions and norms can be imagined for regulating conduct at the level of one inter-connected globe.

Moon goes on to assert that while some of the perspectives presented, including liberalism, may be compatible with Berlinian value pluralism, none requires it and some reject it. The general impression a reader is left with is that such a tragic pluralistic theory of the sources of value may be safely ignored as too 'controversial'. Unfortunately, however, there is no uncontroversial alternative. Certainly ethical monism or rationalistic pluralism cannot be regarded as such. Nor is the claim that human morality is merely a matter of whim or custom, without any objective structure, generally accepted. Even the attempt to avoid the whole issue by leaving everything open is problematic.

Some of the contributors do pursue alternatives to the Berlinian doctrine. In an illuminating chapter, for example, John Haldane suggests that the Aristotelian-Thomistic ethical tradition of natural law might best be viewed as a version of what I have called rationalistic pluralism, which he rightly suggests offers 'a *via media*' between monism and tragic pluralism (p. 96). According to natural law thinking, he says, 'what is harmful or beneficial for human beings as such' is 'rationally discernible', a matter of objective truth: 'Right and wrong, on this account, is not a matter of mere opinion or sentiment, nor is it a relative or local matter like custom' (p. 90). Duly emphasizing that there is nothing necessarily theological or ontological about this way of thinking, Haldane defends a variant of it ('objectivist naturalism') which maintains that irreducibly plural concrete virtues are involved in the many different 'normal' functionings of human nature yet these various natural values and associated functionings can be integrated within a rational whole, yielding a teleology akin to the classical Greek doctrine of *eudaimonia*:

The approach of objectivist naturalism draws from the writings of Aristotle and Aquinas (at least on its interpretation of them) the idea that right action is best understood in terms of the exercise of dispositions—virtues—the having and practice of which serve to advance natural human well-being. Virtues such as prudence, temperance, justice, and courage are as necessary as health and sanity in order to achieve and maintain a good life (p. 97).

Questions remain as to how much variation in individual or group lifestyles is compatible with 'natural human well-being' and how any resulting conflicts can be reasonably accommodated. But Haldane does make the key

point that 'there can be little if any room for compromise' with respect to certain 'fundamental human rights, entitlements flowing from one's human nature' (p. 104). In principle, the content of such fundamental human protections is 'rationally discernible', although continuing disagreement must be expected to some extent among fallible human beings. Moreover, Joseph Boyle, who defends a quite similar variant of natural law theory in his critical response to Haldane, makes clear that a suitable political process is an important vehicle for identifying and sanctioning such rights, and for accommodating variations in individual and group conceptions of the good life (pp. 120-23).³

Nevertheless, most of the contributors pay scant attention to theories of the real sources of moral value, preferring to concentrate on other issues. The editors say the main concern is with 'cultural pluralism', in the straightforward sense that different traditional systems of norms are observed at the level of national societies and beyond, and seek answers to the question: 'How can such traditions be brought into a mutually fruitful dialogue?' (p. 4). If the main issue is how to promote peace and compromise among conflicting ethical traditions each of which inspires (possibly unwarranted) belief in a significant number of people in the world today, then it may well make sense to avoid attempting to settle the vexed issue of the sources of value. After all, cultural pluralism would in all likelihood exist anyway, independently of where the truth may lie on that issue. If tragic value pluralism happens to be the correct theory, it would hardly be surprising to observe cultural pluralism as different groups of people make different picks when faced with conflicts of incommensurables, picks that gradually become established as dominant social customs. Yet tragic pluralism does not strictly imply cultural diversity: it remains logically conceivable (however unlikely) that all humans, whatever the social context, would pick the same (not necessarily internally coherent) systems of values when facing the same conflicts. On the other hand, if monism or rationalistic pluralism is true, cultural pluralism may still persist indefinitely because of human fallibility, even if (what is by no means obvious) the one supreme good or rational pattern of virtues really remains invariant in content across different social circumstances. Of course,

3. Millian utilitarianism can also be interpreted as a version of rationalistic pluralism along these lines, in which irreducibly plural kinds of enjoyments or utilities are rationally arranged within a single abstract idea of happiness or *eudaimonia*. Strictly speaking, these plural kinds of utilities can even be described as 'incommensurable' because they cannot be reduced to a common scale of rational numbers. Rather, the plural kinds are arranged in a lexical hierarchy such that a higher kind of enjoyment is held to be infinitely more valuable than a lower kind. Note that, despite their incommensurability, the different kinds of utilities or values are rationally comparable in terms of the lexical hierarchy. Thus, the implicit idea of 'incommensurability', though strictly correct, is distinct from the idea involved in tragic value pluralism. See, for example, Jonathan Riley, 'Interpreting Mill's Qualitative Hedonism', *The Philosophical Quarterly* 53.212 (2003), pp. 410-18.

if moral values are merely subjective whims or conventions about which there cannot be any question of objective truth, then cultural diversity is no less to be expected.

Yet the contributors are mainly concerned not with cultural pluralism but rather with ethical pluralism in still another sense, namely, the recognition that different ethical doctrines, or what Moon calls 'perspectives', may be the focus of reasonable disagreement, even if none of them holds sway within any existing culture. Reasonable 'perspectival pluralism' of this sort holds that different ethical perspectives can reasonably disagree on the answers to moral problems because no perspective can make an uncontroversial claim to be true—indeed, it is still an open question even whether value is inherently plural or not. By implication, a perspective will be rejected as unreasonable if it insists that its moral answers are non-negotiable because its way of understanding the issues ultimately exhausts the truth. As Moon says: 'One who accepts the possibility of ethical pluralism as reasonable disagreement explicitly acknowledges that one's own perspective does not provide an authoritative framework within which disputes must be argued, unlike the disagreement that arises *within* a particular perspective' (p. 344, emphasis original). Given pluralism as reasonable disagreement among multiple perspectives, attention is then focused on whether fruitful dialogue and compromise can be hoped for in the context of a selected list of perspectives. The emphasis on dialogue and compromise implies a wish to 'live with others on the basis of norms (in a broad sense) they also have reason to accept (or, at least, do not have sufficient reason to reject)', and perhaps even a willingness 'to abandon important, even fundamental aspects of one's own framework in order to reach a reasonable accommodation with others' (pp. 344-45). The general influence of such theorists as the late John Rawls and Thomas Scanlon will already be obvious to the reader.

With this understanding of ethical pluralism as reasonable perspectival pluralism, the contributors consider nine different ethical perspectives. Each perspective or tradition is discussed by two leading scholars who contribute, respectively, a major essay and a separate critical response. Thus, in addition to Haldane and Boyle on natural law ethics, the volume includes rich and lively discussions of modern egalitarian liberalism by William Galston and Brian Barry, of classical liberalism or libertarianism by Chandran Kukathas and James Tully, of Confucianism by Joseph Chan and Lee Yearly, of Islam by Dale Eickelman and Muhammad Khalid Masud, of Judaism by Menachem Fisch and Adam Seligman, of Christianity by David Little and James Skillen, of feminism by Christine Di Stefano and Carole Pateman, and of critical theory by William Scheuerman and Simone Chambers.

These 18 scholars were asked to clarify their respective perspectives with respect to a common set of five questions, with a view to collective discovery of areas of overlap and disagreement as well as possible resources for reaching compromise. Roughly, the five questions were as follows: Does the perspective aim at ethical uniformity or accommodating a diversity of ethical

perspectives? According to the perspective, does the government have authority to protect, ban or otherwise regulate ethically based differences and, if so, what is the scope of that authority? How should ethically based disagreements on the rights and duties of citizenship, for example the civil status of women, be dealt with? To what extent, if any, should government become involved in life and death issues such as abortion and euthanasia? To what extent, if any, should conflicting ethical views relating to sexual relationships, for example same-sex marriages, be tolerated?

There is substantial disagreement among (and even within) the nine perspectives as presented with respect to the last three questions as well as the scope of the authority that evidently must be given to government to regulate conduct, including conduct motivated by ethical disagreement. This is hardly surprising. Indeed, as the contributors themselves often suggest, there is significant room for further disagreement on these matters, since alternative interpretations to those presented are possible for each perspective. I shall make no effort to canvass even the range of disagreement displayed by the contributors. But it is perfectly obvious that liberals and conservatives of various stripes are sharply divided over such issues as abortion, physician-assisted suicide and same-sex marriage.

In any case, the major conclusion, stressed by both Moon and the editors, is that all of the perspectives do seem to comport (however uneasily) with reasonable perspectival pluralism (pp. 15-19, 344-49, 357-58). In this regard, there is an influential distinction, emphasized by Rawls, between comprehensive ethical perspectives, which seek to account for virtually all aspects of a good life and, in so doing, typically make claims which affirm the truth or falsity of value pluralism or monism, and partial 'political' perspectives, which seek to account for only the public 'political' conditions of a good life and, in so doing, claim to be able to provide a political order that can accommodate reasonable disagreement without relying on a comprehensive theory of the good. Among the perspectives considered, the two liberalisms and critical theory are partial doctrines that have as a principal objective the political recognition and management of reasonable perspectival pluralism. But the five comprehensive doctrines also have the resources to endorse reasonable disagreement to some extent because they acknowledge human fallibility and recognize that mistakes in their own frameworks might be corrected as a result of reasonable opposition. Feminism is a special case because it is always combined with some other perspective yet, for that very reason, it has the resources of its allied perspective and perhaps what Moon calls 'a distinctive sensibility' of its own 'to the task of learning how to engage in dialogue across difference' (p. 349).

Some might object that this more or less unanimous endorsement of reasonable perspectival pluralism is an artefact of the selected list of perspectives as interpreted by the contributors. It must be admitted that intolerant, fundamentalist variants of the same doctrines, including liberalism, as well as others not considered, including utilitarian and tragic value pluralistic perspectives,

might have been selected, in which case things would look much more pessimistic because of intractable conflicts. But the objection does not tell against the volume's main conclusion so much as underscore the need to clarify *why* it is reasonable for an ethical perspective to endorse 'reasonable disagreement' as conceived. Disagreement is said to be 'reasonable', it seems, if and only if it does not upset, or threaten to upset, some common moral horizon, that is, some minimum set of norms and institutions which no human being could reasonably reject. If there is such a common moral horizon, then it may be taken as the focus of an overlapping consensus among *any* list of reasonable ethical perspectives, including reasonable versions of utilitarianism as well as of tragic value pluralism, not merely the list under consideration. But what could comprise such an ethical minimum?

The perspectives considered in this volume seem to support the contention that key ingredients of a common moral horizon include some bedrock human protections, variously described as some minimum set of 'natural rights' or 'human rights', the 'minimum content of natural law', or 'some elements of the *jus gentium*', as well as a public political consultation process that facilitates more or less effective social and/or legal enforcement of those basic protections and allows grievances to be systematically addressed. Moreover, the political system must tolerate if not celebrate any ethical perspective that respects the relevant human protections (whatever their content may be agreed to be) and advises compliance with the political procedures and laws, including amendment procedures, which exist to identify and sanction the basic protections. Together, these ingredients might be said to constitute a partial political theory of 'minimum justice' or 'decency' among human beings.⁴ A perspective can then be accepted as 'reasonable' provided it rises at least to this minimum threshold level of justice and decency. But a perspective must be rejected as 'unreasonable' if it fails to meet the threshold. Individuals or groups seeking to act on any such unreasonable perspective are legitimately suppressed by any effective means of social coercion, including violence and war if necessary.

But the question remains: Why should any ethical perspective be required to comport with some such theory of minimum justice or decency before being considered reasonable? In other words, why should such a partial political theory and its endorsement of reasonable disagreement be given

4. Elsewhere, in the context of Berlin's pluralistic liberalism, I have referred to such a theory as 'minimally liberal' but nothing turns on that terminology. Rawls and others prefer to restrict the term 'liberal' to advanced democratic societies, and to distinguish liberal societies thus understood from 'decent non-liberal' ones. Berlin also attaches the term 'decent' to a much broader range of societies than advanced liberal democracies. Whatever label is placed on a theory of minimum justice or decency of the sort described, the important point is that such a theory is far less demanding than the advanced liberal theories of justice proposed by, say, Rawls or Mill. See Jonathan Riley, 'Interpreting Berlin's Liberalism', *American Political Science Review* 95 (June 2001), pp. 283-96; and 'Defending Cultural Pluralism Within Liberal Limits', *Political Theory* 30 (February 2002), pp. 68-96.

suitable priority over competing ethical considerations? Why is it so valuable for human beings to insist on just that much ethical uniformity, that is, uniform respect for the norms and institutions of minimum justice or decency as outlined?

The received answer seems to be that this strategy should be adopted by moral agents as a pragmatic device for getting along with others under conditions of ignorance as to what might constitute a true ethical perspective, including whether value is ultimately plural or singular. In the absence of any authoritative ethical doctrine, reasonable people should opt for a political order that enforces ethical uniformity with respect to the moral minimum and at the same time tolerates or even encourages disagreement with respect to all of those aspects of the good life which lie beyond that common moral horizon.

As Moon points out, however, this received answer ‘presuppose[s] that people are capable of entertaining a high level of cognitive complexity’ (p. 345). In particular, it presupposes that people can simultaneously accept a comprehensive ethical perspective, including its truth claims, and a partial political perspective that is predicated on the denial of any authoritative comprehensive perspective and thereby ‘requires one to be able to distance oneself from one’s own comprehensive beliefs, at least to the extent of being able to see those beliefs as one possible perspective among others, a possible object of sincere and even reasonable disagreement’ (p. 346). But ‘cognitive dissonance’ may be a more apt term than ‘cognitive complexity’ for describing the requisite state of mind. Moreover, in my view, cognitive dissonance of this sort does not provide a plausible account of the psychology of a rational moral agent. Why would such an agent agree to sacrifice what are perhaps the most fundamental and important tenets of his comprehensive perspective, merely to continue to survive and argue with other people who do not subscribe to those same tenets? Why would he settle for a political order that is by assumption less valuable to him in terms of his comprehensive perspective than his other beliefs which are incompatible with that political order? By compromising thus, it seems clear, he would be abandoning his most sacred values or labouring under a delusion. Either way, he would apparently fall short of being a rational moral agent.

A more compelling answer than the received one may be that rational people embrace the requisite sort of political order and reasonable perspectival pluralism because minimum justice or decency—the focus of an overlapping consensus among any list of reasonable ethical perspectives—truly is the most valuable aspect of a good life. On this view, people are warranted in believing at least that much about the real structure of human morality, even if no authoritative comprehensive doctrine is available. Perhaps sufficient evidence exists to support the conclusion that the good life for creatures like us must really be structured in that way, to that limited extent. Even so, that would not imply that anyone has the complete truth or even the evidence required to decide between objective value pluralism and monism.

But this alternative to the received view has far-reaching implications. It implies, for example, that the notion of a partial political perspective must be taken with a large grain of salt. According to the alternative view, such a political perspective is not properly viewed as partial because it must claim that human beings are warranted in believing that minimum justice or decency is a most valuable aspect of any good life, and more valuable than *any conflicting* ethical considerations. Indeed, that supreme degree of ethical importance explains why a rational moral agent, no matter what his or her comprehensive doctrine, will support a political system that identifies and safeguards such a moral minimum while at the same time accommodating reasonable disagreement.

Thus, any ethical perspective, including versions of utilitarianism and value pluralism as well as of liberalism and traditional monotheistic religions, can be considered 'reasonable' if it gives suitable *priority* to a political theory of minimum justice or decency as outlined. Some basic set of human protections or rights, and a political process that adequately identifies and sanctions the set, must be regarded as essential prerequisites of a good life or, in other words, as non-negotiable aspects of it. A faith in God or Utility, for example, or in plural gods or plural utilities, might be seen by the individual or voluntary association as no less valuable than minimum justice in terms of a particular comprehensive perspective. But such a faith is not necessarily in conflict with the priority of minimum justice: all can enjoy a basic right to practise any 'reasonable' perspective that tolerates or even affirms other similarly tolerant doctrines. But a doctrine cannot be considered 'reasonable' if it refuses to suitably prioritize minimum justice or decency. If it prescribes the imposition of some theology on people against their wishes, for example, or if it recommends the sacrifice of basic human protections as a means to promote some controversial notion of general welfare, then it must be rejected and condemned. Those who seek to act on any such unreasonable perspective are legitimately suppressed in the name of minimum justice or decency itself.

The idea of a common moral horizon of minimum justice or decency lacks any content, however, unless the relevant norms and institutions and their relative importance are 'rationally discernible' in terms of a common human nature or, in phenomenalist terms, a science of human psychology. No doubt a fully adequate scientific psychology is still a long way off. It might consist of one determinate system of theorems explaining how rational moral agents are ultimately motivated by a single ultimate end or pattern of plural ends. Or it might feature multiple unconnected and mutually incompatible systems of theorems associated with plural and tragically conflicting motivations, giving rise to zones of indeterminacy (and explanatory gaps) whenever rational moral agents experience tragic conflicts of basic ends. But whatever the complete truth may be, perhaps a conclusion is already warranted that some very basic protections, such as the rights of innocents not to be murdered or enslaved, and a political process to maintain them, are among the most valuable ingredients of any form of good life for human beings, and never reasonably outweighed by any competing ethical considerations.

Book Reviews

G.F. Schueler, *Reasons and Purposes: Human Rationality and the Teleological Explanation of Action* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, an imprint of Oxford University Press, 2003). 188 pp. ISBN 0199250375 (hbk). Hardback/Paperback £30.00/£-.

Until recently, the only real resistance to Davidson's ruling influence over the Philosophy of Action has come from various Wittgensteinian camps, most prominently that of G.H. von Wright and his pupil Frederick Stoutland. The last few years, however, have seen an increasing number of dissidents come to the surface with a plethora of independently minded objections to Davidsonian accounts of both action individuation (e.g. Paul Pietroski, David-Hillel Ruben) and explanation (e.g. Jonathan Dancy, Rüdiger Bittner). G.F. Schueler's new book places him in the latter group of philosophers, whose chief concern is to explicate the relation between our actions and our reasons for doing them, and who have a common target, namely, the following two Davidsonian theses:

The Belief Desire Thesis (BD): The reasons for which we act are (Humean) combinations of our desires and our beliefs about how to satisfy them.

The Causal Thesis (CT): Our reasons for acting are the causes of our actions.

Schueler's aim is not so much to convince us that these theses are wrong as it is to show that the only defensible versions of them pose no threat at all to the views which they have been purported to repudiate (chs. 1-2). Nevertheless, as he himself notes early on in the book (p. 9), his intention is not to rescue any of those theories propounded in the (supposedly Wittgensteinian) 'little red books' which Davidson demolished in one fell swoop back in 1963. Indeed Schueler acknowledges the acuteness of Davidson's criticisms of the then mainstream opposition. What he challenges is whether in doing so Davidson (perhaps unintentionally) gave birth to a theory of action explanation which is equally misguided in its own way (it being a moot question whether Davidson would actually endorse the standard interpretation of his work).

The key to Schueler's criticism of both BD and CT is the idea that reasons-giving explanations of action are inherently *teleological* (ch. 3). That is to say, the agent's reasons will always point to the purpose for which he acted (Schueler happens to believe that *all* intentional action is done for reasons but this plays no significant role in the general argument of the book). From this it follows, or so we are told, that the explanations in question are also inherently *normative*. The book's overall strategy is to reject any version of either BD or CT which maintains that action explanation can do without either one of these two features. Just what it means to

say of an explanation that it is normative, however, is a matter of some contention (which I return to below).

According to Schueler, CT only goes astray when it declares that reasons explanations are completely analysable in terms of efficient causes that make no essential references to our purposes (p. 18). What is at stake, therefore, is the idea that when it comes to intentional action final causation cannot be reduced to efficient causation:

[T]he issue is whether in the end explanations of the sort cited in BD, reasons explanations of actions, must themselves be explained in terms of non-purposive notions of the sort that 'direction of fit' is supposed to be or, alternatively, whether unanalyzed purposive notions such as 'having a goal' or 'having a purpose' can do the required explanatory work. (p. 38)

On this account there is still a minimal sense in which CT is undeniable, namely the sense in which to say that one thing caused another is not to give a substantive explanation of the one in terms of the other, but merely to state that there is such an explanation to be had, and that the events in question will (under some description) figure in it (p. 16). Schueler thinks this is harmless because the explanatory power of such statements is not derived from any kind of law, but rather, from the inherent purposiveness included in the reasons which CT further identifies as causes. This point about there not needing to be any psychophysical laws for there to be a BD-style causal explanation of any given action is good as far as it goes. However, Schueler seems to overlook the fact that such explanations nevertheless entail that there must be (as indeed Davidson believed there to be) a strict physical law connecting some related mental event to the action. As we shall see, such laws would render the explanatory relation between reasons and actions which Schueler favours epiphenomenal. But to appreciate this we must first turn to his rejection of BD.

Schueler begins his argument by demonstrating that desires play no formal role in the kind of reasoning which either precedes action or is implied by it (ch. 4). He then suggests that we do not ever reason from our beliefs (in so far as we construe these as psychological states of the agent) either:

[I]t is just a mistake to think that desires are somehow *used in* any reasoning, any more than are hopes, fears, wishes, or cravings. For that matter, beliefs are not *used in* reasoning either, whether theoretical or practical. The sorts of things that *give one reason* to act are facts or, perhaps, 'states of affairs'. It was *the fact that* a speeding car was about to hit me that gave me a reason to jump to the side. But one *reasons with* propositions (or sentences, if you like), the *contents* of beliefs, doubts, suspicions, hunches, and so forth, the things that can *describe or refer* to facts or states of affairs. (p. 112-13; original emphasis)

Schueler's point that the things we deliberate from are not psychological states but alleged facts (things we take to be the case) seems to be both true and relevant. Since deliberation is all about treating the considerations we weigh up as potential reasons for acting, BD cannot be right in so far as it conceives of these reasons in either Humean or Psychologistic terms. So far so good. But now recall that Schueler also claims that there is an inherently *normative* element to any successful reasoning explanation of action (ch. 5). He writes:

Practical deliberation is the process of trying to figure out what one has most reason to do and this is *essentially* evaluative... Ordinary reasons explanations are thus normative in two distinct senses. They ascribe rationality to the person whose actions are being explained. At the same time, in virtue of so doing, they open this action, and the reasons for which it was performed, to critical or rational evaluation which is of exactly the same sort that one's own practical deliberation focuses on one's own actions and possible actions. (pp. 164-65)

This characterization of reasons explanations as normative is doubly mistaken. First, it is one thing for something (say a violinist's performance) to be open to evaluation and something quite different (if anything at all) for it to be normative. Second, Schueler has given us no reason to doubt the intuitive view that people often act because of considerations which they know are not (even *pro tanto*) good reasons for acting. Of course we can expect so-called weakness of will to cause some trouble for any theory of action, but we must ask ourselves whether anything has been gained by insisting that the relation between reasons and action *must* be normative. Why not rest content with the weaker constraint that any plausible theory of action explanation must allow that it at least be *possible* for a person to act for a good reason? The truth of this (together with some view about the sorts of things that good reasons are) would seem sufficient to refute both BD and CT. In fact, given that people's beliefs and desires are paradigmatic examples of the sorts of things we subject to rational evaluation, this is something which no point about evaluation could ever achieve.

One final matter worthy of consideration concerns the object of action explanation. Schueler proves no exception to the literature when he shifts between talking about our reasons for acting and the reasons which explain why those events which happen to be our actions occur, as if these were obviously one and the same thing. Given that it is at least questionable whether this is so, we might do well to ask ourselves whether the whole dispute over the nature of reasons and their relation to action might not rest on an unnecessary conflation of two different explananda, both of which may properly be called objects of action-explanation. If it does, we can take on the point about purpose without giving up the idea that all event explanations are causal.

Whatever the case, there is no doubt that Schueler has given Humeans and Causalists plenty to worry about. Because of this, it is all the more regrettable that he takes no time to spell out the differences and similarities between his views and those of the few other philosophers who find themselves on roughly the same side, but it looks like initial battles have to be won before we can expect such matters to come to light. In the meantime, *Reasons and Purposes* forms a vital part of a new awakening in the Philosophy of Action-Explanation.

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J.L. Holzgrefe and Robert O. Keohane (eds.), *Humanitarian Intervention: Ethical, Legal, and Political Dilemmas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). 400 pp. ISBN 052152928X (pbk). Hardback/Paperback. £50.00/£18.95.

This collection of nine essays constitutes an ethical, legal and political inquiry into the nature of humanitarian intervention. Following a general introduction by Keohane, the book is structured as follows: Holzgrefe and Tom J. Farer contribute each a chapter on the 'context of humanitarian intervention'; Fernando R. Tesón and Allen Buchanan provide chapters on ethical considerations; three chapters on international law are supplied by Michael Byers and Simon Chesterman, Thomas M. Franck and Jane Stromseth; and Keohane and Michael Ignatieff conclude with one chapter piece on the politics of humanitarian intervention.

In particular, the authors are concerned with intervention that is per definition *illegal* according to international law, such as the 1999 NATO intervention in Kosovo and other interventions not sanctioned by the UN Security Council. A central question unites these essays: Under what conditions is *unauthorized* humanitarian intervention justifiable? A related key theme is the tension between prerogatives of state sovereignty and the desirability for intervention to prevent some of the most appalling abuses of humanity. That is, 'how conceptions of sovereignty are shifting as a result of changes in norms of human rights' (p. 2).

The failure of the international community to prevent genocide in Rwanda in 1994 and, especially, the NATO intervention in Kosovo, which brought to halt large-scale violence, constitute key empirical evidence from which several authors draw conclusions about the appropriateness of humanitarian intervention. According to Keohane, 'None of the contributors regards humanitarian intervention as anathema under all conditions, but all of them are well aware of the potential for abuse inherent in its practice' (p. 1).

Holzgrefe defines humanitarian intervention as

...the threat or use of force across state borders by a state (or group of states) aimed at preventing or ending widespread and grave violations of the fundamental human rights of individuals other than its own citizens, without the permission of the state within whose territory force is applied. (p. 18)

This is a functional definition, allowing for a coherent discussion of humanitarian intervention across ethical, legal and political dimensions and thus preventing the 'conceptual stretching' which commonly bedevils edited volumes in the social sciences.

The pooled efforts by these scholars converge to produce an instructive and multi-faceted examination of humanitarian intervention. How is humanitarian intervention as a response to gross human rights violations best facilitated? Ought international law governing humanitarian intervention to evolve into a new legal standard? What sort of (legal and political) precedent is set by the unauthorized NATO campaign in Kosovo? Differing views are at least partially overcome by the shared liberal foundation on which the authors' arguments rest, and their general agreement that humanitarian intervention ought not, for the sake of maintaining absolute (or Westphalian) national sovereignty, be condemned *in toto*.

Both Tesón and Buchanan argue that states have a duty to act in some cases of gross violations of human rights, whereas Byers and Chesterman defend the principle

of non-intervention. Franck suggests that some exceptional cases of abuse, for example the attempt at genocide in the Balkans, may 'trump' established legal principles of non-intervention and thus produce appropriate changes in the law. The UN could perform a 'jurying function' in assessing the appropriateness of each such case (p. 227). Stromseth argues that the legal status of unauthorized humanitarian intervention remains uncertain following the intervention in Kosovo, which opens up space for gradual reform of international law that is preferable to a formal, doctrinal framework for legal reform (p. 233). This is a prudent conclusion given the ethical complexities and political realities that are part of humanitarian intervention.

Holzgrefe (pp. 19-20) outlines four 'ethical divides' along which arguments about the justification of humanitarian intervention fall. First, naturalist theories emphasize morally binding norms 'discovered through reason or experience', whereas consensualist theories emphasize 'explicit or tacit consent of agents' as the proper source for moral concern. Second, the 'proper objects of moral concern' are the welfare of human beings according to individualist theories or the welfare of groups according to collectivist theories. Third, egalitarian theories hold that all objects of moral concern must be treated equally, while inegalitarian theories allow for objects to be treated unequally. Fourth, the 'proper breadth of moral concern' is, according to universalist theories, all agents, whereas particularist theories hold that only some agents qualify. This dichotomization of the ethical arguments is embedded in both Tesón's and Buchanan's argumentation. It does not, however, prevent the authors from acknowledging, and engaging, the very complex, and oftentimes conflicting, arguments for and against humanitarian intervention.

Tesón's liberal and universalist exhortation to humanitarian intervention (invoking St. Augustine on the uselessness of sovereignty without justice) is arguably the most forceful argument in this volume. Perhaps it is also the (logically) most problematic argument. Tending at times toward the polemical, Tesón claims that non-liberal arguments (e.g. various communitarian, legalistic, and even strong libertarian ones) are wrong because they are not sufficiently liberal in recognizing the need to protect individuals, even when it requires positive action. On the 'relativist objection' to liberal theories of humanitarian intervention, Tesón finds it necessary to reveal that he has 'never been able to see merit in relativism as a general philosophical view' (p. 100). Alas, Tesón's core argument for the right, and duty, to intervene tends dangerously close to the tautological—non-liberal arguments against intervention fail because they are not compatible with fundamental liberal concerns regarding the inviolable rights of individuals.

Buchanan's approach is of particular interest to international relations scholars as it explicitly engages issues of state sovereignty. Because 'state-majoritarianism'—that is, whatever a majority of states agree is just—cannot be understood as having the same legitimacy-conferring power as individual consent in a world where many states are not democratic, Buchanan suggests that would-be reformers of international law must ask whether it will be necessary to move beyond reform that centres on a new treaty *within* the UN system to a treaty-based approach *outside* the current UN system (p. 171). Buchanan's argument therefore challenges not only existing international law and the sanctity of state sovereignty, but also the UN system itself. However, states already concerned with infringements on their sovereignty by stronger states will likely not take kindly to Buchanan's suggestion that a 'club' of liberal democracies (i.e. Western powers) design themselves a vanguard for the protection

of human rights, and thereby become exempt from legal constraints regarding how one sovereign state might treat another.

If a case for unauthorized intervention can in some cases be made, attention must also be paid to politically viable post-intervention scenarios. Keohane argues for the 'unbundling' of sovereignty in failed states, so that political institutions can function once humanitarian intervention has been carried out (p. 276). The idea of a 'gradated', or partial, sovereignty is an attempt to sidestep arguments against intervention that rest on the notion of inviolability of state sovereignty. According to Keohane, 'societies with low capacity for self-governance will have to accept very limited sovereignty' until they have redeemed themselves (p. 9). This is, indeed, a 'forceful liberalism' (p. 10).

The problem is that no proper mechanism is outlined for discerning who should 'unbundle', and when this unbundling is to take place. As Keohane acknowledges, there is a great danger that humanitarian intervention becomes (increasingly) linked to the very fuzzy concept of 'war on terror' (p. 11). This is even more problematic in a time of US occupation in Iraq, when motives for interventions are likely to be met with a great degree of scepticism in societies supposed to benefit from them. Nor is it useful to compare, as Keohane does, the externally imposed limitation of sovereignty that he envisions for 'troubled societies' with the sort of pooling of sovereignty entailed by contemporary processes of European (EU) integration (p. 284). Furthermore, the idea that the US belongs to the 'properly qualified' states with licence to intervene cannot simply be taken as a given. Considering the many instances of highly controversial US engagements in Latin America, South-East Asia and now the Middle East, that 'qualification' must first be demonstrated.

Ignatieff also doubts the ability of states in 'bad neighbourhoods', which exist all over the Global South (p. 303), to govern themselves, and he is sceptical of the ability of democracy alone to bring order and stability to many developing nations. Like Keohane, he finds useful the idea of various sorts of 'protectorates' or 'regimes of conditional independence' (which is what is implied by 'gradated' sovereignty) to produce order. Simply 'multiplying the number of Westphalian states' is not a viable solution, and in some cases of ethnically divided states, rebuilding within the same geo-political structures is not feasible (p. 309).

These arguments are not new. The limited sovereignty 'solution' has an empirical precedent in the League of Nations' Mandates following World War I, and Ignatieff's scepticism regarding democracy in societies not 'sufficiently prepared' for it was strongly articulated already in Samuel P. Huntington's *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968). Ignatieff's assertion that 'chaos has replaced tyranny' (p. 299) echoes Robert D. Kaplan's popularized, and vulgarized, 'The Coming Anarchy' (*The Atlantic Monthly*, February 1994, pp. 44-76). There is a paternalistic tone in Keohane and Ignatieff's arguments that risks perpetuating the idea that durable solutions to chaos and violence are dependent on the actions of Western powers, with peripheral countries, once again, relegated to playing the passive role. The history of North/South relations does not suggest that such arrangements work.

These two concluding chapters are the least satisfactory in the volume, because they seem somewhat detached from the ethical and legal argumentation that precedes them. The emphasis on what is politically 'feasible' detracts, in particular, from the crucial issue of what is *ethical* behaviour with regards to humanitarian

intervention. Political expediency is, of course, the age-old nemesis of ethical (and legal) considerations. Nevertheless, these chapters serve the purpose of illustrating just how difficult it is, after the complex ethical and legal arguments have been put forth, to devise workable political solutions.

Ongoing violence and disregard for human rights in countries such as Liberia and the Democratic Republic of Congo ought to keep humanitarian intervention on the agenda at the United Nations and among the global powers. Farer suggests that an ineffective humanitarian interventions regime is partly responsible for the environment that has encouraged the spectacular emergence of various terrorist organizations, and that the US is now certain to take (unilateral) military action to protect its own interests. Therefore we need a 'new scheme of international cooperation' that can transcend the interests of 'parochial, narrowly compassionate figures who predominate in the councils of the leading states' (pp. 88-89). It remains to be seen whether new standards for humanitarian intervention will result from the reconfiguration of global power, and standards for interaction between states, emerging in the era following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the US. Any 'new world order' will surely affect our understandings of, and rationales for, humanitarian intervention.

To this end, *Humanitarian Intervention* constitutes a valuable contribution to a pressing issue of our time. As any constructive and durable transformation of the current humanitarian interventions regime must stand on a solid ethical, legal and political ground, this book represents a basis from which to begin a thorough evaluation of when, and by what right, states intervene in the 'internal' affairs of each other.

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Jules Coleman and Scott Shapiro (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Jurisprudence and Philosophy of Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). 1050 pp. ISBN 0198298242 (hbk). Hardback/Paperback. £69.95/£-.

Second in the new Oxford Handbook series is this impressive collection edited by Jules Coleman and Scott Shapiro which contains 24 original contributions to the philosophy of law by authors such as John Finnis, Frances Kamm, John Gardner and Timothy Macklem, Brian Bix, Leslie Green, Gerald Postema and Kent Greenawalt. The purpose of this work, state Coleman and Shapiro, is not to add to the growing list of dictionaries, encyclopaedias and companions that presently saturate philosophical publishing, but to offer an overview of, and an addition to, scholarship on the philosophy of law. No attempt, however, is made to contribute to every major topic or school of thought within legal philosophy. There is no treatment, for example, of law and economics (a subject the editors believe has been extensively explored in recent writings), or of feminist legal theories, or of non-western philosophy of law. Despite these gaps, though, a notable range of issues and theories is addressed: authority, reasons, rights, methodology, adjudication, constitutional and statutory interpretation, inclusive and exclusive legal positivism, classical and

modern traditions of natural law theory, formalism, responsibility, language, and political obligation. Moreover, several chapters look at the philosophy of law as it applies to specific domains of law including tort law, common law, contract law, private law, criminal law, property law and international law. Each topic receives comprehensive treatment, as the editors granted authors both the space (15,000 words) and the freedom to present their 'take' on the relevant issues.

Constrained by space, I shall highlight only three articles from this volume. One well-argued and engaging piece is Gardner and Macklem's 'Reasons', which teases out and neutralizes various challenges to the view that reasons fall within the domain of facts. After reasserting the classical position that, as rational beings, we are beings in the world responding to the world and not to our construction of the world, Gardner and Macklem rebut some purported implications of their position. One such implication is that, given the importance of reasons, all actions must be taken by reasoning with the reasons for those actions. To this, these authors reply that deliberating about what to do, an activity in itself, is not always the best way to achieve what the reasons that figure in one's deliberations would have one do. Some values are better served when one acts spontaneously than when one acts deliberately. In this article, Gardner and Macklem also consider the relationship between fact and value, the distinction between a justification (a reason to act) and an excuse (a reason to *believe* there is a reason to act), and the ways in which reasons can be incommensurable.

Despite the merits of this article as a contribution to the ongoing debate about reasons, one might question its relevance for a handbook on jurisprudence and philosophy of law since, excluding a brief discussion of the distinction in criminal law between a denial of wrongdoing and an assertion of justification, little is said to explicate the place of reasons in law. Gardner and Macklem justify their limited treatment of legal reasoning on the grounds that 'there is no special legal mode of rationality... Legal thought and action is subject to the same fundamental doctrines and principles of rationality as the rest of human life' (p. 442). And yet, irrespective of this claim (which is not defended), more attention to reasons permitted by law, that is, legal justifications, perhaps is required to warrant inclusion of this article in this handbook.

Kamm's 'Rights' offers a detailed analysis, first, of moral and legal aspects of rights; second, of possible grounds for rights; and finally, of conflicts that arise between rights and utilities and amongst rights themselves. Taking as her starting point Hohfeld's conceptual scheme, which classifies rights as claim-rights (or directed duties), privileges, powers or immunities, Kamm challenges the nature of the correlation between duties and rights, maintaining that there is a sense in which rights can exist without anyone possessing the directed duties to which these rights give rise. Kamm then rebuts various theories of rights—the beneficiary theory, the choice theory and the interest theory—arguing in favour of a status-as-person theory according to which the importance of a right may outstrip any interest that it protects when that right is a response, not to what is good *for* a person, but to the good (worth or dignity) of that person. The worth of persons is implicated in the impermissibility of violating any one person, says Kamm. In expressing something true of all persons, this right of inviolability, although not absolute, surpasses the interests of any one person and thus offers a way of understanding and addressing conflicts between rights and great goods not protected by rights.

Original and thought-provoking, this article offers forceful objections to prevailing theories on rights. Kamm compels the reader to reconsider, amongst other things, the relationship between rights and duties, the purported centrality of interests to the existence of rights, and the role played by stringency in resolving conflicts of rights. In this way, Kamm makes a useful contribution to discussions not only in the philosophy of law, but also in moral and political philosophy.

'Law and Obligations' by Green explores both the grounds for scepticism about political obligation and the implications that this scepticism has for legal theory. This essay covers familiar territory in focusing upon, first, the key voluntarist arguments for political obligation including fairness, consent or promise-keeping, and gratitude, and then the key non-voluntarist arguments for political obligation including associative obligations and necessary institutions. Green offers some fresh reasons to doubt these arguments, which fuel his claim that we should turn our focus away from the obligation of obedience. One advantage of scepticism about political obligation, says Green, is that it may free our thinking and allow us to redirect our attention to other little-considered obligations, such as (1) the obligation to facilitate the rule of law, (2) the obligation to know the law, and (3) the obligation to develop the law.

However, to these obligations proposed by Green, some objections come to mind. First, these obligations seem to demand much more from citizens by way of active political engagement than political obligation does; for example, there are, as Green acknowledges, 'many more occasions on which we can further or hinder the rule of law than there are occasions when we can obey' (p. 545). And, therefore, given what it would demand of people to require them to facilitate, develop and know the law, weighty arguments are needed to justify the claim that there is an obligation to be thus politically involved. But, all three considerations—facilitation, development and knowledge of the law—seem to reflect, not general and universal obligations, but ordinary reasons for action. The point to bear in mind, though, is that Green offers these obligations undefended for our consideration merely to demonstrate that the excessive attention given to an obligation of obedience has caused us to overlook important possibilities that lie in other directions.

These articles, a representative sample from this collection, combine extensive analysis of well-known arguments with original and thought-provoking points of view. Given the generous word limit set for contributors, greater breadth and depth of analysis is possible in these essays than in most journal articles. With its blend of exposition, critique and original argument, this handbook is an invaluable resource for legal scholars and students alike.

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Axel Honneth, *Unsichtbarkeit. Stationen einer Theorie der Intersubjektivität* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), 162 pp. ISBN 3518292161 (pbk). Hardback/Paperback. €-/€10.00.

During the last decade the theory of recognition has emerged as a new paradigm in both Continental and Anglo-American debates. Its attractiveness stems from its

promise to provide a conceptual framework that allows us to see how basic issues in anthropology, ethics, moral philosophy, critical social theory and political analysis are intimately tied up and in fact cannot be adequately understood separately. While the theory of recognition made its first steps as a reconstruction of the young Hegel's idea of the struggle for recognition (Axel Honneth, *Kampf um Anerkennung* [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992], trans. *The Struggle for Recognition* [Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995]) and as an analysis of the growing importance of demands for recognition by political, cultural and social groups (Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and 'The Politics of Recognition'* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992]), it is only in recent years that its full systematic implications have come to the fore. This is especially due to the work of Axel Honneth who has recently published a debate with Nancy Fraser (*Redistribution or Recognition?* [London: Verso, 2003]) and a new postscript for a re-edition of *Kampf um Anerkennung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003, which also appeared in *Inquiry* 45 [2002], pp. 499-520), in which he answers a range of criticisms by further elaborating his approach of differentiating various spheres of recognition (love, legal respect, social esteem). In a nutshell the most basic claims of the theory seem to be (1) that recognition by others is a condition of being a person who can lead his or her own life (anthropology and ethics), (2) that reciprocal recognition of the equal value of each person is what we owe to each other (moral philosophy), (3) that socio-economic conditions which make this kind of moral relationship impossible are pathological and illegitimate (critical social theory), and (4) that recognition has been the central claim of many recent political and social movements (political analysis).

Honneth's newest book, whose title could be translated as *Invisibility: Stages of a Theory of Intersubjectivity*, takes a step back and brings together six essays written during the last three years. Their common purpose is to outline answers to three questions from the areas of epistemology and action-theory, which the author poses himself in the preface: (1) Is the act of recognition an act of attribution or perception? (2) Is recognition the byproduct of other acts or an act of its own? (3) Is recognition only partially or exclusively constitutive of the autonomy of persons? In five of the essays, Honneth elaborates his approach indirectly by engaging with past and present contributions to an understanding of intersubjectivity. These include Fichte's still tentative analysis of intersubjectivity as a transcendental condition of an autonomous practical self-relation, a critique of Heidegger's and Gadamer's exclusion of the third person and the perspective of the generalized other, and a re-evaluation of psychoanalytic object-relations theory in the face of postmodern celebrations of decentered identities. The two most interesting of these essays, however, deal with Sartre's negativistic account of intersubjectivity and John McDowell's moral realism. Whereas the latter poses the challenge of reconciling the idea of a perceptive, potentially particularist, component in recognition with Honneth's claim to universalism, the former points to the possible pathological, objectifying consequences of the primacy of intersubjectivity for individuals. Before turning to the piece on Sartre, to which I will limit my discussion for reasons of space, it makes sense to outline the first, most systematic, essay, from which the whole volume takes its title (an earlier version appeared in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 75 [2001], pp. 111-26).

According to Honneth, the key to a better understanding of recognition lies in marking it off from (value-neutral) perception. What he calls a 'moral epistemology'

starts from the difference between simple invisibility and social invisibility, the experience of being 'looked through' by the others that is clearly a form of misrecognition (powerfully described, as Honneth shows, in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*). While perception results in the identification of someone as a specific individual, recognition refers to the expressive act through which we imbue this cognition with an endorsement (p. 15).

What is expressed in our way of interacting with each other, however, is not only this kind of *cognition*, but the motivational readiness to treat the other in a way that shows her that I recognize her social value, or, to put it in a more Kantian way, that I respect her as a source of legitimate claims, i.e. as an intelligible or noumenal person. In its most morally basic form, recognition therefore amounts to granting the other unconditional value (p. 24). For Honneth, then, recognition has to be understood not only as an act of *valuation*, but also and at the same time as an *evaluative perception* in which the value of the person is 'directly' given (p. 26), that is, as an appropriate response to who the person is rather than as the attribution of a status. The 'primacy of recognition' (p. 27) consequently amounts to the claim that the normatively neutral perception of another person is nothing but a special and abstracted case of inherently evaluative re-cognition.

With this systematic attempt to confront some of the most basic questions for a theory of recognition in mind, it seems clear what Honneth's answers to the questions posed at the beginning have to be: recognition is a matter of perception rather than of attribution; it consists in an intentional act of its own revealed in subsequent attitudes and dispositions; and it is constitutive of being a self-conscious and autonomous subject. This last claim, however, is not argued for in the first essay, but in the essay on Sartre, which thematizes the relationship between perception and recognition as well as that between recognition and personal autonomy.

As is well known, the analysis of the gaze occupies a central position in *Being and Nothingness*. What is less well known is that the main aim of the argument is to solve the problem of other minds which so troubled analytic philosophy during the last century. The cause of the trouble, Sartre wants to show against both idealist and realist positions, is that the problem is normally framed in epistemological terms, on the model of knowledge of external objects, which makes it impossible to ward off scepticism. However, if we take into account the categorial difference between subject-object and subject-subject relations—the first is a relation of indifference, the second of interestedness—we see that we are forced to acknowledge (to use Cavell's term) the existence of the other because of certain existential experiences that come with interpersonal relationships. The most notorious of these is the feeling of shame which uncontrollably arises when we experience being the object of the other's gaze in a situation in which we would prefer not to be seen. This feeling, however, is necessarily linked to the assumption that there is an observing other: our status as an object and the observer's status as a subject go hand in hand (p. 95).

The problem, of course, is that the price for recognizing the other as a subject is the alienating experience of being objectified by the other's gaze. Sartre seems to think that there is some kind of substantive freedom characteristic of the subject that is inevitably limited by the existence of others—an unacceptable thesis for a theory that holds that *reciprocal* intersubjective recognition is the condition of individual self-consciousness and autonomy (p. 100). Honneth, however, also realizes that this claim enables Sartre to explain how social development comes about—a

question Honneth himself tries hard to answer in the above-mentioned new postscript. Sartre can simply point to the Hegelian insight that the individual who has experienced objectification will struggle to recover her status as a subject by in turn objectifying the other. Consequently, and unlike Honneth, Sartre understands social order as inherently conflictual, making it hard to imagine a stabilized and harmonious arrangement of mutual recognition that is not continually challenged and transformed (pp. 104-105).

The relationship between recognition and autonomy, then, does not seem as self-evident as Honneth at times suggests. If Sartre's phenomenological analysis of the negativity and asymmetry of identificatory and objectifying processes of recognition is at all plausible, it strongly tells against recognition being based on a non-distorting perception of—or adequate response to—qualities of persons and unambiguously ensuring individual autonomy. On the other hand, it is not clear how the justification of (moral) claims to recognition has to be understood: is it a matter of (evaluative) perception, which is supposed to provide the moral agent with reasons directly, or rather a matter of argument with and justification to relevant others? As seems to be the case with the struggle for recognition, then, the theory of recognition is not about to come to a standstill. In particular the relations between the cognitive and the normative dimensions of recognition and between its freedom-enhancing and its conformity-imposing effects clearly need more discussion—a discussion Honneth fortunately seems ready to carry on.

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Emmanuel Levinas, *Humanism of the Other*, translated from the French by Nidra Poller, with an introduction by Richard A. Cohen (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 131 pp. ISBN 0252 028406 (hbk). Hardback/Paperback. \$29.95/\$—.

Emmanuel Levinas has been emerging as the most important voice in moral theory in Continental Europe in the twentieth century. While no satisfactory grasp of his thought can be gained without studying his two masterworks, *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, there are many glimpses of his radical approach to ethics in the many essays and smaller books that he published in his lifetime.

The three essays by Levinas that make up the bulk of this text were published separately in France between 1964 and 1970 and then gathered together by him into a book with a new foreword in 1972. They have been previously published in English in a collection of articles by Levinas, translated and edited by Alphonso Lingis: *Emmanuel Levinas: Collected Philosophical Papers* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987) and the most substantial of these essays was also reprinted in a revised version of Lingis's translation, with copious footnotes, in Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi (eds.), *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 33-64. However, in his introduction to the present volume, Richard A. Cohen explicates some of the subtle

differences that the two translations evince. For her part, the translator acknowledges the inevitable reshaping that any translation brings to the thought of so intricate a writer as Levinas. There may well be value, then, in having a new rendering of these texts and in a form more akin to the original French publication.

Of considerable value in the introduction is the situating of Levinas's thought in the context of a debate within European thought between humanism and anti-humanism. This debate was crystallized in an exchange in Davos in 1929 between Ernst Cassirer and Martin Heidegger at which Levinas was present (and in which he was to play a minor role critical of Cassirer which he was later to regret). The dispute between the two great German thinkers was ostensibly over their respective interpretations of Kant. Cassirer took the more traditional view of Kant as having theorized the creative role of human intellect in the production of knowledge and of culture so as to empower reason in its enlightenment role. Heidegger, in contrast, appropriated Kant's thought to highlight the role of imagination. Insofar as man is situated and 'thrown' into a worldly and historical existence, his productive imagination is an expression of his context with the role of reason demoted to that of editor, as it were, of the resultant finite understandings on the part of *Dasein*. With these differing conceptions of reason and of human freedom, the lines were drawn between an enlightenment humanism that accords humanity freedom and a critical reflexivity that can attain to truth and a conception of justice on the one hand, and an anti-humanism that, in Heidegger's version, sees humanity as the fated expression of the self-disclosure of Being and the 'guardian' of what history makes inevitable on the other. While Levinas's sympathies in this debate came to lean more towards Cassirer, recent scholarship has aligned him with Heidegger. Nothing could be further from a true appreciation of both thinkers.

There would seem to be two dialectical nodes to the first of Levinas's three essays, 'Significance and Sense'. The first of these is the structuralist conception of subjectivity that would see it as the product of culture and of discourse. The so-called 'death of the subject' is an anti-humanism in which social and historical forces are posited as having a more formative role in human existence and in the values we live by than does originary and creative human subjectivity. The second dialectical node is relativism. It would follow from the 'death of the subject' position that, without a basis in a subjectivity that was somehow 'independent', there is no place from which a moral critique of culture could be offered. If such a critique were proffered from outside of that culture it would be an expression of cultural imperialism and if it were proffered from within that culture it would lack a basis transcending the norms of that culture and so fail to have any critical edge.

Levinas seeks to refute the 'death of the subject' view and the relativism that comes in its wake by reaffirming the active and creative nature of subjectivity. He does so by suggesting that the meaning or signification that the world has for subjects always goes beyond what is given in perception. Meaning is the product of a hermeneutic process that not only interprets reality as being more meaningful than the merely given, but also creates the context or 'totality' within which this interpretation can be grounded. Subjectivity, therefore, is both creative and necessary to there being a meaningful world. But lest this argument be thought to lead to an idealist, voluntarist, or Nietzschean conception of subjectivity as will-to-power, Levinas argues that the ground for this creative and meaning-making role for subjectivity is not the Ego, but the Other. It is by responding to the ethical demand

placed upon subjectivity by the nakedness, vulnerability and absoluteness of the Other, that the self comes to itself. It is not the reflexivity of consciousness that establishes subjectivity but the call that the Other places upon one.

In this way, Levinas has established both the active, creative and essential nature of subjectivity for the meaningfulness of the world, and also its ethical and relational nature. It is this latter which then becomes the basis for his attack on relativism. Levinas grants that a Platonism or moral realism which sees the intelligible as existing beyond the world is untenable. However, a conception of values as immanent to cultures need not preclude the possibility of subjectivity taking a critical stance towards its own culture and towards the cultures of others. Its ethical nature as a response to the call of the Other gives it a basis of critique. Subjectivity has a 'sense'. It has a direction and movement towards the Other. It is on the basis of this primordial direction or sense that the significances and norms posited by historical cultures can be criticized.

Levinas's discussion of the face of the Other in its seventh section of the essay is as clear and succinct a statement of the core of his ethics as one is likely to find. The essay also contains suggestive excursions into the epistemological and ontological difficulties raised by positing the face of the Other as a being beyond being and by displacing subjectivity from the epistemological centrality which traditional philosophy has given it.

In the essay, 'Humanism and An-Archy', Levinas returns to his attack on the anti-humanists and to his positing of a core of subjectivity that escapes their totalizing theories. Here he speaks of subjectivity as 'pre-originary' and in that sense 'an-archic' (p. 51). It is expression and creativity. It is a 'responsibility prior to freedom' (p. 52). But this may lead one to think that this responsibility is fate and is not accepted voluntarily. Are we enslaved to the Other? Such a conception, answers Levinas, would presuppose an ontological distinction between subjectivity and that which would enslave it. But it is precisely this distinction which does not obtain at this primordial level. The subject does not pre-exist the responsibility that it is called to by the Other. It is called into being by this responsibility, and so it is not enslaved by it.

In the third and final essay, 'Without Identity', Levinas extends his critique of the contemporary thesis of the death of subjectivity and the social construction of identity to Heidegger's contribution to that position. For Heidegger, it is not humanity that speaks and acts, but it is Being which speaks and acts through humanity. It is the task of human beings merely to tend to the voice of Being and, through art, knowledge and culture, bring it to expression. Humanity is, as it were, a vehicle for the being of Being. Heidegger rejects any primordial interiority which belongs to humanity as such. Against these attacks on humanism and on interiority, Levinas posits the vulnerability of the subject. Against all the ego philosophies from Plato to Nietzsche, which posit the subject as epistemological or ontological centre, Levinas stresses its vulnerability to the Other and to the suffering of the Other. It is on this that our interiority, and thus identity, is based.

Levinas's prose is deeply imbued with references to the Western philosophical tradition and he addresses an audience similarly imbued. Rather than clarification and carefully signposted argument, we have hyperbolic prose that provides what Richard Rorty has called 'edification' rather than demonstration. While the text is somewhat removed from the style and substance of ethical debates in the Anglo-

American tradition, there is much that can be learnt from exploring Levinas's ideas. These essays are not a definitive or comprehensive explication of those ideas, but they are a relatively accessible introduction. For scholars already familiar with Levinas's work they disclose interesting aspects of his engagement with the philosophical climate of his time and for any philosopher interested in ethics Levinas's placing of ethics at the very heart of epistemology and metaphysics cannot but be inspirational.

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David William Archard, *Children, Family and the State* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003). xiii + 190 pp. ISBN 0754605558 (pbk). Hardback/Paperback. £40.00/£15.99.

This book belongs to a series, Live Questions in Ethics and Moral Philosophy, offering 'short, accessible studies addressing some of the most topical questions shared by moral philosophy and the social sciences'. It has three long chapters, respectively on 'Children', 'The Family' and 'The State'.

The first chapter is mainly about whether children may be said to have rights. It begins with a discussion of theories of rights which leaves unclear Archard's view on two related questions: does every 'perfect' moral duty (duty to a specific person or to all) correlate with a moral right, as is sometimes maintained? And is a moral right something which by definition ought to have a corresponding positive right, actually enforced in law? Archard speaks of moral rights as enforceable (e.g. on pp. 4-5); I assume this means that they all ought to be backed by positive rights. This assumed correlation of moral and positive rights presumably explains why he usually writes simply of 'rights', without qualification as moral or legal, and why he sometimes asks whether children or parents *do* have a certain right, at other times (without apparent change of sense) whether they *should*. But the correlation should be made explicit.

The chapter contains detailed discussion of three possible positions on whether children have rights: roughly speaking, that children have no rights, that children have the same rights that adults have and that children have some rights (perhaps including some which adults do not have) but not all those which adults are thought to have. I found much of this chapter rather unsatisfactory. The discussion of the first position is in part about an important paper by Onora O'Neill; in this she argues, not that children have no rights, but that instead we should stress adults' obligations to children, which consist in part of imperfect obligations which do not correspond to rights. Archard's account of this difficult paper is very obscure, partly because of his lack of clarity about the relation between positive and moral rights.

Archard links O'Neill with critics of children's rights who think that too much stress on rights may undermine the love and care which are children's best safeguard. But he does not point out that this is not an argument against children's *having* rights: a champion of children's rights would say that we appeal to rights when love and care are lacking—or seriously misguided, as when a loving parent wishes to deny a daughter education. Archard does mention (pp. 10, 16) a claim that children do not need the protection of rights, but does not explain how this

claim might be defended. He is too friendly to the suggestion (pp. 10-12) that children do not 'have the capacity' even for welfare rights: admittedly they may not understand 'how a right functions', but surely the relevant capacity is the capacity to *benefit from* the kind of good in question.

The liberationist position, that children should have the same rights as adults, is discussed in a particularly obscure section. Four types of argument for this view are distinguished, of which one is that any age chosen as a threshold for maturity is artificial because those just under and just over it do not differ discernibly. The point usually made in this connection, that young people of the *same* age differ enormously in maturity, is mentioned only by implication. And the relation between moral and legal rights is again relevant: laws often need to be artificially specific in order to be enforceable, so their correspondence with moral rights is likely to be rough and ready.

The discussion of the rights which children may be supposed to have, if they do have some rights, is the best part of the chapter on children. There are good discussions of the problematic notion of a child's best interests, and of children's rights to an 'open future' and to grow up. Also discussed is the child's right to have his or her views 'given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child' (*UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, quoted on p. 54). Archard discusses the Law Lords' decision in the Gillick case as an example of what this might mean in practice, but does not point out that the issue illustrates the necessarily loose fit between legal and moral rights. (This case concerned a circular from a local health authority advising its doctors that they could counsel young girls under 16 about sexual matters and provide them with contraception without their parents' consent. A mother named Victoria Gillick went to court to attempt to have the circular declared unlawful. In 1986 the case finally went to the House of Lords which decided in favour of the health authority; Lord Scarman said: '... parental right yields to the child's right to make his own decisions when he reaches a sufficient understanding and intelligence to be capable of making up his own mind on the matter requiring decision'.)

Chapter 2, on the family, is less problematic than Chapter 1. Archard produces a broad definition of a family and argues for a 'state of families' as serving children's interests better than a Platonic 'family state', while recognizing that the institution of the family has always had its critics. He argues that there are reasons based on children's interests why 'causal' (biological, in an inclusive sense) parents should in general look after their children, but claims that such parents do not own their children or have an absolute right to look after them. Instead they have some rights *derived* from—or, better, a good deal of parental discretion in the discharge of—a parental duty of care. The chapter ends with interesting discussions of justice within the family and between families, concluding that while the institution of the family prevents perfect justice in a society it is probably necessary for the realization of other values.

Archard seems to assume that there is no difficulty in saying that 'causal' parents have a duty of care to their children. But while the claim may not be controversial, various questions arise. Are we to say that in deciding to produce children—or to have sex in the first place—people *undertake* the obligation to care for them or find someone else who will? And do the kind and degree of parents' obligations depend on the arrangements their society has for child-rearing? In other words, do parents undertake to carry out parental duties as conceived in their society? Since parents

have duties of care to specific children, as Archard states (p. 94), we can perhaps say that these duties (or only some of them, the most important and enforceable) correlate with children's moral rights against their parents. But this conclusion does not seem to be drawn explicitly, perhaps because thoughts of duty and rights are not the usual motivations within the family, as Archard stresses elsewhere. Children's rights, if any (Archard remains hesitant about them), seem to be conceived of as rights only against the state.

Chapter 3 claims that the state's concern with children is twofold: as protector of its weaker members and as guardian of its future welfare. The state as protector steps in when the family is seen to have failed in its duty of care. There is an interesting and sensitive discussion of the notion of family privacy and the tension between respect for it and the overriding need to protect children from abuse and neglect. The state is justified in making education compulsory on paternalistic grounds, as necessary for the child's welfare. This education should enable children to make their own adult choices—and parents cannot reasonably complain of this. The state also has its own interest in education, as preparing future citizens; the development of autonomy is important in this respect too. There is an interesting section on the medical treatment of children in which Archard claims that using children incapable of consent in research or medical procedures that do not benefit them is simply child abuse, but he perhaps dismisses too quickly the possibility of an older child's genuine consent.

This book is a rich, thoughtful study of its subject-matter which is in the end very rewarding. But it is not very 'accessible'. In keeping with the aims of the series, it largely consists of accounts and brief discussions of the writings of others; Archard eschews numbers and letters to indicate their various theses and sub-theses, but does not always achieve a similar clarity of structure by other means. It is not always clear whether he is reporting a view or endorsing it, and his own conclusions tend to be rather lost amid the detail—though his chapter summaries are useful here. In particular, Archard's English style is unhelpful. There is the occasional seriously malformed sentence: '...where no child grows up but can play games forever' (p. 36, in an account of Barrie's *Never-Never Land*) instead of '... where every child remains a child and can play games forever'. There are serious ambiguities: 'Although having rights is better than not having them, those who lack rights do not lack any moral status whatever' (p. 23). (What is intended is: '...do not completely lack moral status'.) Most seriously, there are far too many overlong, contorted sentences. It is a pity that this worthwhile book requires such a struggle.

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Amy Gutmann, *Identity in Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003). 246 pp. ISBN 069109652X (hbk). Hardback/Paperback. £18.95/£–.

In her latest book, Amy Gutmann takes on the much-debated issue of the relation between identity groups and democracy. The book's title prefigures her answer: we should understand identity groups as within, and subordinated to, the requirements

of a truly democratic politics—specifically, to democratic justice, which comprises of principles of civic equality, liberty and opportunity. We should regard groups as subordinate in part because individuals, not groups, are morally fundamental; it is the well-being and fair treatment of individuals, not groups, that constitutes the benchmark of democratic justice (p. 7). Put differently: ‘Group identity is not morally fundamental’ (p. 16). For if it were, groups could justify contravening the requirements of democratic justice (p. 58).

Gutmann pursues the inquiry with her characteristic lucidity and fair-mindedness. She presents herself as neither friend nor foe, in principle, of identity groups: she is prepared to judge these trees by their (democratic) fruits. Reflecting this even-tempered approach, she criticizes Brian Barry’s splenetic broadside against identity groups. At least in the US context, there is no evidence that identity groups are responsible for the weakness of a more egalitarian politics (p. 22).

Gutmann makes this unruly topic more manageable by classifying identity groups as cultural, voluntary, ascriptive and religious, and by treating each separately. As she more or less acknowledges, the lines dividing these categories are not as bright as one might wish. Certain sorts of identities are at once cultural, religious and ascriptive. With some justification, one might think that voluntary and ascriptive identities are more clearly separated. Still, whether a particular identity is ascriptive—that is, ‘largely beyond people’s ability to choose’ (p. 117)—depends on circumstances. Many German Jews believed that their Jewish identity was voluntary and that they could shed it through assimilation or baptism. Their fate revealed that the nature of their identity depended, not on choice, but on the views of others.

A contested question is whether it is obligatory for the structure and practices of identity groups to mirror the principles of the larger democratic polity. Gutmann is prepared, within limits, to accept those that do not, but she is not persuaded that undemocratic groups can and often promote democratic purposes, as Nancy Rosenblum has argued. This leads her to distinguish sharply between tolerating such groups and supporting them. While she is (barely) willing to go along with the US Supreme Court’s holding that as an ‘expressive’ organization the Boy Scouts are permitted to excluded gay men from their ranks, she insists that governmental institutions must disassociate themselves from all such discriminatory groups, a process of disentanglement that may involve withdrawing their exemption from taxation. The failure to disassociate constitutes culpable public complicity with injustice (pp. 107-108).

In the United States and in many countries around the world, religiously based identity is pervasive and fundamental. Gutmann asks whether democratic polities should treat religious identity as ‘special’ and answers in the negative. Yes, we should accede to some religious claims against democratic majorities—for example, when Quakers request exemption from arms-bearing military service. But for the same reasons, we should also accept claims based on secular conscience. For religious and secular citizens alike can ‘converge in understanding and experiencing their ethical commitments as binding on their will’ (p. 170). From this perspective, she endorses the post-World War Two judicial expansion of ‘conscientious objection’ in the United States beyond its original legislative restriction to the devout.

Gutmann’s arguments raise a number of questions, of which I can engage only a handful in this short review. One concerns the proper scope of ‘public’ concerns. At various points, Gutmann gestures toward the thesis that the legitimate purview of even democratic government is limited (pp. 47, 54)—for example, when she states

(rightly, in my view) that laws requiring public school children to salute the flag 'overreached the bounds of what any legitimate law should require' (p. 175). She is less than clear, however, about the basis of limits to government. Her argument relies heavily on the existence of inviolable 'basic rights', but she repeatedly insists that the content of such rights is subject to reasonable disagreement (see, for example, pp. 72 and 79). This would seem to constitute (suitably deliberative) democratic majorities as the ultimate arbiters of individual rights. If so, it is hard to see how rights can demarcate the perimeter of democratic legitimacy.

Gutmann's discussion of cultural groups takes up the familiar question of exit rights. At first blush, she appears to reject outright the claim (which she attributes to Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit, among others) that the existence of publicly secured exit rights is enough to warrant acceptance of illiberal and undemocratic group practices. But as the argument proceeds, she distinguishes, as have others, between (merely) 'formal' and 'effective' exit rights. Only the latter can ensure truly informed consent to otherwise impermissible practices.

Gutmann's account conflates two distinct kinds of cases. The first arises when government devolves to groups legal authority over important questions, a move that can eliminate exit rights altogether. In Israel, for example, civil marriage does not exist, and the Orthodox rabbinate controls the terms under which individuals who are even nominally Jewish can get married and divorced, at least within the borders of Israel. (Christian and Muslims are subject to parallel confessional authorities.) It is hard to square this arrangement with the basic principles of liberal democracy.

A different kind of case arises when the state permits groups to act in ways that burden (without outright prohibiting) an individual's decision to exit. Gutmann acknowledges that leaving a group with which one closely identifies is bound to be burdensome to some extent. The question is when the group's practices constitute an undue or excessive burden on the right of exit. We may agree with Gutmann that forcing individuals to surrender all property as a condition of leaving renders the right of exit ineffective (p. 94); this is an easy case. A tougher issue is whether the state should require group to ensure that 'all children receive an education that enables them to exercise informed consent about membership in any given cultural group, which means being exposed to alternatives and taught the skills of critical thinking about them' (p. 61). Gutmann seems to believe that a group's failure to do so constitutes a *per se* violation of the criterion of effectiveness. I disagree, for both theoretical and practical reasons. I do not believe that parents are morally required to give their children an education that is neutral between (say) their religious faith and alternatives to it or that teaches children how to be critical of that faith. Nor is such instruction necessary in practice. Large numbers of young adults brought up in highly restricted circumstances (Orthodox Jews and Amish, among many others) end up leaving the group that totally dominated their upbringing. It may well be that they constitute a paradigm of informed decision-making, because their rejection of their communities of origin takes place on the basis of the fullest conceivable information about these communities.

Overall, the category of the 'voluntary' has what appears to be an ambiguous status in Gutmann's theory. She denies that to be morally acceptable, group membership must be voluntary. This point goes well beyond membership in ascriptive groups, which by definition is not voluntary. Labor unions are hardly ascriptive groups, but their legal structure often requires individuals to join as a condition of

obtaining and retaining employment. Although the costs of exit are so high as to rule out exit for most individuals, Gutmann regards unions as consistent with core democratic principles. A familiar argument is that unions cannot pursue the collective good of their members without binding rules against free-riders and defectors. This may well be so. But then how are unions to be distinguished from the cultural groups to which the United States and Canada have given the legal authority to burden entrance and exit, and whose practices Gutmann criticizes? Like unions, these groups argue that they cannot pursue their distinctive collective good without the power to sanction free-riders and defectors. Perhaps the real distinction Gutmann has in mind is not between the practices of unions and cultural groups, but rather between the kinds of collective goods they pursue. If so, she owes us a fuller account of the basis on which some of these goods may be deemed worthier than others.

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Sarah Stroud and Christine Tappolet (eds.), *Weakness of Will and Practical Irrationality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, an imprint of Oxford University Press, 2003). 328 pp. ISBN 0199257361 (hbk). Hardback/Paperback. £35.00/£–.

This volume is a collection of papers, all but one of which were presented at a conference on the same topic at the University of Montreal in 2001. The editors have also added a brief introduction, half of which is devoted to a very quick overview of some of the relevant background literature on weakness of will and practical irrationality, while the other half summarizes the main claims of each of the papers in the volume.

The contributors, in order of appearance, are Michael Smith, Richard Holton, Philip Pettit, Christine Tappolet, Sarah Stroud, Sergio Tenenbaum, Gary Watson, Ralph Wedgwood, Duncan MacIntosh, Joseph Heath and Ronald de Sousa. As is common in reviews of collections such as this one, I will first briefly summarize each contribution, and then comment in more detail on one of the papers.

Michael Smith ('Rational Capacities') attempts to explicate our pre-philosophical intuitions about the differences between cases of recklessness, weakness and compulsion in terms of the different rational capacities that the individuals in question either possess or fail to possess.

Richard Holton ('How is Strength of Will Possible') offers a précis of several chapters from a proposed book on the will. He argues that the resources provided by beliefs, desires and intentions are insufficient to account for the phenomenon of strength of will, and that instead we need to appeal to a distinct faculty of willpower.

Philip Pettit ('Akrasia, Collective and Individual') adopts the novel strategy of trying to illuminate individual cases of *akrasia* by first considering group cases. More specifically, he gives conditions for the kind of group (the 'self-unifying cooperative') that would be capable of exhibiting *akrasia*, and then proceeds to understand the individual case analogously as involving a kind of constitutional disorder.

Following on the renewed interest in philosophical accounts of the emotions, Christine Tappolet ('Emotions and the Intelligibility of Akratic Action') argues that

emotions can make an action which is contrary to a normative judgement intelligible in a way that *akratic* actions which don't involve emotions are not. Emotions for Tappolet involve perceptions of value, and this allows her to endorse the claim made by Audi, Arpaly, and others that some *akratic* actions in which the judgement is false may actually be more rational than if the agent had succeeded in acting in accordance with the judgement in the first place.

Sergio Tenenbaum ('*Accidie*, Evaluation, and Motivation') proposes a novel and interesting strategy for defending the following claim: 'To desire something is to conceive it to be good, from the serious threat proposed by cases of *accidie* or general dejection and depression in which the agent seems to lack any motivation to do what she takes to be good or desirable.'

Gary Watson ('The Work of the Will') distinguishes between internalist and externalist conceptions of agency, where the former are committed to the existence of a necessary connection between the will and the good. He then proceeds to argue against the thesis that there is no room on the internalist view for a conception of the will except as equivalent to practical judgement. Watson also discusses in some detail the question of what role, if any, the will has to play in theoretical reasoning.

In 'Choosing Rationally and Choosing Correctly', Wedgwood attempts to advance the debate between broadly recognitional and constructivist views of practical reason by articulating and defending a novel version of the former approach. According to a simplified version of Wedgwood's proposal, a choice is rational if it is rational for the agent to believe that the option chosen is a good thing to do, where the sense of 'good' is a purely formal rather than substantive concept.

In 'Prudence and the Temporal Structure of Practical Reasons', Duncan MacIntosh responds to Nagel's well-known work on prudence in the context of defending a present-aim approach to rationality. Accordingly, MacIntosh rejects the claim that prudence is rationally obligatory.

Joseph Heath ('Practical Irrationality and the Structure of Decision Theory') provides an admirably clear discussion of decision theory in the context of arguing that it should be construed neither as purely descriptive of our actual reasoning, nor as purely normative for determining what people should do. Rather, what decision theory does according to Heath is 'work out the implications of the commitments that are implicitly taken on by an agent who occupies a certain position in the game of giving and asking for reasons' (p. 264).

Finally, in 'Paradoxical Emotion: On *Sui Generis* Emotional Irrationality', Ronald de Sousa first distinguishes strategic rationality (which maximizes the likelihood of successful action) from epistemic rationality (which maximizes the likelihood of true belief). He then argues that disputes between these two kinds of rationality can be adjudicated by a third kind, namely emotional rationality.

Let me spend a bit more time on Sarah Stroud's contribution, 'Weakness of Will and Practical Judgement'. Stroud is concerned with two views about the relationship between practical judgements (especially those judgements of the form 'I have most reason to ϕ ') and intentional action or intention formation. According to her preferred view, practical judgements bear a necessary relationship to subsequent action or intention formation in rational agents. On this view, when an agent suffers from weakness of the will in failing to act in accordance with his practical judgement, he is invariably irrational. According to what Stroud calls the alternative 'Humean externalist' view, practical judgements issue in actions or intentions only with the

help of an intermediate *desire*. While the Humean has several options to choose from, a natural choice for this desire is a general desire to do (or form the intention of doing) what we have most reason to do (p. 128).

Stroud attempts to motivate her view by arguing both that the Humean alternative is no better off when it comes to the 'structural elements' that it must make appeal to, and that when it comes to the phenomenon of global *akrasia*, it is in fact significantly worse off. Let me briefly raise a doubt about both of these arguments.

Stroud asserts that the Humean view is necessarily committed to the following instrumentalist principle:

- (P1) Form an intention to ϕ when you want to ψ and believe that by ϕ ing you will ψ (p. 134).

Stroud goes on to claim that the Humean 'in effect makes a categorical structural claim about the transmission of reason-giving force from ends to means. The bindingness of the hypothetical imperative is itself categorical' (p. 135). This is then enough to show that both the practical judgement and Humean views are committed to categorical imperatives of practical reason.

But it is not obvious to me that a Humean view about the connection between practical judgements and intention formation needs to be committed to (P1). For one thing, as presented the Humean view is a view about the *explanation* of intention formation and action in cases of judgement formation, not about the way in which such formation and action *should* be carried out. In addition, P1 looks to be a principle governing *deliberation*, and not the causal activities of the mental states which result once a practical judgement has been formed. There the relevant principle seems to be something like:

- (P2) Form an intention to ϕ when you believe that you have most reason to ϕ and want to do (or form an intention to do) what you have most reason to do.

Something like this principle seems to be a far more natural choice to serve as the 'categorical imperative of practical reason' for a Humean view of the connection between judgement and action.

Stroud's actual objection to the Humean view concerns the possibility of global *akrasia*. Given that the Humean requires the presence of a distinct mental state in order to allow a judgement to issue in action or intention formation, it follows that it is at least possible for there to be a world in which we *never* act in accordance with our judgements in virtue of failing to have the requisite intermediary desire. But, says Stroud, such a world is not clearly conceivable or coherent (p. 144).

Stroud rightly notes that one way a Humean might respond is by arguing that what makes such a world difficult to conceive is that the agents in question are all in a permanent state of practical irrationality. But, she claims, the Humean does not have the resources to make this claim—'[t]hese beings who are completely uninfluenced by the conclusions they reach about what they have most reason to do are still *practically rational agents*; they are simply rational agents with a different inventory of desires than is typical of human beings hereabouts. On the Humean picture—in contradistinction to the practical-judgement view—it is not constitutive of rational agency to be influenced by such considerations' (pp. 144-45, emphasis hers).

But again this is not obvious. Stroud seems to have P1 in mind when asserting that according to the Humean, global *akratias* are not practically irrational. But as far as I can see, there is no reason given for thinking that P1 is the *only* principle of practical rationality that the Humean can appeal to (if the Humean does so in the first place). And Stroud herself suggests some additional principles earlier in her paper which express '*uncontroversial* and indeed compelling ideas about rational agency' (p. 137, emphasis mine):

- (P3) It is constitutive of rational practical thought to be motivated by (your judgement of) good reasons.
- (P4) Rational practical thought constitutively connects recognition of (practical) reasons with intention and action.
- (P5) Reason-judgements have, as it were, automatic practical pertinence with respect to intention and action (p. 137).

As Stroud rightly asks, 'What is a rational agent, if not, in the first instance, one who perceives, responds to, and indeed acts on the basis of reasons?' (p. 138, emphasis hers).

The editors together with Oxford University Press have put together an attractive volume. Combining all the references together at the end proved to be very helpful, as did the fine index. However, one puzzling feature of the volume turned out to be the rationale behind the ordering of the papers, as, for example, the two papers that focus directly on the emotions appear at almost opposite ends of the book.

As far as the overall content is concerned, the collection is a bit uneven. Many of the papers are of noticeably high quality (e.g. those by Holton, Watson and Wedgwood, among others), but a few are significantly weaker, either because they do not display the same argumentative sophistication, or because they at times simply repeat arguments which are already familiar from the author's previous work on the subject. In general, however, this volume represents an important contribution to action theory, philosophy of mind and moral psychology, and should be read by anyone who works in these areas.

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Martin Van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner (eds.), *Republicanism: Republicanism and Constitutionalism in Early Modern Europe*, I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). 432 pp. ISBN 0521807565 (hbk). Hardback/Paperback. £46.99/£-.

Martin Van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner (eds.), *Republicanism: The Values of Republicanism in Early Modern Europe*, II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). 414 pp. ISBN 0521802032 (hbk). Hardback/Paperback. £46.99/£-.

Republicanism is an intellectually rich and conceptually complex tradition of political thought that focuses on the vital interrelation between freedom, public good and civic virtue. Republicanism originated in classical Rome, although some of its features are found in the political discourse and practice of the Greek city-states.

Pocock, Skinner and Viroli have recounted the fascinating history of republicanism and Pettit has elaborated the idea of republican freedom as non-domination that provides an intriguing alternative to the standard liberal conception of freedom as non-interference. The republican discourse through its long journey from classical Rome and Renaissance Italy to the Dutch Republic, the English Civil War and the American and French Revolutions does not refer to a monolithic doctrine. Yet it deals in principle with the same problem: to conceptualize a form of government that involves the citizens' active participation and serves the common good.

These two edited volumes contain the intellectual fruits of a project on republicanism as a shared European heritage, sponsored by the European Science Foundation. Thirty scholarly essays address historical and theoretical issues related to the republican discourse in early modern Europe, and enrich our historical understanding of republicanism. The story of republicanism in the mid-sixteenth to the late-eighteenth century unravels in six thematic sections which systematize the overall project and draw a panoramic intellectual map. Volume I is devoted to issues of anti-monarchism, citizenship and constitutionalism. Volume II explores themes related to republican values, the concept of gender and the rise of commercial society. The contributors are: Armitage on empire and liberty; Bödeker on natural law and the mixed constitution in Dutch and German political discourses; Boralevi on the classical foundational myths of European republicanism; Comparato on republicanism in Italy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; Conti on republican rituals in Italian political thought in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; Dzelzainis on anti-monarchism in English republicanism; Fauré on women and the republic; Von Friedeburg on civic humanism and republican citizenship in early modern Germany; Geuna on republicanism and commerce in the Scottish Enlightenment; Gil on republicanism in early modern Spain; Grześkowiak-Krwawicz on anti-monarchism in Polish republicanism; Hampsher-Monk on virtue and politeness; Kapossy on neo-Roman republicanism and commerce in eighteenth-century Berne; Larrère on women, republicanism and the growth of commerce; Opaliński on civic humanism and republican citizenship in the Polish Renaissance; Oz-Salzberger on Scots, Germans, republic and commerce; Peltonen on citizenship and republicanism in Elizabethan England; Pii on republicanism and commercial society in eighteenth-century Italy; Scott on classical republicanism in seventeenth-century England and the Netherlands; Skinner on classical liberty and the coming of the English Civil War; Sonenscher on republicanism and commercial society in eighteenth-century France; Spitz on D'Holbach's critique of republican virtue; Tilmans on republican citizenship and civic humanism in the Burgundian-Habsburg Netherlands; Van Gelderen on sovereignty and mixed constitution in Dutch and German political thought; Vega on feminist republicanism and the political perception of gender; Velema on anti-monarchism in early modern Dutch political thought; Winch on commercial realities and republican principles; Worden on republicanism, regicide and republic; Wright on republican ideas in eighteenth-century France; and Zurbuchen on republicanism and toleration.

The arguments and analyses of thirty essays, compelling and revealing as they are, cannot be discussed in detail in a book review. In this review, my strategy is to give the reader an idea of the diversity of themes and the quality of the studies by briefly discussing some representative essays. A short exposition of contributions by Bödeker, Fauré, Geuna, Tilmans and Velema will serve this purpose.

Bödeker unravels the debate concerning the mixed constitution in Dutch and German political thought around 1700—a debate triggered off by the crisis of political Aristotelianism and natural law theory. The new premise of indivisible sovereignty led to the rejection of the concept of the mixed republic on the assertion that, in the long term, it cannot safeguard political stability. Bödeker discusses the theories of Spinoza, Pufendorf, Treuer and Huber as paradigmatic for the main debates on the mixed republic. Spinoza accepts the doctrine of undivided sovereignty and defends democracy as the best form of government. Pufendorf endorses the principle of indivisible sovereignty and advocates the *monarchia limitata* as the most preferable type of government. Finally, Treuer and Huber attempted to unify the concepts of sovereignty and mixed constitution.

Fauré shows that republicanism shaped its discourse on women, by using the hermeneutic framework of civic humanism which adopted the gender prejudices of antiquity concerning the organization of the polis. Both in the ancient and the modern republics women were excluded from active political participation. The received view of the female inadequacy with regard to government was sustained by the traditional narrative of women's virtues. Fauré argues that it was 'the expression of rights as climax of a then institutionalised discourse' (Vol. II, p. 136) in the writings of De Gournay and Wollstonecraft, which brought the story of feminine virtues to an end.

Geuna analyses Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767) and illustrates how republicanism influenced Ferguson's critique of modern commercial society. Ferguson, being an Enlightenment thinker, accepts as inevitable and indispensable the transformations that shaped modern society, yet he employs his republican perspective to identify the ills and determine the place of the economy in a modern society. Although economy is important, it is not everything. Ferguson focuses on the significance of the political sphere. His republican vision contains a variety of principles: the defence of the republic is the collective affair of all the citizens; devotion to public life brings self-fulfilment; freedom relates to the conflict among virtuous citizens; political participation is an end in itself—but his ideas of citizenship and virtue refer only to the higher ranks of society. Ferguson's case offers a good starting-point for reflecting on differences concerning political conflict, political order, the common good, civic virtue, and the relation between virtue and law, in the republican tradition.

Tilmans investigates the notion of citizenship in the Burgundian-Habsburg Netherlands by focusing on the writings of Canter, Cassander, Grapheus, Erasmus, Biesius, De Damhoudere and Goethalsius, and shows that the idea of civic freedom characterizes the humanist discussions on citizenship. She also demonstrates the continuity of the republican discourse in the Netherlands in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Tilmans elaborates the notion of republican citizenship in Goethalsius's *De foelice et infoelice republica, ad senatum Brugensem* (1566) and discusses, in detail, the happy republic which has civic freedom and virtue as its foundations.

Velema explores two important varieties of early modern Dutch republicanism: (1) the anti-monarchical treatises of the brothers De la Court, published in the 1660s; and (2) De Beaufort's *Treatise on Liberty in Civil Society*, published posthumously in 1737. De la Court outlined the evils of monarchical rule (corruption, vice and untruthfulness in the court life; useless, stupid and ignorant princes; exploitation

and degradation of the subjects). De Beaufort focused on the opposition between (republican) liberty and (political) slavery and asserted that monarchy destroys political virtue and civic equality. Both recognized that 'the greatest threat to the liberty of the country was posed by the Stadholderate, which was viewed as the first step in the direction of monarchy' (Vol. I, p. 24). The anti-monarchical theories of De la Court and De Beaufort, however, lost much of their relevance in the radicalized political discourse of the Patriot movement in the late eighteenth century.

Skinner and Van Gelderen faced a demanding task in editing this two-volume set and achieved the fruitful completion of a grand project. This publication offers some outstanding contributions to the study of European republicanism and stimulates further research and investigation. Republicanism is a vibrant intellectual tradition whose significance is not exhausted in the history of political thought—on the contrary, its vision of political freedom, civic virtue and the common good can enrich substantially our political praxis and understanding of politics and put forward a robust idea of citizenship and good government.

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Gaus, Gerald F., *Contemporary Theories of Liberalism: Public Reason as a Post Enlightenment Project* (London: Sage, 2003). 240 pp. ISBN 0761961399 (pbk). Hardback/Paperback. £60.00/£19.99.

Gerald Gaus's latest book is a welcome contribution to the growing number of textbooks in the field of contemporary political thought. Ostensibly a book about contemporary liberalism, the book's real strength lies in its detailed discussion of how contemporary liberalism has developed into a theory of deliberative democracy concerned with public reason as a central feature of justice in the modern world. Insofar as the book is a textbook aimed at advanced undergraduates and postgraduates, it should interest other scholars too who may be interested in the subject or in need of a general overview of contemporary liberalism. The book is most valuable as a classroom resource and should be read as such. Each chapter is laid out in an accessible way and the narrative flows logically from one topic to the next. Interestingly, the book purposely does not take on certain specific issues in contemporary liberal thought such as distributive justice or property rights, but rather is devoted to more fundamental issues 'of the relation of individual disagreement and shared public principles, how social cooperation is achieved through politics, and how there can be any public principles in our deeply pluralistic world' (p. 21).

The first three chapters of the book provide the reader with a solid foundation in liberal thought discussing writers such as Hobbes, Locke, and Kant. These chapters also sketch out important themes and challenges taken up in later chapters, although each chapter has a stand-alone feel. Not surprisingly the specter of pluralism hangs over the book with considerable weight as Gaus poses the key question driving his analysis and subsequent arguments: 'whether ordered political life based on mutual respect, with a politics that aims at justice, is possible in the modern

world of deep disagreement about values, justice and what is reasonable' (p. x). Gaus sets up his discussion of the various contemporary liberal approaches to this problem by highlighting the important distinction between Enlightenment liberalism and its post-Enlightenment descendents. The early part of the book outlines in some detail the turn away from Enlightenment liberalism as a theory 'irremediably based on the faith that progress in the moral and political sciences will bring about increased convergence among all rational people on the moral and political truth' (p. x). For Gaus it is the broad realization that Enlightenment liberalism as a doctrine of truth could only be enforced by the coercive use of state power against individuals that serves as the departure point for what follows in subsequent chapters. Gaus has identified what he classes as seven post-Enlightenment contemporary theories of liberalism and addresses each of these in turn.

The first two approaches are closely related and focus on Isaiah Berlin's value pluralism and John Gray's *modus vivendi* liberalism. Berlin's work on value pluralism has recently found favor again and a contemporary debate has broken out between John Gray (*Isaiah Berlin* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996]) and *The Two Faces of Liberalism* [Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000]) and William Galston (*Liberal Pluralism: The Implications of Value Pluralism for Political Theory and Practice* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002]) among others. These chapters allow Gaus to delve more deeply into the key issues surrounding value pluralism and the crucial relationship between private and public reason. Berlin's value pluralism revolves around the recognition that plural values without universal truths are not a challenge to liberal thinking, but rather serve as its starting point. And it is from this understanding of modernity that Gray develops what Gaus describes as a Hobbesian-inspired *modus vivendi* liberalism where politics is seen as a working compromise among inherently clashing views. However, Gaus argues that neither of these two liberal pluralist approaches is sufficiently attractive since 'there is no clear path from pluralism to the justification of liberty or liberalism' because 'public reason is created by private reasoners as a means to achieve their private goals' (pp. 83-84). Such a move, according to Gaus, may leave pluralism under threat, especially when these formerly private—and now public—reasons carry the weight of the state behind them. In other words, although these two closely related approaches comprehend the problem, they ultimately fail because they cannot keep private reasons from becoming fused with public reason. The fear is that this move would lead to a potentially oppressive situation for those whose values, for whatever reason, were incompatible with those of the state.

Out of the failure of these first two post-Enlightenment theories examined by Gaus springs a decisively deliberative turn which focuses on the central question of how to free public reason from private reason. The first thought is that all reason must be social in nature, since all thinking must at some point be developed through some sort of 'intersubjective agreement' on the rules which govern us. However, for Gaus, this move toward collective reasoning undermines the basis for instances of reasonable disagreement, so too proves unsatisfactory since it seems to once again deny the fact of pluralism that characterizes the modern world. Gaus sees greater hope in deliberative democracy and goes to great lengths to outline and critically analyse the competing versions put forward by Jürgen Habermas and Joshua Cohen. For Gaus, deliberative democrats believe 'that the essence of a democratic society is the creation of a public, shared, view through public deliberation' (p. 20). This

approach seeks to cope with pluralism by setting down a firm idea of public reason and public justification aimed at securing political power based on consensus among reasonable people. However, an obvious problem is in just who qualifies for the label 'reasonable' and for the most part we end up back where we started—trying to separate public reasons from private reasons. Gaus rightly argues that deliberative democrats face a real problem in trying to solve this dilemma which may lead to the minimization of reason to maximize agreement (pp. 140-43). The next approach analysed is a somewhat dense, but ultimately rewarding study of aggregative public reason where public reason is thought to simply be an aggregation of individual preferences into social decisions through voting.

By the time Gaus's discussion turns to Rawls's political liberalism, a coherent argument for his own approach, justificatory liberalism, begins to take shape. Gaus's discussion of Rawls's thought is engaging and he brings a refreshing tone to what is now well-worn territory. Gaus maintains that Rawls's *political* project ultimately fails to convince insofar as it is an attempt to section off public reason so that it applies in a freestanding and narrow manner. Gaus concludes that Rawls's project cannot sustain itself because political reason cannot be isolated from 'reasonable disputes about non-political values' (pp. 201-202). Instead, Gaus argues that post-Enlightenment contemporary theories of liberty are best thought of as strategies aimed at securing 'a robust conception of public reasoning—citizens reasoning together—while avoiding making too much a matter of consensus, or looking for agreement where none is to be found' (p. 230). Gaus sees this not so much as contemporary liberalism's problem, but rather a condition brought about by modernity. Perhaps he is right to suggest that the best we can do in light of deep reasonable disagreements about values and the ends of life is to try to keep coming back to public reason and justification and hope that somehow we get where we are going in a just and fair manner.

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Books Received

Books appearing in this list may still be reviewed in future issues.

Bernstein, R.J., *Radical Evil* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002). 304 pp. ISBN 0745629547 (pbk). Hardback/Paperback. £50.00/£15.99.

Brink, David O., *Perfectionism and the Common Good: Themes in the Philosophy of T.H. Green* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, an imprint of Oxford University Press, 2003). 154 pp. ISBN 0199264409 (hbk). Hardback/Paperback. £18.99/£–.

Calhoun, Cheshire, *Setting the Moral Compass: Essays by Women Philosophers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). 398 pp. ISBN 0195154746 (pbk). Hardback/Paperback. £56.99/£18.99.

Carter, M., *T.H. Green and the Development of Ethical Socialism* (Green Studies, 1; Exeter: Imprint Academia, 2003). 230 pp. ISBN 0907845320 (hbk). Hardback/Paperback. £25.00/£–.

Charlton, B., and P. Andras, *The Modernization Imperative* (Exeter: Imprint Academia, 2003). 96 pp. ISBN 0907845525 (pbk). Hardback/Paperback. £–/£8.95.

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Foot, P., *Moral Dilemmas and other Topics in Moral Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, an imprint of Oxford University Press, 2002). 226 pp. ISBN 019925284X (pbk). Hardback/Paperback. £35.00/£14.99.

Frey, R.G., and C.H. Wellman, *A Companion to Applied Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003). 704 pp. ISBN 1557865949 (hbk). Hardback/Paperback. £85.00/£–.

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Gensler, H., E. Spurgin and J. Swindal, *Ethics: Contemporary Readings* (London: Routledge, 2003). 400 pp. ISBN 041525681X (pbk). Hardback/Paperback. £55.00/£16.99.

Gorman, Jonathan, *Rights and Reason: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Rights* (Chesham: Acumen, 2003). 192 pp. ISBN 1902683749 (pbk). Hardback/Paperback. £40.00/£13.95.

Graham, Gordon, *The Case Against the Democratic State: An Essay in Cultural Criticism* (Exeter: Imprint Academia, 2002). 96 pp. ISBN 090784538X (pbk). Hardback/Paperback. £-/£8.95.

Green, T.H., *Prolegomena to Ethics* (ed. David O. Brink; Oxford: Clarendon Press, an imprint of Oxford University Press, 2003). 629 pp. ISBN 0199266433 (pbk). Hardback/Paperback. £50.00/£19.99.

Heinaman, Robert, *Plato and Aristotle's Ethics* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2003). 212 pp. ISBN 0754634035 (hbk). Hardback/Paperback. £37.50/£-.

Hoeffe, O., and R. Pippin (eds.), *Hegel on Ethics and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). 360 pp. ISBN 0521818141 (hbk). Hardback/Paperback. £47.50/£-.

Jacobs, L., *Pursuing Equal Opportunities: The Theory and Practice of Egalitarian Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). 288 pp. ISBN 0521530210 (pbk). Hardback/Paperback. £45.00/£15.95.

Katz, Leonard D. (ed.), *Evolutionary Origins of Morality* (Exeter: Imprint Academia, 2000). xvi + 352 pp. ISBN 090784507X (pbk). Hardback/Paperback. £-/£14.95.

Levinas, E., *Unforeseen History* (trans. N. Poller; Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004). xxv + 149 pp. ISBN 025202883X (hbk). Hardback/Paperback. \$34.95/\$-.

Machan, Tibor R., *The Liberty Option* (Exeter: Imprint Academia, 2003). 104 pp. ISBN 0907845630 (pbk). Hardback/Paperback. £-/£8.95.

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Miller, Alexander, *An Introduction to Contemporary Metaethics* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2003). 312 pp. ISBN 0745623441 (pbk). Hardback/Paperback. £55/£16.99.

Moellendorf, Darrel, *Cosmopolitan Justice* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2002). 224 pp. ISBN 0813365783 (pbk). Hardback/Paperback. £53.99/£17.99.

Pangle, Thomas L., *Political Philosophy and the God of Abraham* (Baltimore, MA: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003). 296 pp. ISBN 080187328 (hbk). Hardback/Paperback. £29.50/£-.

Podoksik, E., *In Defence of Modernity: Vision and Philosophy of Michael Oakeshott* (Oakeshott Studies, 4; Exeter: Imprint Academia, 2003). 268 pp. ISBN 0907845665 (hbk). Hardback/Paperback. £25.00/£–.

Pogge, Thomas, *World Poverty and Human Rights* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002). 296 pp. ISBN 0745629954 (pbk). Hardback/Paperback. £55.00/£16.99.

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West, Robin L., *Re-Imaging Justice: Progressive Interpretations of Formal Equality, Rights, and the Rule of Law* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2003). 204 pp. ISBN 0754622967 (hbk). Hardback/Paperback. £55.00/£–.