

Truth, Intuitionism, Pluralism

ethical mission. Lagerkvist (1971) had God reply to a question regarding his intention in creating human beings with, "I only intended that you need never be content with nothing" (p. 65).

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Commentary to Feature Review

THE FUTURE OF MORAL PSYCHOLOGY: Truth, Intuition, and the Pluralist Way

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What are the recent theoretical developments in the study of moral psychology? The publication of the *Handbook of Moral Behavior and Development* (Kurtines & Gewirtz, 1991) provides us with an excuse to assess the state of the art. It also provides us with a chance to engage in some augury (and perhaps influence the future) by making an educated guess about where the discipline is heading. We assess the current state of moral psychology in the light of a history of conflicts along three theoretical fronts: cognitivism versus emotivism, pluralism versus monism, and intuitionism versus rationalism. We foresee the consolidation of a cognitive-pluralist-intuitionist theory of moral psychology whose main tenet is that moral appraisals (this is good, that is right) are grounded in self-evident truths (intuitions), saturated with local cultural meanings, and activated by means of the emotions.

SOME PRINCIPALS OF MORAL PSYCHOLOGY: THE CURRENT STATE OF THE ART

The 40 chapters contained in the *Handbook* make it clear that the voice of Lawrence Kohlberg still dominates the current scene. The reference lists contain 143 references to Kohlberg's work, more than twice the number for any other author. A survey of all entries in the PsycLit data base under the descriptor "moral develop-

ment" confirms this picture: Sixty percent of the entries for 1991 either employ or criticize Kohlberg's theory and methods.

Kohlberg's preeminence derives from the fact that in the wake of the "cognitive revolution" of the 1960s, he temporarily gained the upper hand over psychoanalysts, radical relativists, and social learning theorists in the battle between cognitivism and emotivism. Moral cognitivism is the position that qualities such as goodness, rightness, justice, or beneficence are real and knowable and that moral statements can therefore be either true or false (see Gewirth, 1984). A cognitivist approach to moral development tries to identify the particular mix of intellectual skills (e.g., perspective taking) and interpersonal experiences (e.g., caretaking) that makes it possible to apprehend or figure out moral truth. The basic point of cognitivist theories of moral psychology is that everyday moral appraisals (e.g., that the police officers in the Rodney King video behaved in a morally repulsive way) can be right or wrong; they are not subjective or inculcated tastes, opinions, or attitudes, as emotivism would have it. Kohlberg succeeded at driving home the cognitivist's point about the objective reality of justice, which he viewed as the supreme moral truth.

The most influential and widely cited critic of Kohlberg's theory is Carol Gilligan. Gilligan's importance derives from the fact that in the wake of the feminist revolution of the 1970s, she temporarily gained the upper hand over Kohlberg in the battle between pluralism and monism. She can be credited with the claim that the realm of moral truth is diverse, not homogeneous, and consists of an ethics of care as well as an ethics of justice.

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Finally, research on the importance of moral emotions flourished during the 1980s, as the cognitive revolution branched out into multiple skirmishes, including the battle of intuitionism versus rationalism. Cognitive intuitionists (e.g., Kagan, 1984; Lazarus, 1991) assume that moral appraisals are generated rapidly and automatically, without deliberate reflection or deductive or inductive reasoning. They assume that verbal judgments about actions and goals (this is right, that is good) and morally relevant emotional appraisals (pride, disgust, empathy, shame, guilt, anger, dread) are grounded in a base set of nondeducible and noninducible self-evident truths, for example, that it is wrong to inflict pain arbitrarily, that it is right to treat like cases alike, that it is right that wrongs should be repaired.

Ironically, if the cognitive intuitionists win the day, the emotions (reinterpreted as a rapid system of cognitive appraisal) may well be restored to their rightful place in the study of moral development. It is not just emotivists who believe that "emotions may be the gatekeeper to the moral world." Cognitive intuitionists believe it as well (see Lucas, 1971; Moore, 1903/1966; Ross, 1930; Seung, 1993; Shweder & Sullivan, 1993; also Strawson, 1949, p. 24, from whom the "gatekeeper" quote is drawn).

SOME PRINCIPLES OF MORAL PSYCHOLOGY: THE EMOTIVIST LEGACY OF DAVID HUME

Hume described the state of the art in moral philosophy in 1777 (1777/1960). His description is astonishingly accurate for moral psychology in 1993: "There has been a controversy started of late . . . concerning the general foundation of Morals; whether they be derived from Reason, or from Sentiment; whether we attain the knowledge of them by a chain of argument and induction, or by an immediate feeling and finer internal sense; whether like all sound judgments of truth and falsehood, they should be the same to every rational intelligent being; or whether like the perception of beauty and deformity, they be found entirely on the particular fabric and constitution of the human species" (p. 2). Hume believed there were only two possible resolutions to this controversy concerning the foundation of morals.

The first possible resolution is the cognitivist resolution, that moral qualities are objective and universal qualities of events in the world and can be apprehended by means of reason through a "chain of argument and induction," and that moral appraisals can reasonably be judged to be true or false.

The second possible resolution is the emotivist resolution, that the moral qualities of events in the world do not exist aside from people's sentimental reactions to those events, including their feelings of approval and disapproval. For emotivists, morality (like beauty) is in the mind of the arbiter. Moral appraisals are not subject to

determinations of truth and falsehood, and cannot be judged against rational standards. They are simply declarations of preferences and values.

Given those two choices, Hume opted for emotivism. Having ceded to reason nothing more than the instrumental capacity to calculate the most efficient means for achieving a given end, he argued that appraisals about which ends in life are bad and which ones are good must be rooted entirely in people's passions, interests, and will. This led Hume to a series of breathtaking emotivist conclusions, from which he had the intellectual courage not to shrink: "Reason is and ought to only be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey." "Reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will." "Tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger." (See Hume, 1739-1740/1969, pp. 460-463.) In Hume's emotivism, ends may provide the rational justification of means, but nothing can provide a rational justification of ends.

One can develop a cognitivist theory or an emotivist theory about any kind of mental state. The distinction between cognitivism and emotivism is not peculiar to the study of moral appraisals. There are cognitivist theories of the emotions and emotivist theories of inductive reasoning. The mark of a cognitivist theory is the assumption that mental states serve primarily a representational function. The mark of an emotivist theory is the assumption that mental states serve primarily nonrepresentational functions. Cognitivist theories explain a mental state by reference to facts or truths about the objects and events which that mental state "re-presents" (sometimes inaccurately), on the assumption that such objects and events exist and can be invoked as external standards for explaining and judging (as rational or irrational) mental states. Emotivist theories explain the occurrence and character of a mental state without assessing the veracity of the mental state vis-à-vis the objects or events it represents, on the assumption that no such objects and events exist aside from the mental representation of them.

Prior to the cognitive revolution of the 1960s, emotivist theories of moral psychology flourished and were used to explain the apparent diversity of moral appraisals across history and culture (e.g., why eating beef is judged a sin in Delhi but not in Dallas). It was widely recognized that moral disagreements are interminable. Emotivist theories offered a simple explanation for why moral disputes go on forever: There are no moral facts. Morality is nothing more than a system of inculcated, reinforced, or introjected values, evolved to serve some pragmatic (nonrepresentational) function such as influencing people to do what you want, coordinating social activities, or balancing intrapsychic conflict anxiety.

THE COGNITIVIST LEGACY OF LAWRENCE KOHLBERG

It is a striking fact of intellectual history that emotivist theories have nearly disappeared from the intellectual landscape of moral psychology. This disappearance is due largely to the bold formulations and fortunate timing of Kohlberg (1969). Kohlberg argued that judgments about the moral world could be true or false, better or worse, just like judgments about the physical world. When children learn to conserve mass in Piagetian tasks, we do not hesitate to say they are developing a more correct, adequate, and true understanding of the physical world. Kohlberg's cognitivism employed the same logic for moral judgments. Kohlberg drew on Rawls (1971) to make philosophical claims about the superiority of justice reasoning. He backed up these claims with longitudinal and cross-cultural evidence that justice reasoning was in fact the endpoint of moral development. Kohlberg made the world safe for cognitivism.

Hume (and Kohlberg) saw only two possible resolutions to the "controversy started of late . . . concerning the general foundation of Morals." The cognitivist resolution implied that morals "should be the same to every rational intelligent being," at least upon sufficient reflection, and "we attain the knowledge of [morals] by a chain of argument and induction." Kohlberg endorsed both of these propositions. But cognitivist theories come in many varieties. Much of the recent work in moral psychology can be seen as a challenge to one or the other of the two propositions, from within the framework of a cognitivist theory. Pluralists like Gilligan disagree with monists like Kohlberg about the first proposition, and intuitionists like Kagan disagree with rationalists like Kohlberg about the second.

PLURALISM VERSUS MONISM

Moral appraisals seem to differ widely across people, cultures, and historical periods. They differ at the level of actions deemed morally obnoxious; in India, for example, among Brahmins, it is highly immoral for a son to eat meat or cut his hair during the 10 days that follow the death of his father (see Shweder, Mahapatra, & Miller, 1987/1990). Moral appraisals also differ in terms of the moral qualities (e.g., rights, duty, care, sanctity) that are salient in judging the rightness or goodness of an action or goal.

Shweder (1984) described three strategies for dealing with this apparent diversity across time and space. The *universalist* strategy (exemplified by Elliot Turiel) is to interpret apparent difference as superficial, and to seek commonality in a more universal deep structure. The *developmentalist* strategy (exemplified by Kohlberg) is to acknowledge the existence of differences and to rank

them as stages, from primitive to advanced. Both of these strategies are forms of moral monism, asserting that there is only one correct or mature morality. In contrast, the third strategy, *moderate relativism*, is a form of moral pluralism, accepting that there can be more than one correct and mature morality. Gilligan (1982) argued against the prevailing monism of morality research in the 1970s, which seemed to rank women as deficient in the one true morality of justice.

Kohlberg and others have pointed out that the mere existence of difference between groups is not evidence that a measuring instrument is biased. We do not throw out our measuring tapes when they tell us that women are, on average, shorter than men. But Gilligan's (1982) now-famous critique of her ex-advisor said more than this. Gilligan asserted that people have two moral "voices," or ways of talking and thinking about moral issues. Kohlberg measured only the development of the justice voice, ignoring (or missing the sophistication of) the care voice. Gilligan found in narrative analyses that American women use the care voice more than the justice voice, while American men do the reverse, yet she noted that both genders use both voices. However, studies of moral reasoning in hypothetical dilemmas have generally failed to find gender differences (Walker, 1991). Some scholars think Gilligan misread the difference between justice and care as a gender issue.

Whether the two moral voices are associated with the two sexes or not, Gilligan has, by common consensus, won the argument for pluralism. Kohlberg, Levine, and Hower (1983) acknowledged that there is more to the moral domain than justice reasoning, and they specifically cited an additional cluster of virtues including "charity, love, caring, brotherhood, or community" (p. 19). This cluster is not homogeneous, however, and there is ambiguity about how the ethics of care is to be conceptualized: as a sensitivity to other people's needs? as the particularistic side of justice in its guise as mercy? as the role obligation of guardianship?

More recently, cultural psychologists have been exploring forms of limited pluralism. The moral value of justice may be recognized in some form in all cultures, yet there are additional moral goods that are often used in sophisticated (or "postconventional") ways to resolve moral dilemmas. Japanese see a moral value in preserving group harmony, even in some cases when justice might be compromised (see Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Indians see a moral value in meeting one's social role obligations, even when these may conflict with the demands of justice (Miller & Bersoff, 1992; Shweder & Much, 1991; Snarey & Keljo, 1991; for a powerful theory of limited pluralism, see Fiske, 1991, 1992).

Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, and Park (in press; see also Shweder, 1990) find that moral discourse tends,

cross-culturally, to make use of three distinct but coherent clusters of moral concerns. These three ways of talking about morality are labeled the ethics of *autonomy* (concerns about freedom, rights, harm, and justice), *community* (concerns about duty and the collective enterprise), and *divinity* (concerns about purity, sanctity, and the realization of one's spiritual nature). Haidt, Koller, and Dias (in press) found that people of high and low social class in Brazil and North America made differential use of these three ethics when judging acts that were harmless yet offensive (such as eating one's dead pet dog or cleaning one's toilet with the national flag). And Balle-Jensen (1993) has confirmed that North American college students are unusual in their almost exclusive reliance on the ethics of autonomy. Older Americans of the same social class are more willing to talk about the moral issues of community and divinity.

INTUITIONISM VERSUS RATIONALISM (AND NATURALISM)

How exactly does one discover or figure out moral truths? Hume described cognitivists as relying on a "chain of argument and induction." But in fact one can be a cognitivist yet hold any of three views on how people acquire moral knowledge. One can be a cognitive rationalist, a cognitive naturalist, or a cognitive intuitionist.

Theories of cognitive rationalism argue that knowledge of moral truth comes from a process of argumentation and deductive reasoning. Kant, for example, was a cognitive rationalist. So was Kohlberg, who was a Kantian as well. Both Kant and Kohlberg tried to counter Hume's emotivism by grounding a cognitivist theory of morals not in the instrumental means-ends reasoning that Hume parodied so effectively, but rather in the principle of consistency inherent in deductive reasoning. They proposed a method for deducing right conduct from the logic of noncontradiction, as in Kant's categorical imperative. (The critiques of this famous and failed attempt to derive substantive moral conclusions from a purely formal logical principle are voluminous; see Seung, 1993).

Theories of cognitive naturalism, in contrast, argue that the methods for acquiring knowledge of the moral world are similar to the methods for acquiring knowledge about the natural world: observation and inductive reasoning. The idea is that actions that are right and outcomes that are good exhibit certain defining properties, which can be observed directly with the senses, much the way one can observe the defining properties of a tiger. Turiel is an eminent contemporary cognitive naturalist. He argues that moral violations, such as murder, contain intrinsic features, such as harm, which are directly observable (Turiel, 1983; Turiel, Killen, & Helwig, 1987).

Most philosophers, however, are uncomfortable with the idea that goodness or rightness or even harm is a natural property (like redness) that anyone with a normal sensory apparatus can see. Yet almost everyone allows that appraisals of rightness and goodness are unavoidably made about almost all of the actions that one does see. How is this done? Cognitive intuitionists offer a third kind of account.

Theories of cognitive intuitionism assume that moral properties (e.g., rightness, goodness, gratitude, beneficence, justice, sanctity, fraternity) are objective and knowable but apprehended as self-evident truths. Such theories assume that moral knowledge is distinct from other forms of knowledge (knowledge of geometry, knowledge of minerals, knowledge of how to build a house) in that it cannot be derived solely from deductive reason (e.g., a principle of consistency or universalizability) or instrumental reason (e.g., knowledge of the most efficient use of means to accomplish a given end) or inductive reason (e.g., systematic observation of the natural properties of objects and events in the world).

Theories of cognitive intuitionism assume that the project of grounding moral appraisals in deductive, inductive, or instrumental reason has failed. Such theories assume that what this failure implies is not that emotivism is right and objective moral qualities do not exist, but rather that objective moral qualities are neither logical properties nor observable properties. Theories of cognitive intuitionism assume that moral qualities are objective properties of a different kind, properties that are open to the rational intuitive capacities of the human mind or nervous system. They can be activated without reflection. They are not dependent on deliberative reason or argumentation to bring them on-line.

One attractive feature of cognitive intuitionism is that it makes it possible to tell the following kind of story about moral pluralism. Following Ross (1930), imagine that the human mind has intuitive access to a plethora of self-evident, abstract moral truths (e.g., fidelity, gratitude, reciprocity, justice, beneficence, self-improvement). These truths are so self-evident that if someone were to deny that, for example, it is right to treat like cases alike and different cases differently, you would suspect either that they did not understand the meaning of those words or that they were not sincere in their denial. Yet there are too many such truths. They cannot all be activated at once. They cannot be institutionalized simultaneously in social practices. Some cultures specialize in the truths of justice and fidelity, others in the truths of duty and care, others in the truths of purity and pollution, and so on.

Moreover, the various objective moral qualities open to apprehension by the intuitive mind are only the abstract "frames" or the "gross architecture" within which

societies historically implement and develop their local and quite divergent moral practices. Thus, for example, although moral appraisals are grounded in an original multiplicity of self-evident moral truths, it is not, on first glance, immediately obvious to an Anglo-American observer precisely why it is morally obnoxious for a Brahman male in India to eat chicken or have a haircut in the days immediately following the death of his father. The case does become self-evident, however, once one recognizes it for what it is: a powerful combination of reciprocity, care, duty, nonmaleficence, and other intuitively available moral qualities.

To recognize the case for what it is, however, one must know the kinds of things orthodox Hindus in India know about death pollution. One must know about the difficulties faced by a reincarnating soul in its attempt to escape from the bondage of the corpse. One must know about the ascetic techniques employed by living relatives (abstaining from sex; fasting from all "hot" foods, such as chicken) to facilitate the absorption of death pollution into their own bodies as a form of assistance to the spirit of the dead. One must know about the migration of pollutions to the extremities of the body. One must know how to remove the pollution by cutting off all head hair, which is done only after the soul is on its way, typically 12 days after the death. In other words, historical and cultural understanding is essential for moral appraisal, yet there is always more to a moral appraisal (the intuition of an abstract moral truth) than only historical and cultural understanding can provide. Taken together, however, moral intuitions and cultural-historical understanding work hand in hand to turn the reality of a cognitive moral pluralism into a credible theoretical possibility.

According to this cognitive-pluralist-intuitionist view, there is such a thing as moral truth, and it is a heterogeneous collection of goods, known through culturally assisted intuition. The base set of abstract, self-evident moral truths is universal but accessed differentially and with particularizing substance.

A second attractive feature of cognitive intuitionism is that it makes it possible to acknowledge the difference between fast and slow cognitive processes, without assimilating this difference to the distinction between "affect" and "cognition." Moral reasoning, like any other kind of explicit and conscious problem solving, is slow. Yet moral intuition, like all intuitive knowledge, is rapid and introspectively opaque. Margolis (1987) argued that most of cognition consists of rapid, intuitive pattern matching, followed (when people are called upon to explain themselves) by slow, *ex post facto* propositional reasoning. Applying this view to the study of moral development suggests that cognitive rationalists such as Kohlberg focused their attention on the slow, *ex post*

facto processes. These processes depend on verbal, deductive, and inductive abilities, which improve throughout childhood, accounting for Kohlberg's age trends. Yet studies of moral intuition find few age trends. Turiel's (1983) method can be reinterpreted as a way to probe children about their moral intuitions (using a series of yes/no questions), and studies that have used this method typically find that 5-year-old children have intuitions similar to those of adults within their own communities.

According to cognitive intuitionism, emotions are the "gatekeeper to the moral world." Emotions "tell us how the world is in a very vivid way" (D'Andrade, 1981, p. 191; also see Shweder, 1993). Emotional responses, it is now generally thought, involve rapid, automatic, and unconscious cognitive appraisals of the significance of events for personal well-being. Lazarus (1991), for example, has proposed a cognitive theory of the emotions in which emotions serve a representational function. In Lazarus's view, the emotions are mental maps of certain kinds of truths. The experience of anger is a representation of a certain kind of interpersonal event (e.g., a demeaning personal insult) that exists both inside and outside the anger, in the mental state and in the state of the world that is represented emotionally.

Crucially, many of the cognitive appraisals that have been postulated as causal conditions for an emotional experience are quite similar to the self-evident truths of morality. Anger is about injustice and the perception of a demeaning personal insult. Sympathy is about harm and suffering. Shame and guilt are about the right and the good. Disgust is about degradation and human dignity. (For more on the emotional basis of morality, see Haidt, Koller, & Dias, *in press*; Hoffman, 1991; Kagan, 1984; Solomon, 1976).

Kagan (1984) has long argued that moral psychology should pay more attention to the emotions: "Beneath the extraordinary variety of surface behavior and consciously articulated ideals, there is a set of emotional states that form the bases for a limited number of universal moral categories that transcend time and locality" (p. 119). In other words, if cognitive intuitionism gains the upper hand over cognitive rationalism, we will soon recognize what many peoples of the world have been telling anthropologists for a long time: The mind of the moralist is located in the heart, which is, paradoxically, a cognitive organ, and it is through the heart that we come to know moral truth(s). That is our augury.

Acknowledgments—This essay was developed with support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Health Program Research Network for Successful Midlife Development (MIDMAC).

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