ONE

Moral Psychology at the Crossroads

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THE KOHLBERG PARADIGM

Until recently the study of moral development has been dominated by stage theories in the cognitive developmental tradition. In this tradition moral reasoning is said to gradually approach an ideal form of perfected operation as a result of successive accommodations that are made over the course of development. These accommodations progressively extend, elaborate, and structure moral cognition, and are described as stages that possess certain sequential and organizational properties. The most vivid example of a moral stage sequence is, of course, Kohlberg's well-known theory. Indeed, there are few theorists in the history of psychology who have had more influence on developmental theory and educational practice than Kohlberg. His embrace of Piagetian constructivism, his writings on the developmental grounding of justice reasoning, and his educational innovations have left an indelible mark on developmental psychology and education.

Kohlberg claimed, for example, that his stage theory provided the psychological resources by which to defeat ethical relativism. His cognitive developmental research program mounted a profound challenge to behavioral and social learning views of socialization, and returned morality to the forefront of scientific study in developmental psychology. The educational implications of his work are still evident in sociomoral curricula (e.g., "plus-one" dilemma discussion) and in efforts to reform the structure of educational institutions (e.g., just communities). Clearly, then, Kohlberg's research program has had a salutary influence on two generations of scholars (Lapsley 1996, forthcoming).

Yet it is also true that the authority of Kohlberg's work has diminished significantly in the last decade. This can be explained, in part, by the general decline of Piaget's theory in contemporary developmental research. Indeed, the general influence of Kohlberg's theory has always been inextricably linked to the prestige and authority of the Piagetian paradigm. The fact that Piaget's hegemony over the field of cognitive development has given way to alternative conceptions of intellectual functioning has had the effect of depriving Kohlberg's cognitive developmental approach of much of its paradigmatic support. One should not conclude, however, that the study of moral development has somehow profited from the wave of post-Piagetian theoretical and methodological innovations that swept developmental psychology in the last decade or so. Indeed, quite the contrary. While the study of cognition has changed dramatically, embracing a wide diversity of theoretical options, the study of *moral* cognition is still largely a matter of cognitive structures developing through stages.

PARADIGM ON THE MARGINS

How moral development has become insulated from theoretical and methodological advances in other domains of study is one of the issues that we explore in this chapter. We will argue that moral psychological research, at least in its cognitive developmental form, has been handicapped by an allegiance to a set of philosophical assumptions that has effectively limited theoretical growth and empirical innovation—and this quite apart from whatever empirical anomalies are associated with the research program. As a result the study of moral development is now largely marginalized within the broader context of cognitive and social developmental research. The debates and issues that once swirled around the moral stage theory, and that once provided an exciting momentum to research, now hold little interest, and not simply because all of the old scores have been settled. Rather, the structural developmental tradition

does not seem very relevant to crucial contemporary concerns about the nature of moral character and the manner of its inculcation and development. It provides little guidance for parents, let alone educators, for how morally crucial dispositions are to be encouraged in young children, and, indeed, provides only a slight framework for understanding moral behavior in young children more generally.

Moreover, the cognitive developmental tradition does not provide much help in understanding how moral reasoning folds into the broad trends of development across other domains. Indeed, the cognitive developmental account of the moral agent, at any stage of development, is one that is not well-suited for integration with other domains of psychological research, largely because its core assumptions and philosophical commitments resist easy commerce with contemporary psychological research. As a result we get little sense of how moral reasoning is related to a full range of psychological processes and constructs, including memory, metacognitive, or motivational processes, either by the emergence and elaboration of self-regulation and self-identity or by mechanisms of cognitive learning. We get little sense of how moral behavior is influenced by personological and situational variables.

It is also true, of course, that researchers in these other domains rarely draw out the implications of their work for understanding moral functioning. Yet there was a time when moral development was central to research on social cognitive development, when its implications for other developmental domains was more obvious, and when its research agenda defined the paradigm of developmental research. It is now a striking fact that so little of contemporary developmental research requires the findings or claims of the cognitive developmental approach to moral reasoning. One gets the sense, instead, reading contemporary textbooks, that the Kohlbergian tradition is now something that is covered more for historical interest rather than as a paradigm that addresses issues of crucial concern to contemporary researchers.

A NEW STARTING POINT

Yet we argue that moral psychology is at an important crossroad. In our view the evident decline of the cognitive developmental tradition opens up new opportunities for theoretical innovation, some of which are plainly evident in some recent work in moral psychology. Although this recent work has yielded important insights about, say, the parameters of domain-centered rationality (Turiel 1983, 1998; Nucci 1982, 2001) or the components of effective moral functioning (Rest et al. 1999), moral psychology is still largely defined in terms that are familiar to the cognitive develop-

mental tradition, and, indeed, in terms that take certain cognitive developmental assumptions as a starting point (as we will see below).

We take a somewhat different starting point. In our view productive lines of moral psychological research in the "post-Kohlbergian era" will be found by searching for integrative possibilities with other domains of psychological research. In particular, we argue that certain cognitive and social-cognitive literatures can be a powerful source of insights for understanding moral functioning, although they are rarely invoked for this purpose. Indeed, the introduction of social-cognitive theory into moral psychology has enormous integrative possibilities (Lapsley and Narvaez, forthcoming). It opens up moral psychology to the theory, constructs, and tactics of social-personality research, with the potential for yielding powerful accounts of moral character, identity, and personality (Lapsley 1999). It opens up a broader array of theoretical options for conceptualizing moral rationality. It locates the study of moral functioning within a mainstream of psychological research on cognition, memory, social-cognition, and information processing. It encourages researchers to look at the full range of developmental literatures for insights about the emergence of moral functioning, including those that address motivation, personality development, the formation of self, and the capacity for self-regulation.

In this chapter we show how a social-cognitive account of knowledge activation might be applied with profit to a number of issues in moral psychology. But we first revisit the longstanding of the proper relationship between ethics and psychology. This volume is, in some ways, a meditation on the relationship between moral philosophy and moral psychology, and it is therefore fitting that the present chapter should begin with a reflection on this problem, if only to help us diagnose the current predicament that faces the field of moral psychology.

In the next section, then, we make two points. First, we argue that Kohlberg's attempt to *moralize* psychology, that is, his attempt to transform the study of moral behavior by appealing to a set of philosophical assumptions and definitions imported from ethics, has had the unintended consequence of isolating moral psychological research from advances in other domains of psychology, effectively pushing it to the margins of contemporary psychological research. Hence our consideration of Kohlberg's solution to the "boundary problem" between ethics and psychology is diagnostic of the current state of the field. Our remedy for the marginalization of moral psychology is for *more psychology.* That is, we suggest that the next generation of research would do well to *psychologize* morality, rather than pursue the moralized psychology advocated by the cognitive developmental tradition. Second, we will argue that the movement towards a psychologized morality is congruent with the emerging

naturalized ethics perspective (see McKinnon, this volume) which attempts to ground normative ethics to a defensible account of human nature. In our view a psychologized morality and a naturalized ethics point towards a common problematic, which is how to account for the "moral personality."

BOUNDARY ISSUES

One of the great stories of this century has been the astonishing rapprochement between moral philosophy and moral psychology. We have Kohlberg to thank for this. In many ways the philosophical resources of Kantian deontological ethics made the cognitive developmental approach possible. Indeed, Kohlberg argued that the study of moral development must begin with certain metaethical assumptions that define a moral judgment (Kohlberg, Levine, and Hewer 1983). Normative ethical theory is required to define the domain of justice reasoning. Armed with these ethical resources, Kohlberg could more easily wrest the study of morality from behaviorists and psychoanalysts and provide a standard by which to criticize other developmental theories.

Hence, Kohlberg's embrace of philosophical formalism not only allowed him to divest moral psychology from the clutches of alternative psychological paradigms, it also provided him a way to articulate and define the emerging cognitive developmental alternative (Kohlberg, Levine, and Hewer 1983). Kohlberg's influence was so pervasive that it is now part of the received view that in the study of moral development philosophical analysis must precede psychological analysis. As Turiel (1998) put it, one result of Kohlberg's enduring influence is that "there is greater recognition of the need to ground psychological explanations in philosophical considerations about morality" (868). Indeed, Kohlberg brought the disciplines of ethics and psychology together in such a breathtaking way that we once dared to think that we could commit the naturalistic fallacy *and get away with it!* (Boyd 1986; Kohlberg 1971).

Although there is almost universal agreement that Kohlberg's embrace of a philosophical view of morality had a liberating effect on moral psychology, in fact, *made moral psychology possible,* there is also growing anxiety about how and where to re-set the boundaries between the two disciplines. Blasi (1990) argued that moral philosophy has had a number of negative side effects on moral psychology. For example, by accepting a particular philosophical definition of morality as our starting point, we have narrowed the scope of inquiry, excluding, for example (and these are Blasi's examples): those concerns that proceed from a consideration of benevolence and affiliation, those that pertain to obedience and one's proper relationship to authority,

those regarding ultra-obligation, and those relating to personal obligation. We could multiply examples of topics that have been neglected because justice is chosen as the starting point.

A second problem is that when we adopt a particular philosophical tradition as our starting point, then the terms of the debate for resolving psychological disputes becomes too easily shifted away from strictly psychological concerns regarding theory, method, and data to the coherence and adequacy of philosophical or metaethical claims. Strictly philosophical considerations become insinuated in the evaluation of psychological theory. As a result philosophical objections are improperly used to trump the empirical claims of a theory. Kohlberg's theory has been the recipient of much of this style of criticism, which Blasi calls "the mixed argument," although it might also be, called "guilt by association." So, according to this genre of criticism, Kohlberg's theory can be safely dismissed because of its affinity with Kant or Rawls or Plato, and, as everyone knows, the views of Kant and Rawls and Plato are just absurd. Apparently, if one's philosophical commitments are thought to be nonsense, then one's psychological theory is thereby guilty by association.

However, at the risk of "blaming the victim," we should also point out that Kohlberg's theory has provoked the sort of criticism that it has received, in at least two ways. One obvious way arises from the fact that Kohlberg's theory is an explicit attempt to use empirical data to resolve philosophical controversies, namely, to use psychological resources to defeat ethical relativism. It should not surprise, then, given this project, that philosophical criticism should attend the evaluation of the psychological theory.

There is a more subtle way that Kohlberg's theory has provoked or caused the mixed argument to abound in moral psychology connected with the way that Kohlberg used the so-called "complementarity thesis" to define the relationship between normative ethical theory and psychological theory. In his view, a normative ethical theory is required to define what is to count as justice reasoning. It provides both categories that are to be used to reconstruct the moral intuitions of subjects and a conception of the *telos* of moral reasoning, the moral ideal. This conception provides the guidepost that allows one to reconstruct the moral justifications of subjects into stages of justice reasoning. This gives the normative ethical theory a role to play in the explanation of psychological stages. It helps explain why, for example, subjects prefer the perspective of higher stages—because they are more adequate, and the philosophical theory tells us *why* they are more adequate. Each succeeding stage is a better philosophical view of justice, whose adequacy can be appraised by reference to normative ethical theory. So, to say that a higher stage is *philosophically* a better

stage becomes part of the *psychological* explanation of sequential stage development (Kohlberg, 1971).

The philosophical theory, then, helps us make sense of psychological data. Consequently, "our theory," writes Kohlberg and his colleagues, "requires moral philosophic as well as social scientific analysis" (Kohlberg, Levine, and Hewer 1983, 14). But there is a complementary relationship here, for the empirical theory, too, contributes to our assessment of the adequacy of the normative ethical theory. If the psychological theory is successful, if its claims are well attested, then we are entitled to greater confidence in the normative claims of the ethical theory. If the empirical claims are falsified, however, then we have grounds for doubting our normative ethical commitments (because they do not work *empirically*). Parenthetically, the claim that the empirical warrant can have implications for ethical theory is a notion that is at the heart of the naturalized ethics tradition, as we will see below.

But one may well wonder just how far complementarity goes. That is, if the normative ethical theory is found wanting on strictly philosophical grounds, should this state of affairs have any bearing on how we appraise the psychological theory? Does the incoherence of the moral ideal also corrupt the psychological claims of the stage theory? Many writers over the years have thought so, leading to numerous philosophical critiques of Kohlberg's conception of the ethical ideal that stage six is thought to represent (e.g., Flanagan 1982; Locke 1976; May 1985; Senchuk 1982; Trainer 1977). Many of these are dismissive of the stage theory just because of alleged deficiencies of the philosophical grounding of the last stage. Blasi (1990) and others (e.g., Puka 1990) have lamented this use of philosophy in psychological arguments, but, in retrospect, it was perhaps inevitable, given Kohlberg's understanding of the complementarity between moral philosophy and moral psychology.

It was inevitable, too, given Kohlberg's attempt to defeat ethical relativism with empirical data. Blasi (1990) noted that the main reason why mixed arguments are to be avoided is because psychologists should not attempt to resolve philosophical questions in the first place. For one thing, the nature of psychological inquiry becomes distorted when subordinated to answering philosophers' questions. For another, it is quite impossible to resolve the metaethical problem with empirical data. According to Blasi (1990), psychologists

> cannot resolve philosophical controversies with the tools of their discipline and following rules of evidence and adequacy that define psychology as a scientific community. When philosophical considerations become an integral part of the empirical argument, issues of methodology, data collection and data inter-

> pretation cannot be isolated for scrutiny and criticism. In sum, communication becomes impossible and, as a result, the very existence of the discipline is threatened. (55)

Blasi notes, then, three negative side effects of moral philosophy's influence on moral psychology: it narrows the scope of inquiry, introduces the mixed argument into scientific discourse, and misdirects and distorts the mission of psychological inquiry.

PHENOMENALISM AND THE MORAL DOMAIN

But we think there is an additional negative side effect of philosophical assumptions on the contemporary research agenda in moral psychology. The assumption of phenomenalism is one of the distinguishing assumptions of the Kohlbergian tradition, but it is widely embraced by alternative research programs that have their roots in the cognitive developmental tradition. According to Kohlberg, Levine, and Hewer (1983, 69), "The assumption of phenomenalism is the assumption that moral reasoning is the conscious process of using ordinary moral language." The moral quality of action must be defined from the subjective perspective, judgment, and intention of the agent. It results from explicit reasoning, deliberative judgment, active decision making, and similar acts of cognitive exertion. The assumption of phenomenalism is one formalist starting point that Blasi (1990) does insist upon. For Blasi, morality "*by definition,* depends on the agent's subjective perspective" (59, our emphasis). In our view, however, the assumption of phenomenalism has contributed to the isolation of moral development research from the broad trends of recent psychological research.

The assumption of phenomenalism is thought necessary to defend the rationality of morality against behaviorists who link moral behavior to the work of external contingencies. The *cognitive* activities of the rational moral agent—interpretation, deliberation, judgment and choice—guarantee radical moral freedom just because they free human behavior from "stimulus control." The decision-making calculus of the moral agent is our best evidence of moral autonomy. The assumption of phenomenalism is also required in order to show, contra psychoanalysis, that moral functioning is the *conscious* activity of the moral agent, which is to say that moral functioning is not driven by passions, is not emotivist, is not irrational. It is not motivated by forces outside of or unknown to reason. Indeed, "the assumption of phenomenalism implies reference to conscious processes" (Kohlberg, Levine, and Hewer 1983, 8).

Hence the assumption of phenomenalism insists that cognition, if it is to count as *moral* cognition, must be conscious, explicit, and effortful. One problem with this formulation is that much of our cognitive activity is not like this at all, but is instead characterized by processes that are tacit, implicit, and automatic. Indeed, these literatures could not possibly have much relevance for understanding moral cognition, if a philosophical starting point fixes the meaning of moral cognition to involve only controlled processes and effortful reasoning (Narvaez and Lapsley, this volume).

Hence, by opting for this philosophical starting point, the study of moral cognition becomes isolated from advances in the general study of social cognition. It instead orients moral psychology to paradigm cases that best suit its distinguishing assumptions, which is resolution of hard-case dilemmas. While typical moral lives will have occasion to wrestle with dilemmas of this sort, this by no means accounts for all of what a robust moral psychology should be called upon to explain. The search for adequate explanations of the full range of morally relevant human behavior should not be handicapped by orienting philosophical assumptions that place an unacceptable a priori constraint on legitimate lines of inquiry.

The assumption of phenomenalism also suggests that one *acts* morally only if one acts on explicit moral reasons, self-consciously and deliberatively invoked by the autonomous moral agent. Hence, according to this view, the moral status of an action can only be certified by indexing the explicit rationale invoked by the agent to justify or explain the action. According to Kohlberg, Levine, and Hewer (1983), "Moral conduct is conduct governed by moral judgment." In order to evaluate the behavior of another as moral or immoral one must be able to impute a judgement to the agent. Indeed, "the study of moral conduct and moral development per se must consider the motives and the constructions of moral meaning that are expressed in behaviors" (71).

Once again the assumption of phenomenalism gives priority to the subjective perspective of the agent in defining moral behavior (as well as moral judgment), and it is one assumption that most socio-moral researchers can agree upon irrespective of their particular theoretical allegiances (e.g., Nucci 2000; Turiel 1998). If it is true, however, that much of our social cognitive functioning is implicit, tacit, or automatic, then the incidence of moral behavior will turn out to be rare and unusual in human affairs. Individuals who engage in morally relevant behavior are often inarticulate about their motivations, are unable to say what judgments may have accompanied an action. To first require an agent to form a judgment, to settle upon a motive, or to construct moral meaning in order to designate morally relevant behavior as distinctly moral is to relegate vast areas of human life beyond the purview of moral evalu-

ation. Much of human behavior will simply not qualify, given the automatic and tacit nature of social cognition.

Hence the assumption of phenomenalism has an unintended consequence. It leads to an attenuation of the moral domain. It significantly narrows the range of functioning that can be the target of legitimate moral psychological explanation. In the words of Iris Murdoch (1992), it suggests that moral rationality and moral behavior are "an occasional part-time activity" (297), some "specialized isolated moment appearing in a continuum of non-moral activity" (303). But this attenuation results from adopting a certain philosophical position on the nature of moral judgment and action (and not from psychological considerations).[1]

This concern about boundary issues between the two disciplines should not obscure the obvious facts that ethicists and psychologists have much to learn from each other and that the dialogue has been enormously productive. In our view the recent interest by psychologists in character, moral identity, and moral personality was greatly influenced by the return of virtue ethics from the margins of philosophical reflection (French, Uehling, and Wettstein 1988). Virtue ethics has led the way and has given many psychologists the conceptual voice to address issues concerning the moral self, moral identity, character and personality. Moreover, this desire of many psychologists to enlarge the moral domain in order to study issues of identity, character and personality is now matched by a movement *within ethics* to expand ethical theory beyond its traditional focus on strictly normative concerns. There is growing recognition that normative ethics must meet minimal psychological requirements so that its prescriptions are possible "for creatures like us" (Flanagan 1991). As Flanagan put it, "Every moral conception owes us at least a partial specification of the personality and motivational structure it expects of morally mature individuals, and that conception will need to be constrained by considerations of realism" (35).

PSYCHOLOGIZED MORALITY AND NATURALIZED ETHICS

Indeed, the emerging "naturalized ethics" perspective (May, Friedman, and Clark 1996; McKinnon 1999, this volume) seeks to ground ethical theory by what is known about "human motivation, the nature of the self, the nature of human concepts, how our reason works, how we are socially constituted, and a host of other facts about who we are and how the mind operates" (Johnson 1996, 49). Johnson (1996) argues, for example, that any comprehensive moral psychology must include an account of personal identity, and must be adequately grounded by the concepts, constructs, and

literatures of cognitive science. Similarly, McKinnon (1999) argues that the starting point of ethical theory should be the facts of human nature. "If ethics is to be about human lives lived well," she writes, "then certain facts about human nature must count as relevant in determining the plausibility of any ethical theory" (10). Moreover, getting the facts right in ethics "will invite cooperation with biology, psychology, ethology, sociology, even neuropsychology and cognitive science, whose findings appear promising in the task of fleshing out the details of human nature"(6). Hence an ethical theory that is *naturalized* attends to empirical realities, to actual lives and the manner in which they are lived, with the conviction that this methodological strategy

> will be more fruitful in understanding the relations between functional goodness and ethical goodness than are typical metaphysical or essentialist investigations into the nature of humans. These latter are designed so as to emphasize the rational capabilities of humans and to minimize the animal, including the social and emotional sides of human nature. The result is necessarily a very impoverished base on which to construct a story about a good human life. (7)

Hence there is an important movement within ethical theory to consider the literatures of personality, cognitive, and developmental psychology for insights about the parameters of virtue and character. Although a number of psychological literatures (e.g., social-cognitive approaches to personality, schema theory, cognitive science models of information-processing, self-constructs and motivation, etc.) are critically relevant for understanding moral psychological functioning generally, and character psychology more specifically, and although these literatures do have enormous implications for providing the "minimal psychological realism" required by naturalized ethics, they are rarely invoked for this purpose. Consequently, many relevant psychological constructs do not yet contribute to ethical or even psychological work on the nature of moral functioning, nor do they inform contemporary educational models of character formation.

In our view social cognitive theory has resources for conceptualizing the facts and details of human nature in a way that promotes the construction of powerful, integrative moral theory, as we will see below. A social cognitive approach also leads to a change of perspective in moral psychology that we find appealing: if the Kohlbergian research tradition brought ethics to psychology, this new perspective reverses matters and brings psychological literatures to ethics. In other words, if Kohlberg *moralized* psychology, this new perspective *psychologizes* morality. The distinction is critical.

When psychology is moralized, then philosophical considerations are smuggled into psychological arguments, or else there is a temptation to use psychological data to resolve philosophical questions. Psychological data are then conflated with philosophical categories of normative ethical theory, leading to the lamentable "mixed arguments" in the evaluation of psychological theory noted by Blasi (1990).

Moreover, a moralized psychology tends to adopt strictly philosophical models of moral rationality that constrain or forbid legitimate theoretical options in psychological research. Note, for example, how the study of "character" was simply ruled out of bounds by the Kohlbergian tradition partly on the grounds that character research does not help solve the philosophical problem of ethical relativism. However, when morality is *psychologized,* then moral functioning is addressed with the tools, theories, methods, and literatures proper to psychological inquiry. In the next section we show how certain strands of social cognitive research can be applied with profit to address these common issues (see also Narvaez and Lapsley, this volume).

KNOWLEDGE ACTIVATION AND THE MORAL PERSONALITY

According to Tory Higgins (1999), one of the general principles of knowledge activation is *accessibility.* Accessibility can be defined as the activation potential of available knowledge. The more frequently a construct is activated, or the more recently it is primed, the more accessible it should be for processing social information. In addition, frequently activated constructs, over time, should be more easily (or "chronically") accessible for social information processing. And, because the social experiences of individuals varies widely, it is likely that there should also be individual differences in the accessibility, indeed, even the availability, of cognitive constructs.

Accessibility, then, is a person variable. It is a dimension of individual differences. Hence, one factor that influences the likelihood that some stored knowledge structure will be activated is its accessibility. And there should be individual differences in the readiness with which certain constructs are utilized. There is now a large literature that attests to the effects of chronicity on social information processing (Bargh and Ferguson 2000; Bargh 1997). Individual differences in the chronic accessibility of constructs influences the processing of behavioral information. Chronically accessible constructs are at a higher level of activation than are inaccessible constructs (Bargh and Pratto 1983), and are processed so efficiently as to approach *automaticity.* Chronically accessible constructs influence one's impression of others and memory and interpretation of social events. Hence, two individuals, each with

unique and non-overlapping accessible constructs, tend to have very difference impressions and recollections of the same event.

The notion that chronicity is an individual differences variable is widely accepted in social cognitive accounts of personality. The social cognitive approach generally describes the dispositional "person variables" not in terms of context-free traits, but as "cognitive-affective units" or mental representations that subsume diverse content. "These encompass the person's encoding or construal of the self and of situations, enduring goals, expectations and feeling states, as well as specific memories of the people and events that have been experienced, and a host of competencies and skills particularly important for self-regulation" (Shoda, Tiernan, and Michel 2002, 317). Moreover, cognitive-affective representations are at varying levels of activation. Some units are relatively unavailable and inaccessible, while others are chronically accessible. In addition, cognitive-affective representations can be situationally primed as well, which suggests that schema activation is a process that is in dynamic interaction with contextual cues.

The social cognitive approach to personality would appear, then, to have a number of critical advantages for conceptualizing the dispositional features of personality, along with its contextual variability, but it has not, heretofore, been invoked to account for any feature of moral functioning. Yet, when this perspective is applied to the moral domain, or, alternatively, when the moral domain is *psychologized* by this social-cognitive theory, a number of productive possibilities become evident. For one, this theory has implications for how moral personality or moral identity is conceptualized. Blasi (1984) has argued that one has a moral identity just when moral categories are essential, central, and important to one's self-understanding. Here we would add that moral categories that are essential, central, and important to one's self-understanding would also be ones that are chronically accessible for interpreting the social landscape. Such categories would be constantly "on-line," or at least easily activated and readily primed for processing social information. And, once activated, these moral constructs would dispose the individual to interpret and judge situations along moral lines.

In addition the social cognitive perspective would suggest that traits, virtues, and other dispositional features of moral character are better conceptualized in terms of cognitive-affective units: personal constructs and knowledge structures, categories, and schemas that are chronically accessible. Virtuous individuals, by this account, would be those for whom moral categories are chronically accessible for appraising and interpreting the social landscape. Moreover, this perspective suggests a new interpretation of moral orientations or moral "voices" (e.g., Gilligan 1982) For some

of us, justice issues might be chronically accessible, for others, benevolence, faithfulness, temperance, or courage. And, indeed, for a great many others there will be categories chronically accessible that have little to do with morality. Hence, not only are there individual differences in whether moral relational schemas are chronically accessible (vs. nonmoral, or even vicious schemas), but even within the moral domain there are undoubtedly individual differences in which virtues, moral categories, or orientations are accessible.

Finally, a chronicity model may provide a new perspective on our understanding of "moral exemplars." In a landmark study, Colby and Damon (1994) have shown that moral exemplars do not see their extraordinary commitments as deriving from an agonizing, decision-making calculus. They do not view their choices as dilemmas requiring protracted deliberation. Instead, they just seem to know what is the right and proper thing to do, *automatically* as it were, without the expenditure of significant cognitive resources. Interestingly, most exemplars in the study were otherwise conventional in their stage of moral reasoning. We suspect that the automaticity characteristic of moral exemplars derives from the fact that for these individuals moral categories are salient, chronically accessible, easily primed, and readily utilized.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have attempted to illustrate the virtues of psychologizing the study of moral functioning by showing how meaningful integration is possible between moral psychology and the literatures of social-cognitive science. In particular we draw attention to schema accessibility as a general principle of knowledge activation, to individual difference in moral chronicity, and to the tacit, implicit, and automatic features of social cognition. Moreover, the application of social cognitive theory to moral psychology makes it possible to anticipate at least four novel facts about moral personological and moral cognitive functioning: (1) it provides a working definition of moral identity, (2) it provides a social cognitive account of the dispositional features of moral character, (3) it provides an explanation of the diversity of moral "voices" and orientations, and (4) it provides an explanation of the automaticity of moral functioning exhibited by moral exemplars.

Indeed, the metaphor of vision seems particularly helpful in coming to grips with what it means to be a moral person. It has been said, "what we *see* depends on who we *are*" (Meilaender 1984). That is, our appraisal of the moral landscape, our moral vision, and our very ability to even notice dilemmas depend on our character. A moral

personality would better *see* the problematic features of situations. What we see depends on who we are, but who we are hinges, we argue, on the kinds of social-cognitive structures (schemas, expectancies, scripts) that are easily primed, easily activated, and chronically accessible for making sense of our experience. To put it simply, a moral person, one who has a moral identity and is virtuous, is one for whom moral categories are chronically accessible for appraising and interpreting social reality, making choices, and guiding behavior. Individuals who are not known for their moral virtues, and truly vicious individuals, would undoubtedly have other schemas chronically accessible.

Finally, we also took up the question of boundaries between ethical and psychological approaches to moral functioning. We argued that the social cognitive approach to moral personality re-sets the boundary between ethical theory and psychological theory to the extent that we move *from* a moralized psychology *to* a psychologized morality. Although this requires us to reconsider the principle of phenomenalism as a basis of collaboration, a social-cognitive perspective does provide a basis for ongoing collaboration with ethicists in the emerging field of naturalized ethics, whom we meet as fellow travelers at the crossroads of moral psychology.

Indeed, we are clearly at a point where emerging trends in moral psychology and in ethics are reaching a common juncture. For example, the increased attention devoted to moral selfhood, character, and identity in both disciplines is the result of movement from two directions. It results from the desire, within psychology, to expand the explanatory reach of moral psychology beyond structures-of-justice reasoning, and from the desire, within ethics, to ground ethical theory to a defensible account of moral psychology. Trends from within both moral psychology and ethics point toward greater interest in virtues, character, and moral identity. Psychologized morality and naturalized ethics, then, settle upon a common problematic, and our hope is that advances in social cognitive research will pay important dividends.

NOTE

1. A weaker version of phenomenalism requires only that one is able to impute a suitable moral intention to the agent. As Kohlberg, Levine, and Hewer (1983) put it, "our actual judgments as to the moral nature of an action depend upon imparting motives and moral judgments to the actor" (71). This way of putting it seems to allow the possibility that the relevant intention, motive, and judgment are things that are clearer for observers to impart than it is for actors to articulate. It allows the possibility, in other words, for actors to have the

proper moral motive without necessarily being conscious of reaching decisions, forming judgments, or appealing to principles. It allows subjective intention to coexist with the realities of automaticity in social cognition. This is a weaker version of phenomenalism in two senses. First, it retains the importance of subjective intention, but at the expense of requiring moral cognition to be a conscious process of making judgments Second, to the extent that it accommodates the automatic, tacit, and implicit qualities of social cognition, it becomes less reliable as a basis for defending moral autonomy. For these reasons we do not think that the weaker version of phenomenalism is the version that Kohlberg intended as the distinguishing philosophical assumption of his paradigm, its otherwise attractive features notwithstanding.

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