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**Moral agency analysed as self-enactment in social roles:
A productive recast of Dewey's pragmatist analysis**

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Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Birkbeck College, University of London

November 2020

I hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is solely my own

John Simons

Abstract

The analysis of moral agency proposed by John Dewey, one of the founders of American pragmatism, can be augmented and made more widely applicable when recast as one that understands moral agency as the enactment of self in the choice and performance of social roles. The recast account of the analysis makes explicit use of the sociology developed by his fellow founder pragmatist, George Herbert Mead, which is largely presupposed by Dewey. Mead's sociology explains the process that transforms a helpless organism into a person or self. The mind is colonized by the culture to which it is exposed and becomes imprinted with the community's shared expectations of conduct in role relationships. The organism is thereby endowed with a consciousness of its own selfhood, and the capacity to realize it in the choice and performance of social roles. It becomes enabled to behave predictably and intelligibly when interacting with occupants of counterpart roles. The relevance of Mead to Dewey's analysis is usually not mentioned in philosophers' commentaries on his work. Similarly, few sociologists and psychologists who study moral conduct and draw on Mead's ideas refer to Dewey. Yet, as this thesis demonstrates, a treatment of Dewey's analysis of moral agency that makes more use of Mead's, and William James's, ideas on the concepts of role and self can reveal fruitful and hitherto unrecognized connections between Dewey's analysis and contributions by others to the analysis of role morality and to factors that affect it. The advantages become especially clear when his analysis is used to assess moral judgements or the foundations of alternative ways of assessing them. Arguably the thesis also strengthens the claim of Dewey's pragmatist moral theory to offer compelling advantages over the traditional alternatives (principally deontological, consequentialist, and virtue-theoretic) on which he drew.

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It was reading a book by the American philosopher Joseph Margolis that led me to choose pragmatism as the branch of philosophy in which to work. I am grateful to him for introducing me to a world of ideas that I have found of enduring interest.

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Introduction

(i) Aim

The central aim of this thesis is to justify the claim that the analysis of moral agency by the American pragmatist John Dewey can be augmented and made more widely applicable if it is recast as the analysis of self-enactment in the choice and performance of social roles. It will be shown that the recasting illuminates fruitful and previously unrecognized connections between Dewey's analysis and contributions by others to the analysis of role morality or to factors that affect it. The advantages become especially clear when in its role-focused form, Dewey's analysis is used to assess moral judgements and the foundations of alternative ways of assessing them.

(ii) Importance of the subject

The importance to moral philosophy of an adequate sociology of the choice and performance of roles is evident in the existential needs of a human society. This is made clear in an examination of these needs in an essay by D.F. Aberle and co-authors (1950), which analyses the functional requirements that have to be met by any society, whether a small tribe, a nation state, or any self-maintaining group with the following characteristics: it occupies a territory, it is capable of existing longer than the life span of its members, and its members' socialized offspring can replace at least some of the members who die (ibid:101)¹. Among these requirements is the division of labour into an integrated set of the social roles necessary to individual and collective survival and welfare, occupied by people competent and motivated to perform them (ibid:105-106). For example, some must rear children because children are helpless at birth, some must provide the food and other resources necessary to life, and some must occupy leadership roles. The individuals who occupy these roles will also occupy a variety of

¹ The authors emphasize that what they have in mind is a model to which actual societies are approximations.

other roles. For example, a father may also occupy the role of son, teacher, car driver, and party activist.

Given that social roles refer to the category of human action that makes society possible and in which normative control is exercised, it might seem unnecessary to argue that their choice and performance should be a subject of central interest to philosophers, especially moral philosophers. In fact, however, an interest in how their ideas would be accommodated by such realities of social life is said to be rare among mainstream philosophers. According to Alasdair MacIntyre, most contemporary philosophers have simply ignored the task of explaining how their proposals can be applied in the real social world.

Noting that a moral philosophy presupposes a sociology, MacIntyre explains that this is because 'every moral philosophy offers explicitly or implicitly at least a partial conceptual analysis of the relationship of an agent to his or her reasons, motives, intentions and actions, and in so doing generally presupposes some claim that these concepts are embodied or at least can be in the real social world' (2007/1981: 23). This implies, of course, that they are or can be embodied in the performance of the social roles that people occupy, such as those of parent, son, lecturer, student, shopkeeper, and bus driver. MacIntyre goes on to point out: 'Thus it would generally be a decisive refutation of a moral philosophy to show that moral agency on its own account of the matter could never be socially embodied; and it also follows that we have not yet understood the claims of any moral philosophy until we have spelled out what its social embodiment would be'. Yet, 'since Moore the dominant narrow conception of moral philosophy has ensured that the moral philosophers could ignore this task' (ibid).

It was not a task ignored by the founders of American Pragmatism in the later Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries. For them the experience of human beings as social creatures was the only credible starting point and

continuing reference point for the development of productive philosophy. To suppose instead that abstract reasoning was sufficient for the purpose was a gross error in their view.

(iii) The founder pragmatists

Four men are widely credited with the foundation of American pragmatism in its classical form in the second half of the Nineteenth Century and early decades of the Twentieth. They are Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), William James (1842-1910), George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) and John Dewey (1859-1952). These men made very different contributions to pragmatism but shared the conviction that philosophy was in urgent need of reconstruction. In particular they believed it needed to abandon the notion of the separateness of self and society. For the pragmatists, persons or selves, and therefore moral agents, were the ongoing creation of society, and society was the ongoing creation of selves.

The actual originator of the family of ideas that became known as American Pragmatism was Peirce. A working scientist himself for 30 years, he believed that philosophers should adopt the stance of science in their enquiries, noting that ‘the scientific spirit requires a man to be at all times ready to dump his whole cart-load of beliefs, the moment experience is against them’ (CP 1.55²). Robert Burch describes Peirce as ‘a theorist of logic, language, communication, and the general theory of signs . . . an extraordinarily prolific mathematical logician and general mathematician and developer of an evolutionary, psycho-physically monistic metaphysical system’ (Burch 2014:1).

Peirce gave short shrift to Cartesian ideas. As Richard Menary explains, for Peirce ‘The Cartesian picture of the self as a thinking thing that is infallibly

² References to the work of Peirce are to the *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*. Citations of the latter, will follow the usual convention of using CP followed by chapter and paragraph number. All emphases shown in all quotations from all authors are as they are in the originals.

certain of its own nature, by the God-given light of reason, is to be contrasted with the pragmatist account of the self as fallible, embodied, and developed through social interaction' (Menary 2011: 610).

Although it laid the foundations for the ideas considered in this thesis, Peirce's own work is not considered explicitly. The reason is that the pragmatist conception of role choice and performance presented here is more directly the creation of the founder pragmatists he influenced, one of whom was William James.

James trained in medicine but achieved eminence as a psychologist and a philosopher. The subjects of his contributions to pragmatist theorizing range from a theory of truth to the philosophy of religion, but the most enduring of them was his work on philosophical psychology, embodied in his two-volume *Principles of Psychology* (1890). One of his fundamental contributions to philosophical psychology is his concept of consciousness. Subjective life is, to use the expression he coined, 'a stream of consciousness', which is what endows people with their sense of the continuity of their present and past states (ibid: 239). It is a stream that attends to its objects selectively and creatively. 'The mind chooses to suit itself, and decides what particular sensations shall be held more real and valid than the rest' (ibid: 286). What it chooses depends largely on its habits of attention, which may be intractable to reason, for 'Reasoning is but another form of the selective activity of the mind' (ibid: 287). As will become clear in Chapter 1 of this thesis, James also made invaluable contributions to an understanding of what is entailed in the choice and performance of social roles and thus to Mead's sociology.

Mead's sociology, which has been widely influential, provided a plausible account of how the self is formed by social interaction, and of the persistent effects of the manner of its formation on conduct. He is credited with having

provided the foundations for the branch of sociology known as 'symbolic interactionism'.

For Mead, mind and self are products of social processes made possible by a shared understanding of the meanings of linguistic and other significant symbols. Thinking is an internalized conversation of the individual with herself using these symbols. The individual's construal of herself is a version of the attitudes of others towards her that she has internalized, the maintenance of which requires her to act in ways that preserves consonance between her attitudes to herself and her perception of others' attitudes towards her. This entails being aware both of the conduct others expect of her in her various social roles (such as that of customer) and of what she can expect of the occupants of counterpart roles (such as that of shopkeeper). By acquiring a culture's shared expectations of the conduct of selves in their social roles, occupants of complementary roles are enabled to interact in mutually predictable and intelligible ways, and in a situation-specific manner. Until recently Mead's work was largely ignored by most moral philosophers, partly at least because they were unaware of the relevance of his theorizing to Dewey's, a close friend and colleague.

Dewey was the successor of Peirce and James as the leading exponent of American Pragmatism, and he drew heavily on their ideas and Mead's in developing his own version of the doctrine. He became widely known as a public intellectual, a celebrated innovator in the field of child development and educational theory, and an active contributor to political debates. He shared Peirce's view that philosophy should take science as its model of enquiry, and believed it should be directed at the solution of practical problems. For him, the adoption of a scientist's attitude to the analysis of moral agency and what it implies for the education of morally capable individuals was a major preoccupation.

Dewey insisted on the unity of self and conduct. When deliberating over a morally significant choice between alternative roles or alternative forms of conduct in a role, the agent is deciding what kind of self would be realized by acting on each of the alternatives available. But Dewey understood that choice of conduct is severely constrained by the social structure and value system of capitalist societies. He wished to see a form of society that adopted an experimental attitude to policies for the improvement of the wellbeing of all its members. It would be a society that had a genuinely democratic structure and an educational system that encouraged its members to act, individually and collectively, as reflective moral agents.

Despite their commitment to science and its methods, the classical pragmatists themselves did not engage in field or laboratory research. For them, to adopt the model of science meant that reasoning should be disciplined by a scientific attitude to the observation and analysis of human conduct and the improvement of human welfare.

(iv) American Pragmatism

An important influence on the convictions of the early pragmatists were the ideas of Charles Darwin. Joseph Margolis, a prominent contemporary pragmatist, attributes to the influence of those ideas the pragmatists' 'constructivist' conception of the cultural world as an endlessly evolving, biologically dependent, self-constructed institution that came into existence when the human species acquired the capacity for linguistic communication. The mastery of that capacity entails, he says, the full development of the functions of persons or selves. The discovery of the evidence that the self is a biosocial construction was a decisive revelation, one which 'the nineteenth century made accessible just prior to the advent of American pragmatism, which flourished at just the right time to seize the idea's advantage' (Margolis 2010: 56-57).

Though they had disagreements about the nature of their enterprise, the founders of classical pragmatism shared a post-Darwinian understanding of the nature of humankind. They saw humans as sophisticated animals who, possessed of language, had acquired an awareness of themselves as persons or selves continuously engaged in interaction with one another and the material environment. The philosopher's function was to investigate the actual experience of these creatures. Rejecting the Cartesian idea of the mind as an enclave separate from the world with a capacity for intuitive knowledge, the pragmatists insisted that the empirical study of human experience, in the way they understood it, was the only source of knowledge and arbiter of its truth.

In support of the case, Dewey contrasts the different attitudes of natural science and non-empirical philosophizing to the use of primary experience (1929: 4-7). For natural scientists, it is the source of their material (for example, Darwin drew on the experience of animal breeders). Also, natural scientists reflect on the import of primary experience (for example, Einstein used elaborate calculations). And they test their conclusions by returning to primary experience (for example scientists interested in Darwin's theories tested them using different observations and experiments). In contrast non-empirical philosophizing makes no attempt to put its conclusions to empirical test, and its conclusions are of a kind that, unlike like those of natural science, does not enrich the meaning of ordinary experience and lead to the improvement of human welfare. On the contrary, non-empirical philosophizing can increase the opacity of ordinary experience and deprive it of having 'in reality' even the significance it previously seemed to have. The only way that philosophers could do justice to its study, maintained Dewey, was to follow the example of the natural scientists, which would mean basing their reflections on the observation of experience and testing their conclusions in the same way. He placed particular emphasis on the need to reject the practice of treating analytical distinctions as though they referred to distinctions between different kinds of experience, such as those between

individual and social, fact and value, objective and subjective, reason and emotion.

It is the foregoing convictions that explain why the work of the classical pragmatists is often seen as a continuation of the British empiricist tradition of the Eighteenth Century. The pragmatists themselves did not see the link in this way, and were especially critical of what they took to be Hume's assumptions about the nature of experience:

the doctrine that sensations and ideas are so many separate existences was not derived from observation nor from experiment. It was a logical deduction from a prior unexamined concept of the nature of experience. From the same concept it followed that the appearance of stable objects and of general principles of connexion was but an appearance (Dewey 1917 [1998a: 51]).

Subsequent scholarship has questioned Dewey's (and others') interpretation of Hume's views, and recent articles have identified links between his views and those of the pragmatists of which they were unaware. Jason Jordan (2013) argues that considered as a sceptical realist, Hume concurred with basic pragmatist convictions, and Catherine Kemp (2017) shows that he was an originator of some of them via his influence on Charles Darwin.

The pragmatists' reservations about British empiricism did not extend to the moral sociology of Adam Smith. As will be explained in the first chapter, they found his ideas very persuasive.

(v) Structure of the thesis

The thesis is in three interdependent parts, each of which comprises two chapters. The contribution of each part to the thesis and the subjects of its chapters are described below. The three parts are followed by a short chapter that presents an overview of the findings and their significance for Dewey's analysis of moral agency and factors that affect it.

Part 1. Foundations

This part describes John Dewey's pragmatist analysis of moral agency and, as a precursor, relevant parts of the sociology it presupposes, the sociology developed by George Herbert Mead.

Chapter 1 describes Mead's pragmatist theory of the relationship between mind, self, and society. It is a theory based on the idea that socialization entails the colonization of the mind by a culture that imprints on it the shared expectations of the conduct of selves as occupants of social roles. The organism is thereby endowed with a consciousness of its own unique selfhood, and the capacity to realize its selfhood and agency in the choice and performance of social roles. The chapter notes the influence on pragmatist thought of the British empiricists of the Eighteenth Century and the moral sociology of Adam Smith.

Chapter 2 presents the pragmatist analysis of moral agency developed by John Dewey. The chapter shows that Dewey grounds his analysis in the observation that moral obligations arise naturally in, and are constitutive of, the variety of role relationships in which members of a society engage. His doctrine of the essential unity of the self and its acts is recast as the doctrine that the self and its agency are realized in the choice and performance of social roles. This presentation of the analysis makes explicit use of Mead's ideas on the self and those of William James on its structure. The topics examined include Dewey's rejection of the idea that any single principle could guide moral judgement, his conviction that moral theorizing entails the application of forms of normativity drawn from each of the three types of classic theories of morality, and his explanation of the effects on conduct of the interpenetration of self and society and of the significance of the cultural variability of moral codes.

Part 2. Extensions

This part of the thesis shows how the role-focused rendering of Dewey's analysis illuminates various ways in which studies by philosophers and social researchers can augment Dewey's analysis and factors that affect its application. Most of these

studies were intended to modify or extend elements of the sociology Dewey presupposes – Mead’s sociology.

Chapter 3 critically reviews several contributions to the classical form of the sociology of self-formation developed by Mead that enrich the role-focused presentation of Dewey’s analysis. These include essays by some British philosophers that show the value of the sociological concept of role to the concept of moral agency. Also considered is work by social scientists and philosophers on the following subjects: the developmental stages by which an agent achieves the detachment required for reflective rather than conventional moral judgement; a theory of the creativity of action that combines ideas developed by Dewey and Mead to show why the rational actor model of action cannot do justice to such activities as moral deliberation, the development of a new social policy, or to any activity for which existing routines provide inadequate guidance.

Chapter 4 draws on studies of social interaction by social researchers, including classic qualitative studies by Irving Goffman. In vindicating and illuminating Mead’s sociology and William James’s contribution to it, these studies reinforce the arguments of Dewey’s analysis of moral agency. The chapter reviews the results of quantitative studies on the following topics: the extent to which self-construal as a morally praiseworthy self predicts morally praiseworthy conduct; the social and personal determinants of the version of the self that will be activated in a particular situation; and the ranking of the agent’s constituent selves by their importance to the individual’s self-construal – a ranking that will, it is argued, affect the agent’s response to moral perplexity. Details of these studies are provided in an Appendix to the thesis.

Part 3. Applications

This part reveals the merits of Dewey’s analysis when tested in practical applications. It is tested in two ways: by contrasting its analysis of moral perplexity with some standard alternatives; and by using it as a standpoint from which to assess the merits of some other methods of analysing the ethical features of roles.

Chapter 5 contrasts a Deweyan interpretation of two well known examples of moral decision-making with their interpretation by alternative forms of analysis. The cases used are those of Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn and the subjects of the Milgram experiments. In both cases the pragmatist analysis is shown to be a better fit with the evidence than the alternatives. It is also shown to offer a more plausible explanation of agents' justification of collateral harm: cases when the serious harming of some is treated as an unavoidable outcome of actions in pursuit of a praiseworthy aim for the benefit of others. Chapter 6 uses Dewey's analysis as a standpoint from which to assess examples of alternative ways of analyzing ethical features of conduct in social roles. The assessment reveals the shortcomings of methods of analysis that lack the resources and scope of Dewey's.

Part 1 Foundations

Chapter 1

The pragmatist sociology of self-formation

This taking the rôle of the other, an expression I have so often used, is . . . of importance in the development of co-operative activity. The immediate effect of such rôle-taking lies in the control which the individual is able to exercise over his own response. The control of the action of an individual in a co-operative process can take place in the conduct of the individual himself if he can take the rôle of the other (George Herbert Mead 1934 [1962: 254]).

This chapter describes George Herbert Mead's sociology of self-formation, important elements of which are presupposed by John Dewey's pragmatist analysis of moral agency. The chapter starts with a section that examines the different ideas of David Hume and Adam Smith in the Eighteenth Century on what motivates people to observe the principles and rules that ensure social order. In the way they addressed the question, they were the precursors of the pragmatist philosophers of the early Twentieth Century. Section 2 describes relevant elements of Mead's sociology, which explains how human organisms acquire an awareness of being selves in a society of interdependent fellow selves. The subject of Section 3 is the different but complementary ideas of Mead and another founder-pragmatist, William James, on the functions of inner dialogue in the process of decision-making, and its place in Mead's sociology.

1.1.0 Explanations of morality in the Eighteenth Century

Most people most of the time pursue their own interests as if they were motivated by a desire to do so in ways that maintain social cohesion and avoid chaos. How is this fortunate state of affairs achieved and maintained? In the Eighteenth Century, David Hume proposed an answer that would reveal both the importance of the question, and the need for a more convincing answer than he gave. Hume's answer was prompted by his response to the proposal by other philosophers that rulers are persons who rule in virtue of the offices they hold

rather than their personal qualities. In a useful article on Hume's response, Christine Chwaszcza (2013) notes that in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries it became necessary to explain that the right of making and executing binding laws was a function of government as an impersonal institution, and that the governed were members of a political entity with a status identified by their relationship to each other and to the ruling institution. The response of some theorists, notably Hobbes, Kant, and Rousseau, was to imagine a 'social contract': a conceptual model, according to which the socio-political obligations of government and governed should be conceivable as having been derived from a hypothetical contract, one that had enabled the governed to assent to their obligations and to have freely accepted self-imposed constraints on their individual freedom. Locke too was a 'contractarian' but differed from the others in invoking natural law to support a claim of natural individual rights and in claiming some empirical support for the contractarian position, which he formulated as an ongoing 'tacit contract' (ibid: 111-114).

1.1.1 Hume on the usefulness of moral conduct as its motive

Hume rejects the idea of social contract theory in all its forms, though he fully recognizes that human society could not exist if its members paid no regard to the laws of equity and justice. 'Disorder, confusion, the war of all against all, are the necessary consequences of such a licentious conduct' (Hume 1777 [1975: 206]). For Hume it is the observance of moral duties to society that allows and is presupposed by the possibility of making contracts. He rejects the possibility that the observance of these duties is impelled by natural instinct, unlike such duties as showing pity to the unfortunate or gratitude to benefactors.

The laws of justice and equity need to be implemented impartially and inflexibly, argues Hume, for otherwise people would be inclined to take into account the character of individuals and their circumstances when judging conduct. Again, the result would be disorder and confusion in society. 'Twas therefore, with a view to this inconvenience, that men have established those principles, and have agreed to restrain themselves by general rules, which are unchangeable by spite and

favour, and by particular views of private or public interest' (Hume 1739 [1978: 532]). Inflexible rules are needed for the support of civil society, even though their inflexibility means that they result in hardship for some people.

But what motivates people to observe and uphold such rules? For Hume it is the recognition that doing so is useful as a contribution to the happiness of society. 'If usefulness, therefore, be a source of moral sentiment, and if this usefulness be not always considered with reference to self; it follows, that everything, which contributes to the happiness of society, recommends itself directly to our approbation and good-will' (Hume 1777 [1975: 219]). Chwaszcza (2013:121) points out that all his argument shows is that self-interest is not the only motive for action. It does not provide an explanation that could justify the claim that the perception of the usefulness of moral sentiment is itself motivating.

Hume's idea that people willingly subject themselves to inflexible moral rules because they perceive that doing so promotes the happiness of society was derided by his friend Adam Smith. Smith suggested that to suppose that would be to assume that the only reason for praising someone was the same as the reason for commending a chest of drawers. He concedes that our sentiments of moral approbation and disapprobation serve the interests of both individual and society, but argues that utility is the product of applying these sentiments, not their motive.

it will be found, upon examination, that the usefulness of any disposition of mind is seldom the first ground of our approbation; and that the sentiment of approbation always involves in it a sense of propriety quite distinct from the perception of utility. We may observe this with regard to all the qualities which are approved of as virtuous, both those which, according to this system, are originally valued as useful to ourselves, as well as those which are esteemed on account of their usefulness to others (Smith 1759 [1976: 188-189]).

Smith suggests that Hume's mistake was to have abstracted general qualities from particular actions. His theory had failed to acknowledge that it was only the latter

that are perceived as being in accord or otherwise with our own sentiments. 'When we consider virtue and vice in an abstract and general manner, the qualities by which they excite these several sentiments seem in great measure to disappear, and the sentiments themselves become less obvious and discernible' (Smith 1759 [1976: 188]). Chwaszcza comments that, ironically, in accusing Hume of philosophical abstractness, Smith is attributing to Hume the error that Hume had attributed to the contractarians (2013: 122).

Consistently with his endorsement of the inflexibility of moral rules, Hume assumes that there will be universal agreement about their application because moral judgements are made from a standpoint common to all or most members of society. It is the standpoint of the 'judicious spectator' (Hume 1739 [1978: 581]), which is that of humanity or all mankind, a species bonded by sympathy.

The notion of morals implies some sentiment common to all mankind, which recommends the same object to general approbation, and makes every man, or most men, agree to the same opinion or decision concerning it. It also implies some sentiment, so universal and comprehensive as to extend to all mankind, and render the actions and conduct, even of the persons the most remote, an object of applause or censure, according as they agree or disagree with that rule of right which is established. (Hume 1777 [1975: 272]).

For Hume, a judgement of a person's moral character is made by the application of moral principles to the person's conduct within 'that narrow circle, in which any person moves' (1739 [1978: 602]). In other words, the judgements of the judicious spectator from the standpoint of 'all mankind' are based on the imagined responses to the individual's conduct of those assumed to be most familiar with it.

In a comparison of Hume's views on this issue with Adam Smith's, John Rick (2007) points out that, while Hume's procedure may allow the judicious spectator to ignore any partiality of her own, it substitutes the partiality of those in the person's 'narrow circle' (ibid: 142). Their views might well be needed for such descriptive purposes as determining whether a person's conduct should be

attributed to character and therefore subject to moral assessment, or entirely to accident, and therefore not morally assessable. But this is an epistemic issue, not a moral one (ibid:145-146). The problem is that Hume makes no provision for a critical assessment of the content of the sentiments of those in the narrow circle (ibid:147). Yet he was well aware that local judgements are specific to time and place. For example, in the *Treatise* he claims that if he were as close to the Marcus Brutus 'represented in history' as he was to his own servant, that 'renowned patriot' would acquire 'a much higher degree of affection and admiration' (1739 [1978: 582]). In the *Enquiry* he notes that it was the prejudices of a time when the assassination of oppressive princes was considered highly praiseworthy that had led to Brutus being treated with indulgence, and that such conduct had subsequently come to be seen as very improper (Hume 1777 [1975:180-181]). Had he recalled such examples of the variability of judgements over time and context when formulating his views on the function of the judicious spectator, he would, presumably, have realized that there was a problem in suggesting that those most familiar with someone's conduct are in a position to apply judgements of it from 'the standpoint of all mankind'.

1.1.2 Adam Smith's 'impartial spectator'

Adam Smith offers a more plausible explanation of how moral judgements are made impartial. His version of Hume's judicious spectator is 'the impartial spectator'. In their introduction to Smith's *the Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1976), D.D. Raphael and A.L Macfie stress (ibid:15) that the originality of his concept of the impartial spectator lies in his development of it in a way that explains the source and nature of conscience, the capacity to judge one's own actions and, especially, sense of duty, as well as that of others.

Smith refers to the necessary role of society as a mirror in which the individual can observe, in the ways that others respond to his behaviour, 'the propriety and impropriety of his own passions, the beauty and deformity of his own mind' (1976: 110). Observing that some of his passions are approved while others prompt disgust, and that their approval is a source of pleasure to him and disapproval a

source of distress, the opinions of others become of keen interest. In order to achieve the impartiality needed to judge how his own character and conduct will be seen by others, the individual conceives of himself as two persons, as impartial spectator and as agent. He then endeavours to assess the agent's conduct from the perspective of the spectator (ibid:113). But it is not only praise and the avoidance of blame that is desired by the individual. 'He desires, not only praise, but praiseworthiness; or to be that thing which, though it should be praised by nobody, is, however, the natural and proper object of praise' (ibid. 114). Similarly, he dreads being blameworthy for something that is properly blameworthy, even if no-one actually sees it as a reason for blame. For Nature has endowed the individual not only with an innate desire to be approved of, but with an innate desire to be approved of for the reasons that he approves of others and for which they ought to be approved (ibid:117). As a consequence, he can feel guilt and shame and remorse if he has behaved in a way in which, viewed from the standpoint of the impartial spectator, is deserving of serious censure, even if he is confident that the behaviour would never be revealed to anyone (ibid: 118). It is only by consulting conscience in the form of the impartial spectator that we can grasp the true significance of things in relation to ourselves or 'ever make any proper comparison between our own interests and those of other people' (ibid: 134). We have learned from habit and experience to do this so readily that we are scarcely conscious of doing it (ibid: 135-136). We also rely on the feelings and standards that we impute to the impartial spectator when making moral judgements of others.

Smith is well aware that the impartiality of the impartial spectator is easily compromised. Sometimes violent emotions prompt people to act on the dictates of self-interest, and though they may revert to the standpoint of the impartial observer when the emotions have subsided, even then their judgement may be biased by reluctance to think ill of themselves (ibid: 158). Nevertheless, from people's experience of the conduct of others in particular instances, observed in the light of a natural sense of propriety or merit, there emerge general rules about the behaviour required to maintain the esteem of others and self-respect

(ibid:159). The rules are established 'by the concurrent sentiments of mankind' and 'when they have been fixed in our mind by habitual reflection, are of great use in correcting the misrepresentations of self-love concerning what is fit and proper to be done in our particular situation' (ibid: 160). In short, the moral rules established by society are, for Smith, represented in human minds by the imagined figure of the impartial spectator. It is this that enables the individual to act as an agent of society, a moral agent. The rules obtain their motivating power from the common desire to be seen by self and others as acting in accord with them. The judgements made when applying these rules to self and others will depend on the particular situation to which they are applied.

Thus, Smith rejects Hume's view that the perception of their practical value is the ultimate motivator of moral sentiments, and instead sees the ultimate motivator as a common desire to be seen to act in accordance with a set of rules established by the 'concurrent sentiments of mankind'. On this view, the commonality of these sentiments is what yields their contribution to social order, though Smith notes that social order does not depend on these sentiments alone. He insists that distinctions of rank and power are also important for social order, and that it is therefore important to maintain them. On the other hand, it was important to be aware of the corrupting effects of according the rich and powerful the respect which only wisdom and virtue should command. The 'disposition to admire, and almost to worship, the rich and the powerful, and to despise, or, at least, to neglect persons of poor and mean condition' is also 'the great and most universal cause of the corruption of our moral sentiments' (ibid: 61).

There has been some controversy over the extent to which moral theory was the subject of Smith's innovative explanation of how societies maintain compliance with their moral norms. In an article on Smith's book, Samuel Fleischacker refers (not warmly) to views of it that see it as more concerned with psychology or sociology than with normative moral theory (2017: Part 1). In fact, Smith seems clearly concerned with both sociology and moral theory. He is sceptical of the value of abstract moral philosophizing and focuses on the way moral judgements

are actually made. In these respects, and in his imaginative notions of the impartial spectator imbedded in the agent's mind, he foreshadows some of the core ideas of pragmatist moral philosophy.

Smith's ideas had an important influence on those of the early pragmatists. In the case of George Herbert Mead, whose work will be examined in the next section, the principal evidence of Smith's influence is the similarity between his ideas and Mead's (Morris 1934: xx1v, fn. 14). The Mead scholar Mitchell Aboulafia quotes from an approving reference to Smith's ideas in Mead's unpublished lecture notes for a course in social psychology. 'Adam Smith makes moral judgement come back to the relation between the self and the community and emphasizes the social character of the judgement'³. After referring to the habit of children to play at being other people and the way that adults often use imagined conversation with others when deliberating, Mead goes on in the quoted statement to maintain that the individual's consciousness of the attitudes of others is what conscience means. (Aboulafia 2001:135, fn. 44).

Smith's influence is explicitly acknowledged by pragmatism's most celebrated moral philosopher, John Dewey, whose debt to Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* is noted in parts of Dewey's most important work on ethics (Dewey and Tufts 1932). In a passage which refers to the development of conceptions of conscience by Greek philosophers, especially the Stoics, the development is described as the attainment of the idea that Smith had described as the 'impartial spectator'. 'The religious, social, and political judgements have become the judgements of man upon himself' (ibid: 129). Smith is mentioned again as among the Moral Sense writers of the Eighteenth Century who had rejected Thomas Hobbes's rationale for the social contract. He had argued that it was necessary to find some basis for morals, given that people were naturally selfish and that life was a struggle for self-preservation (ibid: 165). A reading list at the end of a chapter entitled 'Moral judgement and knowledge' refers readers to passages in

³ Mead 1910

Smith's book for material on sympathy and moral judgement (ibid: 314). And at the end of a chapter entitled 'Ethical problems of the economic life', a reading list refers to the classic treatises of Adam Smith, J.S. Mill, and Karl Marx as furnishing the background to the discussion (ibid: 428).

1.2.0 Philosophers' neglect of Mead

Mead's work has yet to be even noticed by many philosophers, including some pragmatist philosophers. Since his ideas are essential to the propositions advanced in this thesis, this section starts by considering some of the reasons for the neglect of his strikingly original work.

In his 1985 book on Mead, Hans Joas observes that the relationship between Mead and Dewey (a long-term senior colleague and fellow pragmatist) is often presented in a way that treats Dewey as the dominant figure and ignores the fact that it was Mead who developed the explanation of the social formation of the self, an explanation adopted by Dewey (Joas 1985: 38). In a foreword to the book *George Herbert Mead in the Twenty-First Century* (2013), Aboulafia agrees that Mead suffered from being in Dewey's shadow, and suggests that the book he is introducing is indicative of an increased interest recently in Mead's work among philosophers, some of whom might have been influenced by Jürgen Habermas's placement of Mead 'at center stage' in *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1981). It is still much easier to find evidence of the contrary.

Unlike Dewey's work, Mead's contribution is still not considered worthy of mention in most mainstream contributions to pragmatist philosophy. For example, unlike Dewey, he is not mentioned in the introductory texts on pragmatism by Michael Bacon (2012) and Robert Talisse and Scott Aikin (2008). In Cheryl Misak's comprehensive history of the early pragmatists, Dewey is treated at chapter length but the work of Mead is consigned to a chapter on 'fellow travellers' (Misak 2013). Similarly, when they are referring to pragmatist ethics, prominent contemporary pragmatists – for example Mark Johnson (2014) and Philip Kitcher (2012) – find no reason to mention Mead but celebrate the ideas of Dewey.

Elizabeth Anderson's (2019) article on Dewey's moral philosophy in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Moral Philosophy* makes no reference to Mead. In his detailed study of Dewey's moral philosophy, Gregory Pappas notes (2008: 198, fn 6) that the importance and influence of Mead on Dewey's ethical thought has been largely unappreciated, but the few passing references that he makes to Mead are not likely to make his contribution better understood.

One reason for the neglect of Mead in texts on pragmatist moral philosophy is suggested by a passage in a chapter on Mead's ethics in the 1985 book by Joas mentioned earlier. He refers there to the few articles on ethics published by Mead, 'in which numerous theses are advanced but not systematically grounded' (Joas 1985: 122). Joas also refers there to evidence in students' lecture notes from Mead's unpublished course on 'Elementary Ethics' that he 'drew very strongly on Dewey and Tuft's book on ethics, to which Mead's students were referred for explication of lines of thought that Mead only mentions in passing' (ibid). Perhaps writers on pragmatist philosophy, and especially on pragmatist ethics, are inclined to assume that if Mead himself defers to Dewey's ideas on ethics, Mead's own contributions may safely be ignored.

Contributors to the literature on pragmatism may also assume that his ideas on sociology are not distinctively pragmatist but could apply to any moral philosophy, an assumption that mainstream philosophy might find positively welcome as less threatening to its conventions. Indeed, arguably the single most important reason for the neglect of Mead by moral philosophers is that his ideas seem, and indeed are, alien to a tradition of moral philosophizing that is preoccupied with the mental processes of the supposedly autonomous and independent moral agent. There is a corresponding preference for Mead's ideas and neglect of Dewey's among sociologists interested in moral issues. From the standpoint adopted in this chapter, these disciplinary prejudices add force to Alasdair MacIntyre's complaint that: 'There seems to be something deeply mistaken in the notion enforced by the conventional curriculum that there are two distinct subjects or disciplines – moral

philosophy, a set of conceptual enquiries on the one hand and the sociology of morals, a set of empirical hypotheses and findings, on the other' (2007: 72-73). On the other hand, it must be conceded that even those who wish to do justice to both Mead's and Dewey's work face problems in identifying which of them was the source of some of their ideas. They were friends and colleagues for many years and had an enduring influence on each other's work. Also, Dewey was himself very interested in social psychology. One of his early books is entitled *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology* (1922). In the Introduction to the best known source of Mead's theorizing, Charles Morris says 'The work of Mead and Dewey is in many respects complementary, and so far, as I know, never in significant opposition (Mead 1934 [1962: x]).

1.2.1 Communication of meaning in symbol form

Mead never produced a monograph, but he is famous as the author of *Mind, Self, and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist* (1934 [1962]), a book published after his death and compiled from lecture notes and unpublished manuscripts. It presents the essentials of his sociology of the self, which, as well as comprising a major contribution to pragmatist thought, led to the foundation of a new branch of sociology, 'symbolic interactionism'.

Mead's conception of the self is rooted in an analysis of the dependence of social life on the use of signs, an analysis which, as Misak remarks, is extraordinarily similar to that of the founder of the pragmatist paradigm, Charles Sanders Peirce (Misak 2013: 140)⁴. Mead points out that when language users converse with one another, they use verbal expressions, but also physical gestures and facial expressions (he describes them all as 'gestures') that he calls 'significant symbols'. Communication is made possible by the shared understanding of the meanings of objects and events conveyed by these symbols, an understanding acquired during the process of socialization. He stresses the reflexivity of human communication.

⁴ Perhaps another reason for the neglect of Mead is the view, one that Misak may be hinting at here, that his ideas were greatly influenced by those of Peirce.

When A uses a statement (or any other gesture) to communicate with B, A's own consciousness of the meaning of the statement depends on her ability to construe it in the same way that she supposes B will construe it. When this occurs — when the statement implicitly evokes in A the same construal that it is supposed to evoke explicitly in B — the gesture is a significant symbol.

The internalization in our experience of the external conversations of gestures which we carry on with other individuals in the social process is the essence of thinking; and the gestures thus internalized are significant symbols because they have the same meanings for all individual members of the same social group, i.e., they respectively arouse the same attitudes in the individuals making them that they arouse in the individuals responding to them: Otherwise the individual could not internalize them or be conscious of them and their meanings. As we shall see, the same procedure which is responsible for the genesis and existence of mind or consciousness — namely, the taking of the attitude of the other toward one's own behaviour — also necessarily involves the genesis and existence at the same time of significant symbols, or significant gestures (Mead 1934 [1962: 47-48]).

For Mead, the development of the mind relies on the internalization of the experience of social interactions unique to language users. He argues that it is by internalizing the way others understand the world and communicate with each other that a mind becomes able to do the same. This is what enables the individual to assume the attitude of the other towards herself and others and to participate responsively in social interactions in ways that may influence their outcomes (ibid: 134). By the same means she is enabled to become an object, a self, to herself. She internalizes what it means to have a self that is separate from other selves and understands that she too has this self. When she converses with others, she is aware of what her own self is saying to other selves: she is participating in her own conversation with them (ibid:140).

The individual experiences himself as such, not directly, but only indirectly, from the particular standpoints of other individual members of the same social group, or from the generalized standpoint of the social group as a whole, to which he belongs. For he enters his own experience as a self or individual, not directly or immediately, not by

becoming a subject to himself, but only in so far as he first becomes an object to himself just as other individuals are objects to him or in his experience; and he becomes an object to himself only by taking the attitudes of other individuals toward himself within a social environment or context of experience and behaviour in which both he and they are involved Mead: (1934 [1962: 138])

1.2.2 Assuming the role of the other

In her conversations and other interactions, the individual endeavours to act in ways that achieve consonance between her own construal of the self she has acquired and her interpretation of how that self is construed by those with whom she interacts. This requires her to assume their attitudes.

Mead stresses that being able to assume the attitude of the other entails being able to assume the *role* in which the other's attitudes are expressed. An example would be a successful transaction between customer and shopkeeper, one that requires them both to be able to anticipate and act on shared expectations about the other's attitudes and conduct in the transaction. Similarly, when someone remonstrates with a friend over some transgression in the expectation that the friend will experience guilt and remorse, the remonstrator assumes that she and the friend have a common understanding of the attitudes and conduct expected of occupants of the role of friend.

How is this capacity to assume the role of the other acquired? Mead describes the development of the capacity as a process that starts in childhood. Young children play at being in such roles as mother, teacher, and policeman. They have imaginary conversations, taking first one role and then another. At a later stage they participate in games that involve several individuals. Now they must know the roles of all players in a game to be able to know what is expected of them in their own role.

In becoming a self, the individual must internalize the attitudes involved in numerous such role relationships to be able to participate in them or take them into account. But for Mead this is only the first stage in the constitution of the self.

Its full constitution requires more than the internalization of specific attitudes of others towards the self and others in particular situations. It also requires internalization of the broader attitudes towards the projects in which the individual's society or social group is engaged, and towards the way of life of which these projects are manifestations. In this process, the mind generalizes from the ideas and attitudes and their social implications of particular actors, to establish *social-group* attitudes as constituents of the self. For example, the schoolboy generalizes from the attitudes of particular others in his school – teachers, other boys – to internalize the attitudes of the school community towards its members. He now takes these attitudes towards himself. He now knows what is expected of him in his role as schoolboy and he understands the role from the standpoint of the school and its functions. Mead describes the attitudes of the internalized social group as those of 'the generalized other'.

1.2.3 The generalized other

There is a different, local, generalized other for each of the communities with which the individual is involved, and these merge into a more universal version. Mead distinguishes between two kinds of social group to which the individual belongs in modern societies. One kind comprises the concrete social classes and such subgroups as political parties and commercial organizations. In these groups, members are directly related to one another. The other kind are abstract categories, the members of which are related to one another more indirectly but which allow possibilities 'for the enriching of the social relations among all the individual members of the given society as an organized and unified whole' (1934: [1962: 157]). These categories would include voters, supporters of sporting teams, the readerships of newspapers, and many other categories, membership of which nourishes civil life and makes membership of a particular society a foundation stone of social identity.

The internalization of the generalized other endows the mature self with a worldview that encompasses her own and others' roles and their motivations, functions, and interrelationships within a social whole. She has the kind of

understanding of society that the child has of the game. As Mead explains:

the complex cooperative processes and activities and institutional functioning of organized human society are possible only in so far as every individual involved in them or belonging to that society can take the general attitudes of all other such individuals with reference to these processes and activities and institutional functionings, and to the organized social whole of experiential relations and interactions thereby constituted – and can direct his own behaviour accordingly (Mead 1934 [1962:155]).

For Mead, it 'is in the form of the generalized other that the social process influences the behaviour of the individuals involved in it and carrying it on, i.e., that the community exercises control over the conduct of its individual members; for it is in this form that the social process or community enters as a determining factor into the individual's thinking' (ibid: 155).

In short, the generalized other is the mind's model of the culture to which it is exposed and which embodies its system of normative regulation. It is Mead's version of Smith's impartial spectator, the solution to the problem that Hume and then Smith had confronted of how members of a society are motivated to observe its prevailing moral code and maintain social order. The model equips the individual to function as a moral agent, enabling her to perform her various social roles in situationally appropriate ways and to respond appropriately to others as they perform their roles. Were it not so, conduct would lack the high degree of predictability that makes social life possible.

Predictability does not, of course, require a slavish conformity to role norms. What it does require is a disposition always to act in ways that are made comprehensible to others, even when the actions are unwelcome to them. This is another function of the generalized other. It makes possible a shared view of the norms that need to be observed by occupants of social roles and those in counterpart roles, and a shared recognition that some norms are role-specific and others apply across roles. The generalized other is also a source of guidance on the interpersonal negotiations needed to adjust norms of conduct to suit particular circumstances,

and to secure change in norms that have become redundant or oppressive as a result of change in conditions or values.

People are often required to anticipate and respond to variation and change in the social and material environments they inhabit, and to do so in ways that adapt normative expectations to suit particular circumstances, in concert with others who will affect and be affected by the actions taken. The young man who learnt from his parents' generation that a woman's place is in the home probably had to learn that his partner took a different view, perhaps necessarily so if they were to have the two incomes needed to be able to afford the kind of home they desired. Their parents may have had to learn that their offspring did not regard it as in the least sinful to live together without being married. In recent decades numerous such changes have occurred, many of them the unintended result of economic and demographic change.

Even when the norms themselves are not a problem, they become one when acting on norms that apply in one role entails ignoring those that apply in another. This is especially the case for those norms which have been accorded the status of moral obligations. For example, a woman may have to choose between staying at home to care for a sick child and going to her office where her colleagues need her contribution at a crucial meeting. A man may have to choose between his obligation to care for his ailing mother and his obligations to attend to the needs of his partner and children. Moral dilemmas may also arise within the same role. For example, a mother may have to decide whether she should, unknown to her teenage daughter, read the latter's email messages in case they reveal evidence of correspondence with a predator, or respect her daughter's right to privacy.

The constant need to adapt conduct to particular circumstances means that the same self that identifies with the generalized other also needs to be one that can adapt that self when decisions and choices need to be made.

1.3.0 The dialogical self and its role-specific incarnations

Both Mead and another founder-pragmatist, William James, proposed a distinction between the self as 'I' and the self as 'Me'⁵. Mead's use of the distinction differs from James's but is, as Hubert Hermans points out (2011: 658), complementary to it. James's version is presented in his very influential account of the psychology of the self (1890).

1.3.1 James's use of the 'I'/'Me' distinction

James defined the 'Me' as the empirical self, and, in its widest sense, as encompassing everything that could elicit the same kind of proprietorial emotion in the individual: not only the body but the sum total of all that someone could call 'mine', from spouse to bank account, from ancestors to reputation, from clothing to immediate family (1890: 291)⁶. The constituents of the self include the individual's social selves, of which there are as many as there are different groups of people whose opinions the individual cares about.

He generally shows a different side of himself to each of these different groups . . . We do not show ourselves to our children as to our club-companions, to our customers as to the laborers we employ, to our own masters and employers as to our intimate friends. From this there results what practically is a division of labour into several selves; and this may be a discordant splitting, as where one is afraid to let one set of his acquaintances know him as he is elsewhere; or it may be a perfectly harmonious division of labour, as where one [is] tender to his children [but] is stern to the soldiers or prisoners under his command (1890: 294)

Each social self attempts to meet the distinctive expectations of honourable conduct in the role of members of its social group and that may not apply to other

⁵ The distinction is also an important feature of Peirce's and Dewey's theorizing about the self. Later writers, pragmatists and others, often use the term 'dialogical' to refer to intrapersonal dialogues. Norbert Wiley (2006) briefly compares and contrasts the way in which the dialogical self is used by each of the founder pragmatists.

⁶ Hubert Hermans points out that almost a century before postmodern theorists had drawn attention to the decentralized multiplicity of the self, James was 'well aware that the extended self was social enough to incorporate different parts of the social environment as different constituents of the self' (Hermans 2011: 656).

roles. For example, it is required of statesmen and judges that they abstain from 'pecuniary relations' of a kind that are honourable for private citizens. To emphasize the point, James says it is common for people to discriminate between their different social selves in such ways as the following: 'As a man I pity you, but as an official I must show you no mercy; as a politician I regard him as an ally, but as a moralist I loathe him'. The reputation to be maintained depends on the group to which one belongs: 'the gambler must pay his gambling-debts, though he pay no other debts in the world' (ibid: 295).

James describes the 'I' as the self with which the individual identifies when she attends to her own subjectivity, her own thoughts and dispositions, including her moral sensibility and conscience, as distinct from the objects of those thoughts and dispositions. For some individuals, says James, this core self is the soul, for others it is the imaginary being denoted by the pronoun 'I'. In both cases it is not an abstraction but, like the body, something that can be felt or experienced. Within the stream of consciousness, it is the innermost self, compared with which other parts seem transient and external. This inner core 'presides over the perception of sensations, and by giving or withholding its assent it influences the movements they tend to arouse'. Within the life of the psyche it is a 'sort of junction at which sensory ideas terminate and from which motor ideas proceed, and forming a kind of link between the two' (1890: 297-298).

Hubert Hermans notes three features of the self that James attributes to the 'I': its continuity or sense of sameness over time; its individuality or feeling of distinctness from others; and its sense of personal volition 'reflected in the continuous appropriation and rejection of thoughts by which the self-as-knower proves itself an active processor of experience' (Hermans 2011: 655).

1.3.2 Mead's use of the 'I'/'Me' distinction

Mead describes his formulation of the 'I'/'Me' distinction as follows:

The 'I' is the response of the organism to the attitudes of the others; the 'me' is the organized set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes. The attitudes of the others constitute the organized 'me', and then one reacts toward that as an 'I' (Mead 1934: [1962: 175]).

The 'Me' is the self that is created by internalizing the attitudes of the generalized other. It is the self of which the individual agent is conscious as an element of the generalized other, the self that knows the expectations of others because they are the agent's own expectations or those the agent would have if occupying their roles. It is the self that is competent to function as a member of a community of interdependent and interpenetrating selves. Although each 'Me' has characteristics that differentiate it from others, it is necessarily a conventional 'Me', one which 'has to have those habits, those responses which everybody has; otherwise the individual could not be a member of the community' (ibid:197).

Like James and perhaps as a consequence of his influence, Mead sees the 'Me' as a composite of constituent selves.

We divide ourselves up in all sorts of different selves with reference to our acquaintances. We discuss politics with one and religion with another. There are all sorts of different selves answering to all sorts of different social reactions. It is the social process itself that is responsible for the appearance of the self; it is not there as a self apart from this experience. We are one thing to one man and another thing to another man (Mead 1934: [1962:142]).

In a recent assessment of whether Mead's conceptual framework remains sound, Robin and Sheldon Stryker (2016: 34) claim that he never conceived of the self as a 'multiple element phenomenon'. Presumably they missed the statement just quoted and others. It is true, however, that Mead does not develop the idea as fully as James does.

Mead's 'I' is the self that is conscious of its 'Me' and in this respect is like James's 'I'. But unlike James's, Mead's 'I' is the self in its active, responsive, phase. It is the phase that determines the self's acts in response to the attitudes of the 'Me' to a situation and in so doing affords the self 'a sense of freedom, of initiative' (1934 [1962:177]). For example, when a choice of role in which to act must be made, it is the self as 'I' that makes it⁷. The 'I' is conscious of the 'Me' but can know itself only by its effects on the 'Me'. Memory reveals what the 'I' decided, but nothing reveals the 'I' in action. It is unknowable. Referring to the indispensability of the 'I' and the 'Me', Mead says:

The self is essentially a social process going on with these two distinguishable phases. If it did not have these two phases there could not be conscious responsibility, and there could be nothing novel in experience (ibid: 178).

The communication between self and others that takes place when the 'I' responds to a situation continually modifies the social process itself. The individual takes the attitude of the social group towards her own response, and in doing so finds her response modified, an outcome that leads in turn to further change. The 'I' may challenge the organized set of attitudes of others that is assumed by and constitutes the 'Me' in a particular situation (ibid: 177). For example, someone who sees herself as compassionate may find she must disassociate herself from a previously shared attitude hostile to immigrants. In doing so, she modifies her construal of herself, as understood from the standpoint of the 'Me'. In responding unconventionally to the attitudes of others, the individual may also change their attitudes.

Individuals continually change the attitudes of society in such ways, albeit very gradually in the case of fundamental attitudes (1934:179-180). In Mead's view, this continuous social process of mutual adjustment improves the coordination of society and the efficiency of the individual's contribution to it (ibid). He describes the self as 'an eddy in the social current and so still part of the current' (Ibid: 182).

⁷ Mead acknowledges, but treats as abnormal, the case of impulsive or uncontrolled conduct, when the 'Me' loses control over the way the self is expressed by the 'I' (1934: [1962:210]).

Like differentiated cells and the human body, selves and society arise and change together as elements of the same process. Sometimes the response of a single individual may have a major effect on the organization of society. To illustrate the process, Mead uses the example of a politician whose self in its 'I' phase wishes to implement a project of reorganization in a community the attitudes of which are his own attitudes, those of his 'Me'. By bringing the project forward and making it a political issue, the politician himself changes. Whether he is successful depends on the extent to which, as a result of his interchange of information with the community, his final 'Me' reflects the attitude of all in the community. Mead says, 'What I am pointing out is that what occurs takes place not simply in his own mind, but rather that his mind is the expression in his own conduct of this social situation, this great co-operative community process which is going on' (ibid:187-188). Mead notes that developments of this kind are especially impressive when individuals of unusual mind and character, such as great religious figures or geniuses, are able to respond to their communities by radically changing them. He maintains that the conduct of a genius is as socially conditioned as that of an ordinary individual: the genius too responds from the standpoint of the organized social group to which he belongs and its attitudes towards whatever project they are being invited to support. But the genius, unlike the ordinary individual, responds in a unique and original way (ibid: 216, fn 23).

More generally the fundamental changes in society that have taken place over successive historical periods have been produced gradually by the responses made by the 'I' of countless individuals in the circumstances in which they found themselves (ibid: 202-203). Mead would surely agree that for most people, most of the time, the important changes in the values of the 'Me' are those experienced by the culture as a whole, such as the liberalization of attitudes to abortion, or those that attend different stages of the life course, such as the stage of becoming an adult. He was obviously correct in his view that sometimes a transformation in the 'Me' of a few can lead to the emergence of strong challenges to the 'Me' of the many; examples include the transformations that animated the suffragettes,

the opponents of slavery, and the members of the National Socialist German Workers' Party⁸.

An important phenomenon considered by Mead is the sense of exaltation that is experienced when patriotic or religious attitudes evoke in the self a reaction to a situation that evokes the same reaction in others. He proposes that in these cases, which lead to intense emotional experiences, the 'I' fuses with the 'Me', individual and group become one (ibid: 273). Referring elsewhere to the effects of this fusion when the nation is at war, he says, 'The great issue itself is hallowed by the sense of at-oneness of a vast multitude' (Mead 1929: 393)⁹. Arguably, the same fusion is often briefly evident in the sentiment aroused when crowds sing patriotic anthems, such as William Blake's *Jerusalem*, or when they are cheered or devastated by the performance of the sports teams they support. It seems reasonable to assume that these occasions elicit the public expression of a fusion of individual and society that already permeates the worldview and that binds individuals to their particular society and its particular way of life; a fusion that would justify an important place for 'my country' in James's inventory of what the individual construes as 'mine'.

Commenting on the complementarity of James's and Mead's conceptions of the dialogical self, Hermans points out that: 'While James carries the self to society, Mead brings society into the self', but despite this difference, both acknowledge the agentic character of the 'I', which 'makes the self both volitional (James) and innovative (Mead)' (Hermans 2011: 658). Recall from early in this sub-section Mead's insistence that the 'I' is unknowable. The social psychologists George McCall and J.L Simmons say that both Mead and James 'took over Kant's definition of the "I" as the essentially unknowable active agent of the personality – that

⁸ Of course, such transformation are easier to accomplish if the few can seem to be offering what the many believe will improve their lives.

⁹ Mead was well aware that the fusion of individual and group that produces patriotic fervour can serve both praiseworthy and ignoble ends (Mead 1929: 315).

which does the thinking, the knowing, the planning, the acting' (1978/1966: 52-53).

For both Mead and James, the 'I' refers to the self's capacity to determine the response required of it, or more specifically, of its 'Me' – the result of past such determinations – to its construal of a current or prospective situation. The response may reinforce or modify the 'Me'. Thus, merging Mead's and James's views on the 'I' and the 'Me', the constitution of the self as moral agent at any moment can be seen as the outcome of past dialogues between the 'I' and the 'Me' on the extent to which the self's choice and performance of its social roles should be consistent with, or modify, the dispositions of the existing self. When the self must choose between roles that require the observance of incompatible obligations, modification may be inevitable. In such cases, the dialogue may be in the form of a sustained interaction between the 'I' and the 'Me' as the agent considers different options. More often, the interaction between the two will be in the form of the instantaneous endorsement by the 'I' of the 'Me's' reaction. In these cases, the dialogue will be more like that of someone trying on a new jacket whose 'I' agrees that the jacket is 'not "Me"'.

1.4.0 Conclusions

Mead's theory of the self understands the culture of a social group as a shared understanding of the meanings of objects and events that is made possible by the use of a system of verbal expressions and other significant symbols. He describes the mind's model of that culture as the 'generalized other', a model that embodies the group's system of normative regulation. It is by acquiring a generalized other by social interaction that new entrants to society become endowed with a consciousness of their own selfhood and a knowledge of the conduct expected of and by role occupants in the various role relationships in which they and others will be engaged. The generalized other also guides role occupants in the interpersonal negotiations needed to secure the adjustment or rejection of role norms in response to change in social conditions or values. Thus, the

internalization of the generalized other equips the individual to function as an exponent of the culture of her social group and as a moral agent, enabling her to act in situationally appropriate ways in her various social roles and when responding to others as they perform their social roles. Social life is made possible by this predictability.

The merger of James's and Mead's versions of the self sees it as a self-monitoring moral agent and a composite of role-specific selves, an agent who at any moment is the outcome of past determinations by the self (in its 'I' phase) of the response to its current situation required of its socially established self (the self in its 'Me' phase). The response will be the self's choice and performance of one of its social roles.

While it retains core features of Smith's impartial spectator, Mead's dialogical self is more sophisticated construction. His theory of self-construction and the concept of the generalized other accord intrinsic sociality to the exercise of moral agency. As an account of the self that is based on the capacity to take the role of the other, his theorizing emphasizes the sociological importance of the concept of role, and in doing so encouraged the wider use of the concept by sociologists. Struan Jacobs (2017) notes the major contribution made by Mead to the replacement in sociology of the concept of personality by that of role as a dominant tool of analysis. Its utility as a mainstream concept has yet to be recognized in mainstream moral philosophy

The next chapter explains how Mead's and James's ideas can be usefully applied in a role-focused rendering of John Dewey's analysis of moral agency.

Part 1 Foundations

Chapter 2

A pragmatist analysis of moral agency

Good, I have said, is ascribable to deliberation about desires and intentions; right, obligation, is dependent upon requirements that have social authority and force; virtues are dependent on approbation (John Dewey 1930: 203).

The subject of this chapter is the analysis of moral agency proposed by John Dewey, presented in a way that understands moral agency as the choice and performance of social roles. This recasting of Dewey's analysis draws on the concept of social role in the sociology developed by his fellow founder-pragmatist George Herbert Mead that was described in the previous chapter, a sociology that is largely presupposed by Dewey.

The principal sources used here for Dewey's conception of moral agency are two of his later works. These are the parts for which he was responsible in the second edition of *Ethics* (1932), of which he was the co-author with James Hayden Tufts, and the article 'Three independent factors in morals' (1930). According to Dewey specialists, these two works best represent his treatment of ethics in his later works (Pappas 2008: 5;310 fns 7 and 8).

The chapter starts with a short section on the different contributions of Mead and Dewey to the latter's theorizing about ethics. Section 2 notes what Dewey sees as the principal difference between the aims of pragmatist and classical moral philosophies. Section 3 justifies the role-focused recasting of Dewey's analysis of moral agency. Section 4 describes his conception of the self as moral agent and his insistence on the unity of the self and its acts. Section 5 describes what occurs when the agent is compelled by the complexity of a moral problem to deliberate on ways of responding to it. Section 6 explains why deliberation requires the agent to become a moral theorist. The subject of Section 7 is Dewey's derivation of three sources of normativity – sources of influential reasons for action – from traditional

moral theories, sources that often conflict in their demands. Section 8 reviews his views on the way the exercise of moral agency is affected by the interpenetration of self and society, and the consequent need for an experimental attitude to progressive social change. Section 9 presents his explanation of the cultural variability of moral codes. Section 10 is an account of the substantial support for Dewey's analysis available from anthropological theory and evidence.

2.1.0 Dewey and Mead

As noted in the previous chapter (1.2.0), Hans Joas reports (1985/1980: 122) evidence that Mead drew very strongly on Dewey's and Tuft's book on ethics. In a later publication, Joas comments on broader differences between the two's contributions to pragmatist ideas, differences that he had recognized after becoming much more familiar with Dewey's work. He still thinks Mead is the more original and more profound thinker on intersubjectivity, but that to attribute Dewey's own concept of specifically human communication simply to Mead's influence is to overlook how deeply it is grounded in Dewey's early idealist writings. Joas adds that, while Mead is certainly the more important for those interested in a theory of intersubjectivity, the practical implications of intersubjectivity are 'much better and more comprehensively elaborated' in Dewey's pragmatism (1990: 171). Dewey himself was fully aware of his debt to Mead. Referring to the latter's 'social interpretation of the world', Dewey says (in the published version of his address at Mead's funeral), 'I know that his ideas on this subject worked a revolution in my own thinking, though I was slow in grasping anything like its full implications' (Dewey1931: 313). It is some of its implications for Dewey's analysis of moral agency that are considered in this chapter and in the remainder of the thesis.

The book on ethics by Dewey and Tufts mentioned by Joas as the one to which Mead referred his students is the first (1908) edition, to which Dewey contributed the part on theory. This chapter draws on the second (1932) edition, and specifically on the parts contributed by Dewey, and will be cited as *E* in what follows. In proposing that Dewey be understood as treating moral agency as the

enactment of self in social roles, this chapter takes more account than do his principal exegetists of some of Mead's ideas. It seems likely that whatever explains the scant attention to Mead paid by most of Dewey's exegetists also explains why their commentaries on his moral philosophy usually ignore the significance of its treatment of role occupancy in the exercise of moral agency.

Dewey was not a novice in the application of the behavioural and social sciences to ethics. He was already a forerunner in the application of interpersonal psychology to ethics when, in 1891, he appointed Mead to the Department of Philosophy at the University of Michigan. Drawing on Jay Martin's (2002) biography of Dewey, Nicholas Pagan (2008) notes his early application of interpersonal psychology to ethics in *Outlines of a Critical Theory of Ethics* (1891) and *The Study of Ethics: A Syllabus* (1894). Another early work, often mentioned in contemporary accounts of his moral philosophy, is *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology* (1922). Clearly, Dewey had the interests and background that would enable him to make good use of Mead's ideas and collaborate in their development.

2.2.0 The proper aim of moral philosophy

Because the pragmatist perspective presented here is based on Dewey's, it is important to note the standpoint from which his moral philosophy is formulated. Dewey rejects as untenable the traditional idea that the aim of moral philosophy is to establish some ultimate principle as a formula for moral judgement, a formula independent of history, culture, material conditions, and individual circumstances. To adopt such an aim is to take what he describes as 'the spectator view' of the task of moral philosophy. Instead, for him, the proper starting point is the correct understanding of human experience from the agent's standpoint. Dewey's own understanding of it, one grounded in a Darwinian conception of the nature of humankind, sees experience as everything that occurs in the continuing intercourse of the living being with the continually changing physical and social environment on which it is dependent and with which it continually seeks successful adjustment (Dewey: 1917 [1998a: 48]). In his view, a correct

understanding of what this means for morality reveals the absurdity of seeking a single principle to guide moral judgement.

Instead the aim should be, in Dewey's view, to find ways of enhancing the desire and capacity of moral agents to choose to act as intelligent moral selves, thoughtfully prosocial in all their social roles, and ready to improve their moral judgements in light of the consequences of acting on them. And since, in his view, almost all the important ethical problems found in modern democracies arise from the conditions of collective life, it is especially important that the convictions of reflective moral selves should be applied when deciding, following experiment, which social policies ought to be supported and which modified or rejected. This would require society to have a genuine democratic structure and an educational system that equipped new generations to realize the potential of such a structure. Philosophy could make an important contribution to the achievement of these ends: 'The popular impression that pragmatic philosophy means that philosophy shall develop ideas relevant to the actual crises of life, ideas influential in dealing with them and tested by the ideas they afford, is correct' (Dewey: 1917 [1998a: 66]). Hilary Putnam remarks that 'if there is a central theme in Dewey's ethics, *it is that the application of intelligence to moral problems is itself a moral obligation*' (Putnam 2006: 271, emphasis in original).

An essential theme in Dewey's ethics is the distinction between customary morality and reflective morality. The former locates its rules and standards of conduct in the community's established practices. Reflective morality 'appeals to conscience, reason, or to some principle which includes thought' (E:171). It is not a distinction between ancient and modern moralities, he notes, since some degree of reflective thought must have been present since earliest times, while in modern societies, conduct is often governed by convention, even when the need for critical judgement is most needed.

2.3.0 Dewey as role theorist

In order to show the advantages of recasting Dewey's analysis of moral agency as the analysis of self-enactment in social roles, it is necessary to justify presenting it in this way. That is easily done. Although he does not use the term role in its sociological sense, he uses the same concept when referring to the expectations people in relationships have of one another's conduct¹⁰. He refers to 'offices', and 'duties', and uses examples of role relationships to explain moral claims. These, he notes, arise from the nature of the relationships between parent and child, between friends, and between fellow citizens. 'Because of inherent relationships persons sustain to one another, they are exposed to the expectations of others and to the demands in which these expectations are made manifest' (*E*:237). He also refers to these demands as the duties that arise in the variety of relationships that people have with others. 'Many of the duties recognized in our system of common law arose out of relations which recur pretty constantly in the economic relations of men, as, for example, those of landlord and tenant, vendor and purchaser, master and servant, trustee and beneficiary' (*E*: 248). Such duties, he says, were what the Romans called offices. 'It is as a parent, not just as an isolated individual, that a man or woman imposes obligations on children; these grow out of the office or function the parent sustains, not out of mere personal will' (*E*: 249).

In the case of those persons who are usually called officers the point is even clearer. The legislator, judge, assessor, sheriff, does not exercise authority as his private possession, but as the representative of relations in which many share. He is an organ of a community of interests and purposes (*E*: 249).

From this point onwards in the chapter, the terminology of roles will be used to replace Dewey's use of equivalent terms. The referents of the latter remain unchanged. Roles refer to the socially recognized expectations of conduct that people have of one another in the relationships that Dewey mentions and all the

¹⁰ In his day the concept of role was not among the standard tools of analysis described by sociologists (Biddle 1986; Jacobs 2018).

other relationships of social life. And since it is in these relationships that all moral demands arise, role ethics refers not to some specialist domain of ethics but to ethics as a whole. As Dewey himself points out, the facts on which morality depends 'are those which arise out of active connections of human beings with one another, the consequences of their mutually intertwined activities in the life of desire, belief, judgement, satisfaction, and dissatisfaction' (Dewey 1922: 329).

2.4.0 The self as moral agent

For Dewey, the agent's character is the self's stable dispositions to respond to similar stimuli in a similar way (*E*: 181). These dispositions are the underlying causes of acts and of their resemblance to one another. 'Continuity, consistency, throughout a series of acts is the expression of the enduring unity of attitudes and habits' (*E*: 183). But dispositions may be stable without being consistent with one another. 'Divided and inconsistent interest is common' (*E*: 281). In an earlier book, Dewey refers to the origins of this inconsistency as follows:

We arrive at true conceptions of motivation and interest only by the recognition that selfhood (except as it has encased itself in a shell of routine) is in process of making, and that any self is capable of including within itself a number of inconsistent selves, of unharmonized dispositions . . . There is no one ready-made self behind activities. There are complex, unstable, opposing attitudes, habits, impulses which gradually come to terms with one another, and assume a certain consistency of figuration, even though only by means of a distribution of inconsistencies which keeps them in water-tight compartments, giving them separate turns or tricks in action (Dewey 1922: 137-138).

The role-focused rendering of Dewey's analysis points to ways in which his concept of the multi-versioned self can be extended with contributions from the theories of his fellow pragmatists. In William James's version of the idea, it is seen as a combination of role-specific or group-specific selves, each of which responds appropriately to the different expectations of those with whom the agent interacts in the different social groups to which she and they belong (1.3.1). For George Herbert Mead, such differences occur because the self is motivated to choose and perform its roles in ways that maintain consonance between its

preferred construal of its own self (or the one to which it aspires), and the perception of how the realization of that self is construed by occupants of counterpart roles (1.2.2).

Taken together, these ideas yield the following expansion of Dewey's concept of the self's character. The stable dispositions that constitute character are those of a particular configuration of role-specific selves. The agent chooses and enacts these various selves in ways that maintain her construal of her character and of the conduct required for its validation by others. As a further expansion of these ideas, social psychologists have proposed that the configuration of role-specific ideas is in the form of a hierarchy of role-specific selves, ordered by their relative importance to the agent's construal of her character. This proposal is examined in Chapter 4.

2.4.1 The unity of the self and its acts

Dewey stresses the intimate relationship between the active self and its environment. When it is awake, the self is always active. The function of a stimulus to the self from the environment is not to initiate activity, but to alter it in response to whatever a change in the environment signifies for the self's dispositions. For example, the sight of an elderly woman standing in a crowded train will prompt one passenger to offer her seat to the standing woman, and others to fix their gaze on their newspapers.

It is the man himself in his very self who is malicious or kindly, and these adjectives signify that the self is so constituted as to act in certain ways towards certain objects. Benevolence or cruelty is not something which a man *has*, as he may have dollars in his pocket-book; it is something which he *is*; and since his being is active, these qualities are *modes of activity*, not forces which produce action (*E*: 322, emphases in original).

For Dewey, acts and their consequences are not separate from the self, but form the self. Thus when acts have moral significance, they are realizations of the self's disposition to observe moral obligations in its conduct. 'It is not too much to say

that the key to a correct theory of morality is recognition of the *essential unity of the self and its acts*, if the latter have any moral significance; while errors in theory arise as soon as the self and acts (and their consequences) are separated from each other, and moral worth is attributed to one more than to the other' (E: 318-319, emphasis in original). The unity of self and acts is implicitly recognized, he says, when we hold someone responsible for her conduct, for to do so is to acknowledge the intimate and internal connection between an act and the actor's self or character.

Since it is in roles that acts occur, Dewey's doctrine of the essential unity of the self and its acts may reasonably be understood as the doctrine that the self – moral and non-moral – is enacted in the choice and performance of social roles¹¹. This unity is assumed by occupants of complementary roles as they anticipate and respond to one another's expectations: they interpret the others' acts as enactments of those others' selves.

2.5.0 The self's response to moral perplexity

There are occasions when the agent confronts a moral problem posed by the need to make a choice of role in which to act between two or more conflicting roles, or between different ways of responding to the conduct or needs of an occupant of a counterpart role. Should a lecturer spend the day in his role as teacher, helping a student urgently in need of help, or spend the time in his role as researcher, finishing an article that is already overdue? Should a barrister use a technicality of law to help a client escape the payment of a just debt? Should someone sacrifice career ambitions to care for an elderly parent? Similar issues arise when it is the conduct of others that poses a need to make a choice. What should be a parent's response to the discovery that her teenage son is taking a Class A drug? What should be a constituency member's response to her Member of Parliament's proposal to press for stricter rules on immigration?

¹¹ F.H. Bradley (1876) refers to the realization of the self in the duties of one's station in society. But for him this realization is seen as the goal of the virtuous self, rather than a generic description of how the self, virtuous or not, is realized.

Such choices pose a problem for the agent's character – the existing configuration of role-specific selves. The unity of the self and its acts means that the individual's choice between alternative ways of responding to cases of moral perplexity will reveal the nature of the preferred self or character¹². Their consequences affect the nature of the future self, whether they are pervasive, such as the choice of life partner or career, or more discrete, such as whether to refuse to exaggerate a friend's qualification when writing a reference. When deliberating over a choice, each alternative may appeal to a different element in the constitution of the self. Thus, while moral deliberation over a choice is, superficially, a weighing of the values of different ends, 'Below the surface, it is a process of discovering what sort of being a person most wants to become' (E: 317).

Selfhood or character is thus not a *mere* means, an external instrument of attaining certain ends. It is an agency of accomplishing consequences, as is shown in the pains which the athlete, the lawyer, the merchant, takes to build up certain habits in himself, because he knows they are the causal conditions for reaching the ends in which he is interested. But the self is more than an external agent. The attainment of consequences reacts to form the self (E: 317-318, emphases in original).

In consequence, 'a moral judgement of an act is also a judgement upon the character or selfhood of the one doing the act' (E: 318).

Deliberation is motivated by the individual's immediate response to the qualities of situations and acts. 'A person must *feel* the qualities of acts . . . before he has an inducement to deliberate or material with which to deliberate (E: 296, emphasis in original). Similarly, deliberation must end with a conclusion that is experienced affectively if it is to stir the person to act in accord with it. Dewey echoes Hume and Smith in maintaining that it is sympathy which animates moral judgement and

¹² For Mead, this is the nature of the preferred 'Me' (1.3.2)

the emotional reactions that prompt deliberation and action on the conclusion reached.

It is sympathy which saves consideration of consequences from degenerating into mere calculation, by rendering vivid the interests of others and urging us to give them the same weight as those which touch our own honor, purse, and power. To put ourselves in the place of others, to see things from the standpoint of their purposes and values, to humble, contrariwise, our own pretensions and claims till they reach the level they would assume in the eye of an impartial sympathetic observer, is the surest way to attain objectivity of moral knowledge (*E*: 298).

Dewey describes what occurs when morally significant choices are made by a process of deliberation. The individual imagines the consequences of making them, and thereby experiences, in the present, the positive or negative sentiments that would be elicited by the adoption of each choice and the consequences of doing so¹³. In the process, the value of each alternative course of action, and therefore of becoming each potential self is directly experienced. Only those imagined consequences that elicit some positive or negative sentiment will have any influence on behaviour.

But while the valuing of acts that accompanies the immediate response to them determines their importance to the agent, it is an error to suppose that this immediate response excludes the need for reflection, when in fact, 'The direct valuing which accompanies immediate sensitive responsiveness to acts has its complement and expansion in valuations which are deliberate, reflective' (*E*: 299). Dewey points out that the immediate response to acts is affected by habits of valuation that are formed early in life, before the development of the ability to use discriminating intelligence. They ensure that there can be no such thing as a perfectly good person. 'Prejudices, unconscious biases, are generated; one is

¹³ In an article that compares the way each of the classical pragmatists uses the concept of the dialogical self or inner speech, Norbert Wiley refers to Dewey's concept of it as what is shown in his description of the process of rehearsing, in imagination, alternative courses of action (Wiley 2006: 12).

uneven in his distribution of esteem and admiration; he is unduly sensitive to some values, relatively indifferent to others' (E: 299).

2.6.0 The agent as moral theorist

In reaching a judgement, moral principles may be helpful. Unlike a rule, such as 'Do not kill', which cannot be framed to account for the numerous circumstances in which an exception has to be made, a moral principle can be helpful as a tool with which to analyse a situation requiring a choice. For example, if the Golden Rule were accepted by all, it would not instruct people how to proceed, but as a principle it would point to 'the necessity of considering how our acts affect the interest of others as well as our own; it tends to prevent partiality of regard; it warns against setting an undue estimate upon a particular consequence of pain or pleasure simply because it happens to affect us' (E: 310)¹⁴. It could not be a substitute for the theorizing required to justify a particular choice in particular circumstances. The conflict and doubt for which such theorizing is required is not the kind aroused when the agent is tempted to do something wrong. In such cases, the struggle is between desire and moral belief (E: 174). Moral theorizing is the reflective process in which an agent must engage when the problem is that of deciding what one *ought* to do in morally perplexing circumstances.

Dewey sees no fundamental difference between systematic moral theory and the reflection that an individual engages in when attempting to find general principles to direct and justify her conduct. 'For what is called moral theory is but a more conscious and systematic raising of the question which occupies the mind of anyone who in the face of moral conflict and doubt seeks a way out through reflection' (E: 173). Systematic moral theory may help the individual to clarify the difficulty that such problems pose and to think about them more systematically than he might do otherwise, but it cannot offer a practical solution, 'it cannot take

¹⁴ The Golden Rule is defined by Simon Blackburn in the Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy as 'Any form of the dictum, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"'. He says some form of it is found in almost all religions and ethical systems.

the place of [a] personal decision, which must be made in every case of moral perplexity' (*E*:176).

It is not only when particular instances of moral perplexity are encountered that moral theory is required. It is also required when the habits of conduct that comprise the customary performance of a social role are made inadequate by new circumstances or by a change in how existing circumstances are construed. Dewey points out that whole communities or groups can find themselves faced by novel opportunities and requirements that challenge habits and beliefs formed in the past (*E*: 175). Some examples were mentioned in the previous chapter. A current example is the increased determination of women to resist being treated in demeaning ways by some men. For the latter, behaving in such ways in various of their social roles and believing it to be acceptable to do so had become habitual. Now the expectations by women of men's conduct in these roles have changed, and men confront a demand to reconsider the moral justification of their habitual dispositions or those of others that they had not condemned.

2.7.0 Three sources of moral normativity

Dewey argues that moral theorizing is subject to the influence of three different sources of normativity – sources of influence on the agent's view on what action ought to be taken – each of which is drawn from one of the types of traditional moral theory, types that are usually considered to offer rival conceptions of the ultimate criterion of right action or moral worth (*E*:193–196). Anderson comments that Dewey recasts 'in methodological terms' the substantive answers of traditional moral theories to traditional moral questions (2019: 21). She interprets this to mean that, for him, the supposedly transcendental criteria proffered by these theories for the appraisal of conduct should instead be seen as different standpoints from which individuals are able to form hypotheses about the propriety of conduct and its consequences for themselves and others. These hypotheses could be tested by acting on them, and the outcome used to provide grounds for the revision of principles and standards (*ibid*: 29-30).

Dewey maintains that while each of the three sources of normativity is soundly based, the fact that they differ in their origin and mode of operation means that they can exercise divergent influences on the formation of judgement, and in consequence

it is characteristic of any situation properly called moral that one is ignorant of the end and of good consequences, of the right and just approach, of the direction of virtuous conduct, and that one must search for them (Dewey 1930: 199)

In place of an ultimate end for the response to the influence of each of the sources, he offers a criterion of the moral praiseworthiness of the agent's response to them. A description of the three sources and their attendant assessment criteria follows.

2.7.1 Desires, intentions, and the Good

One source of normativity is a conception of the Good: the desired or intended objective of the choice and performance of a role. An example would be the goods sought by enacting the role of dutiful son or political activist. For the type of traditional theory for which the conception of the Good is central, the problem is that of identifying the ends of desires and intentions that are truly or rationally good. These theories are concerned with the attainment of either morally good consequences or some ultimate good, such as *eudaimonia*. For Dewey,

The task of moral theory is thus to form a theory of Good as the end or objective of desire, and also to frame a theory of the true, as distinct from the specious, good. In effect this latter need signifies the discovery of ends which will meet the demands of impartial and far-sighted thought as well as satisfy the urgencies of desire (*E*: 205)

Dewey observes that 'The moral problem which confronts every person is how regard for general welfare, for happiness of others than himself, is to be made a

regulative purpose in his own conduct'¹⁵ (E: 264). With Jeremy Bentham's formula for utilitarianism in mind, Dewey argues that It is unrealistic to suggest that regard for general happiness could serve that purpose. People could not be expected to act on their estimate of the effect on general happiness whenever doing so would entail a sacrifice of their own happiness or that of those close to them. The extent to which the agent's actions are directed towards the wellbeing of others will depend on the agent's character or self. This is ignored by those for whom the happiness of the majority is the supreme moral principle. For them, even an act that is morally repugnant to the self is good if its overall effect is considered benign. The self and its qualities are mere means to that end. It is a different matter when it is the effect of laws and institutions on the general welfare that is being estimated. For that purpose, the precise consideration of consequences is required.

It was, says Dewey, John Stuart Mill who aligned utilitarianism with the 'unbiased moral sense of mankind' and who described doing as one would be done by and loving one's neighbour as oneself as 'the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality' (E: 265). Mill believed that laws and social arrangements should attempt to achieve as close a correspondence as possible between the happiness of the individual and the interests of society as a whole, and that establishing the same association in the mind of the individual should be the aim of formal and informal education. In Dewey's view, making the wellbeing of society the end or purpose of desire would be too vague to do anything but arouse a diffused sentimental state, yet it pointed to the criterion by which the moral praiseworthiness of the objects of desire should be assessed. That criterion is whether an object that will satisfy a desire, the achievement of which is the aim of the chosen role and its performance, is one 'which at the same time brings satisfaction to others, or which at least harmonizes with their well-being in that it does not inflict suffering upon them' (E:271).

¹⁵ By 'every person', he means of course every person for whom the moral justification of conduct is important.

By personal choice among the ends suggested by desires of [sic] objects which are in agreement with the needs of social relations, an individual achieves a *kind* of happiness which is harmonious with the happiness of others. This is the only sense in which there is an equation between personal and general happiness. But it is also the only sense which is morally required (*E*: 272, emphasis in original).

To identify objects that comply with the criterion, the reflective agent adopts the standpoint of a projected ideal observer and considers proposed objects 'through the eyes of this impartial and far-seeing objective judge' (*E*: 269).

2.7.2 Role obligations and the Right

Another source of normativity is a concept of the Right that should govern the intentions and ends of the agent's choice and performance of roles. Kant is the best known exponent of the type of traditional theory in which this concept is central. For its advocates, desires are a threat to the Right, which is 'that which accords with law and the commands of duty' (*E*: 233).

Dewey finds untenable a concept of the Right that requires the suppression of desires and intentions inherent in the nature of human beings. Kant's identification of the Good Will as the only moral good implies that the self, independently of the consequences of its acts, is the supreme and exclusive moral end. This is to treat acts and their consequences as mere means for maintaining the good self (*E*: 315-316). Thus, however bad the consequences of an act, if it maintains the goodness of the self, it is good. What is required is a concept that preserves the distinction between the Good and the Right without such consequences. Dewey's concept of the Right is based on the observation that obligations are constitutive of the various role relationships people have with one another in society. He points out that, for example, the obligations of friends to one another, the observance of which may sometimes be irksome, arise from the nature of the relationship between friends. 'If we generalize such instances, we reach the conclusion that Right, law, duty arise from the relations which human beings intimately sustain to one another, and that their authoritative force springs from the very nature of the relation that binds people together' (*E*: 237-238).

The demands should be seen, not as Kant saw them – a product of reason – but as the claims made by society on behalf of its members on how they *ought* to behave in their relationships with one another. These are evidently – in the role-focused presentation of Dewey’s analysis adopted here – the obligations that occupants of social roles are expected to observe by occupants of counterpart roles – the obligations that Mead saw as those internalized with the generalized other (1.2.3). They 'operate to induce the individual to feel that nothing is good for himself which is not also a good for others' and that encourage 'a widening of the area of consequences to be taken into account in forming ends and deciding what is Good' (E: 245).

Role obligations may or may not coincide with what reflection concludes is morally right. In any case, what is currently regarded as right should always be understood as subject to revision in light of further enquiry and reflection, thereby fostering moral progress (E: 252). Once upon a time apartheid was judged right, by white South Africans, and the restriction to men of eligibility to vote in parliamentary elections was judged right, by men. Those who reject a customary view of a particular moral obligation may have a duty to *not* observe it. Pointing this out, Dewey reminds readers that 'Some persons persecuted as moral rebels in one period have been hailed as moral heroes later' (E: 251). He notes that to justify the claim that a particular obligation is not rightful, the moral non-conformist needs to show that an alternative would better serve the common good (E: 252)

Dewey’s criterion of the rightfulness of the agent’s choice and performance of a role is whether the obligations of the role are regarded by the agent as serving the common good and are therefore as binding on her own judgement and action as it is on those from whose observance of it she benefits (E: 250-251). For example, does someone who, in her role as citizen, benefits from the observance by other citizens of an obligation to send honest accounts of income to the tax authorities regard herself as bound by the same obligation?

Wrongness is defined by a rejection of this requirement.

Wrong consists in faithlessness to that upon which the wrongdoer counts when he is judging and seeking for what is good to him. He betrays the principles upon which he depends; he turns to his personal advantage the very values which he refuses to acknowledge in his own conduct towards others. He contradicts, not as Kant would have it, some abstract law of reason, but the principle of reciprocity when he refuses to extend to others the goods which he seeks for himself (*E*: 251-252).

By that measure, wrongdoing is ubiquitous, and given the structure of modern society, difficult to avoid in Dewey's view.

2.7.3 Praise, blame, and virtue

The third source of normativity is the desire for conduct to be found praiseworthy rather than blameworthy by others for the dispositions revealed by the agent's choice and performance of roles – dispositions which generate and sustain conceptions of virtue and vice. Traditional moral theories of this type are advocated by those impressed 'by the enormous part played in human life by facts of approbation and condemnation, praise and blame, reward and punishment, encouragement of some courses of action, resentment at others, and pressure to keep persons from adopting those courses which are frowned upon' (*E*: 195).

Ideas of virtue and vice emerge from the mass of these approbations, 'the dispositions which are socially commended and encouraged constituting the excellencies of character which are to be cultivated; vices and defects being those traits which are condemned' (*E*: 195). Because praise and blame are spontaneous and instinctive, they differ in principle from the good and the right as a source of normativity. But their effect may be to endorse judgements of rightness or influence deliberation about ends (Dewey 1930 203).

Dewey points out that from the standpoint of conventional morality, what count as virtues can readily be listed. They will include kindness, honesty, temperance, and many others. What these virtues mean in practice is defined by the forms of conduct in which they are realized and that are approved, forms which vary

between societies and change over time. Such virtues as public-spiritedness, regard for life, faithfulness to others, and fairness have a permanent value because no community could survive in which they were not approved. But the view of what constitutes a realization of these virtues in conduct differs between communities and changes over time. In some communities, even regard for human life does not extend to all female infants or the aged (*E*: 281). There are also of course major variations in the conduct described as showing fairness.

Reflective morality acknowledges that a virtue cannot be defined by a permanent and uniform feature of conduct. Dewey maintains that it should be defined by whether the agent's conduct in pursuit of a morally praiseworthy interest reveals a disposition with the following three qualities: whole-heartedness (total commitment), continuity and persistence, and impartiality. It is dispositions with these qualities that are the virtues which ought to be praised. On occasions when persistence in the face of obstacles is the most prominent quality, it may be described as the virtue of courage. When impartiality is the most prominent, it may be described as a commitment to justice. And when someone subordinates a strong desire to a comprehensive good, she may be described as exhibiting the virtue of self-control. When virtues are defined in this way, they 'interpenetrate one another' and 'this unity is involved in the very idea of integrity of character' (*E*: 283).

When they are treated as separate from one another, the traits described as virtues have variable meanings. For example, when treated as separate virtues, courage may be seen as merely stoical resistance, and conscientiousness an obsession to avoid falling into error. When it is partial, the virtue of concern for others may refer to a concern restricted to the interests of friends and relatives, rather than a disposition to treat the interests of occupants of all counterpart roles, not with the same intensity, but with an equal and even measure of value, whether they are 'friends or strangers, fellow citizens or foreigners' (*E*: 282-283).

In sum, Dewey's criterion of whether an action is the realization of a virtue is whether the action displays a praiseworthy disposition that is realized wholeheartedly, consistently, and impartially in pursuit of morally commendable objectives (E: 281-282). The criterion is a measure of the integrity of the agent's character.

2.7.4 Conflicting influences on moral judgement

Dewey maintains that because each of the sources of normativity represented by the traditional moral theories has a function in moral theorizing, uncertainty and conflicting ideas and the need for individual choice are inherent features of moral judgement¹⁶. In an address to France's Société Française de Philosophie in 1930, he describes the difference between his view of the traditional theories and the views taken by their advocates, and the implications of the difference for moral judgement.

The traditional theories postulate a single principle as the explanation of moral life, and exclude the possibility of uncertainty or conflict when considering the moral quality of a proposed act. According to these theories, 'Conflict is, in effect, between good and evil, justice and injustice, duty and caprice, virtue and vice, and is not an inherent part of the good, the obligatory, and the virtuous' (1930: 199). In fact, argues Dewey, the sources of normativity that are the subjects of the theories, while independent in their origins, are intertwined in their operation and often divergent in their influence. He summarizes his own alternatives to the traditional theories (reviewed above in the preceding three sections) and concludes: 'Good, I have said, is ascribable to deliberation about desires and intentions; right, obligation, is dependent upon requirements that have social authority and force; virtues are dependent on approbation' (ibid: 203).

¹⁶ Dewey does not use the term 'sources of normativity'. On this occasion he describes them as 'independent variables in moral action' (1930: 199). The role-focused version of his analysis of moral agency clarifies the important distinctions he is making.

Dewey concedes that the three sources of influence on conduct can converge in their effects. An example would be when in their role as citizens, agents act on the socially approved right and obligation to protest against an injustice, regard doing so as contributing to an outcome that has good consequences, and know that the exercise of the right is considered praiseworthy and virtuous by respected others. But it is where these different influences are intertwined and cut across one another, as they often do, he claims, that problems arise. As an example at the aggregate level, he refers to the contrast between publicly recognized duties in the Anglo-Saxon countries and the 'schema of virtues which assure economic success, a fact which explains in some measure our reputation for hypocrisy' (ibid: 204)¹⁷. One of these 'virtues' would be the valuation of career success over success as a mother. The same competing influences are also evident when there is public debate about a moral issue. For example, they are evident in the debates that occur when a terminally ill individual's conviction that she is morally entitled to be helped to end her life conflicts with a socially authorized view that she is not so entitled, a view reinforced by the condemnation of her demand by some and the support of it by others.

At the individual level, Dewey's three sources of moral normativity may compete for influence whenever there is a need to choose between roles or ways of performing them that differ in the obligations they impose, the ends they seek, or the virtues the choice will demonstrate. Of course, this problem arises only for the morally conscientious agent. 'The more conscientious the agent is and the more care he expends on the moral quality of his acts, the more he is aware of the complexity of this problem of discovering what is good; he hesitates among ends, all of which are good in some measure, among duties which obligate him for some reason' (ibid: 199).

¹⁷ In 2016 the world's richest nation elected as its president a man who had responded to a rival candidate's claim that he had paid no taxes with the words, 'That makes me smart' (quoted by Aaron Blake in an article in the online version of *The Washington Post*, 15 March 2017).

In Dewey's view it is absurd to ignore these competing pressures. It needs to be recognized that there exists no single formula that can resolve all moral difficulties. A philosophy which would instead

admit that every human being can only do his best to shift for himself among the disparate forces, would throw light on our real difficulties and would help us make a more accurate estimate of competing factors. It would be necessary to sacrifice the idea that there exists, theoretically and beforehand, a unique and ideally correct solution for every difficulty into which a person will be thrown. Personally, I believe that this sacrifice, far from being a loss, would be a gain. By turning our attention from rules and rigid standards, it would lead us to take fuller consideration of the specific elements which necessarily enter into every situation where we must act (1930: 204).

In other words, the assumption that there is a single criterion that would help someone deal with a morally complex situation is both false and misleading. As well as ignoring the fact that there is more than one source of normativity, it ignores the importance of context, an error to which philosophers are all too prone in Dewey's view. 'I venture to assert that the most pervasive fallacy of philosophic thinking goes back to neglect of context' (Dewey 1931 [1998: 207]). Moral philosophy needs to recognize that the response to a morally complex situation will depend on the effect of the three sources of normativity on the agent's perception of possible responses to the particular circumstances that have made the situation complex. These will include the effect of the response on the agent's preferred character.

Dewey was well aware that the exercise of moral agency was constrained and conditioned by social circumstances. One of the most distinctive features of his analysis of moral agency is his treatment of the malign effects on its exercise of the social structure of modern societies. In this he anticipated the main thrust of the criticisms of Mead's sociology of moral agency that will be considered in the chapter that follows.

2.8.0 The interpenetration of self and society

Dewey rejects the conception of individual and society that treats them as separate rather than as interpenetrating entities. For him, as Mead says of him, 'The individual constitutes society as genuinely as society constitutes the individual' (1935: 74). Or as Dewey himself writes:

the contention is not in the least that our will, the body of our desires and purposes, is subservient to social conditions, but that the latter are incorporated into our attitudes, and our attitudes into our social conditions, to such an extent that to maintain one is to maintain the other, to change one is to change the other (*E*: 379).

Dewey believed that the opportunities for morally significant choices are often constrained by the fact that 'social conditions enter integrally and intrinsically into the formation of character, that is, the make-up of desires, purposes, judgments of approval and disapproval' (*E*: 380).

He finds the effect of social conditions on moral attitudes in modern societies is especially evident in the economic sphere. Dewey argues that the commercial activities of capitalist society, with their emphasis on ruthless competition for private gain, permeate the lives of most people and often undermine the appeal of their own convictions. National life is dominated by an ethos of exclusiveness and encourages people to base their criteria of evaluation on those of their own class, ethnicity, and skin colour, and to view other nations with suspicion and fear. The 'convictions that obtain in personal morality are negated on a large scale in collective conduct, and for this reason are weakened even in their strictly personal application' (*E*: 286). He has in mind practices that are officially and legally forbidden but that may be tolerated and even encouraged, such as tax evasion and the use of 'recreational drugs'. Dewey complains that where customary morality prevails, the question of the ends that people should live for is forestalled by the habitual conduct and institutions that constitute the social environment in which people find themselves. 'There are today multitudes of men and women who take their aims from what they observe to be going on around them' (*E*: 197).

For many others, lack of education and poverty mean they have little choice but to do just what they must do to survive.

As a result, 'At the present time, almost all important ethical problems arise out of the conditions of associated life' (E: 352). He includes the following among the collective conditions of modern democratic societies that affect the lives of individuals: the invasion of domestic life by new modes of industry; the control of opportunities for finding work by concentrations of capital; the modifications of social conditions by new inventions. In such circumstances, 'reflection is morally indispensable' (E: 353). People need to decide which changes they favour and which they disfavour, which institutions they want to preserve and which they want to modify or abolish. The individual may have decided what she personally prefers about some issue, such as whether she believes that she and her spouse alone should be able to decide whether to end their marriage, but her problem takes the form: 'What attitude shall I adopt towards an issue which concerns many people whom I do not know personally, but whose action along with mine will determine the conditions under which we all live?' (E: 353). In other words, what attitude should an agent adopt, in the role of citizen, to issues that will affect the agent and many fellow occupants of that role?

2.8.1 The need for an experimental attitude to social change

Dewey recognizes that people, from temperament, education, or environment, hold different views about many issues, and that these differences often express an underlying preference for either an individualist or collectivist attitude to intervention in their lives. As well as the conflicts that arise from these different orientations, there are conflicts of view about needs and policies between and within different sections of society, including those between and within social classes, people of different ethnicity, upholders of old traditions and would-be reformers, political parties and factions within them, possessors of power and wealth and those with less of both. These conflicts will be reflected in tensions between participants in role relationships. For Dewey, while it is important to take account of these differences, it is even more important to note how they change

over time. For example, what is regarded at one time as antisocial and immoral (an example would be providing easy access to methods of birth control) is often later seen as an admirable reform.

Such transformations signify that the proper criterion by which change should be judged is not some particular conception of the relationship between individual and society, for that 'would assume the existence of final and unquestionable knowledge upon which we can fall back in order to settle automatically every moral problem' (E: 364). Rather, reflective morality points to the need for a society able and willing to adopt an experimental attitude to itself, one in which there is a general willingness to re-examine current convictions about any aspect of social life in light of its consequences for the wellbeing of those affected, *'even if that course entails the effort to change by concerted effort existing institutions, and to direct existing tendencies to new ends'* (E: 366, emphasis in original).

According to Dewey, it would need to be a genuinely democratic society in which members had been educated and socialized in ways that would realize its potential.

2.9.0 Cultural variability of moral codes

There are many reasons to expect differences between and within societies in the role norms that moral agents observe. The social conditions that affect the norms of a society may be heavily influenced by its relationship with other societies. For example, a society's norms may be influenced by an educational system imported from another society or by exploitative trade arrangements, which in some circumstances help to maintain traditional norms and in other cases challenge them. Within society there are often social groups with interests that differ from and may be strikingly incompatible with those of other groups. As a consequence, acting in the interests of others may be more apparent within groups than across them. Much of the cooperation between groups may be forced rather than volitional, or achieved by the ability of the powerful to manipulate the ideas and inclinations of the powerless.

The continuing viability of a society depends on the maintenance of social order, but also on its adaptiveness to change in preferences and circumstances. As the sociologist Percy Cohen points out, when social order is maintained by mutually reinforcing processes, such as those of value consensus and common interests, it provides the conditions of its own perpetuation by tending to resist pressures for disruption and change (1968: 31). The converse is also true. One consequence is that norms which suit social conditions at one stage in the history of a society can lead to change in social conditions at a later stage, and eventually to a change in norms. For example, pressure on resources resulting from high population growth may contribute to a rejection of the value placed on large families. In consequence family-size norms developed when infant mortality was high may change to norms better suited to a society in which it is much lower.

Commenting on the cultural variability of moral codes, Dewey insists that the binding force of a society's moral code is relative to the society's organization. Its moral principles are facts, as real and significant as the social conditions to which they are related, and may have no significance in another culture. This view is implicit in an account of moral agency that sees it as the enactment of self in social roles, given that the expectations of conduct embodied in many of these roles (including those essential to the survival of the community) are determined by the particular social conditions with which the occupants must contend.

Dewey maintains that it is the commitment to a static and uniform moral code for all times and places that provokes the extreme reaction that they are all conventional and have no validity. A recognition of the intimate association of a code of morals with social forces 'will create and reinforce search for the principles which are truly relevant in our own day' (*E*: 313). A contemporary example would be the way an improved recognition of that association has heightened awareness of the racial discrimination that restricts access to high-status occupational roles.

2.10.0 The anthropology of morality

In what he says about the interpenetration of self and society and its effects, including the cultural variability of moral codes and the attendant variability in what participants in role relationships expect of one another, Dewey's analysis of moral agency rests on distinctive assumptions about the anthropology of morality. These assumptions have been broadly supported by philosophers who favour some form of moral relativism, including most prominently David Wong (2014;2006), who finds justification for them in recent studies in the anthropology of ethics.

Wong bases his 2014 essay on the view that an account of morality needs to satisfy three desiderata. First, it needs to recognize and be compatible with significant variation across historical periods and different societies in the major kinds of value, including types of rights, obligations and duties, and morally desirable ends. Secondly, it needs to specify a set of criteria for what counts as morality, even though different moralities can vary in value content. Finally, Wong claims that an account of morality needs to have a way of evaluating different moralities as being more justifiable or less so, or of being true or false.

Wong starts by suggesting that those moral philosophers who defend the existence of a single true morality do not give enough weight to the disconfirming evidence of significant differences in values and value system within and between societies. Some of these differences are evident in variable views on such issues as the permissibility of abortion. Other differences are evident in the pervasive effects of such cultural characteristics of worldview as whether the claims of impartial justice or those of interpersonal obligation should have precedence in moral decision-making. Wong's argument supports Dewey's view that a society's morality is specific to its particular circumstances.

In some of his interpretations of the differences between societies in their prevailing worldview, it is clear that Wong is unfamiliar with pragmatist sociology. For example, he says 'a Confucian or what I have called a relational conception of

the person is a descriptive claim about what kind of entities persons are: they are bodies or biological organisms who become persons only when they come into relationship with each other' (ibid: 341-342). Wong also treats as distinctively Asian the conception of the role-specific self, the self with character traits that are realized by conduct in some roles but not others. For pragmatists who endorse Mead's theory of self-formation, these ideas are not peculiar to Confucianism, but apply universally to persons or selves.

Wong notes that few philosophers have reflected on the second of his desiderata, the criteria of what counts as morality, but instead have assumed a particular meaning (ibid: 343). Addressing the issue, he argues that morality is defined by its function in human life, that its function is the promotion and regulation of social cooperation, and that it is a function that can be fulfilled by different configurations of values. To perform its function, he points out, morality incorporates culturally established differences in value among kinds of activities and motivations, such as distinctions between noble and base and between admirable and contemptible. 'In effect, I propose that moralities have a "core" that involves prohibitions on harm, specifications on when one can harm, and norms specifying actions necessary for the cooperative form of life that a given morality is prescribing' (ibid: 349-350). What Wong 'proposes' here is essentially what Aberle et al. (1950) had pointed out was a necessity of societal viability, and that the pragmatists had taken for granted (Introduction (ii)). It is a conception of the morality internalized by moral agents which, as Wong says and as the pragmatists would have agreed, is broad enough to encompass ideals beyond that of cooperation, such as the ideal of individual liberty, that would be inconsistent with more restrictive criteria.

Wong also challenges the sharp distinction made by some between the moral and the conventional. Referring to Confucians, he notes that for them, the proper observance of customs and conventions, such as the daily rituals of greeting at meals, is a way of expressing respect and of cultivating respectful attitudes and emotions (ibid:347). The same might be said of many customs and conventions in

the West, for example such meal-time rules of etiquette as not starting to eat until all have been served and filling others' glasses before one's own. He believes, as did the pragmatists, that all normative prescriptions are cultural constructions, and that how, if at all, the moral is distinguished from the conventional is another such construction.

The fact that normative prescriptions are cultural constructions that vary among societies does not make them any less real in their consequences, or, in the view of the prominent pragmatist philosopher, Joseph Margolis, in their factual existence. Margolis explains that while the intentionality possessed by cultural entities makes the cultural *sui generis* and irreducible to the physical, 'cultural entities are embodied in natural or physical entities and their properties are correspondingly incarnate in natural or physical properties; hence, cultural entities exist in the same sense physical objects do and their properties are as real as physical objects are' (Margolis 2001: 145). On this view the expectations of conduct in social roles are therefore just as real as the human occupants of the roles.

2.10.1 The evaluability of moralities

The cultural variability of normative prescriptions does not contradict the claims of those who point to attributes, such as 'fair', that appear to be regarded universally as those possessed by a moral person. What varies is what counts as manifestations of these virtues. For example, most taxpayers in the United Kingdom regard it as fair that their taxes are used to provide medical care for all, including those too poor to be tax payers. This is not the view of a high proportion of citizens of the United States.

Like Dewey and Margolis, Wong rejects the possibility of there being one true morality. He describes himself as a relativist 'but not an "anything goes" relativist' (2014: 345). The not-anything-goes reservation is explained by his view that it is possible to judge moralities as better or worse or even false by evaluating the credibility of their factual beliefs about the world and their functional adequacy.

He concedes that, because it is constructed by human beings, moral truth is especially dependent on point of view, but he argues that 'constructions can be more or less adequate given the functions they have' (ibid: 345) and that their adequacy can be assessed by the facts. Among the examples that he mentions is the erroneous belief that, owing to their innate limitations, it is in the interests of some groups of humans to be subordinated to other groups. Undoubtedly beliefs of this kind are found in all societies, and they may cohere with the social conditions in which they are found, including the distribution of power that sustains them and which they help to sustain. For example, the subordination of women in a patriarchal society is a feature that permeates its social and economic arrangements. The belief that it is in women's interests to be subordinated is necessary to the preservation of the arrangements.

Dewey too distinguishes between the truth of the moral code as locally understood and the credibility of the factual claims that support it. In his political philosophy he is highly critical of the way that workers in the capitalist system are manipulated to identify their interests with those of the ruling groups (See 3.6.0).

Wong echoes Dewey in stressing that an accurate conception of morality needs to allow for the fact that self-interest can take precedence over moral considerations, but has a different view of how self-interest is manifested. Wong says: 'in the United States our economic practices and institutions provide incentives and shape motivations in a way that severely conflicts with American moral values' (ibid: 344). This implies a disconnection between the self and its acts that Dewey repudiated. In his view, the moral values of the self are revealed in its conduct. If that includes, for example, claiming, in their roles as voters or politicians, to have egalitarian values while actually supporting economic policies that favour the wellbeing of their own social group, what is revealed is a want of integrity in the moral values of the self. It is the origin of what he had in mind when he referred to the reputation of Anglo-Saxon countries for hypocrisy (2.7.4).

Wong's views and the abundant anthropological evidence to which he refers are broadly consistent with the convictions of Dewey's moral philosophy. The essay supports his understanding of the social function of morality, his view that a community's morality is a cultural construction specific to the community's circumstances, and his acute awareness of the common mismatch between the truth of the moral code as locally understood and the credibility of the factual claims invoked in its defence. Had Wong treated the Confucian understanding of self-formation and role-specific selfhood not as specific to Confucians but as applying universally, it would have been explicitly supportive of the role-focused version of Dewey's analysis of moral agency.

2.11.0 Conclusions

This chapter has presented Dewey's analysis of moral agency in a way that follows the implications of his observation that moral obligations arise naturally in, and are constitutive of, the role relationships between members of a society. He believed that society's interests are well served when the regulation of the mutual reciprocal expectations that occupants of these roles have of one another's conduct is governed by intelligent reflection on the means of achieving the common good.

Dewey sees the self or character as the stable dispositions of a combination of constituent selves to respond to similar stimuli in a similar way, selves that are inconsistent in their dispositions but consistent in their configuration. When taken together with theorizing on the self by Mead and James, the concept of the self that emerges is one that sees the agent's choice and performance of role-specific selves as governed by the agent's construal of her character and the need for its validation by others.

The unity of the self and its acts means that when the agent is morally perplexed and has to choose between roles or ways of performing a role that require deliberation, the choice will have an effect on the agent's character or the one to which she aspires. Dewey maintains that in making a choice, the agent is subject

to three sources of normativity – sources of influence on what the agent ought to do – each drawn from the three traditional types of moral theory, sources which differ in their origin but are intertwined in their operation and often divergent in their influence. For each source, he specifies a criterion by which the moral praiseworthiness or otherwise of an agent's actual or prospective response to it may be assessed.

One source is the desire or intention that is the objective of the agent's choice and performance of a role. Another is the obligations embodied in the chosen role, obligations that Mead sees as those internalized with the generalized other. The third source is a desire for the praise or blame of others for what they see as the morally praiseworthy character traits the virtues – revealed by conduct in the role. Dewey maintains that because each of these sources of normativity has a function in moral theorizing, uncertainty and conflicting ideas are inherent features of moral judgement. Moral philosophy needs to recognize that the response to a morally complex situation will depend on the effect of the three sources of normativity on the agent's perception of possible responses to the particular circumstances that have made the situation complex. The effects considered will include the perceived effect of the responses on the self's construal of its own character. Dewey calls for a moral philosophy which, instead of claiming that there is some universal principle that can be invoked to banish moral perplexity, admits that human beings can only do their best to respond to the pressures of the disparate sources of normativity in play.

The anthropological assumptions of Dewey's moral philosophy are broadly consistent with the anthropological evidence reviewed by Wong. These include the conviction that the function of morality is the promotion and regulation of social cooperation, a function that is fulfilled by a socially constructed moral code that is specific to the state of the society in which it is embedded. Dewey would have approved Wong's view that it is important to distinguish between the truth of a moral code as locally understood and the credibility of the factual claims invoked in its defence. Wong's description of the Confucian understanding of self-

formation and role-specific self-hood seems to endorse elements of the sociology presupposed by Dewey's analysis of moral agency and that he assumes applies universally.

Noted earlier was Alasdair MacIntyre's assertion in *After Virtue* that any moral philosophy presupposes a sociology, and that the claims of any moral philosophy cannot be understood until the manner of its social embodiment is made clear. He goes on to claim that 'since Moore the dominant narrow conception of moral philosophy has ensured that the moral philosophers could ignore this task' (2007: 23). To the extent that Alasdair MacIntyre is correct in his claim in *After Virtue* that moral philosophers ignore the issue of social embodiment (2007:23), one reason is likely to be the continued indifference of many of them, including some pragmatist philosophers, to the interdependence of moral philosophy and sociology. This seems to be at least part of the explanation of the neglect of Mead by Dewey's exegetists, which in turn may explain their neglect of the import of Dewey's ideas for the moral significance of social roles. When Mead's contribution is made clear, the effect is to emphasize the intrinsic sociality of Dewey's conception of moral agency, and therefore the dependence of a moral code on the social conditions that sustain it.

Part 2 Extensions

Chapter 3

Conceptual development of the pragmatist analysis

As to the place of personal morality, I want to say that any conduct that can be distinguished from spontaneous behaviour, as Professor Emmet does distinguish personal morality, is still a matter of roles; a person can choose in what role to act, including the choice to remain in high office, the choice between conflicting role-requirements, the choice to act as helper on the bus, and even the choice to act in no role at all. In this consists his moral freedom; though to choose to act in no role at all is to choose not to act morally (Bernard Mayo 1968: 52).

Chapter 1 examined George Herbert Mead's sociology and its explanation of how a culture becomes imprinted on the human organism, endowing it with selfhood and knowledge of what is expected of its own self and the selves of others as occupants of social roles. Chapter 2 drew on the concept of social role developed by Mead and William James's conception of the multi-versioned self to recast John Dewey's pragmatist analysis of moral agency. It was recast in a way that understands moral agency as the choice and performance of social roles. This chapter considers some of the numerous studies of Mead's sociology undertaken by philosophers and social scientists since its original formulation, and that have the effect of augmenting and extending Dewey's analysis of moral agency.

Section 1 examines some contributions by British moral philosophers in the 1960s to a literature on the significance of the concept of role to the concept of moral agency. Section 2 reviews a version of Mead's theory of self-formation that treats it as a developmental process, and focuses on the stages by which individuals achieve the reflective intersubjectivity needed for the full exercise of agency in social roles. Section 3 explains why a theory of action needs to take account of the creativity entailed in non-routine action and the implications of this for the rational actor model of action. Sections 4,5, and 6 review contributions that augment Mead's sociology and its potential contribution to Dewey's analysis of moral agency. The subject of Section 4 is the claim that Mead's sociology is

unrealistic in its conception of society and the self and its treatment of social conflict. Section 5 examines an argument which claims that Mead overlooks the fact that the domination of occupants of some roles by occupants of other roles is integral to social action, and a potential source of conflict. Domination is also the subject of Section 6, specifically forms of it of which the dominated are unaware. They are forms taken for granted as part of the fabric of a way of life. Section 7 examines an argument that the availability of different and incompatible spheres of moral justification in modern societies means that social conflict is an intractable feature of them.

3.1.0 Social roles as the sites of moral agency

In the 1960s, British philosophers contributed to an important literature on the dependence of the concept of moral agency on the concept of role. Their contributions, which presupposed Meadian sociology (not always explicitly), are examined in what follows.

A pioneering contribution to literature on the use of the sociological concept of role in moral philosophy was the book *Rules, Roles and Relations* by the British philosopher Dorothy Emmet. In the introductory chapter, she observes that social action depends on the existence of mutual reciprocal expectations about how people are likely to act, 'and on these expectations not being too often disappointed' (1966:7)¹⁸. In subsequent chapters she explains why the study of the implications of this fact requires a recognition of the interdependence of sociology and moral philosophy. Commenting on the value of the concept of role to practitioners in both fields, she says:

What people think they ought to do depends largely on how they see their roles, and (most importantly) the conflicts between their roles. It may be a bridge notion between myself as an individual, with my proper name and my personal responsibility, and 'my station and its

¹⁸ The book contains a brief summary of Mead's sociology of self-construction (pp.156-157) and refers once to John Dewey (p. 29), though only to claim that his influence had promoted the false assumption that critical scientific intelligence and liberal values go together.

duties' in the institutional world of the society in which I have to live (1966: 15).

The phrase in quotation marks is the title of a chapter in *Ethical Studies* (1876), a book by the idealist philosopher F.H. Bradley. Commenting on the chapter, which she describes as perhaps the only classical contribution to the literature on institutionalized rights and duties, Emmet says that Bradley 'dismisses cavalierly the individual behind the rights and duties' (1966: 181)¹⁹. She is critical of the philosopher Bernard Mayo for a similar reason: his rejection (Mayo 1952) of the idea of respect for persons as a moral notion, 'since he sees morality as dependent on rules citing universalizable properties and classes' (Emmet 1966: 177). For Emmet, it is essential to avoid conflating the person with the persona and personal morality with role morality, while acknowledging the profound extent to which the person's understanding of the rights and duties of a role are institutionally conditioned. She notes that as well as bringing her own style to the role and being capable of taking a detached view of herself and her roles, there is another way in which the person 'is distinguishable from any particular role, or even from an assemblage of roles: through the all too familiar and often painful problem of conflicts between the claims of different roles on time and attention, and even between the obligations to which they point' (1966: 173).

Other philosophers of the same period who take similar views on this issue include Gerald Cohen and R.S. Downie. Cohen claims that 'if sets of roles are conceived as persons, the status quo is immediately sanctified: when roles constitute selfhood, to change society is to mangle human beings' (1969: 33-34). Downie, in a note to which further reference will be made below, asserts that while it is correct to insist on an irreducible social dimension to morality, 'it is equally correct to insist on an irreducibly personal dimension' (1969: 42). In response to such reservations about a role-focused view of morality, Mayo (1968) argues that they are misplaced.

¹⁹ In fact, while Bradley stresses the moral desirability of fulfilling the duties of a station, he notes that the individual is capable of perceiving cases of conflict between doing so and the observance of more demanding moral obligations. Such conflicts should prompt reflection 'You cannot confine a man to his station and his duties' (Bradley 1876:185).

Mead would have agreed. Recall his distinction between the 'I' and the 'Me' (1.3.2). The 'I' chooses the roles in which its 'Me' is realized and the manner in which the role is performed. The same view is presupposed in Dewey's description of moral deliberation (2.6.0). Although he does not mention either philosopher in his article, Mayo too presupposes a self that chooses its roles and how they are performed.

3.1.1 The scope of the concept of role

In Emmet's view the concept of role should be applied only to relationships 'which are sufficiently structured to be classified under common names, which have some pattern of conduct associated with them, recognized in the breach as well as the observance' (Emmet 1966: 169). It should not be applied, in her view, to such transitory relationships as those between a passenger who steps forward to help a fellow passenger from slipping off a bus, thus putting them briefly in the roles of helper and helped, or to unexpected and non-obligatory acts of kindness. If applied to any form of relation, she maintains, no matter how transitory or spontaneous, it would become too all-embracing to be effective as a tool of social analysis. Mayo too believes that such an attenuated concept would be of little use to sociologists, but he claims that it can still have a cutting edge in ethics and the philosophy of mind.

As to the place of personal morality, I want to say that any conduct that can be distinguished from spontaneous behaviour, as Professor Emmet does distinguish personal morality, is still a matter of roles; a person can choose in what role to act, including the choice to remain in high office, the choice between conflicting role-requirements, the choice to act as helper on the bus, and even the choice to act in no role at all. In this consists his moral freedom; though to choose to act in no role at all is to choose not to act morally (Mayo 1968: 52).

To support his claims, Mayo first examines the role concept (ibid: 52-58). A summary of his analysis follows. A description of someone's conduct as performing a role is never merely a description, he says, but also a condensed explanation of the person's conduct. Consider the role of bus conductor. No

description of beliefs and actions can stand as a description of what the individual does as a bus conductor without the essential qualifiers 'as', 'qua', 'in his capacity as'. Moreover, the conductor's actions in that capacity cannot be understood except in relation to those of the occupants of other, counterpart, roles, such as passenger, driver, manager. 'The concept of role is irreducibly sociological; it cannot be reduced to elements of individual behaviour or belief' (ibid: 52). But as an institution, a role shapes the beliefs and conduct of its performers, because a performer's knowledge of what she is doing involves knowledge of what she is doing it *as* and the conduct expected of her in that role. She also knows that those in counterpart roles know that she is performing a role and therefore the conduct to expect of her, and they know that she knows that they know, *etcetera*. The role is not constituted by their expectations. Rather, their expectations are determined by the role they take her to be playing. In sum, a description of someone's conduct as performing a role is 'a condensed explanation in terms of an open-ended series of expectations by, and of, others' (ibid: 58).

Consider the helper-on-the-bus example again in the light of Mayo's account of the role concept. What makes the helper's action intelligible to observers, and to the person helped, is that they recognize the role she is performing in the interaction. It is evident to them that the helper is responding to socially recognized expectations of the conduct expected of a passenger in a position to help another passenger who is at risk of harm. The helper does not need to say anything to make clear to others the role she is enacting: they recognize it from the significance they attribute to details of the way helper and helper act, their posture and demeanour, and the context in which their interaction occurs.

While it serves the purposes of Mayo's analysis to describe helper-on-the-bus as a role, that is not how the passenger's action would usually be described. If the term role were used in the description, it is likely that a more general term, such as Good Samaritan, would be used. The importance of Mayo's use of the term role here lies in its demonstration that if it were not understood as the performance of a role, however described, the passenger's action would be baffling, and possibly

alarming. Sometimes someone's actions are baffling precisely because it is not clear what role they are performing. This will often be the case for anyone who encounters a role for the first time (for example, the roles of participants in an unfamiliar religious ceremony, the roles of players in an unfamiliar game) and sometimes for everyone when entirely new roles are created and are in the process of being institutionalized.

3.1.2 Morality and role-taking

After completing his examination of the role concept, Mayo offers the following analysis of the relationship between morality and role-taking to support the claim that moral imperatives are role-requirements (ibid: 58-62). Both morality and role-taking imply the notion of a consensus which, even if it does not actually exist, enters the thinking of the individual. When such motives as 'on principle', 'as a matter of right or wrong', 'from a sense of duty' are used to interpret an agent's conduct, the interpretation is of what the agent recognizes herself to be doing something *as*: it is an interpretation of her understanding of the role she is performing. 'If I do *Y* as a matter of moral principle, then so far as witnesses are concerned I expect them not merely to note my doing *Y*, but to note it – again, to *take* it, *as* done in fulfilment of expectations, and moreover in the expectation of recognition as having fulfilled expectations, the expectations being shared between me and them' (ibid: 60, emphases in original).

Mayo describes such conduct as that of the moral agent acting 'the moral role' (ibid: 58). 'To play the moral role is to recognise, and to be recognised as recognising, a system of moral expectations which is common within the interlocking expectations' (ibid: 60). Later he writes, 'There is no reason why someone who says "Speaking not as a father, or a government employee, but from the moral point of view . . ." should not be assuming a role, though certainly a very special and important one' (ibid:62). These statements led another British philosopher, R.S. Downie, to infer, not unreasonably, that Mayo was proposing that to be a moral agent was itself to perform a role, and one distinct from that of bus conductor, shopkeeper etc. (1968: 40). Downie points out that this proposal

would have untenable implications. If being a moral agent were performing a role, it could be chosen or rejected like any other social role, and that is not the case. While someone can reject any moral claims on herself, she cannot reject being a moral agent because 'moral agents are persons acting in various capacities' (ibid:41). They can choose to accept or reject a role, but its acceptance or rejection is not itself the action of someone acting a role.

In a cryptic and disdainful rejoinder, Mayo implies that readers are unlikely to share Downie's interpretation of his argument, but he makes little attempt to explain why the interpretation is incorrect (Mayo 1969: 108). In fact, to judge from the argument of his article as a whole, the problems seem to be partly with his wording of the statements challenged rather than with what he intended them to mean, though the statements also suggest some confusion.

When he refers to the agent playing the moral role, Mayo probably means that an agent may perform a particular role (say, that of shopkeeper or lecturer) in a way that fulfils the moral obligations an agent is expected to observe when performing that role. The agent is not performing two roles, one as moral agent and one as, say, shopkeeper. Rather she is realizing her moral agency (as well as her practical agency) in her choice and performance of the latter role²⁰. Moral agency would also be realized, though in a different role, by someone who uttered the statement 'Speaking not as a father, or a government employee, but from the moral point of view'. In this case the agent would be realizing his moral agency in the role of putative authority on moral conduct.

²⁰ The term moral role might also be applied as a secondary description to some roles, but with the word 'moral' emphasized simply to emphasize that their choice and performance is motivated primarily by concern for the welfare of others and without expectation of reward. One example would be that of helper on a bus. Others would be the roles of donor to a charity and volunteer lifeboatman.

Mayo may not have fully recognized the implications of his own views on choice of role to judge from his remark that the choices open to an individual, and in which her moral freedom consists, include the choice to act in no role at all, 'though to choose to act in no role at all is to choose not to act morally' (1968: 52). To choose not to act in any role would be to choose not to exist socially or physically (physically, because it would mean rejection of any cooperation with providers of such necessities as food, shelter, and medical care).

3.1.3 Role morality and conscience

Mayo explicitly considers the objection that the concept of social role cannot accommodate such inner aspects of morality as conscience and the freedom to reject the moral consensus (ibid: 62-63). It is an error, he points out, to mistake the consensus of mutual expectations as understood in the moral thinking of the individual ('required for the "inwardness of the moral life"') (ibid: 62) for the existence of a moral consensus as a social fact. On whether the moral consensus can be rejected, Mayo argues that resistance to a moral consensus may itself be understood as a role requirement. Dewey would have agreed of course, and noted that rejection of a role requirement is often the morally praiseworthy outcome of the exercise of reflective morality and the application of a criterion of what ought to be approved or disapproved (2.7.1).

The distinction between the moral demands of roles and their personal interpretation is evident in the variability of interpretations of gender role. For example, many men seem able to construe their gender role in a way that ignores some normative expectations of their conduct and allows them to act in a predatory way towards female colleagues. Many women now occupy roles (military drone operator, footballer, curate, member of parliament) that has required them to defy widely shared normative expectations of their attitudes and conduct as occupants of their gender role. In doing so, they are of course participating in the process of modifying conventional expectations of conduct in that role, the same continuing process that achieved the expectations of gender and other roles that current occupants now regard as conventional.

On the other hand, Mayo points out that the extent to which some conventional expectations are deliberately *not* fulfilled can be a measure of the moral insincerity of the performer. A crook pretending to clean windows but with theft in mind merely acts on the expectation that he is cleaning the windows, but not the further expectations acted on by a sincere performer of that role (ibid: 60-61). Both the crook and the sincere window cleaner are moral agents but the former prefers to exercise his agency in immoral ways.

The same error of conflating an actual moral consensus with the individual's understanding of it is made, Mayo maintains, by Emmet when she supposes that role morality cannot deal with conflicts between the demands of different roles. The woman who struggles to decide whether to abandon her role as a career woman to take on the role of carer for an aged parent is among many instances of a necessarily inner conflict. It arises because she perceives an incompatibility between what she personally takes to be the demands of these roles.

3.1.4 Spontaneous conduct

Mayo agrees with Emmet that the role concept does not apply to spontaneous behaviour that occurs in 'the conduct of a person in his intimate personal life with other persons' (ibid: 63), which, he says, accounts for much of the conduct in the individual's life and 'which no one wishes to call a morality'. But when a decision has to be made and the issue is 'What should I do?', the situation has moved beyond the purely personal (ibid: 63).

This view seems in need of qualification in two respects. First, the issue of 'What should I do?' is as likely to arise in the individual's personal life as in another part of it. Secondly, whether or not it is in the individual's personal life, spontaneous conduct is not exempt from the application of the role concept. Those affected need to know, for example, whether a spontaneous act is that of a kindly teacher or a paedophile, an act of a nurse or a sadist, an act of a befriender or a confidence trickster. Many spontaneous acts that would be acceptable from lovers would be assaults if they were the acts of occupants of other roles. A spontaneous

act is usually an unpremeditated expression of an enduring disposition, and the correct attribution of meaning to the act depends on the correct recognition of the role in which it occurs. Of course, it is not always possible to identify the role, with the result that occupant's actions will not be understood.

An important issue about role occupancy that is not mentioned by Mayo but that is stressed in Downie's critique is the distinction (often made in contemporary discussions of role ethics) between the conduct expected of a role occupant and features of the conduct that are specific to the performer. Referring to this distinction, Downie cites as examples 'courteous policemen, cheerful shopkeepers' (1968: 41). He sees this as bringing moral qualities to a role that are not features of it and that are not explicable in terms of it. Had Mayo addressed this issue or responded in a way consistent with his overall view, he might have responded in either of two ways. He could have pointed to the distinction he has stressed between the moral consensus that exists as a social fact and the consensus of mutual expectations as understood in the moral thinking of the individual. On this view, a courteous policeman is someone who acts both on the consensus of moral expectations of the conduct of policemen and with the courtesy that he personally believes is or should be expected of policemen. Alternatively, Mayo might have argued that when someone's conduct is recognized as being that of, say, a courteous policeman, what is being recognized is the performance of a role that incorporates but is not the same as the role of policeman *simpliciter* and that is notably different from the role of a discourteous policeman. This is the sense of the term role on which theatre critics rely when they name actors in a production as those who play the role of, for example, harassed housewife, tyrannical husband, or angry adolescent.

Mayo brings a rigour to his examination of the role concept and its relevance to moral philosophy that is missing from Emmet's and other analyses. With few modifications, his is a compelling argument for the value of Mead's concept of role to an explanation of the individual's conduct as a moral agent, and further justifies the treatment of Dewey's analysis of moral agency as an analysis of the choice and

performance of social roles. Mayo's analysis shows that role morality is not the preserve of particular role relationships, such as those between parent and child, citizen and Member of Parliament, lawyer and client. Rather, role morality applies to all social relationships in a community because they are all role relationships, whether fleeting or enduring, close or distant, and whether engaged in cheerfully or reluctantly.

Had he buttressed his argument with relevant allusions to the pragmatist sociology it presupposes, Mayo's analysis might have received more attention than it has from philosophers, including pragmatist philosophers, and from sociologists interested in morality. Claims about the moral normativity of roles need a convincing foundation.

3.2.0 The ontogenesis of agency

Mead frequently refers to the process of internalization by which individuals acquire selfhood and the capacity for agency, but he does not attempt to describe how it occurs. He is content to treat internalization as a process to be taken for granted, as are most of those who adopt his sociology. But clearly, it is a process that merits explanation, and one has been proposed by the social psychologists Jack Martin and Alex Gillespie (2010). They draw on Mead's ideas and their own elaborations of them in a series of publications to present 'an integrated account of the ontogenesis of human agency', which they describe as 'neo-Meadian'. The authors maintain that their account is consistent with Mead's but successfully deflects an objection to it: that in his purported reliance on 'internalization' to explain the origin of mind and the self's awareness of itself, he assumes what he claims to explain because the process of internalization that he describes depends on the prior existence of a reflexive self.

The proposed neo-Meadian account explains the ontogenesis of agency as the outcome of the individual's psychological development as she interacts with others in the course of her transformation from infant to adult. As well as selfhood she achieves the capacity for reflective intersubjectivity and the degree of

detachment from others and their commitments required to determine her personal response to the demands of social roles. Thus, the account offers an explanation of the genesis of the capacity for understanding and acting on Dewey's distinction between customary and reflective morality.

3.2.1 The development of agency

Martin and Gillespie maintain that initial forms of agentive possibility are exhibited in the intimate interactivity between infant and caregiver, in the course of which the infant is introduced to a world that both supports and resists her actions and connects her movements to the actions of others and the characteristics of objects. Subsequently she engages in a variety of transactions with the world (such as hiding and seeking, being fed and feeding) that entail co-ordination of her actions with those of others and occupation of the different roles in relation to others required for the transactions. Gradually she becomes able to recall and anticipate being in these roles when not actually in them: now she has the experience of adopting more than one perspective or opportunity for action at approximately the same time.

Because her growing command of significant symbols enables her to adopt different attitudes within a social act, the child can act towards her own use of them as others do or have done. For example, in responding 'No!' to the command 'Bedtime!', she may be repeating a parent's response to demands the parent deems unreasonable. The start of the capacity to respond to herself as both subject and object equips the child with an increasing awareness of the separation of possible role relationships in sequences of interaction from actual role relationships in them. She is thereby enabled to participate in activities with more formally structured interactions, such as games, that have multiple, co-ordinated roles, and to occupy alternative roles in sets of interacting social roles, such as those of audience member for and actor in a school play, recipient of gossip and source of it, beneficiary of parents' housework and contributor to it. 'Thus, frequently with the assistance of others (peers, parents, other adults), the child who participates in role exchanges begins to enter into more abstracted,

rule-governed social practices that reflect vocational, economic, political, and personal traditions of living extant in her broader communities' (ibid: 263).

The term 'role' is used above to refer to both what Martin and Gillespie mean by that term and instead of another term they use, 'social position'. The authors distinguish between the meanings of these terms as follows.

A social position entails related social positions that co-constitute each other (e.g. buyer-seller, giving-getting, speaking-listening, etc). A social role refers more to the expectations and norms associated with more institutionalized social positions (i.e., mother, father, doctor, teacher, bus driver roles)' (2010: 262).

The criteria used to make this distinction are not robust. The buyer-seller or speaker-listener relationships and that of the relationship between helper and helped on a bus are also institutionalized, also subject to norms and expectations. Similarly, the roles in the mother-child relationship are also co-constitutive, like those of, for example, the buyer-seller or giver-getter. It is true that the use of the term social role is commonly restricted to particular instances of social position. But that restriction is irrelevant when what is at issue is socially recognized expectations of conduct. This is what Mayo understands and Emmet does not and that justifies Mayo's use of the term role in 'an extended sense', to refer, for example, to helper on a bus (3.1.1).

3.2.2 The achievement of reflective intersubjectivity

Martin and Gillespie note that there comes a stage in the child's development when her intersubjectivity – her participation in a common system of attributing meaning to phenomena – becomes reflective. Initially she attempts to insist on the predominance of her own perspectives when interacting with occupants of counterpart role, but gradually she comes to interact in ways that recognize that others are individuals with perspectives and interests of their own and different from hers. Later she achieves a higher level of intersubjective understanding, displayed in a capacity for interacting with others in ways that accommodate her

awareness that they are aware of respects in which their perspectives and interests differ from hers. Eventually the individual attains fully reflective intersubjectivity, marked by its extension from her own interactions to encompass third-person and societal perspectives. 'Increasingly the action tendencies, perspectives, and interests of individuals are consolidated in terms of distinctive individual identities capable of acknowledging alternative identities, commitments, and ideologies of other individuals and groups' (ibid: 265). Now when problems occur in interactions with others, their interpretation and resolution may refer to the social conventions and institutionalized values of the community. A wide variety of sources, including novels, films, and other creative works are drawn on by individuals to inform their interactive and intersubjective experience and, especially when disagreements cause problems, to enable them to consider alternative ways of acting in their cooperative activities with others.

Martin and Gillespie's description of the development of moral and practical agency culminates in optimistic assumptions about its capacity for change of self and society

In choosing, acting upon, and realizing possibilities for action and interaction that emerge at the interfaces of multiple perspectives, human agents continuously are involved in the ongoing creation of themselves and their societies. As adolescents and young adults imaginatively coordinate, frame, and generalize perspectives and possibilities through deliberate planning and problem solving with others, they come to realize their potential as agents capable of transforming themselves and their world (ibid: 266).

The kind of transformation of selves and societies these authors describe evidently does occur, though more often as part of a group response to group-wide changes in circumstances or values than as a manifestation of the independence of individual minds. Even when change entails the rejection of current norms, most people are keen to minimize the risk of being regarded as notably non-conformist by other members of their social group. One indication of the importance commonly accorded to avoiding that risk is the rarity of radical departures from

whatever is a group's dress code. In other words, the dominant feature of individual action is its sociality, a fact explained by Mead's theory of self-formation. It is also a fact recognized by Dewey's analysis of moral agency, a recognition made more evident by the interpretation of agency as the enactment of self in social roles. The account of social action examined in the next section reveals features of it that are commonly not noticed.

3.3.0 A pragmatist theory of action

One of the most important modern contributions to pragmatist thought is Hans Joas's theory of the creativity action, the origins of which he finds in the ideas of Mead and Dewey (Joas 1996). The pragmatist philosopher Vincent Colapietro describes the theory as providing 'nothing less than a revised draft of what itself was a dramatic revision of the traditional depiction of human beings' (Colapietro 2009: 2). Parts of the theory that seemed most relevant to this thesis are examined in this section. It draws on Joas's book and more recent articles written with co-authors, the economist Jens Beckert (2006) and the sociologist Erkki Kilpinen (2006).

3.3.1 The creativity of action

The creativity at issue in Joas's theory of action is not of individuals, but of *action*. It is a creativity exercised whenever non-routine action occurs, though its exercise is always constrained by the particularities of the situation. The concept of creativity is missing from most treatments of action, which are teleological and based on the rational-actor model. According to that model, which is particularly popular in economics, actors pursue goals while taking constraints on their possible courses of action into account. Sociological models within this teleological tradition subscribe to the same rational-actor model but also take into account norms and values. Joas accepts that these models are often empirically useful, but argues that their tacit assumptions are often not met and that they ignore the creativity of human action.

One of the tacit assumptions on which the teleological concept of action is based is that agents pursue one goal at a time and focus on the optimum means of its attainment. In fact when the action involved is not routine, it is commonly more exploratory in nature. As Dewey had emphasized, it often entails the reciprocal adjustment of means and ends, and is shaped by values and goals that become clear only retrospectively. The process has the same non-teleological character whether it entails resolving a moral dilemma, establishing a new social policy, or adjusting to such changes as those encountered at each stage of the life cycle. For example, the deliberation entailed in resolving a moral dilemma requires the agent to imagine different choices of action and their consequences (2.6.0). A consideration of the consequences may reveal new choices, which in turn will have different consequences. It is only when a choice is made that the goal of the deliberation is established.

A second tacit assumption of the rational actor model is that agents have effective control over their own bodies. In fact their control is partial. For example, on occasion they may be unable to control the urge to laugh or to weep. On other occasions, anger or distress may prompt them to respond impulsively to the actions of others in ways they later regret²¹. Agents are often unaware of the origin of their tastes and inclinations. According to Joas's theory, the body is known to the agent not directly but via a body image created in the mind by intersubjective interaction during the agent's socialization. In consequence 'we find sociality right in the core of human agency' (Joas and Beckert 2006: 276).

The third tacit assumptions of the teleological concept of action is that agents act autonomously towards their fellow agents and the environment. In contrast, Joas's theory maintains (consistently with Mead's theory of self-formation) that autonomy is an endowment of intersubjective processes. It follows that the

²¹ It seems that genetic factors make it easier for some than for others to control impulsive conduct. For example, a large study of adolescents in the United States showed that variation in three genes was correlated with large difference in the odds of reporting use of contraception at last coitus (Daw and Guo 2011).

paradigmatic form of individual action is social action. It is social not simply in the sense that it usually involves others – often remote others – but also because the capacity for action to be realized is dependent on interaction with others (Joas and Kilpinen 2006: 329). More specifically, it is dependent on reciprocally oriented interaction, made possible, as Mead explains, by the ability of those involved to take the role of the other.

3.3.2 An illustration of the creativity action

The relevance of Joas's theory for the agent's choice and performance of social roles can be illuminated by examining what occurs when there is a change in social policy. Assume for example that a new prison minister convinces his colleagues that a major reform of prison conditions is desirable on humanitarian grounds and would also reduce reoffending rates. This proposal may have had its origins in the minister's aspiration to be remembered for his contribution to social progress. The proposal itself will have emerged from a protracted process in which various alternatives were considered, and that entailed the reciprocal adjustment of means and ends. It may have involved the study of available evidence, discussions with prison governors and others, possibly the trial of a new regime in some prisons, the emergence of new ideas for reform, and the successful refutation of claims that prison would cease to be a deterrent to crime if prisoners were treated considerately. The review of the evidence may also have indicated that for some categories of offender, the consequences of imprisonment made it an unwise form of punishment. Creativity would have been required of action at every stage – in the process of discovering goals, in the cooperation needed to achieve them, and in responding to the actions of others

The cooperation needed for the implementation of such a venture as prison reform requires the prospective cooperators – civil servants, judges, prison officers, probation officers, and others – to adjust their reciprocal expectations about their mutual intentions, needs, motives, and strategies. They are enabled to do so by engaging in the intersubjective process of role-taking in social interaction described by Mead. Initially created and reinforced in social action, the

expectations become 'constitutive expectancies' based on which 'actors can increasingly generalize the expectation of reciprocity of action' (Joas and Beckett 2002: 281). The revised role expectations become components of the generalized other and this makes cooperation partly independent of the agents' personal knowledge of those they cooperate with.

Occupants of those roles with the most power can use it to reinforce conformity with the newly institutionalized expectations. Legal sanctions and the need to avoid reputational damage also impose constraints on deviance, but all involved are aware that co-operators may fail to meet expectations. It remains a continuous task for them to communicate to one another that expectations needed for their co-operation are indeed being met. And since reform commonly reveals the need or opportunity for further reform, the creation and reinforcement of new role expectations is also often a continuous task.

3.3.3 Agency and relational sociology

The sociologist Ian Burkitt treats Joas, and Mead and Dewey, as important contributors to the branch of sociology known as 'relational sociology', a branch that focuses on the interactions and interdependence of a society's members. In a book chapter entitled 'Relational agency', he points out that individuals are always located in the multitude of overlapping relations that constitute social structure. 'In these relations, our powers for agency in various different contexts are always dependent on both impersonal and interpersonal interdependencies, and therefore we should begin to think of humans as interdependents and interactants whenever they practise agency' (2018: 530). That is another way of saying they should be thought of as occupants of complementary roles. As an example of impersonal interdependence, he refers to how his effectiveness as a lecturer is dependent on workers at a power plant to generate the energy needed to light the room and power the projector. As an example of interpersonal dependence – given in an earlier paper (2016) – he cites an essay by Carol Smart in which she refers to the evidence of relationality from an empirical study of kinship obligations in the West. It is evidence that is unlikely to be found surprising by

anyone. The study found that when people made decisions about such matters as wills, moving, or caring, they did so in relation to others rather than taking only their own needs and desires into account. 'Importantly this term relationality also captures a way of thinking that ordinary people have as a consequence of being a part of a web of connectedness where both their concept of self (and self-value) is tied into how they behave towards significant others' (Smart 2011: 17).

On the subject of creativity in interaction, Burkitt refers to a caveat pointed out by Dewey. Creativity is only possible where the situation allows new possibilities to emerge and in which agents have the power to identify them and set new goals (2018: 533). This is commonly not the case: goals are set by others outside the interaction. As an example, Burkitt mentions how in capitalist societies, the goal of work is the wages on which people depend for their economic survival, the level of which they are likely to have less power than their managers to determine. Other kinds of constraints on the exercise of agency are the subjects of the sections that follow.

3.4.0 Mead's optimism about the function of conflict in society

Mead's work has been the subject of strong criticism, most of it from sociologists or social psychologists, though usually they have attempted to identify and remedy the putative shortcomings of his sociology while adopting its fundamental ideas. Most of the critics have found Mead too optimistic about society, too ready to believe that reciprocity and cooperation come naturally to humankind as a consequence of the process of taking the role of the other.

The sociologist Sheldon Stryker has been influential among the mainstream critics of Mead's work. He is critical of Mead's conceptualization of society, one which, contrary to the evidence, sees it as relatively homogeneous in social composition and engaged in an evolutionary process which will lead to smaller units becoming encompassed by larger units, and thereby eliminating harmful social differentiation and conflict (Stryker 2008). Corresponding to this unrealistic view

of society, says Stryker, is a view of the self which visualizes it 'as singular, internally relatively undifferentiated and (ideally) coherent' (ibid:18). As he points out, given such a view, it is difficult to theorize effectively about the effects on social behaviour of structural and situational variables, and when and how the individual is conflicted by the incompatible demands of different roles. Stryker also argues, recalling earlier observations by himself and many others, that Mead's ideas are not empirically refutable because the key concepts are too imprecise to serve as the basis for theories that would be open to refutation (ibid:18). Despite his criticisms of Mead's theorizing, Stryker emphasizes its valuable features, which explain why it forms the foundation for his own empirical work (ibid:19). This will be described in Chapter 4.

Others share Stryker's scepticism about Mead's conception of society as heading for the eradication of conflict. A common criticism of his sociology is that it is excessively consensus-oriented. It acknowledges that conflict between social groups occurs, but regards it as an important source of social change towards a different and usually improved state of society. Critics claim that this ignores the effects of power differences in society on its structure and therefore on the agency of the selves that comprise its membership. These are not criticisms that can be made of Dewey's view of society. In fact, as will become apparent, the modifications proposed to deal with them augment his view.

3.4.1 The generic self and the contingent self

Peter Callero (2003) rejects the claim that Mead's account of the formation of the self is flawed because it ignores the effects of social practices, such as those of the educational system, instituted by the powerful as mechanisms of domination. Callero maintains that these critics fail to take account of Mead's social psychology and the conception of the self as a reflexive process of social interaction whereby one becomes an object to one's self. In consequence, says Callero, the critics make a category error. They fail to distinguish between the contingent nature of the self – the culture-specific outcome of social interaction in a particular society – and the

generic self as a product of the universal features that explain self-formation in any society. He stresses that the self as conceived by Mead has agency. As noted in Chapter 1 (1.3.2), the self comprises an agentic 'I' as well as a 'Me', and the 'I' affords the self the possibility of creative action and emancipation from the control of others. Callero concedes, however, that there is a risk 'that the self-regulating processes of reflexivity will come to be colonized by forces of domination and control' (ibid: 120).

Given the extent to which so much of the social experience from which selves are formed and roles determined is shaped by the powerful, often in their own interests, Callero's view may seem unduly optimistic. On the other hand, it is possible to point to many social changes over recent decades, such as those demanded by feminists and civil rights activists, which show that emancipation from historical constraints is possible, despite strong opposition. And history provides much evidence to support Mead's belief that conflict can lead to the resolution of differences and to pressure for progressive social change. The convergence of what initially seemed conflicting and irreconcilable views on acceptable norms has typically been a prominent feature of social change in modern societies. One example is the convergence of view on many issues apparent in the policies of the main political parties in the United Kingdom; for example, on the issue of a minimum wage. Also, even when differences between communities in modern societies persist, such as cultural differences between ethnic groups, their members typically recognize the society-wide role norms that make their conduct intelligible, predictable, and sufficiently acceptable when interacting with others as citizens of the society of which their own community is a constituent.

Nevertheless, differentials in power and resources continue to be a source of social conflict and to impose important constraints on the possibilities for action of those with limited resources and little power. Dewey's view that the important ethical problems of modern societies stem from the way they are organized and

the values they sustain is amply supported and augmented by the arguments and evidence assembled by contemporary theorists.

3.5.0 Conflict that is integral to social action

The limitations of Mead's treatment of both domination and social conflict are the subject of a radical critique of his views by the sociologist Lonnie Athens (2007; 2012). He starts by summarizing Mead's understanding of social conflict as a conflictual social act (intra-group or inter-group) in which participants cannot agree on either the goal of a joint action or on the roles to be performed to achieve the goal, or on both goal and roles. Mead maintains that conflict is just as common as consensus, and that it can create pressure to change goals and roles in a way that resolves the conflict, and is thereby a major force for progressive social change. In Athens's view, the main problem with this understanding of conflict is that it does not take into account the fact that, at least for complex social actions, participants (individuals or groups) usually occupy roles that are unequal in power.

Occupants of the more dominant roles have more control over the act, and those who are more dominant in one relationship are often also more dominant in many others (2012: 436, 438). Conflict occurs when occupants of subordinate roles contest the dominance or expectations of those in superior roles, and those involved may draw on different forms of power – psychological, economic, physical – to gain or maintain an advantage. Athens argues that discord over dominance is a potential source of conflict that is integral to social action, and a source that Mead does not consider despite his recognition of the ubiquity of conflict and its importance as a driver of social change.

Differences in the relative dominance of roles involved in a social act would be a feature of any imaginable form of cooperative social life, and in pursuing their own aspirations, occupants of inferior roles often depend heavily on those in superior roles for help and guidance. Nevertheless, the conflicts to which Athens refers – conflicts caused or exacerbated by dissatisfaction with the justifiability of the dominance or expectations of a role partner – is a familiar characteristic of role

relationships, including those between life partners, parents and children, employers and employees, governments and governed, and members of international alliances. And even when conflict does not occur, occupants of dominant roles may use their power to exploit inferiors and restrict their agency.

For those with less power, it is evidently important that they perceive the power of their superiors as justifiable and their treatment as fair. Of course, often occupants of inferior roles may be unaware that the power of their superiors is being used in a way that is not justifiable and is being used to exploit them. This issue is considered in the next section.

3.6.0 Role-taking refusal as a tactic of repression (and revolt)

Gil Richard Musolf (2013) draws on Mead's sociology to address the issue of domination. He notes that it is also the core issue of John Dewey's political philosophy, and describes Dewey as the progenitor of a variety of contemporary contributions to a literature that have 'not only illustrated domination in a bureaucratic, corporate, capitalist world – one saturated in racism, sexism, and classism – but have also suggested strategies 'to reduce domination without succumbing to utopian grandiosity' (ibid: 87). Dewey believed that domination by the ruling groups of the capitalist system reduced workers to a slave-like condition, while at the same time manipulating them to see the rulers' interests as their own. Musolf quotes Dewey's assertion that the master-slave relationship exists 'in any situation which effectively places one person in subjugation to another – children subject to their parents, wives to their husbands, subjects to their rulers, laborers to their employers'²². In this and other respects, Dewey's views were similar to those of Marx (ibid: 101).

Musolf is particularly interested in those forms of domination of which the moral agent is unaware because they are institutionalized and taken for granted as part of the fabric of a way of life. 'The attitudes of superordination and subordination

²² The quotation is from Dewey's *Lectures in China 1919-1920*.

are internalized during role-taking, thereby reproducing larger patterns of class, race, and gender domination in social interactions, leading to the microfoundations of dehumanization' (ibid: 87). Mead too was a vigorous critic of the capitalist system, and Musolf turns to an idea of Mead's – 'role-taking refusal' – for an analysis of the attitudes of oppressors and of those who resist it (Musolf 2012). Role-taking refusal is a refusal by the powerful to take the role of the other for some social groups in the community. Musolf refers to specific studies of the phenomenon which show that a disposition to take the role of the other is inversely related to social power: the greater the power, the less people take the roles of those with less, and, more importantly, the less the power, the greater and more accurately people take the role of those with more (2012: 76-77). And since taking the role of the other – the generalized other – is how selves are created and come to understand themselves in the process of socialization, the consequences for those with little power, the oppressed, is that their self-construals are profoundly shaped by those with power over them. The latter legitimize their power by believing that they are superior to those over whom they have power, and convincing them of this. Musolf quotes Marx: 'The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that . . . the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are thereby subject to it' (ibid: 77).

Musolf reviews accounts of numerous examples of this form of domination, including that of Europeans over non-Europeans, American and European slave owners over their African slaves, and of upholders of patriarchy over their victims. He also offers examples of refusal by the oppressed to take the role of the oppressors by rejecting the 'superiority delusion'. 'Role-taking refusal allows actors to discard negative cultural representations and construct affirmative ones, to raise consciousness, transform identity, and prosecute collective strategies of action to transform society' (ibid: 81-82). Historical examples include the French and Russian revolutions. Contemporary examples include the feminist movement and the American Civil Rights movement.

Role-taking refusal is an example of a contribution of Mead's sociology to an explanation of an obstacle to the exercise of moral agency. When successfully practised by oppressors, role-taking refusal combined with the illusion of the oppressors' superiority legitimizes the way they shape the self-construals of the oppressed and constrain their agency. If they are to free themselves from this form of domination, the oppressed need to practice role-refusal and reject the way they are construed in the generalized other of their oppressors and reconstrue themselves. Dewey would of course have agreed. He would have seen the rejection of the oppressor's construal as essential to the capacity of the oppressed for moral reflection and effective participation in an authentically democratic society

3.7.0 Politics as a source of conflict

Athens's' views on dominance and the potential for conflict are endorsed in a recent article by Bruno Frère and Daniel Jaster (2019), but they claim that he, like Mead, assumes that members of society have or seek a unified understanding of the social world, a single generalized other. Frère and Jaster attribute a more enlightened view of conflict to John Dewey but regard him as also too optimistic about the prospects of community integration. According to the sociologists they represent, while Dewey understood that individuals in society varied in their interests and values, his ideas for integration would only succeed in a homogeneous society without major divisions.

Frère and Jaster draw on French contributors to pragmatist theory to maintain that people in modern societies have access, not to a single generalized other, but to several discrete generalized others or grounding perspectives to make sense of their experience and justify their conduct. ('Grounding perspective' is used here as a more self-explanatory alternative to the authors' term 'polity'.)

Each of these perspectives was derived from a political philosophy, itself representing a historical polity. By a slow process of institutionalization in Western Europe they eventually became 'the foundation of our everyday life debates and

conflicts', that could be used without reference to their original sources (ibid:150). Six of them are described as notable, each of which can be roughly identified by a term that refers to a ground for the justification of conduct: Civic Welfare, Productivity/Efficiency, Family welfare, Fame/Popularity, Anti-materialism, and Self-Interest/Greed²³. Members of a community are aware of all these perspectives as possible grounds of justification. Thus, when they attempt to justify their actions to others, they can rely on others' recognition of the standpoint on which their arguments are based.

Conflict can occur if people interact in the light of different perspectives; for example, an employer may assess an employee's worth on grounds of Productivity/Efficiency while the employee assesses it on grounds of Family Welfare. Conflict can also occur when people differ in how they justify their conduct from the same perspective. For example, both an employer and an employee may believe the latter's value should be judged from the standpoint of Productivity/Efficiency – a criterion of the industrial sphere – but conflict can occur if for the former this means productivity and for the latter the value of her experience. Such disputes may not be resolved by negotiation, but can be the means of achieving mutual understanding of irreconcilable positions, and sometimes compromise.

The different perspectives that explain conflict over the criteria applied to the evaluation of individual role performances are also invoked to explain broader social conflicts. For example, they are invoked to explain conflicts between political parties over claims that low taxes disproportionately benefit the better-off at the expense of the poor (Civic Welfare versus Self-Interest/Greed), or that new infrastructure will damage the environment (Productivity/Efficiency versus Civic Welfare and Anti-Materialism).

²³ To aid understanding, some of the terms used here are replacements of those shown in the original.

A point not noted by Frère and Jaster is that as well as conflict between individuals, differences in grounding perspective can be the origin of inner conflict for the same individual, for example when the conduct expected of a parent (Family Welfare) conflicts with that of the conduct expected of an employee (Productivity/Efficiency). Another point the authors do not make is that, as well as generating conflicts, grounding perspectives also positively support collaborative interaction when the same perspectives are used by all occupants of complementary roles. For example, when they occupy interacting roles, citizens and officials expect one another to observe role norms grounded in the culture of Civic Welfare. Similarly, parents and their children's teachers expect one another to observe role norms grounded in the culture of Family Welfare.

According to Frère and Jaster, the declared aim of French pragmatists is 'to build a sociological system able to represent conflict and disputes in social life' (ibid: 153). They see this development of classical pragmatism as enabling pragmatist sociology to offer an alternative to a sociology that emphasizes the constraints on conduct and aspirations imposed by the inequitable distribution of power and resources. Conflict is seen not as an anomaly but as an everyday experience. When it occurs, the adversaries' awareness of different grounding perspectives equips them with the potential means of understanding one another and themselves, and of dealing with the conflict in a way that remains responsive to the requirements of social order. The focus should be 'on how people periodically piece together unity within a social system that is always in flux; always up for negotiation and argumentation/justification' (ibid: 155). 'Only during conflict and disputes can we clearly see individuals' attempts to intentionally perceive another's state of mind' (ibid).

An overemphasis on unity by American pragmatists, claim these theorists, has obscured the way that conflict and the attempts of opponents to justify their different views to one another make clear the agency that American pragmatism champions. By ignoring conflict these pragmatists were neglecting 'one of the best moments to highlight and illustrate people's intentionality and agency in

amending their understandings of the social world' (ibid). Frère and Jaster also point to the significance of this view of conflict for Athens's argument about the importance of power differences between participants in an interaction. When participants in a conflictual interaction differ in the grounding perspective that informs their understanding of the situation, it is the one adopted by those with more power that is likely to prevail.

It is not clear why Mead's term – generalized other – is used to refer to the kind of grounding perspectives they describe. It would avoid confusion and be entirely consistent with the French sociologists' case if, instead, they maintained that Mead's conception of the generalized other needed amendment. It would be an amendment that acknowledged the existence within the generalized other, or within a particular generalized other such as that of a corporation, of the different grounding perspectives that members of a community may invoke to justify their own beliefs and actions, and to understand the standpoints of their critics. Dewey would probably have welcomed the idea as a way of identifying the different grounds that agents may offer to justify their desires and intentions, the obligations they observe, and the conduct they consider virtuous. He would, however, have been likely to reject the authors' claim that the existence of different grounding perspectives meant that his ideas for the reorganization of society were too optimistic.

3.8.0 Conclusions

The version of the pragmatist sociology of moral agency based on the theorizing of its founder has subsequently been the subject of research and development by many scholars. The contributions considered in this chapter augment the role-focused presentation of Dewey's analysis of moral agency and factors that affect its application.

Mayo's analysis of the dependence of the concept of moral agency on the sociological concept of role is clearly dependent on the Meadian sociology described in the previous chapter. The analysis proposes that to interpret an act as

the observance of a moral obligation is to interpret it as an act performed as an occupant of a social role, one in which the observance of that obligation is among the socially shared expectations of the conduct of any occupant of the role. The identification of the role in which the act occurs is what makes the act intelligible to occupants of counterpart roles and observers. For example, it is what would enable observers to decide whether a physical interaction between passengers near the exit of a bus is one between occupants of the roles of helper and helped or of assailant and victim. Role morality applies to all social relationships in a community because they are all role relationships, whether fleeting or enduring, close or distant, and whether engaged in cheerfully or reluctantly. The implications for Dewey's analysis of moral agency is to extend its reach and further justify its treatment as the realization of self in social roles.

The social psychologists Martin and Gillespie interpret Mead's sociology of self-formation from the agent's point of view, and focus on the process by which individuals develop the capacity to achieve the reflective intersubjectivity and detachment needed for the intelligent exercise of agency in social roles.

In the theory of the creativity of action developed by Joas from the ideas of Dewey and Mead, agency is seen as a capacity that cannot be realized except by reciprocally oriented interaction with others, made possible by the ability of those involved to take the role of the other. Progress from vague aspiration to the achievement of a goal often entails a process in which means and ends are reciprocally adjusted. Creativity is a requirement of effective action in the process of discovering goals, in the negotiations with others needed to achieve them, and in responses to actions initiated by others.

Meadian sociology is vulnerable to the claim by Stryker and others that it is unrealistic in its conception of society and the self, especially in its treatment of the effect of power differences between different sections of society and therefore on the formation and conduct of selves. As Stryker argues, societies and selves are much more internally differentiated and conflicted than Mead

supposes. One pervasive source of potential conflict is, as Athens points out, a source integral to social action: at least for complex actions, complementary roles in a social act are usually unequal in their power over the outcome, and conflict occurs when those in subordinate roles contest the dominance or expectations of those in superior roles. Power over the outcome may also be power to persuade the oppressed to share their oppressor's view of their subjection and see it as justified. Noting that this was a core issue of John Dewey's political philosophy, Musolf uses Mead's idea of 'role-taking refusal' for an analysis of the attitudes of oppressors and of those who resist oppression.

Frère and Jaster present an argument that people in modern societies draw on several distinct spheres of normativity or 'polities', such as those of Family Welfare and Self-Interest/Greed, to make sense of their beliefs and conduct and to justify them to others, especially others with whom they are in dispute. The idea seems potentially useful, though arguably the polities are better seen as different grounding perspectives within the generalized other, rather than as different generalized others. It is also important to note that they are the cultural sources of expectations that are *shared* between occupants of complementary roles, as well as the sources of expectations that are disputed. The incorporation of such grounding perspectives in Dewey's analysis of moral agency could be used to extend it by identifying the different grounds that may be offered to justify desires and intentions, moral obligations, or conduct considered virtuous.

This chapter has reviewed ways in which the characteristics of Dewey's analysis of moral agency and factors that affect its application have been augmented by contributions from philosophers and social theorists to the development of Mead's sociology. As the next chapter will show, several research-based studies of Mead's sociology and William James's contribution to it have also augmented Dewey's analysis and extended its implications.

Part 2: Extensions

Chapter 4

Social research on the pragmatist analysis of moral agency

Other things being equal, performances strongly suggested by more prominent identities [i.e. selves] are more likely to be carried out than are those less clearly suggested by them or than are central suggestions of less prominent identities. In this way, the ideal self, or hierarchy of prominence, aids one in choosing among diverse projects of action (George J. McCall and J.L. Simmons 1978: 80).

Previous chapters have described the development of a pragmatist theory of the realization of moral agency in social roles. This chapter examines ways in which the arguments of the pragmatist analysis of moral agency have been explored and extended by social researchers. All the studies were conducted by leaders in their field and are widely cited. Some were undertaken decades ago, but their findings continue to be discussed by contemporary scholars. Of course, the studies have limitations, and there are differences of view about the extent to which these compromise the validity of claims based on the reported findings. Nevertheless, two positive claims may be made about the research reported here that seem uncontroversial. One is that none of the reported findings or explanatory models are an affront to common sense; they are more likely to be seen as elaborations of it. The other is that in formulating models to be tested in research, the investigators usefully extended the range of pragmatist theorizing.

Section 1 describes the contribution to pragmatist microsociology of the ethnographic studies of social interaction conducted by Harold Garfinkel. Section 2 does the same for Irving Goffman's studies of role-specific presentations of the self. Section 3 critically examines a claim that Garfinkel's and Goffman's studies undermine the standard view of normativity. Section 4 reviews quantitative studies that test propositions about the social-structural determinants of the role-specific self to be activated in a situation. These studies were developed in a branch of sociology – symbolic interactionism – based on the ideas of George Herbert Mead and William James. Section 5 describes a research programme, also

rooted in the ideas of Mead and James, based on the idea that the role-specific self to be activated in a situation is influenced by the ordering of the agent's constituent selves by their importance to the agent's preferred self-construal. Section 6 considers a proposal that the ranking of constituent selves by their importance to the agent's self-construal can help to explain the response to moral perplexity. Section 7 reviews quantitative studies that test the proposition, also derived from symbolic interactionist ideas, that self-construal as a morally praiseworthy self predicts morally praiseworthy conduct. Section 8 considers a study that investigates the effect on moral judgement of occupying two occupational roles that differ in their expectations of the agent's conduct.

4.1.0 Garfinkel's ethnomethodology

The studies undertaken by Harold Garfinkel that are described here were published over 60 years ago, but contemporary commentators continue to discuss the implications of his work for the empirical grounding of pragmatist claims.

Garfinkel sees social order and therefore the moral order not as a slavish response to institutionalized imperatives, but as the ongoing accomplishment of members of society as they endeavour to make their everyday actions intelligible to one another. To explore the processes of this accomplishment, he founded a form of sociological enquiry, 'ethnomethodology', which comprises procedures for making visible the features of interaction by which normative expectations are confirmed or modified (Garfinkel 1967). One of these procedures is the so-called 'breaching experiment' that entails the deliberate breaching of standard expectations, such as the normative expectations that occupants of the roles of salesperson and customer have of each other. In one such experiment, 67 students were each required to visit shops and on three occasions to offer much less than the asking price for an item costing two dollars or less, and on another three occasions to do the same for an item costing 50 dollars or more. Garfinkel argues that, given the institutionalization of the fixed-price rule, if the encounters had been governed by the internalization of that rule, common responses by the students to its

attempted breach should have been anxiety at the prospect and the expectation that it would be shaming, followed by the experience of being shamed when they attempted the breach. Common responses of the salespersons should have been anxiety and anger. In the event, some anxiety was shown by a few salespersons, but anger by only one. Anxiety was most commonly reported by students at the prospect of the experiment and when approaching the salesperson for the first attempt at bargaining, but most reported that they were enjoying the experience by the third transaction, and many that they had been surprised to learn that bargaining could succeed. Presumably, the salespersons involved were those employed in relatively small local shops. It is unlikely that the sales personnel in a large department store or supermarket would have been so accommodating. In other settings, people commonly reacted with irritation or bewilderment to Garfinkel's breaching experiments. It is these responses that reveal the potency of participants' existing expectations in social interactions.

Garfinkel regards the experiment of challenging the fixed-price rule as showing that conduct which might have been construed as obedient conformity to a standardized rule by a 'cultural dope' is in fact the result of anticipatory anxiety that prevents the individual from attempting to consider an alternative to conforming (ibid: 70). He does not explain why being constrained by anxiety about breaking a rule should be seen as any less a conformist trait than acting from positive respect for it. Nor does he notice that in breaking the rule, the students are conforming to the will of the occupant of the dominant role in the lecturer-student relationship. Nevertheless, the experiment demonstrates the potency of the normative expectations that commonly govern the conduct of individuals when interacting in the roles of salesperson and customer, the dependence of their potency on the absence of a sufficient incentive to challenge them, and, when a sufficient incentive arises – in this case the students' conformity to Garfinkel's expectations of them – the negotiation of a successful challenge and the modification of expectations.

In other studies, Garfinkel sets out to reveal how people constitute the rules that will be observed in an encounter. In one such study, he and a colleague interviewed jurors about how they reach their decisions (ibid: 105-115). In his report of the study he describes how jurors confront rules of decision-making – the official rules – which they respect but which differ from some of the rules they use in daily life.

Drawing on his findings, Garfinkel lists some of the rules of daily life that govern what jurors allow each other to treat as the correct facts of the case, the facts that will determine whether they will be satisfied with the verdict reached and that will allow them to complete their task with their reputations intact. One such rule is that decisions on the facts 'do not require of the juror as a condition for making them that he makes no use of "What Any Competent Member of the Society Knows that Anyone Knows"' (ibid: 108). What Anyone Knows is based on common-sense beliefs that jurors trust one another to use in testing the validity of claims, for example beliefs about the driving behaviour of different types of people. Garfinkel contrasts the daily-life rules with the official rules that the juror comes to feel required by the court to observe, such as those which exclude any place for sympathy, preconceptions, or personal preferences in reaching a verdict, and insist that the only legitimate grounds for a decision are the law and the evidence.

In their accounts to the interviewers, the jurors maintained that their decision-making procedures had been those that were officially approved. They were resistant to admitting, what had been discovered from interviews with other jurors, that it was in the course of their deliberations that they had learnt how their decisions were made. Yet according to Garfinkel, 'the interviews had shown that jurors did not actually understand the conditions that defined a correct decision until after the decision had been made' (ibid: 114). A variety of conditions had entered into their deliberations, and it was only when they had agreed on a verdict that, looking back, they could construct an ordered account of the process

by which it had been reached. Their conduct exemplified the non-teleological form of action described by Joas's theory of creative action (3.3.1).

Garfinkel himself was critical of the core ideas of the founder pragmatists. Commenting on the criticisms he had made in an early text (Garfinkel 1948 [2006]), Mustafa Emirbayer and Douglas Maynard (2011) note that in that text he had failed to engage with pragmatism's most recognizable contributions, but that, more importantly, he had misunderstood fundamental aspects of it. For example he had suggested that Mead understood role-taking as a contemplative process, undertaken as something apart from and antecedent to its actual practice²⁴. They maintain that Garfinkel's later works should be seen, not as rejection of pragmatism, but as attending to matters that the pragmatists had left unexplored, in particular 'the actual concrete procedures whereby actors accomplish the meaningful, patterned, and orderly character of everyday life' (ibid: 236). The study of jurors described above illustrates what they mean. Mead would probably have seen the study as one in which the jurors were faced with the problem of reconciling the rules they were officially required to observe with those of the generalized other. It is likely that he would have welcomed the use of his ideas in empirical research.

4.2.0 Goffman's self-presentation studies

The positive implications of Irving Goffman's ideas for the support of Mead's ideas is not controversial. He makes this clear in the book for which he is best known, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959 [1969]). There he proposes that face-to-face interactions between individuals 'in ordinary work situations' be seen as performances directed, not necessarily consciously, towards controlling the impression of themselves that they communicate to one another²⁵. Like

²⁴ The article by Emirbayer and Maynard (2011) is the subject of a symposium on 'Pragmatism and Ethnomethodology' in the journal *Qualitative Sociology* 34(1)

²⁵ Referring to this issue in another book Goffman (1971: 279) writes 'George Herbert Mead must be our guide'.

Garfinkel's studies, Goffman's were undertaken many years ago but continue to be seen as landmark contributions to the grounding of pragmatist claims.

4.2.1 Impression management

Goffman follows Mead and James in noting that individuals adjust their conduct and appearance in light of their perception of the impression of themselves formed by others. The impression to be communicated will depend on the particular others engaged in the interaction and the response sought.

Performances succeed in their aims to the extent that they conform convincingly enough to established expectations of the conduct of those whose characteristics the performers wish to have attributed to themselves. Among the forms that the management of impressions can take is what Goffman describes as 'role distance': conduct deliberately intended to deny the version of self that occupancy of a role would communicate by someone who fully embraced and was embraced by it. As one of his examples of the projection of role distance, he refers to adults riding on a merry-go-round with their small child, and who 'wear a face that carefully demonstrates that they do not perceive the ride as an event in itself, their only present interest being their child' (Goffman 1961: [1972: 97]). In other words, they want the world to understand that they are performing the role of parent, not the role of merry-go-round rider or pleasure-seeker.

Goffman is sometimes criticized for failing to respect the complexity of human motivation – for example, by Smith and Riley (2009: 61) – but that complexity is not his subject-matter. Goffman emphasizes that the interaction between performer and intended audience has a moral character. This is because society is organized on the principle that anyone who signifies, implicitly or explicitly, that she is a person with certain social characteristics has a moral obligation to be the person she claims to be, and a corresponding right to expect that this claim will be honoured by others (1959: [1990: 24]). Yet, *qua* performers, the concern of individuals is not with whether they are abiding by the numerous moral standards by which they are judged, but rather 'with the amoral issue of engineering a convincing impression that these standards are being realized' (ibid: 243).

The performer adopts preventive practices to avoid the discrediting of the impression she wants to project and adopts corrective practices when discrediting occurs. In many social relationships, those to whom the claim is directed cooperate by adopting practices protective of the impression of herself the claimant is attempting to project. For example, they may pretend not to notice if she unwittingly reveals something discordant with that impression. In short, social interactions are often subject to a tacit understanding that face-saving is everyone's responsibility. An astute testimony to the truth of this is Goffman's observation that when an individual commits a gaffe, she has no licence to forgive it. That prerogative is for others to exercise, and they commonly do so.

Sometimes a failure to meet expectations may require the individual to attempt to change the meaning accorded to an act by giving an account of it that makes the act acceptable (1971: 109). Such attempts, which Goffman calls 'remedial work', include excuses, apologies, and accounts of the act intended to show that the circumstances were such that the agent was not at fault. As Goffman recognizes, there are also circumstances in which those who fail to meet existing expectations succeed in showing that it is the expectations that are at fault, and that they should be abandoned in favour of those that would see their conduct as justified. He mentions the examples of children's constant negotiation of new privileges that are soon seen as their due by their carers, and the social changes achieved by the labour movement and the suffragettes (ibid:349)

Of course, sometimes (for example when adversaries try to show that a government minister is unworthy of his office) people believe they have reasons for doing the opposite of cooperating to preserve self-construals, and far from adopting protective practices, they may deliberately attempt to discredit the individual's claim to be a person of a particular kind.

4.2.2 The dismantling of the self

In a chapter of his book *Asylums* (1961), Goffman shows the power of his interpretation of pragmatist microsociology to illuminate the process of the

deliberate discrediting of the individual's self-construal. The chapter is entitled 'The moral career of the mental patient' and is based on his ethnographic study of patients in an American hospital in 1955-56. There he suggests that the fate of the mental patient has much in common with that of the segregated inmates of other institutions, such as jails, concentration camps, and monasteries.

Like the neophyte in many of these total institutions, the new inpatient finds himself cleanly stripped of many of his accustomed affirmations, satisfactions, and defences, and is subjected to a rather full set of mortifying experiences: restriction of free movement, communal living, diffuse authority of a whole echelon of people, and so on. Here one begins to learn about the limited extent to which a conception of oneself can be sustained when the usual setting for it are (sic) suddenly removed (Goffman 1961: 148)).

Gone is the interaction with significant others and the chosen living arrangements that sustained the patient's self-construal. Now the assignment to a particular ward with its distinctive restrictions on freedom are, so the patient is firmly instructed, what someone with his damaged state of self needs as treatment (ibid: 149). Improvements in conditions will be dependent on what the staff see as improvements in his level of functioning. The more that a hospital attempts to be therapeutic rather than merely custodial, the more likely is it that the patient will also be subjected to 'even more blatant' attacks on his self-construal. He will be told that 'if he wants to be a person he will have to change his way of dealing with people and his conceptions of himself' (ibid: 150). He may be required to practise this new version of himself in individual or group therapy. Attempts by patients to project a different self-construal are routinely discredited by staff. In the course of what is seen by the hospital as a process of resocialization, the patient learns what it is like to be defined by society as not having a viable self. As a result, the threat to self-construal that normally helps attach people to the self that society accords them is loosened and may result in forms of conduct that would not otherwise occur, for example extramarital relationships with fellow patients and hostility to next of kin.

The self, whether it exists in the public world or the segregated world of a mental institution, 'is not a property of the person to whom it is attributed, but dwells rather in the pattern of social control that is exerted in connection with the person by himself and those around him' (ibid:168). What Goffman finds of unique interest in the case of the mental patient is its illustration of the possibility that in abandoning the previous self or having it dismantled, the person can also lose, at least for a time, that self's respect for moral norms and fear of being shamed for failing to observe them (ibid: 169).

Goffman's accounts of the activities needed to maintain the agent's own and others' self-construals confirm and illustrate Mead's idea that agents endeavour to behave in ways that maintain congruence between self-construal and the perception of how the self is construed by others (1.2.2). It is the mechanism that explains the functioning of one of the sources of normativity posited by Dewey: the valuation of the agent's conduct as virtuous or otherwise (2.7.3).

4.3.0 Frega on Garfinkel, Goffman and normativity

The implications of Garfinkel's and Goffman's studies for the understanding of normativity and therefore for moral agency are considered in a recent article by the pragmatist philosopher Roberto Frega (2015). In this article, which is entitled 'The normative structure of the ordinary', he argues that the studies support a view of society in which normativity is to be explained by interaction processes rather than by a social regime 'governed by the better known play of norms, values, and institutions' (ibid: 57). Frega claims that a different philosophical theory of normativity is needed, and he endeavours to show that it is pragmatism which has 'developed a theoretical account of normativity consistent with the account of social reality developed by the tradition of social interactionism' (ibid: 54).

According to Frega, the ethnomethodological studies show that a successful interaction depends heavily on participants' compliance with the mutual expectations of everyday life 'as a morality' and that these have the following

features: they are 'not given or found, but constantly produced through the interaction itself' (ibid: 58). Nor are they independently guaranteed by some transcendent institution. 'In fact, ethnomethodological findings show that, in taking decisions, society's members do not act as if they were following rules or applying previously agreed or shared systems of norms' (ibid: 59). On the contrary, the findings show that the appropriateness of norms is 'contextually decided according to the needs of the situation' (ibid). He claims that although the interpretative strategies adopted are usually such as to confirm standard expectations, the structuring of interaction is 'autonomous in the sense that, within it, subjects do not act according to pre-given normative orientations, but tend rather to adjust their normative orientation to their perception of what the situation requires' (ibid).

Frega finds further support for his views in Goffman's work. He interprets what the latter says about the shared responsibility for face-saving to mean that the effective exercise of this responsibility is what matters to the participants in an interaction 'rather than abstract compliance with norms' (ibid: 60). The same concern is shown by the importance given to remedial work when expectations are breached. For Frega, the point that is relevant to an understanding of normativity in Goffman's analysis is the mutuality of engagement needed to maintain normative structure in interactions. That mutuality is essential since the existence of social life requires that 'each participant accepts the role of critical controller with regard to the behaviour of each agent in the face of tacitly shared normative assumptions.' (ibid: 61)

For Frega the distinctive normative quality of mutual expectations is their 'structural fragility'. This is because, dependent as they are on the willingness of society's members to comply with the expectations and the possibility that they will not do so, the interaction is subject to the constant threat of failure. He thinks it may be the awareness of this threat which imposes on all participants the duty to comply with expectations and force others to do the same.

The following quotation summarizes Frega's main conclusion:

According to this view, social order is not imposed upon reality top-down, but rather emerges bottom-up through social interaction, as a property of social interactions themselves. Hence its fragility. The normative order of social life reposes, therefore, in the mutual engagements through which actors negotiate their social positions, coordinate their action, define and redefine their selves, as well as the social situations in which they act. According to this conception of social life, the standard view of normativity as being mainly concerned with rule-following, norm application, and institutional compliance loses much of its relevance (Frega 2015:65).

4.3.1 An assessment of Frega's view

Frega draws from the work of Garfinkel and Goffman a version of the self as moral agent that has much in common with that of the early pragmatists, especially Mead. It is not a component of self that becomes evident only when specific decisions with moral import must be made or moral dilemmas resolved. On the contrary, it is a self that is on duty whenever social interaction is involved because cooperation in the successful execution of the interaction is a mutual obligation, one that requires the observance or modification of normative expectations in a manner sensitive to the self-construals of participants and the particular circumstances of their interaction. These necessities of social interaction, imposed by the interdependence of participants, are usually understood tacitly as part of the unseen sub-text of social life. They become visible enough when they are ignored: when a greeting is not returned, a queue jumped, a normal courtesy withheld, humiliation or embarrassment allowed to occur, and so on.

What is puzzling about Frega's account is his conclusion from it that rule-following, norm application, and institutional compliance are largely irrelevant to normativity. It is puzzling because in much of what he says he seems to recognize their relevance. Significantly, Mead's contributions to pragmatist sociology receive little explicit attention in the article; he is mentioned once in passing and once in a footnote. And while the article is evocative of some of his contributions, it is notably silent on others. In particular, there is no reference to Mead's concept of

the 'generalized other', the model of the social world with which social experience endows the mind, transforming an organism into a self that can be conscious of its own existence as a self in a society of selves (1.2.3)

According to Mead, it is the norms and values assimilated with the generalized other that are the origin of the normative expectations that both permit successful interaction, face-to-face and remote, and commit participants to its success. That is how the predictability of conduct that makes society possible is achieved. It is this conception of normativity that is supported by Goffman's observations on self-presentation and face-saving and by the opposition usually provoked by Garfinkel's breaching experiments. It is also a conception that can accommodate the latter's and Frega's insistence that the normative expectations observed and the manner of their observance need to be sensitive to the particularities of context.

Recall the difficulties of Garfinkel's jurors as they attempted to reconcile the court's expectations of their treatment of evidence with their common-sense models of how people behave (their generalized others). He includes as one of the determinants of whether jurors would be satisfied with their decisions on the facts of the case that they 'emerge from the inquiry with their reputations intact' (Garfinkel 1967: 108). This is to concede the potency of existing normative expectations. The juror's problem is the common problem of maintaining congruence between the actor's own and others' construal of the self in circumstances when the normative expectations that will yield this outcome are unclear or conflicting. This is the problem that Frega has in mind when he refers to Garfinkel's view that the details of appropriate conduct 'must be necessarily worked out at the level of local interaction because normative prescriptions are 'structurally and unavoidably under-determined' (Frega 2015: 58).

Garfinkel himself claims that the possibility of common understanding consists not

in shared knowledge of social structure but

'in the enforceable character of actions in compliance with the expectancies of everyday life as a morality' . . . Not only does common sense knowledge portray a real society for members, but in the manner of a self-fulfilling prophecy the features of the real world are produced by persons' motivated compliance with these background expectancies' (1967:53)

Another problem with Frega's view is that it would be an implausible explanation of major social changes. Such changes (for example, in family size, the divorce rate, the proportion of women in the labour force) can be swift, interconnected, socially and geographically pervasive, and often much affected by economic forces. While social interaction at the level of individuals is not the origin of these shifts, it will of course be involved in them, especially in making possible the shifts in role expectations they require²⁶.

It is misleading to claim that social order emerges either bottom up through social action (Frega's view) or top down through institutional compliance (the standard view according to Frega). The maintenance of social order requires both compliance with institutionalized norms and interactional processes that modify their application, and that do so in normatively governed ways. For a society to remain viable, its collective needs must constrain what occurs at the level of individual members. To that end its members engage collectively in sustaining a shared system of normative regulation, but one which they will often participate in modifying in response to changes in circumstances or values. These modifications and the adaptation of role norms to circumstance are negotiated by role occupants in the course of their interactions with occupants of counterpart roles. This is a view of the maintenance of social order that is strongly endorsed by the findings of Garfinkel and Goffman. It is also endorsed by questionnaire and

²⁶ Joas's theory of the creativity of action (3.3.1) offers a more persuasive account of the processes of decision-making that preoccupy Garfinkel. Frega refers (p. 69) respectfully to Joas's theory but believes it is not suited to the aspects of normativity that concern him.

experimental studies conducted in a branch of sociology based on Mead's ideas that is the subject of the next section.

4.4.0 Symbolic Interactionism and identity theory

As noted earlier, social scientists have taken much more interest than have most philosophers in Mead's theorizing about the self and society. His ideas became the foundation of a branch of sociology which one of his students, Herbert Blumer, named 'symbolic interactionism'. Blumer intended the name to stress the new field's focus on how people's acts towards objects were based on the objects' meanings to them, meanings that were derived from social interaction and modified by interpretation (Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction 2017).

In a recent review and assessment of research in symbolic interactionism, Michael Carter and Celene Fuller (2016) describe its emergence as a response to the then dominant perspective in sociology that focused on the impact of macro-level institutions and social structures. 'Departing from this tradition, symbolic interactionism was developed to understand the operation of society from the "bottom up," shifting the focus to micro-level processes that emerge during face-to-face encounters in order to explain the operation of society' (ibid: 932).

Of the three main variants of the symbolic interactionist perspective, the one most relevant to the subject of this chapter is described as identity theory, a pioneer of which was Sheldon Stryker (1968). As noted in the previous chapter (3.4.0)), he was critical of aspects of Mead's theorizing, and endeavoured to improve on it.

4.4.1 Social-structure and the salience of role-specific selves

Carter and Fuller note that the distinctive feature of Stryker's work is its emphasis on the way that interactions are influenced by the relatively stable normative expectations that shape conduct in the various social roles that people occupy as role-specific selves. The expectations are internalized as those applying to these role-specific selves, and the observance of the expectations maintains social structure. On this view, the likelihood of a particular self being activated in a

situation will depend on the potency of its links to the social structure.

Stryker has remained a major influence on the development of identity theory. In a review of his own and others' contributions to its development (2008), he acknowledges its origins in Mead's ideas but points out that these constituted a conceptual framework rather than a set of refutable propositions (ibid:18). Also, whereas Mead's concern was the way the social process shapes society, self, and interaction, Stryker's interest is in the way society shapes social interaction, with society seen as 'organized systems of interactions and role relationships and as complex mosaics of differentiated groups, communities, and institutions, cross-cut by a variety of demarcations based on class, age, gender, ethnicity, religion, etc.' (ibid: 19). Social life is understood from a 'role theoretic sense of social structure', and thus as taking place largely within relatively small networks of role relationships. It is assumed that the content and organization of the self are shaped by everyday experiences, and that these proximate sources mediate the effects of class, age, and other social differentiators. The normative obligations which most individuals are most regularly expected to observe are those encountered in the network of role relationships in whichever cultural milieu they happen to inhabit. In one milieu that could mean expecting people to show, say, a high regard for bourgeois conventions. In another it could mean expecting people to show contempt for them.

Stryker's derivation of identity theory from Mead's analysis insists that the self's response to the world is affective and conative, as well as cognitive, and he proposes, following James (1.3.1), that the individual has a constituent self for every organized system of role relationship in which she participates — self as employee, spouse, parent, poker player, friend, and so on²⁷. Each constituent self is a self-construal that shapes conduct across all situations encountered in the role on which that self is based (ibid: 20). Stryker proposes that the role-specific selves

²⁷ Stryker and others use the term 'identity' rather than self to distinguish a constituent self from the self as a whole. This is a difference in terminology with no relevant substantive implications.

are ordered, although not necessarily strictly, by the likelihood of being invoked – their relative salience – in a variety of situations. The place of a constituent self in this hierarchy of salience is determined by the strength of the individual’s commitment to social networks in which that constituent’s self and its role are valued. ‘To the degree that one’s relationship to a set of others depends on being a particular kind of person and playing out particular roles, one is committed to being that kind of person’ (ibid: 20). An example would be the mother of several children all of whose important relationships are with people who, in the way they behave towards her, validate her self-construal as first and foremost a mother. Stryker refers to research which found two kinds of commitment underlying the measure of commitment used in early research. One kind was interactional commitment, defined as the number of relationships linked to a given constituent self. The other kind was affective commitment, emotional attachment to others in networks of relationships. Stryker reviews the successful tests of hypotheses derived from his theory and subsequent elaborations of it.

The results of the research of Stryker and colleagues show how social structure influences the relative salience of a constituent self by determining the social networks in which the priority of constituent selves is established. Another determinant of that priority, and one more immediately related to the issue of moral agency, is the relative subjective value of the constituent selves.

4.5.0 Self-structure and the salience of role-specific selves

A theory of the subjective determinants of the relative salience of a role-specific self – its relative likelihood of being enacted – was proposed by two other early contributors to identity theory: George McCall and J.L Simmons (1978)²⁸. Like Stryker, they followed William James and the other classical pragmatists in maintaining that the individual has multiple constituent selves. But in contrast to Stryker's emphasis on the effect of structural factors on the ordering of the agent's role-specific selves, these theorists were interested in the ordering of the selves by

²⁸ The first edition of this book was published in 1966.

their importance to the agent's self-construal. A summary of their proposals follows.

4.5.1 The role-specific self, the 'Me', and the 'I'

A role-specific self (which McCall and Simmons describe as a 'role-identity') is the individual's preferred self-construal – one often not matched by performance – as someone being and acting as an occupant of a social role (ibid: 65). This self-construal has two components. One, the conventional component, is the set of expectations held of any occupant of the role concerned. The other component comprises the expectations based on the individual's 'idiosyncratic interpretations and elaborations' of the role (ibid: 68)²⁹. The relative proportions of the two components vary between individuals and between the individual's role-specific selves. 'Some people add little to the role-expectations they have learned; others modify and elaborate culturally defined roles to such extreme extents that the roles become unrecognizable to other people and the individuals are regarded as eccentric or mentally ill' (ibid: 68)³⁰.

Taken together, the set of role-specific selves comprises what Mead describes as the 'Me', by which, say these theorists, he means 'all those *perspectives* on oneself that the individual has learned from others – the *attitudes* that the 'I' assumes towards his own person when he is taking the role of the other toward himself' (ibid: 53, emphases in original) and that embody the individually elaborated standards internalized from significant others (ibid: 54). McCall and Simmons propose that the role-specific selves that together constitute the 'Me' are best thought of as the internal audience of the 'I', and the latter as the performer. Both Mead and James, they say, 'took over Kant's definition of the "I" as the essentially unknowable active agent of the personality – that which does the

²⁹ A distinction made by Bernard Mayo (3.1.3) and necessary to Dewey's understanding of reflective morality (2.2.0).

³⁰ This echoes a remark of Charles Sanders Peirce 'Meantime we know that man is not whole as long as he is single, that he is essentially a possible member of society. Especially, one man's experience is nothing, if it stands alone. If he sees what others cannot, we call it hallucination' (CP5.402).

thinking, the knowing, the planning, the acting' (ibid: 52-53). It is the 'I' that observes the extent to which the individual's preferred self-construal (its role-specific 'Me') as the occupant of a role is confirmed both by the experience of performing it and by the responses of others to the performance.

4.5.2 The prominence hierarchy of role-specific selves

McCall and Simmons envisage the individual's role-specific selves as interrelated and interacting components, some compatible with one another, others incompatible, that form an organized and interrelated whole, and that are ordered in a 'somewhat plastic hierarchy of prominence' by their importance to the individual's construal of its composite self (ibid: 73-74). This prominence hierarchy or self-structure at any point in the lifespan corresponds, these authors maintain, to what is described by many theorists as the individual's 'ideal self' – the construal of self that is most congenial to it. Since this is the construal of self which the individual would most like to be the one justified by her conduct and to be recognized by others as so justified, it presumably also reflects the degree of importance she attaches (or *fails to attach*) to being a morally praiseworthy person overall – a *moral* self – and to be recognized as such.

To be distinguished from the ideal self is the 'situational self', which is the hierarchy of role-specific selves ordered by the individual's likelihood of enacting them in a given situation. For example, whereas someone's ideal self might rank self-as-spouse above self-as-scholar, the demands or the rewards of enacting the latter role may mean that it is often accorded priority by the situational self.

McCall and Simmons emphasize (1978: 82) that the overt role-specific self is only one of the selves involved in the choice of role and its performance. Other selves will be involved and will often have a decisive influence on whether a conflict between role expectations arises. For example, two roles with pervasive and distinctive effects on choice of other roles and performance in them are the gender role and the citizen role.

Different again from the situational self is the individual's 'character' (or persona), which is constituted by the subset of role-specific selves that the individual attempts to incorporate in her performance in a particular encounter³¹. The aim of the performance is to persuade occupants of counterpart roles that the individual has the character she is attempting to display. 'Character and role are thus social objects determined jointly through the interaction of performer and audience' (ibid: 83). For example, drill sergeant A, who wishes the new recruits to fear him more than they seem to be doing, may become more of a bully, while drill sergeant B, who wants to reduce the recruits' evident fear of him, may become more parental in the way he performs his role.

4.5.3 Determinants of the salience of a role-specific self

The overall salience of a given role-specific self in a given situation is the resultant of the typical effect of each of five factors (ibid: 74–82). One is its position in the individual's prominence hierarchy. Another is the extent to which the situation offers a profitable opportunity to enact the role. A third factor is the individual's need or desire to be satisfied that her performance in the role, as assessed by herself and respected others, validates her self-construal. A fourth factor is the intrinsic gratifications of performing the role (rewards not contingent on the adequacy of performance) such as the camaraderie of colleagues. The fifth factor is the extrinsic gratifications of performance, such as prestige and material resources.

In a situation in which alternative role-specific selves might be activated, those higher in the hierarchy of prominence are, other things equal, more likely than those lower to be chosen. 'In this way, the ideal self, or hierarchy of prominence, aids one in choosing between diverse projects of action' (ibid: 80). For example, if a role-specific self as, say, politician dominates the individual's self-construal, it is likely to have a powerful influence on her professional and private life. But its

³¹ In a footnote, the authors state 'We shall use the term "persona" in referring to the character an individual repeatedly assumes in a given interpersonal relationship' (fn.46).

influence may be overridden if the agent perceives that, in a given situation, an alternative self is more likely to be endorsed by those in counterpart roles, or better rewarded. For example, someone whose most prominent self is that of a mother and who makes this evident by her conduct in many situations may prefer to activate an alternative self temporarily – perhaps as someone concerned with political issues – when she is with those whom she suspects do not share her maternal interests. Whichever of the agent's constituent selves is activated, its performance is a social act and therefore its conduct needs to be negotiated with others involved in the act. McCall (2013: 13) notes that an implication of this view is that when engaged in a social act, the self 'is actually tripartite in structure: the I, the Me, and the self as negotiated social object'. It will be argued in the section that follows that the prominence hierarchy offers a useful way of conceptualizing the agent's response to the experience of moral perplexity

A recent study by Philip Brenner, Richard Serpe, and Stryker (2014), investigated the causal ordering of prominence and salience in the case of self-as-science-student. The study found that the more the constituent self as science student was valued (a measure of its prominence) the greater the likelihood students believed they would mention it on meeting four different categories of person (a measure of salience). Referring to the 'prominence' model developed by McCall and Simmons, Brenner and co-authors note that it assumes greater freedom than did Stryker's original model for the activation of constituent selves to be determined by the agent and 'typically negotiated in interactive settings' (ibid: 232-234)³². Details of the study are provided at Appendix A³³.

Discussing the results, the researchers note the importance of their finding, one not explicitly anticipated by Mead, that the likelihood of a constituent self being invoked is influenced by the affective dimension of its subjective value (ibid: 246).

³² The two models have independent effects on salience.

³³ A later paper by the same authors refers to several other studies that support the causal relationship between rank of role-specific self in the hierarchy and its likelihood of being activated (Brenner et al. 2018: 59).

On the other hand, they suggest situations in which the magnitude and in some cases even the direction of the association may vary substantially for other categories of constituent self. When the conduct of the constituent self is subject to external constraint or exacting obligations, there may be a high but theoretically redundant correlation between prominence and salience. Conversely, when the choice and enactment of a constituent self's role is relatively unconstrained, the relationship between prominence and salience may be stronger or weaker: stronger in the case of, say, zealous religious converts, because they highly value and therefore frequently enact the role of religious zealot; weaker or even reversed for, say, those in professional roles which they have come to find tedious. As the researchers insist, it is essential to take into account the type of role-specific self that is invoked and the context in which the act occurs (ibid: 248).

4.6.0 The self's response to moral perplexity

Moral perplexity occurs when the agent confronts conflicting normative demands (2.5.0). An essay by Joshua Daniel (2016) proposes how the self is or should be affected by the existence of these conflicts. An examination of his essay is followed by a description of how the idea of the prominence hierarchy described in the previous section can be used to illuminate how dilemmas may be resolved.

4.6.1 The 'I' and the 'Me' and moral perplexity

Daniel addresses the issue of role conflict by proposing a conception of conscience based on Mead's distinction between the 'I' and the 'Me'. It is a conception which sees the experience of conscience as one that 'concerns the self's holistic interactions with its various social environments, not simply its conversations with imagined or actual social interlocutors' (ibid: 276). Daniel argues that the 'Me' – the phase of the self that represents the generalized other – is the self's socially endowed conscience that informs it of the conduct expected of it and others in their social roles. In contrast, the 'I' is the 'self-enacting individual conscience', the

phase of the self that is free to respond innovatively to the 'Me', able to contest particular norms or expand the range of those included (ibid: 283).

He argues that, because an individual usually acts in several roles (for example as parent, daughter, subordinate colleague, supervisory colleague, citizen), the 'I' confronts, not a single sphere of social roles and set of norms, but a number of them, thereby involving the self in multiple sets of often conflicting normative expectations³⁴. Thus, the norms embodied in the 'Me' comprise, not a single socially established conscience but as many of them as there are communities in which the self participates.

On this view, moral perplexity should be understood as the consciousness of the tension caused by the self's experience of participating in these multiple social spheres with their often conflicting normative demands. It is the task of the 'I' to manage these conflicts in a way that enables the self to live in different moral communities 'with some measure of integrity' (ibid: 288). Its history of doing so provides the foundation for the way that the 'I' will deal with particular dilemmas, such as that posed by the need to choose in wartime between the conscience of self-as-church-member and that of self-as-patriot. 'The decision to support or contest warfare is not made in a vacuum but rather emerges as a coagulation, at a particular moment, of the historical trajectory of the self's ongoing negotiation between social consciences' (ibid: 288).

Daniel's proposal for the way in which moral perplexity should be understood and managed assumes that the 'Me' is construed by the 'I' as one that presses for integrity. To assume that it necessarily does so is unrealistic and takes no account of Dewey's and James's conception of the self as a consistent combination of selves that are often inconsistent with one another (2.4.0). The 'I' can often avoid the experience of conflicting normative demands by its choice of the role-specific 'Me' that will be

³⁴ Instead of 'sphere', the author uses the term 'social ecology'

enacted. When moral perplexity cannot be avoided because the demands of different role-specific selves are equally pressing, it is, as Dewey argues, the self that needs to change (2.5.0). The 'I' must decide what changes to the 'Me' will yield its preferred construal of it. The idea of the 'prominence hierarchy' offers a useful way of describing this conception of the agent's response to moral perplexity.

4.6.2 The prominence hierarchy and moral perplexity

Recall that the prominence hierarchy proposed by McCall and Simmons is a 'somewhat plastic' hierarchy of the individual's interrelated and role-specific selves, some compatible with one another, others not, ordered by their importance to the individual's self-construal (4.5.2). The relative positions of the role-specific selves in the prominence hierarchy can therefore be expected, other things equal, to guide the choice of role in situations when there are two or more candidate roles that conflict in their normative expectations of the agent's conduct. For example, those whose professional role ranks well above family role in the hierarchy may usually give priority to the former when the two roles make conflicting demands, without experiencing perplexity. To the extent that role-specific selves in the prominence hierarchy exhibit 'a distribution of inconsistencies that keep them in watertight compartments' (Dewey 1922: 85-86; 2.3.0), awareness of conflict is even less likely.

Typically, conflicting role expectations cause perplexity when the role-specific selves involved are of similar rank in the prominence hierarchy. Thus, a parent may have to choose whether to devote less time to caring for her children in order to care for one of her own parents. A barrister may find herself unable to satisfy both her duty as advocate to accord priority to her client's interests and her duties as a servant of the court or as a citizen. In such cases, the agent's problem is that of choosing the role-specific self and manner of its enactment that is most consonant with the agent's prominence hierarchy – its ideal self, which presumably is also its *moral* self.

This conception of the agent's response to moral perplexity is what John Dewey had in mind (2.5.0). For him, deliberation in response to moral perplexity is a process of choosing between the values of different versions of the self that will be realized in the choice of a role and its performance. In the course of the deliberation different options appeal to different elements in the constitution of the character, or as McCall and Simmons would say, to different role-specific selves. The choice will be subject to the influence of the three sources of normativity specified by Dewey: the moral praiseworthiness of the objective; the moral obligations that the choice will impose; and the desire for its approbation as virtuous by respected others (2.7.0-2.7.4). The outcome may be a change in the ordering of the prominence hierarchy – the ideal self – if the existing ordering cannot accommodate the agent's choice.

4.6.3 An illustrative case of the effects of rank in the prominence hierarchy

As a vivid illustration of the effects of differences in the rank of role-specific selves in the prominence hierarchy, consider the case of Horatio Nelson. As a naval commander he was famed for putting his duty above all other considerations. But he did not show the same rectitude in the role of spouse, as his discarded and cruelly treated wife was to discover. The outcome of his successes as a naval commander was, in the words of the naval historian Andrew Lambert, that he 'saved his country from defeat and destruction' (2017). These successes sustained a close fit between Nelson's self-construal as a morally responsible self in that role and how he was seen by the public. In contrast, his conduct in his marital role, though it provoked unflattering comment, was not a serious threat to his self-construal. Nelson himself attributed his adultery to the shortcomings of his wife³⁵. He was not unusual in being ready to ignore normative expectations of conduct in a role-specific self that is low in the prominence hierarchy because it matters little to self-construal. Nor was his spouse unusual in suffering the adverse consequences of occupying a counterpart role in such circumstances. A low stake

³⁵ Most historians shared Nelson's view of the reason for his adultery until the discovery in 2001 of a cache of letters from his wife to his friend. These showed how shabbily she had been treated and deceived by Nelson and his lover, yet how much his wife continued to love him (White 2006).

in role-specific selves that require a compassionate response to others explains common examples of inaction on behalf of the needy (refugees, zero-hours workers, users of foodbanks) by those in a position to help them³⁶.

Lambert (2017) refers to another interesting contrast between Nelson's conduct in different roles. As a member of the House of Lords he opposed the abolition of the slave trade, yet 'no man who reached the deck of a British warship remained a slave, and there were many African and Caribbean sailors in Nelson's Navy', who were treated no differently from other men³⁷. For Lambert, a justification of Nelson's support of the slave trade, and presumably what motivated his support, was the widespread belief at the time that it generated skilled manpower for the Royal Navy. Which again suggests the potency of his role-specific self as naval commander

Perhaps John Dewey had someone like Nelson in mind when he wrote:

A man may have a strong conviction of duty without enlightenment as to just where his duty lies. When he assumes that because he is actuated by consciousness of duty in general, he can trust without reflective enquiry to his immediate ideas of the particular thing which is his duty, he is likely to become socially dangerous (*E*: 295).

4.7.0 Dimensions of the moral self

Peter Burke and Jan Stets (2009) make further contributions to identity theory in a book that describes a programme of research originated by Burke and developed in collaboration with Stets and others. Stets (2015) applies ideas presented in that book to moral selfhood, understood as a set of culturally recognized attributes that have been internalized, but which, unlike those of role-specific selves, apply

³⁶ In an article on the reluctance of academics to praise each other, Terri Apter (*Times Higher*, 8 February 2018) quotes the political scientist Wallace Stanley Sayre: 'Academic politics is the most vicious and bitter form of politics because the stakes are so low'. They are not low for those whose careers are blighted. For example, academic politics was one reason why the founder of pragmatism, Charles Sanders Peirce – regarded by many as America's most original philosopher – was prevented from ever obtaining a tenured university post.

³⁷ This is an example of someone using one of the grounding perspectives (Productivity/Efficiency) described by Frère and Jaster (3.7.0) to justify different motivations.

to the self as a whole and 'are held core to the individual, defining the person in distinct ways' (ibid:444).

Perceived discrepancies between self and others in the construal of conduct as morally praiseworthy explain the processes that produce the moral emotions (Stets and Carter 2012). To behave in ways that cause the individual to perceive a match between her own and others' construal of her observance of moral norms induces positive emotions. The perception that the self's conduct falls short of others' expectations of her induces the emotions of shame or guilt or both. Alternatively, an individual may persuade herself, consciously or unconsciously, that there is more of a match than there is or that the mismatch should be ignored (Stets 2015: 447). To observe defiance by others of these same moral norms can induce anger, contempt, or disgust (ibid: 447).

Stets's ideas on the moral self can be usefully aligned with the core idea of McCall and Simmons that the agent's role-specific selves are ordered in a hierarchy of their relative prominence, and that this hierarchy corresponds with the individual's 'ideal self'. Since this is the construal of self which the individual would most like to be the one justified by her conduct and to be recognized by others as so justified, it reflects the degree of importance the individual attaches (or *fails to attach*) to being a morally praiseworthy person overall – a *moral* self – and to be recognized as such.

It follows that the extent to which self-construal as a moral self predicts morally praiseworthy conduct in a particular encounter is a measure of the extent to which the moral dispositions of the ideal self are preserved in the encounter. This applies to both the situational self – the *preferred* ranking of a role-specific self in the encounter – and the individual's character or moral self in the encounter – the choice and performance of the role the individual negotiates with occupants of counterpart roles.

Here the conception of the relationship between conduct and self-construal as a moral self is essentially the relationship that Dewey had in mind. Recall (from Chapter 2 (2.3.1) that for him, 'It is not too much to say that the key to a correct theory of morality is recognition of the *essential unity of the self and its acts*, if the latter have any moral significance; while errors in theory arise as soon as the self and acts (and their consequences) are separated from each other, and moral worth is attributed to one more than to the other' (*E*: 318-319, emphasis in original). The unity of the self and its acts means that the agent's character or moral self is evident in the habitual dispositions revealed when the agent makes choices between morally significant alternatives.

An empirical measure of the importance of being, and being recognized as, a moral self has been tested in a number of studies. These are reviewed in the following sub-sections.

4.7.1 An empirical measure of moral selfhood

As is clear from the number of studies included in recent reviews by Peter Jennings et al. (2015) and Johannes Boegershausen et al. (2015), research on the moral self has become a popular subject of empirical research. Although identity theorists have taken the lead in applying symbolic interactionism to theorizing about the moral self, identity theory of the kind inspired by Mead has not been the most popular foundation for its empirical study. According to the review by Jennings et al., approximately 70 per cent of studies have comprised investigations of the predictive power of a measure of the importance of the moral self to self-construal developed by Karl Aquino and Americus Reed (2002). These researchers claim (*ibid*: 1438) to have drawn on 'social identity theory' but to have based their work on a combination of a cognitive-developmental model that emphasizes moral reasoning, and a sociocognitive model that emphasizes the self-regulatory mechanisms of standards and self-sanctions (*ibid*: 1423). Nevertheless, their research programme does test a principal assumption of identity theory and a pragmatist understanding of moral agency: that the extent to which culturally

recognized moral attributes are important to the self is predictive of morally significant conduct³⁸.

To measure the importance of the moral self to self-construal, Aquino and Reed first established by research that the following nine traits were commonly regarded as those that a moral person possesses: caring, compassionate, fair, friendly, generous, helpful, hardworking, honest, and kind. Two attitude scales were then developed to investigate attitudes to possession of these traits. One scale, described as a measure of 'internalization', was used to assess the centrality of moral traits to self-construal by requiring respondents to indicate the extent of their agreement/disagreement with such statements as 'It would make me feel good to be a person who has these characteristics'. The other scale, described as a measure of 'symbolization', was used to assess the importance of the traits in the respondent's activities: respondents were required to indicate the extent of their agreement/disagreement with such statements as 'I am actively involved in activities that communicate to others that I have these characteristics'.

4.7.2 The prediction of morally significant conduct

As a first test of the predictive accuracy of their scales, Aquino and Reed used them to predict whether 145 high-school children would respond to a request by one of their class teachers (who, unknown to them, was a collaborator in the study) to bring in gifts of cans of food for distribution to the needy. The results showed that the strongest predictor was whether the student was female. The only other predictor was the internalization scale: for every unit increase in the score on this scale, the odds of donating cans increased by 80 per cent. The only significant predictor of the number of cans brought, as distinct from whether any were brought, was the symbolization scale. Details of the study are provided at Appendix B.

³⁸ As with other quantitative studies mentioned here and survey studies of this kind in general, the claim that one variable is predictive of another means that the observed association occurs too often to be explained by chance.

Recently (2015) Johannes Boegershausen and Aquino and Reed, reviewed and reflected on the results of 32 studies that had used the framework (the 'A&R framework') of the 2002 study just described. The studies reviewed include those that examined the interaction of internalization and symbolization and the effect of different situational factors on outcomes. It is clear from the review that the substantial body of evidence amply confirms the predictive validity of the internalization scale. When the outcome was praiseworthy conduct, such as volunteering and expressions of concern for socially distant others, it was more likely to be exhibited by high scorers on this scale than by low scorers. When the outcome studied was blameworthy conduct, such as cheating, high scorers seemed more temptation-proof than low scorers: less likely to need to exert conscious effort to withstand the temptation to engage in such conduct; less likely to engage in blameworthy conduct as a response to others' engagement in it; and less likely to act antisocially towards out-groups.

Not all the findings for low internalizers suggest that they were beyond redemption. For example, the reviewers report that such situational cues as recalling the Ten Commandments were particularly effective at motivating low internalizers to behave morally. Nor did the findings for high internalizers always reflect well on them. When blameworthy conduct was the issue, in some cases their probity seemed particularly vulnerable to financial incentives and other situational factors that diminish the importance of moral concerns and justify engagement in immoral acts. Further, when evaluating potential beneficiaries of their praiseworthy conduct, high internalizers were inclined to be more critical and sceptical than low internalizers.

The results for the symbolization scale were less reliable as predictors of praiseworthy conduct. High scores on this scale seemed to be associated with punitive and retaliatory reactions to mistreatment by others. High scores were also associated with so-called 'moral licensing effects' – an inclination to treat initial praiseworthy conduct as licensing (or perhaps, offsetting the blameworthiness of) subsequent conduct that was not praiseworthy.

4.7.3 The prediction of moral emotions

As noted earlier, the studies undertaken by Aquino and colleagues drew on but were not based on identity theory. Stets (2015) summarizes a series of 7 investigations of the predictive power of the importance of self-construal as a moral self that were explicitly based on that theory (Stets and Carter 2011, 2012). The studies are summarized at Appendix C.

The studies used questionnaire surveys to reveal the extent of a student's self-construal as a moral self, its association with choices they had made in a series of common moral dilemmas, and the emotions their choices had evoked. Each survey was followed by a laboratory study in which the participants were told they were testing a new college entrance examination. The test was constructed in a way that provided participants with opportunities to cheat (by changing their answers to questions when informed of the correct answers) and to fail to report unmerited credit (when they were given, deliberately, excessively high marks for their answers to questions). Their use of these opportunities was secretly observed.

The results showed that the assumptions of identity theory were broadly supported both by the surveys and the laboratory studies. Students with higher scores on the scale of self-construal as a moral self were more likely to report making morally praiseworthy choices in the moral dilemmas, less likely to need to report feelings of guilt and shame over their choices, and less likely to be among the 30 per cent who actively cheated in the laboratory study. But score on the scale did not predict the likelihood of being among the 50 per cent of students who failed to report unmerited credit³⁹. Nevertheless, these studies together with those described in Section 5.6 show that the importance to self-construal of having the qualities of a culturally defined moral self predicts morally significant

³⁹ Among the reasons that Stets suggests for this is that that the failure was not considered sufficiently consequential to be seen as a moral issue.

attitudes and conduct in most of the situations devised by the investigators. In doing so, the studies endorse Dewey's assumptions of the relationship between self-construal and moral agency.

4.8.0 A study of incompatibility between role-specific selves

Jennings et al. (2015) observe that much of the research included in their review of studies of the moral self assumes that individuals possess a unified and distinct moral self that can be more or less central to self-construal (ibid:155). Such studies, they say, neglect 'how the content and structure of the moral self may change across domains, such as the multiple social roles a given individual may take on that are both within and external to his or her [employing] organization' (ibid:155). This is a misunderstanding. The studies mentioned so far in this chapter were designed to focus on the moral self when understood as a characteristic of the self as a whole, whatever inconsistencies there might be between role-specific selves in their disposition to behave morally. In other words, the researchers were attempting to measure the extent to which it was important to the self as a whole to be regarded as morally praiseworthy.

In a study designed to reveal incompatibility between the obligations of role-specific selves, Keith Leavitt and several colleagues (2012) investigated the impact on moral judgement of having two occupational roles that differed in their expectations of the agent's conduct. Presenting the rationale of their project, the authors explain that because awareness of obligations owed to others is a central feature of social life, a critical goal within an occupational role is to secure the approval of 'key constituencies of the occupation' (ibid: 1319). A distinction is made between (i) universalistic occupations (such as those of policeman or teacher), whose moral judgements are expected to observe universal moral principles come what may, and (ii) particularistic occupations (such as those of barrister or manager), whose moral judgements are expected to take into account their effect on the interests of their particular constituencies, especially of those individuals or groups (clients, subordinates) to whom obligations are strongly felt

within the current role⁴⁰. 'We refer to such judgments as *morally flexible*, in that they are characterized by a motivation to weigh universal principles against the practical needs of one's particular constituencies' (ibid: 1319, emphasis in original)⁴¹. It is not, the researchers say, that particularistic occupations are insensitive to universalistic principles, but rather that 'obligations to constituencies are themselves seen as moral imperatives, and serving those obligations requires moral flexibility and openness to trade-offs' (ibid: 1319). Leavitt et al. conducted three studies to test hypotheses based on the foregoing rationale. The one that seemed the most illuminating will be outlined here. Details are given at Appendix D.

The subjects studied were two samples of engineers, most of them in managerial positions. One sample were employees of a large U.S. federal government agency. The other sample were members of America's National Society for Professional Engineers (NSPE), which requires members to observe universalistic principles of giving priority to public safety in their decisions and not gaining employment or contracts by unfair practices.

The moral flexibility of both samples was tested by asking them whether U.S. firms wishing to secure civil engineering contracts in a named Indian city should follow established local practice and offer gifts to government employees. There was no significant difference between the samples in the likelihood of saying it was wrong to make gifts. But a sub-sample of NSPE members who had been primed by being asked to recall themselves acting as an engineer were significantly more likely than a sub-sample primed to recall themselves acting as a manager (87 per cent versus 47 per cent) to say that it was wrong to make gifts to secure contracts. In

⁴⁰ This is evidently a very broad distinction, since those in either category of occupation are likely to have occasion to make both so-called universal judgements and to show partiality to particular constituencies.

⁴¹ The moral issues posed by the claim that the moral obligations of a professional role may override the obligations of 'ordinary morality' (or what Leavitt et al describe as 'universal principles') are considered in the chapters that follow.

contrast, there was no significant difference between similarly primed subsamples of government engineers. While conceding that the engineers' opinions are not a reliable proxy for actual conduct, the researchers conclude that their study shows that when an individual has more than one occupation-specific self, whichever of them is salient will have disproportionate effects on moral judgement. The researchers also conclude that the particularistic obligations felt by a constituent self to others in a counterpart role, such as that of employer, can be enough to override universal standards, largely because these obligations are perceived to be moral.

In other words, the claim is that an engineer's moral obligations in the role of employee may override his or her obligations in the role of engineer. An alternative interpretation seem equally plausible. It is that those engineers employed by private companies who did not think it was wrong to offer gifts to government employees had in mind not their moral obligations to their employers but their own material interests as employees who needed to win contracts. That would not be a consideration for engineers employed by a government agency.

4.9.0 Conclusions

The research findings reviewed in this chapter support and extend Dewey's pragmatist understanding of moral agency. Garfinkel's studies (4.1.0) reveal that productive role relationships require participants in them to observe prevailing role norms and to negotiate how these will be adapted to suit the circumstances of the encounter. Goffman's studies illustrate how agents attempt to perform their social roles in a way that achieves congruence between their own construal of their role-specific selves and the construal of them that they attribute to occupants of counterpart roles. The findings of both sociologists endorse key aspects of Mead's theorizing about the self, the theorizing adopted by Dewey. In doing so, the findings reveal how interaction processes are involved in the maintenance as well as the modification of role norms.

Pragmatist ideas have been extended by sociologists working in a branch of sociology – symbolic interactionism – that is based on Mead’s ideas. Both research evidence and ordinary experience support the claim that the likelihood of a role-specific self being enacted depends on both the relative strength of the individual’s commitment to social networks in which that role-specific self is valued and on its relative importance to the individual’s self-construal. For example, a committed church member may interact frequently with other members both in consequence of her commitment to the social networks to which she and they belong, and because her role-specific self as an active member of the church is a source of rewarding experiences and ranks high in the prominence hierarchy of her ideal self. Difference of rank in the prominence hierarchy also seems a plausible way of conceptualizing how the structure of the self may help the agent avoid the experience of moral dilemmas and resolve them when they are unavoidable.

In an important extension of the evidence base of pragmatist moral philosophy, Aquino, Reed, Stets, and others have demonstrated the predictive power of measures of self-construal as a moral self: measures of the extent to which the individual construes herself as possessing a set of attributes that are culturally recognized as indicative of moral praiseworthiness. One version of the measure predicts the extent of morally praiseworthy conduct in a range of situations (4.7.1-4.7.2)). Another version predicts the reported experience of guilt or shame when the individual perceives a mismatch between her own and others’ construal of her conduct as morally praiseworthy (4.7.3). Given reasonable assumptions, these findings support Dewey’s insistence on the essential unity of the moral self and its acts.

None of the studies reported in this chapter are beyond the range of common-sense understandings of how people may behave in the circumstances described. The plasticity of self-presentation described by Goffman is recognized in common discourse, for example in remarks that start 'She is an entirely different person when . . .' and that conclude in such ways as 'her husband is not around/ she has

had a few drinks/ she is with her children/she is at work/she is treated with respect'.

Similarly familiar to most people are personal experiences of actions that echo other findings of the studies. Here are some examples: challenging conventional expectations (for example asking for a promotion instead of waiting for one); suppressing the most prominent and salient self (perhaps self as philosopher) in favour of one (perhaps self as football enthusiast) deemed more appropriate in the circumstances (such as when responding to a friend's enthusiastic account of a football match); ignoring an obligation of one role (such as that of respecting the legal speed limit) in order to observe an obligation of another (such as that of arriving in time for the start of a meeting); and experiencing guilt or shame or both on observing a mismatch between own and others' construal of acceptable conduct or between own and the generalized other's construal of it. Nor is anyone likely to find it difficult to believe that those who see themselves as morally responsible are more likely than those who do not to want others to see them in the same way, and therefore to behave in ways likely to achieve this outcome.

In short, studies described in this chapter offer plausible interpretations of some of the mechanisms underlying everyday experience of morally significant conduct. In doing so, the studies support and extend Dewey's analysis of moral agency when this is understood as the enactment of self in the choice and performance of social roles.

The next two chapters examine how the analysis fares when applied to the interpretation of particular instances of moral decision-making (Chapter 5) and to the analysis of some theories of role ethics that do not presuppose Mead's sociology (Chapter 6).

Part 3 Applications

Chapter 5

The analysis of moral judgements

Consequently, it is proper to say that in choosing this object rather than that, one is in reality choosing what kind of person or self one is going to be. Superficially, the deliberation which terminates in choice is concerned with weighing the values of different ends. Below the surface, it is a process of discovering what sort of being a person most wants to become (John Dewey and James Haden Tufts 1932: 317).

The purpose of this chapter is to reveal the merits of Dewey's analysis of moral agency when used as standpoint from which to assess three important cases of moral judgement.

The subject of Section 1 is a Deweyan interpretation of the moral dilemma of Huckleberry Finn. That analysis is contrasted with alternative interpretations in Section 2. A Deweyan interpretation of the motivation of the volunteers in Stanley Milgram's well known experiments is presented in Section 3, and is contrasted with alternative interpretations in Section 4. Considered in Section 5 is the judgement made by the trustees of a pension scheme that, in pursuing the laudable aim of protecting the interests of pensioners, the trustees are justified in allowing investments in companies that supply tobacco products, despite the harm caused to users of these products.

5.1.0 The dilemma of Huckleberry Finn

Alan Goldman points out in a recent book that, as well as all his other claims to distinction, Mark Twain was 'also a philosopher, at least if that title is bestowed on the basis of published philosophical insight, explicit and implicit' (Goldman 2017: xi). His most famous contribution to moral philosophy is the novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and in particular its account of how its hero, a young and unsophisticated boy, responds to a moral dilemma that confronted him in the south of the United States in its slave-owning era. The question of what motivated

the boy's response to the dilemma has been widely debated by moral philosophers. Some of their contributions will be considered in what follows.

5.1.1 A pragmatist interpretation of the dilemma

Huckleberry Finn (HF) finds himself helping Jim, a slave and a friend of his, to escape. As someone who has assimilated from the culture of his community – his generalized other – a dominant ideology according to which slaves are the property of their white owners, what HF takes to be his conscience troubles him.

I tried to make out to myself that I warn't to blame, because I didn't run Jim off from his rightful owner; but it warn't no use, conscience up and says, every time. "But you knowed he was running for his free-dom, and you could a paddled ashore and told some-body". That was so – I couldn't get around that noway . . . Conscience says to me, "What had poor Miss Watson [Jim's owner and HF's self-appointed mentor] done to you that you could see her nigger go off right under your eyes and never say one single word? . . . Why, she tried to learn you your book, she tried to learn you your manners, she tried to be good to you every way she knowed how. THAT'S what she done'" (Twain 1884: 150).

HF was especially dismayed when Jim tells him that when he reaches a free State and has saved enough to buy his wife, they would both either buy their children or if necessary steal them. 'Here was this nigger, which I had as good as helped to run away, coming right out flat-footed and saying he would steal his children – children that belonged to a man that I didn't even know; a man that hadn't ever done me harm' (ibid: 151).

HF decides to report Jim to men hunting for escaped slaves, but at the last moment cannot bring himself to do so. 'I tried for a second or two to brace up and out with it, but I warn't man enough – hadn't the spunk of a rabbit' (ibid: 153).

Later, reflecting on how bad he feels about having not given Jim up, he acknowledges that he would have felt just as bad if he had given him up. In the terminology of 'I' and 'Me', his 'I' (the self in self-scrutinizing mode) starts by accepting a dictate of the 'Me' forged during his upbringing in white society. Then he decides that, in the situation in which he finds himself, to meet the

expectations of that ‘Me’ would be even more damaging to his overall self-construal than to meet those of his ‘Me’ as a friend of Jim.

Having acquired his ideas about the good and the right as a member of a slave-owning society, HF would not ordinarily have defied the dictates of a moral code which warranted the treatment of a slave as the personal property of the slave’s owner, especially an owner who had been good to HF ‘in every way she knowed how’. What prompted the decision he made in this case was the imagined effect of having to construe himself as someone who was so ready to ignore the obligations of friendship that he was ready to betray his friend’s trust. HF shrank from such conduct, even though it entailed ignoring what he saw as his moral obligations to others.

The Figure below represents HF’s dilemma as a choice between two possible role-specific selves. The contrasting attributes shown – which represent alternative attitudes – are among the many that, it may be supposed, collectively define the two prospective selves that constitute the horns of the dilemma.

| Huckleberry Finn’s dilemma | |
|---|--|
| Self as member of white society | Self as Jim’s friend |
| Sees Jim as a slave and someone’s property | Sees Jim as a friend in need of help |
| Sharply aware of Jim’s misconduct | Sharply aware of Jim’s expectations |
| Repelled by idea of helping a slave to escape | Repelled by idea of betraying a friend |
| Will feel wretched if he ignores conscience | Will feel wretched if he betrays Jim |

Note that each attribute in the Figure combines cognitive and affective responses to HF’s situation, that this applies also to the dilemma as a whole, and that the dilemma is evoked by the need to choose a course of action. This

is how HF's experience would have been understood by Dewey, who had rejected the separation of fact and value and of reason and emotion as misrepresentations of the nature of human experience.

5.2.0 Alternative interpretations of the dilemma

There is a large literature about HF's motivation. By examining some of the non-pragmatist interpretations in this section, the distinctiveness of the pragmatist contribution will be clarified. Note that the purpose of the section is not to arrive at a judgement on whether HF's conduct was morally praiseworthy, but rather to illuminate the differences between pragmatist and non-pragmatist interpretations of such judgements.

5.2.1 Interpretations that emphasize sympathy

HF's motivation attracted the interest of Charles Sanders Peirce, the founder of American Pragmatism. He refers to HF's motivation, though his analysis of it is, ironically, not a pragmatist one. He describes HF's act as the expression of a sentiment of 'christian charity', which would overrule conscience in resolving moral disputes: 'like Huckleberry Finn, we act from christian charity without caring very much whether conscience approves of the act or not' (Peirce: CP 8.47). Even setting aside the theological allusions, this was evidently not the explanation of HF's choice that Twain intended his readers to infer, or one that Dewey would have been likely to endorse. The text makes it clear that HF cared very much whether his conscience approved of his act. His discovery that he was not someone who could betray his friend entailed the experience of guilt for the serious moral transgression of failing in what for him was a clear civic duty.

A misattribution similar to that of Peirce is made by Jonathan Bennett in a widely cited article, 'The conscience of Huckleberry Finn' (1974). Unlike Peirce, he fully understands that overcoming the dictates of conscience was no easy matter in this case, but he attributes HF's resolution of his dilemma to his sympathy for Jim. Bennett uses the term sympathy 'to cover every sort of fellow-feeling, as when one feels pity over someone's loneliness, or horrified compassion over his pain, or

when one feels a shrinking reluctance to act in a way which will bring misfortune to someone else' (ibid: 124). He quotes the following of HF's statements, made as he set out in a canoe to betray Jim to the slave hunters, as evidence that it is sympathy and not moral principle that influences his decision:

as I shoved off [Jim] says:

'Pooty soon I'll be a-shout'n for joy, en I'll say, it's all on accounts o' Huck I's a free man . . . Jim won't ever forgit you, Huck; you's de bes' fren' Jim's ever had; en you's de ONLY fren' old Jim's got now'.

I was paddling off, all in a sweat to tell on him; but when he says this, it seemed to kind of take the tuck all out of me. I went along slow then, and I warn't right down certain whether I was glad I started or whether I warn't. When I was fifty yards off, Jim says:

'Dah you goes, de ole true Huck; de on'y white genlman dat ever kep' his promise to ole Jim.' Well, I just felt sick. But I says, I got to do it – I can't get OUT of it (Twain 1884: 152)].

Note that neither here nor elsewhere in his description of his deliberations does HF refer to having any sympathy for Jim, and that to judge from remarks quoted earlier, the boy is aghast at the slave's conduct. Yet Bennett believes that HF's conduct was dictated by sympathy, which, owing to weakness of will, prevented him from acting on principle, albeit 'bad' principle. He notes Twain's 'masterly handling of the difference between general moral principles and particular unreasoned emotional pulls' (1974:127).

From a Deweyan standpoint, the following views of Bennett about HF's experience are incorrect: that reason and emotion are separable ways of responding to a situation; that feelings are aroused by Jim's plight but not by his rejection of the moral principles of white society; and that the sympathy for Jim that explains HF's conduct is unreasoned.

HF does have feelings towards Jim: positive feelings activated by their relationship but also negative feelings activated by Jim's flouting of the norms of white society.

But feelings are not the free-floating sensations that Bennett and others seem to have in mind when they use this term. Feelings are components of 'sentiments', in the long-established sense defined by R.B. Cattell: 'an acquired and relatively permanent major neuropsychic disposition to react emotionally, cognitively, and conatively toward a certain object (or situation) in a certain stable fashion, with awareness of the object and the manner of reacting' (1940: 16)⁴². The definition would apply also to the way in which Dewey understood the concept of sentiment. It is the recognition that it combines emotion, cognition, and conation that distinguishes this conception of sentiment from one that treats it simply as a synonym of emotion or feeling. From a Deweyan standpoint, HF is judging whether it is the dispositions of his self-construal as a member of a slave-owning society or those of his self-construal as a friend of Jim that should have priority in defining the self that will be realized in his conduct.

Bennett insists that the only 'reasons' that HF considers are those which weigh in favour of betraying his friend, and it is true that the boy says nothing to suggest that he consciously considers any reason against betrayal. The reasons against are his valuation of the role-specific self that betrayal would reveal. Though he despises himself for what he takes to be a want of manliness, HF shrinks from being the kind of person who gives more weight to what he thinks is the right way for a member of white society to act than to his friend's expectations of how he will act. He acts like the zealous Nazi who, despite grave misgivings born of a strong conviction that all Jews should be denounced to the authorities, hides a Jewish friend who seeks his help. For Bennett, such decisions are triumphs of feeling over 'bad morality', a morality of which he, and he assumes the reader, deeply disapproves. In his view, HF's conduct is morally praiseworthy even though the boy thinks otherwise and even though there are potent reasons for him to think otherwise. Apparently, the reason it is morally praiseworthy is that HF's

⁴² This and similar definitions are quoted by Myriam Munezero and colleagues (2014: 103) in an article intended to clarify the distinctions and relations between a set of terms that includes sentiment, emotion, and affect.

conduct conforms not to the beliefs and values of his own time and place but to those of Bennett's.

In a recent article, Alan Goldman rejects Bennett's conception of sympathy and argues that 'Sympathy contains the implicit judgement that a person needs help in light of his situation' and that an implied moral judgement justifies the claim that 'Huck's guiding emotion is sympathy for his friend Jim' (2017: 18). In Goldman's view, that emotion is a moral emotion and reflects the fact that HF is implicitly aware of the moral reasons to help Jim. These reasons, according to Goldman, are HF's reaction to the injustice of slavery and to his friendship with Jim. 'He is aware of the moral reasons that require him to act as he does, although this awareness is not conscious or explicit, and he does not conceive of these reasons as moral' (ibid:18). Twain's text offers no evidence to support the inference that HF is unconsciously aware of the injustice of slavery. Much of what the character says suggests that he takes the existence of slavery for granted as part of the fabric of his society, and that he is dismayed by Jim's indifference to its normative demands.

Bennett's views that HF's conduct is to be explained by sympathy and that his conduct was morally praiseworthy are enthusiastically endorsed in a recent article by Craig Taylor, though he does not share the former's view that sympathy is 'mere feeling'. In his view, HF's conduct is an instance of 'the primitive sympathetic response of being moved to act (to help) in certain ways immediately, without thinking, by the suffering of another' (2012: 588). Taylor believes that such primitive responses, ones that cannot be explained by the agent's deliberation over moral beliefs and principles, account for a wide variety of everyday moral responses to others.

Taylor points out that when someone helps another person who is suffering, it would be unusual to ask why that person's suffering should be a justification for giving help. It would indeed be unusual, but the reason it would be unusual is not because it is assumed that the helper is motivated by some thought-free 'primitive

sympathetic response'. Consider the example of a young woman who offers her seat in a crowded train to an elderly passenger. The young woman has construed the situation in a way that invokes her compassion and prompts her to act on expectations embodied in a moral norm. Her mental model of herself is of a self that responds to others who need help, and surrendering her seat is a way of maintaining that construal of self and eliciting others' affirmation of it. If Taylor were right, how could one explain the conduct of young women who do *not* act in this way? Presumably he would not say that they suffer from the absence of whatever psychological mechanism explains a 'primitive sympathetic response'.

In any case, such a mechanism would not explain HF's conduct. The text offers the reader no reason to suppose that he would respond to any other escaped slave in the way he does to Jim. He understands even the latter's idea of stealing his own children as in accord with 'the old saying, "Give a nigger an inch and he'll take an ell"' (Twain 1884: 151). And far from being moved to act 'without thinking', HF's decision is preceded and followed by mental anguish. Not to acknowledge this is to ignore a characteristic of his conduct that, in isolation, would have been seen then and would be seen now as morally praiseworthy – a willingness to sacrifice his self-esteem and peace of mind to save Jim. Also, as Alan Goldman (2017: 20) points out, in protecting Jim, HF was putting his own freedom at risk and thus acting courageously. Helping Jim was not cost-free.

5.2.2 Interpretations that emphasize epistemic considerations

In part, the aim of Taylor's article is to rebut an objection to Bennett's and others' views made by another philosopher, James Montmarquet (2012). The latter rejects their conclusion that HF's action in not betraying Jim was morally praiseworthy. In his view, it could not be morally praiseworthy because it was not motivated by beliefs that were arrived at in an epistemically responsible manner.

Montmarquet claims that an agent's moral beliefs, if arrived at in an epistemically responsible manner, play an indispensable role in determining whether an action is morally praiseworthy or blameworthy. He argues as follows. In HF's case, his

belief that he should surrender Jim to the authorities could qualify as epistemically responsible, albeit not necessarily praiseworthy, because it was based on currently accepted opinions in his society. He had no such warrant for what he actually did. He happened to do a morally praiseworthy thing but not for the right motives. Montmarquet insists that what is distinctive of human responsibility is the application of practical reason, including the evaluation of the strength of the relevant reasons, and HF showed no sign of applying practical reason to the choice he made.

From the pragmatist standpoint, HF showed every sign of applying practical reason to his choice. He applied it in attempting to decide which of his possible role-specific selves would be enacted in resolving the dilemma he faced. As Dewey puts it, moral deliberation 'is a process of discovering what sort of being a person most wants to become' (Dewey and Tufts 1932: 183). Of course, this assertion is based on a theory of the connections between mind, self, and society, and Montmarquet's moral philosophy sees no need for such a theory. He explicitly acknowledges the cultural origins of the moral beliefs that HF applies to his conduct and argues that, because they prevailed in his society at the time, it would have been epistemically responsible of HF to act on them, though not morally praiseworthy. This view implies that to observe the dictates of conventional morality is always epistemically responsible, whatever reflection on their rightness might suggest.

It would not have been morally praiseworthy for HF to betray Jim, according to Montmarquet, because the prevailing moral beliefs that would have made doing so epistemically responsible are now seen as morally unacceptable. Nor, on this view, was his conduct made morally praiseworthy by the fact that he did help Jim, because those (since discredited) beliefs had persuaded HF that he had acted wrongly, even though his action was in accord with modern beliefs that were both epistemically responsible and morally acceptable. In short, according to this analysis, there would have been nothing morally praiseworthy in HF's conduct whether he had helped Jim or betrayed him to the authorities.

5.2.3 Interpretations that emphasize character

Montmarquet is also unmoved by the implications for HF's case of what he describes as 'the character view of moral responsibility': the view, originated by Aristotle and endorsed by Hume that the praiseworthiness or blameworthiness of an act depends on whether it manifests qualities of morally good or bad character (2012: 59). He considers whether the fact that HF's conduct exemplifies the morally good traits of sympathy, kindness, and openness to another's humanity make his conduct morally praiseworthy, and offers two reasons for denying that they do. First, even if these traits affect HF's conduct, he does not consciously choose to act on them and their effect is independent of any view he has of their relevance. Second, HF regards the traits as less significant than the moral responsibilities that he recognizes, especially to Jim's owner. For both reasons, HF deserves no credit for any influence the traits had on his conduct.

If, as a Deweyan would argue, HF's conduct was determined by the sort of person he saw himself to be, and therefore with the dispositions of such a person, including a disposition to take full responsibility for his conduct, he did in fact act with a consciousness of his morally significant traits and of their relevance. It is true that in helping his friend, he believed both that he was failing to act on moral obligations to Jim's owner and that his action revealed weakness of character. Nevertheless, even from Montmarquet's standpoint, the purpose of the act would usually be regarded as a morally praiseworthy one: to help a friend. And as noted above, in helping his friend, he displayed loyalty and courage.

5.2.4 Comments on non-pragmatist interpretations

Most of the non-pragmatist arguments considered in this section assume that the morality of HF's conduct can be assessed independently of the era and social setting in which it occurred. It is an assumption antithetical to Deweyan pragmatism, which insists on the interdependence of social conditions and moral judgements: 'social conditions enter integrally and intrinsically into the formation of character, that is, the make-up of desires, purposes, judgments of approval and disapproval' (Dewey and Tufts 1932: 380). Changes in social conditions lead to

changes in moral values: 'That which is regarded as anti-social and immoral at one time is hailed later on as the beginning of great and beneficent social reform – as is seen in the fate of those moral prophets who were condemned as criminals only to be honoured later as beneficial to the race' (ibid: 363).

The non-pragmatist arguments have been about whether, even though he seemed to endorse the values prevailing in his society at the time, HF should be given credit for acting in a way that defied them. He would have received unequivocal praise if he had believed that acting as he did was morally justified. Yet if that had been the case, it would have meant he had failed to assimilate norms integral to the way of life of his society and in accordance with William James's memorable dictum: 'A social organism of any sort, large or small, is what it is because each member proceeds to his own duty with a trust that other members will simultaneously do theirs' (James 1896 [2017: 15]). It was HF's consciousness of his civic duty that made it so hard for him to decide to help his friend. While what happens in real societies often falls short of James's idealization, it needs to be sufficiently true of them, including those that are changing rapidly, if they are to remain viable.

As it happens, most of the non-pragmatist arguments considered above ignore features of HF's conduct which, though they might not have been enough to persuade his compatriots to excuse his transgression, are as highly valued now as they were in his day. He showed generosity and loyalty. His action in saving Jim promised no benefit and was in fact costly to his self-esteem and peace of mind, and to that extent altruistic. It was also courageous. HF himself saw no virtue in his conduct, but an analysis of his motivation need not regard his own confused judgement of it as definitive. To do so is to miss much of the point of Twain's story

5.3.0 The motivation of Milgram's volunteers

Another way of revealing the differences between pragmatist and alternative interpretations of moral judgement is to contrast different interpretations of real-world moral choices made in an experimental study. One of the best known of

these studies is used here for that purpose: Stanley Milgram's study in the 1960s of the willingness of individuals to administer lethal electric shocks to strangers when asked to do so in circumstances which encouraged them to believe they should comply (Milgram 1963, 1974).

The Milgram experiments will be described, and then a pragmatist interpretation of their results will be given. That interpretation will be followed by those of two theorists who differ radically from the pragmatists and each other in their conceptions of moral agency. For one of them – Jesse Prinz – moral intuitions are the proximate determinants of morally significant conduct. For the other – John Doris – moral decision-making is largely determined by situational factors, and an agent's moral dispositions as constituents of character have a relatively limited role to play.

5.3.1 The Milgram study

Volunteer participants recruited for the Milgram study were told that its purpose was to investigate the effectiveness of punishment on memory. A number of different versions of the experimental procedure were used. In the one that was the subject of Milgram's first published report on the study (1963) the procedure was as follows. Volunteers were told that they would be the teachers of another volunteer. The volunteer teachers were instructed by a lab-coated experimenter (in fact a confederate) to operate a machine that would (they were told, untruthfully) give increasingly intense electric shocks to the 'learner' (in fact another confederate) in another room each time the learner gave a wrong answer to a memory test. The learner would show his answers by pressing one of four switches that were connected to lights on the shock generator. The teachers were told that the shocks were painful but not dangerous. There were 30 shock levels, each clearly labelled, which appeared to increase to a maximum of 450 volts. When the level reached 300 volts and again when it reached 315 volts, the learner protested by pounding on the wall of his room, loudly enough for the teacher to hear. From the 300-volt level onwards, the learner stopped answering. The teacher instructed the experimenter to wait 5 to 10 seconds and then to treat

absences of a response as a wrong answer and to continue to give shocks. In subsequent versions of the study, the responses heard by the teacher before they stopped included screaming, demands to be let out, and claims that the learner's heart was troubling him. At the end of the experiment, the volunteer teacher was introduced to the person he had assumed was the learner and informed of the real purpose of the study.

That real purpose was to discover at what point the volunteers would defy the experimenter and refuse to increase the voltage level. Milgram reports that of the 40 volunteers, 26 (65 per cent) were fully compliant and went on giving shocks until they reached the maximum level, labelled 450 volts. They did so, says Milgram, despite often expressing deep disapproval of the experiment. He reports that many of the teachers showed signs of extreme nervousness, especially when administering the more powerful shocks. 'Subjects were observed to sweat, tremble, stutter, bite their lips, groan, and dig their fingernails into their flesh' (1963: 375). One of the teachers who refused to continue giving shocks said this when refusing:

I think he's trying to communicate, he's knocking . . . Well it's not fair to shock the guy . . . these are terrific volts. I don't think this is very humane . . . Oh, I can't go on with this; no this isn't right. It's a hell of an experiment. The guy is suffering in there. No, I don't want to go on. This is crazy (Milgram 1963: 376).

Since the original Milgram experiments, others have conducted versions of them in the United States and other countries. A survey of the results by Thomas Blass shows that the mean percentage of volunteers fully compliant was 61 per cent for the 10 studies (including Milgram's) conducted in the United States, and 66 per cent for the 9 studies conducted in other countries (Blass 2004: 311).

Milgram proposes that it is the disposition of ordinary people to obey those deemed to possess legitimate authority that explains the unexpectedly high proportion of volunteers who were fully compliant. That same disposition, he

claims, is what explains why ordinary people become willing to participate in such barbaric acts as those committed by the Nazis in the Second World War and by the Americans in the Vietnamese War.

The Milgram experiments have been the subject of much controversy and criticism. Two issues in particular have concerned critics. One was the ethical propriety of requiring the volunteers to engage in a process that many of them found harrowing, and that often remained a distressing memory, unaffected by the limited debriefing procedure used. The second issue of major concern was what was widely held to be the inadequacy of Milgram's theory about the conduct of his volunteers. It was pointed out that Milgram's experiments had measured behaviour, not the reasons for it and that alternatives to his own explanations were available. Scepticism about his theory made many unwilling to accept his view that willingness to obey the instructions of an authority explained both his volunteers' conduct and such actions as those engaged in by perpetrators of the Holocaust and the massacre of civilians by American soldiers in My Lai during the Vietnam War⁴³.

5.3.2 A pragmatist interpretation of the volunteers' conduct

Whatever the shortcomings of Milgram's experiments or his interpretation of them, the fact remains that despite the anxiety it caused them, most volunteers were persuaded to apply what they believed were severe electric shocks to fellow human beings. The pragmatist role-focused analysis of moral agency offers a plausible alternative explanation of their conduct.

The volunteers believed themselves to be occupants of the role of participant in a scientific study. They had been paid what at the time was a relatively high sum of

⁴³ The foregoing and other criticisms are reviewed in a useful book by an Australian journalist, Gina Perry (2012). It describes the results of her intensive study of the Milgram archives at Yale university, discussions with Milgram's colleagues, and interviews with some of the volunteers in his experiments. In an article on her book, the sociologist Augustine Brannigan (2013) says that it questions the moral and scientific significance of the study as it was originally formulated.

4.5 US dollars for their participation. The credibility of what they were asked to believe was heightened by the way the study was set up: the modern laboratory in which the study took place, the authentic-looking design of the machine they were asked to use, and the carefully staged experimental procedures. Most importantly, in most variants of the study they were supervised by a white-coated experimenter they believed was on the staff of a famous university, someone whom they would assume had the expertise and attitudes of a responsible expert in his field.

In this interaction between occupants of the two roles, the volunteers were in the subordinate role and the success of their cooperation and therefore of the study depended on their compliance with the instructions of the experimenter, the occupant of the dominant role, and someone who took responsibility for the outcome. He knew, as they did not, why the experiment had the form it had. On the other hand, the volunteers were also enacting the role of teacher, and the obligations they were expected to observe in that role, and in most of their social roles, included one essential to societal functioning – an obligation to avoid causing serious physical harm to others without legitimate reason. Defying this obligation would seriously challenge the moral self of most volunteers.

From the standpoint of the version of identity theory described in Chapter 4 (4.6.2) the situation of the volunteers can be described as follows. The moral self that is embodied in the volunteer's ideal self is one that ensures that the volunteer is averse to causing physical harm to others without good cause in all common social roles. This also applies to the situational self in common roles, and will apply to the situational self of the volunteer in his role as teacher in the experiment. But the form of the experiment puts pressure on him to accord higher priority to the self in the role of participant in a scientific study, one that requires a situational self who is prepared to collaborate in administering high-voltage electric shocks to people. The pressures to choose this role and perform it well includes (or so it will have seemed to the volunteer) whether he is regarded as a responsible collaborator in an important study by the experimenter with whom he is

interacting. Most volunteers were persuaded by the apparatus and procedures of the study, albeit reluctantly, that complying with instructions was a legitimate duty, and therefore posed no challenge to their construal of themselves as moral selves. A minority were not persuaded⁴⁴.

Milgram's own explanation of the conduct of the obedient volunteer is similar to that of the pragmatist interpretation. He says it would be mistaken to suppose that the volunteer loses his moral sense.

Rather his moral concern now shifts to a consideration of how well he is living up to the expectations that the authority has of him. In wartime, a soldier does not ask whether it is good or bad to bomb a hamlet; he does not experience shame or guilt in the destruction of a village: rather he feels pride or shame depending on how well he has performed the mission assigned to him (1974: 8).

He refers to the claim of a pilot quoted in an American newspaper that the bombing of Vietnamese men, women, and children was for a noble cause and therefore justified. 'Similarly, most subjects in the experiment see their behavior in a larger context that is benevolent and useful to society – the pursuit of scientific truth' (ibid:9).

5.4.0 Other interpretations of the motivation of Milgram's volunteers

The distinctive features of a pragmatist interpretation of the motivation of Milgram's volunteers become clearer if it is compared with alternative interpretations offered by two contemporary philosophers, Jesse Prinz and John Doris.

⁴⁴ It would have been interesting to know if the members of this latter group would have scored more highly than their obedient peers on the scale developed by Aquino and Reed to measure the importance of the moral self to self-construal (See 4.8.1)

5.4.1 A situationist interpretation

Theorists who apply a 'situationist' analysis argue that moral dispositions as constituents of character or personality have a relatively limited role to play in moral decision-making, because behaviour is largely determined by situational factors. A leading exponent of this view is John Doris, who says in his book *Lack of Character*, 'The experimental record suggests that situational factors are often better predictors of behaviour than personal factors, and this impression is reinforced by careful examination outside the confines of the laboratory' (2002: 2). He argues that, typically, whether a trait, such as compassion, will be exhibited varies with situation, and that this also applies to the individual's value commitments. For a given situation, an individual's behaviour is more likely to accord with the population norm than to exhibit dispositions distinctive of the individual. Doris contrasts his situationism with what he describes as 'globalism', the belief that a character trait is a reliable and stable disposition to exhibit the trait in a variety of conditions, and that it is likely to be related to other traits with which it has value commitments in common. 'The honest person, for example, will be consistently honest, and will also exhibit consistent behaviour indicative of traits related to honesty, such as loyalty and courage' (2002: 23)

Doris believes the results of Milgram fully support his case. If the globalists were right and Milgram's subjects had been compassionate, Doris assumes they would all have refused to cooperate in the experiment. He is confident that it was the circumstances they were placed in that determined the response of the Milgram subjects, and he finds it remarkable that most philosophers appear not to notice the problems that this and similar experiments pose for the 'notions of character on which much philosophical discussion depends' (2005: 3, 39). Referring to those who declined to give electric shocks up to the maximum, he says 'There's little reason for confidence that the disobedient subjects, however inspiring their behaviour in the experiment . . . could be counted on to exhibit Socratic self-mastery in other situations' (ibid: 48-49). In further support of his views, he refers to the Holocaust and other atrocities as evidence that people will behave in real life as inhumanely as he believes most did in the Milgram experiments.

Doris is well aware of the high predictability of social behaviour. He concedes that the degree of coordination needed for social life would not be achieved if people did not exhibit substantial reliability in their behaviour. But, he claims, the dispositions displayed by such behaviour are highly specific to the situation in which they are displayed, and that 'One can expect the "usual" only in the usual circumstances' (ibid: 65). And while some people may be consistently compassionate, 'this sort of consistency is rare enough to count as abnormal' (ibid).

There is a sense in which pragmatists can readily agree with Doris that the individual's morally significant conduct will depend on situation, but they will have in mind a different conception of situation, one that points to a potential problem in his analysis. It is a problem he is aware of, and that he confronts explicitly, though not in relation to specifically pragmatist ideas. Referring to research in the field of social-cognitive theory, he notes a distinction made by some of its leading practitioners between 'nominal' and 'psychological' features of situations. 'Nominal features are actor-independent "objective" elements of situations, while psychological features involve the subjective salience the situation may have for a particular actor at a particular time' (2005: 76). Proponents of the latter view of what defines a situation – the view implicit in the pragmatist interpretation offered in 5.3.2 above – argue that what to an observer seems an individual's inconsistency of conduct between situations, may seem entirely consistent with her character or self-structure to the individual herself.

Doris agrees that, if features of character are included in what counts as a situation, the situational variability of an individual's conduct across situations is not inconsistent with a coherent combination of these features. But, he argues, this form of coherence does not address variability in compassion and other moral attributes that are observed when situations are defined by their nominal characteristics. For him, even if it can be convincingly shown that this variability is not only compatible with, but to be expected of a psychologically coherent character responding to different situations, the ethical issue is unresolved. It

remains the case that ‘from the perspective of ethical thought, there is something deeply right about saying character is fragmented; it is likely to be profoundly disintegrated relative to familiar evaluative categories’ (2005: 85).

From a pragmatist standpoint, the criteria applied by Doris when making judgements of character are inadequate because he fails to take account of the interpenetration of self and society (2.9.0). As George McCall (2013: 19) notes, if the social roles that people occupy within their social networks have incompatible expectations of conduct, these same conflicting expectations will be embodied in the dispositions of the individual’s role-specific selves. What Doris describes as fragmentation of character is what McCall and Simmons understand as the hierarchy of role-specific selves that constitute the structure of selfhood (4.6.2). It is a structure that often leads to inconsistency of conduct between role-specific selves. Recall Dewey’s view of selfhood as a configuration of inconsistent selves kept in watertight compartments, ‘giving them separate turns or tricks in action’ (2.4.0)⁴⁵. Dewey too was concerned about the ethical issues posed, but what distinguishes the pragmatist view from Doris’s is that it understands the contribution of social structure and role expectations to the creation of inconsistent moral obligations.

5.4.2 An intuitionist interpretation

In his book *The Emotional Construction of Morals* (2007), Jesse Prinz considers whether it would be a defence of the obedient subjects in the Milgram experiments to argue that they might have formed the rational belief that a scientist in a laboratory coat would not have led them into evil, and that their decision to obey was rational and perhaps even virtuous. He rejects this interpretation on the ground that their behaviour was indefensible: ‘surely faith in scientists is not a good reason to ignore a person who is begging for mercy; subjects in Milgram’s experiment reported afterwards that they thought that their

⁴⁵ Alasdair MacIntyre sees the inconsistency as a result of the compartmentalization of the agent’s social roles, encouraged by the structure of modern societies. His ideas on the subject are considered in the chapter that follows;

shocks might be fatal' (ibid: 155). He condemns any attempt to show that their behaviour might be justified in some way as 'especially insidious, because it suggests that we should let the subjects in these experiments off the hook' (ibid).

Prinz does attempt to explain the volunteers' behaviour. He agrees with those who see the conduct of the obedient volunteers as willingness to obey an authority figure, and argues that this willingness is an instance of culturally reinforced respect for rank norms that 'emerge through biocultural interaction' (ibid: 279). He also suggests, like Doris, that their situation was one in which character was overridden by situational factors. 'Situational factors tend to influence behaviour when context is novel, instructions are detailed, choice is diminished, duration is brief, or response is narrowly defined' (ibid: 156). He notes that in the Milgram experiments, subjects are given little choice and their instructions are detailed.

In viewing the conduct of Milgram's volunteers as morally wrong, and inexcusably so, Prinz is exemplifying his theory of 'constructive sentimentalism', which he describes as a form of intuitionism. In his view, intuition is simply an example of our mundane capacity to introspect our emotional states, the states that generate moral facts. These states are 'perceptions of patterned changes in the body that carry information about our relationship to the world' (2007: 94). Action has the property of being morally right if and only if it causes approbation and morally wrong if and only if causes disapprobation⁴⁶. Thus, while distaste for, say, killing may be acquired in one way and distaste for, say, incest in another, we know that each is wrong because 'it just feels wrong'. But, he maintains, according to his theory, unlike expressive theories, such as emotivism, verbal expressions of moral judgements simultaneously express not just how the individual feels but the representational content of the judgement.

⁴⁶ He maintains that while this formulation allows for a strong form of relativism, there are good reasons to expect many observers in a culture or subculture to converge on the same sentiments.

When we say, “That’s wrong!” we convey our feelings and also aim to assert a fact. “Pickpocketing is wrong” represents the fact that pickpocketing has the property of wrongness. Moral wrongness, I have suggested, is the property of being the object of disapprobation (2007: 100)

To judge from the reports of the feelings they expressed, Milgram’s volunteers were very reluctant to give lethal electric shocks to others, but that feeling did not stop most of them from doing it. Why not? According to Prinz, the reason was the norms that explain their willingness to accept the authority of the scientist who was instructing them. But if so, why does Prinz regard the volunteers’ conduct as inexcusable? Presumably it is because he believes that the volunteers’ reluctance to give lethal electric shocks should have outweighed the feeling that it would be wrong to disobey the scientist. Implied by this belief is the view that the feelings that would have directed his conduct had he been in the volunteers’ situation would have differed from those that were experienced by most of the volunteers. It is not clear how he could be certain of this.

For the pragmatist, the situation of the volunteers was one in which each was under normative pressure to maintain congruence between his self-construal as an exponent of the role of responsible collaborator in a scientific study, and the construal of him in that role by a respected experimenter. The compliant volunteers would have felt it wrong to do otherwise. At the same time, they were also under normative pressure to avoid causing physical harm to those they had been led to believe they were teaching. That too felt wrong. Had he framed the situation like this, Prinz might have been led to question the value of ‘it just feels wrong’ as a useful criterion of wrongness.

5.5.0 The legitimization of harm

Milgram proposed that in behaving as they did, his obedient volunteers were showing the same deference to authority as those who committed such atrocities as those of the Holocaust and the Vietnam war. The relevance of the experiment to these real-world events is also noted by Doris and Prinz. Both assume that a common feature of Milgram’s compliant volunteers and the perpetrators of

wartime atrocities was the willingness of ordinary people to harm others when placed in extraordinary circumstances.

From the standpoint of a Deweyan analysis, it was neither the extraordinary circumstances in which they were placed that explained the volunteers' willingness to harm others, nor their deference to authority. What explained it was their compliance with the customary norms of a role they were enacting, a compliance encouraged by the belief that they were furthering the cause of science and the view of others whose judgement they respected that their conduct was virtuous. For the perpetrators of atrocities and Milgram's compliant volunteers, these normative pressures legitimized their conduct. In the case of Huckleberry Finn, it was because the norms of a slave-owning society that he had imbibed meant that protecting an escaping slave lacked any vestige of legitimacy that doing so was so troubling for him. Nevertheless, HF, after anguished deliberation and exposure to the expectations of his friend, rejected these pressures. They were also rejected by Milgram's non-compliant volunteers. The construal of self that he and they wished to maintain required them to choose a different role: that of friend for HF, and that of fellow-citizen or fellow-human being for the volunteers.

5.5.1 The legitimation of collateral harm

The legitimation of harmful conduct by role norms and its approval by respected others is not limited to social roles in which occupants cause harm directly and intentionally or in which the circumstances are unusual. It also applies to those roles in which the occupants cause severe, even lethal, harms to others and do so knowingly but in the belief that the harms are of the collateral kind, an unavoidable consequence of meeting the legitimate – socially and legally authorized – expectations of their roles⁴⁷.

⁴⁷ Excluded here are instances of collateral harm in which the bad consequences of an act can readily be justified by the importance of its good consequences. These instances may be covered by the Principle of Double Effect.

Collateral harms may be more common than harm caused directly and intentionally, and they occur in very common circumstances. They include, for example, the harms caused by those in developed countries who benefit from the low prices of goods made possible by the exploitation of producers in low-income countries. To further illuminate the differences between the pragmatist analysis of moral agency and those they have been contrasted with above, what follows is an analysis of an example of collateral harm.

The example is the conduct of group who make decisions that entail collusion in actions that are well known to cause the premature deaths of millions. The decision-makers in this case are occupants of the role of trustee in the many British pension schemes that invest in companies which profit from the production and marketing of tobacco products. These products are believed to cause 8 million premature deaths every year, including 1.2 million that are the result of non-smokers being exposed to second-hand smoke. 'Around 80 per cent of the 1.1 billion smokers worldwide live in low- and middle-income countries, where the burden of tobacco-related illness and death is heaviest' (World Health Organization 2019).

One pension scheme that invests in the tobacco industry is the Universities Superannuation Scheme, which in 2019 invested £111 million in British American Tobacco and £84 million in Imperial Brands. These were among the 100 of the Scheme's largest investments in equities at 30 September 2019. The Scheme claims that it is strongly in favour of 'responsible investment' and that ethical considerations are among the factors that the Scheme's investment managers are explicitly required to consider. But:

Our responsible investment policy in regards to the USS Retirement Income Builder must be consistent with our legal responsibility to treat our members' financial interests as paramount. The legal advice received by USS states that we cannot make investment decisions purely on the basis of an ethical or moral stance (Universities Superannuation Scheme 2019).

From the standpoint of the pragmatist analysis, what seems to explain the trustees' decision is their commitment to the praiseworthy aim of preserving the pension entitlement of their scheme's beneficiaries, and their pursuit of this aim by compliance with the customary and legally supported norms of the role of pension trustee. It is a compliance encouraged by the approval of their conduct by those whose judgement they respect, who include their lawyers, their investment managers, and probably (because they made the same decision) the previous occupants of the post of trustee over many years. The trustees may also feel they have the tacit approval of the current and future beneficiaries of the pension scheme, given the absence of any evidence that most of them oppose its investment policy. In short, from their perspective their position may appear to derive support from all three of Dewey's sources of normativity – their evaluation of the consequences of their investment for those affected by it, the obligations of their role as trustees, and the view of those whose opinions they value that their decision is praiseworthy. Clearly, however, their position does not meet the criteria of moral rectitude that Dewey specifies. The lethal effects of tobacco products on many of those who consume them appear to have no influence on the policies of the USS trustees or of the moral obligations they take into account.

Presumably the trustees would reject any criticism on moral grounds with the argument that, given that tobacco shares perform well and reliably in the stock market and that it is an obligation of the role of trustee to treat the financial interests of scheme members as paramount, any harms they may help to cause by their support of tobacco products are an unavoidable consequence of meeting the legitimate expectations of their performance as trustees. That it would have been possible to take a different view is suggested by the example of those responsible for the Medical Research Council's pension scheme. They specifically instruct the scheme's investment managers 'not to invest in the shares of those companies whose predominant business revenues come from tobacco related products' (Medical Research Council: 2020: 3).

Doris might find the decision to invest in tobacco products morally questionable, but he could not reasonably attribute the decision to a flaw in character common to all the trustees. Nor could he or Prinz claim that it is the extraordinary circumstances in which the trustees are placed that explain the decision. A claim that the trustees are deferring to authority would be more plausible in this case, but, in the circumstances, many would find that a willingness to defer without protest was itself morally questionable. Prinz too might find the decision to invest in tobacco products objectionable, or, to use his terminology, the object of disapprobation and therefore possessing the property of wrongness. But the available facts do not suggest that the trustees take this view; for them the investment appears to have the property of rightness.

5.6.0 Conclusions

In the non-pragmatist accounts of the dilemmas of Huckleberry Finn, he is seen as either acting amorally because his action was not based on the use of practical reason, or as acting virtuously but unreflectively because impelled to do so by sympathy or the possession of virtuous character traits. There is no recognition here of the importance of the impact of HF's choice of role in which to act on the construal of himself as a *moral* self that would have ensued if he had betrayed a friend, a construal that would have been reinforced by his perception that it was one shared by Jim. In the event, he found it easier to choose to remain someone who could not bring himself to betray a friend rather than someone who could not bring himself to ignore the norms of white society.

In the case of Milgram's volunteers, those who refuse to continue administering electric shocks are regarded by Prinz as acting virtuously and by Doris as abnormal in doing so. On the other hand, the obedient volunteers are seen by Prinz as acting in a way that is morally indefensible, and by Doris as exhibiting some of the malign consequences of the fragmentation of character of normal people, consequences that can occur when normal people are placed in unusual circumstances. These

interpretations take no account of the impact of the agents' choice of role and performance in the role on their judgement of themselves and others' judgement of them as moral selves. In contrast, the Deweyan analysis proposes that the obedient volunteers saw themselves as reluctantly but dutifully discharging their duties to science in their role as assistant to one of its representatives. The disobedient volunteers rejected this role. In their case, their action would be consistent with the possession of an ideal self and therefore moral self in which there was no place for a role-specific self that was indifferent to its obligations to the individual cast as learner in the experiment.

The use of the role-focused analysis of moral agency to interpret the moral judgements made by HF and Milgram's volunteers has shown the importance of considering factors that determine the choice of social role in which a judgement is made and the interaction between role occupant and occupants of counterpart roles. The importance of doing so is even more evident if applied not to cases when severe harm is reluctantly inflicted or contemplated by normal people in unusual circumstances, but to the pervasive infliction of equally or more severe harm – knowingly, but without guilt or shame or even embarrassment – by normal people in normal circumstances, acting in a socially authorized manner. Seen in this light, what is often malign in its consequences for human welfare is not the conduct of ordinary people placed in exceptional circumstances, but rather their conduct in normal circumstances when they believe the malign consequences, however grievous, are unavoidable effects of successfully pursuing a laudable aim for the benefit of only one section of society.

Part 3 Applications

Chapter 6

Contemporary analyses of role ethics

In customary morality it is possible to draw up a list or catalogue of vices and virtues. For the latter reflect some definite existing custom, and the former some deviation from or violation of the custom. The acts approved and disapproved have therefore the same definiteness and fixity as belong to the customs to which they refer. In reflective morality, a list of virtues has a much more tentative status. Chastity, kindness, honesty, patriotism, modesty, toleration, bravery, etc., cannot be given a fixed meaning, because each expresses an interest in objects and institutions which are changing (John Dewey and James Haden Tufts 1932: 280-281).

This chapter critically examines, from the standpoint of Dewey's analysis of moral agency, some examples of the use of alternative analyses by contemporary philosophers to justify claims about the ethical feature of social roles. The chapter demonstrates the potency of his analysis when used for this purpose.

Because the normative theory of moral agency adopted by most analysts of role ethics is virtue ethics, the chapter starts with a section that contrasts the best known version of this theory with the pragmatist alternative. The claims of virtue ethics have been strongly pressed by Alasdair MacIntyre, and he applies it himself in the article on role ethics that is the subject of Section 2. The subject of Section 3 is an article by Christine Swanton in which she proposes a novel way of resolving a contentious issue in the analysis of professional roles. Her proposed resolution is based on a new version of virtue ethics that she has developed, one that she claims can deal with problems that are beyond the reach of what she calls 'orthodox virtue ethics'. Section 4 describes an analysis of professional roles by Tim Dare that rejects the conclusion reached by Swanton's analysis. Section 5 describes an attempt to base analyses of role ethics on duties required to maintain the four basic types of role relationship – hierarchical, egalitarian, communal, and transactional.

6.1.0 Aristotelian virtue ethics

When they discuss the moral issues that arise for particular roles, such as that of lawyer, moral philosophers often rely (not always explicitly), on a version of virtue ethics. This is a species of moral theory for which, so claim Rosalind Hursthouse and Glenn Pettigrove, virtues and vices are foundational, and in which other normative notions (particularly deontological and consequentialist) are grounded (2018:1).

Virtue ethics is one of the respects in which Dewey's philosophy has been said to resemble that of Aristotle. In a review of scholarly commentaries on the respects in which their philosophies converge and diverge, Nicholas Pagan notes that 'Aristotle foreshadows pragmatism, for example, in preferring virtue-based to rule-based ethics, in contending that the moral status of a person's actions and the nature of the person's selfhood are interdependent, and in stressing the key role of habits in character formation' (2008: 239). For Pagan, what most distinguishes Dewey from Aristotle is the former's emphasis on the plasticity of the active moral self and his conception of it as 'dependent on others for its very existence' (ibid: 248). These are indeed important distinctions between the two, but there are others. For Aristotle, the virtues are traits or dispositions of character necessary to the choice of virtuous conduct, but for Dewey virtues cannot be defined by permanent and uniform features of conduct (2.8.3). And as Gregory Pappas points out in his book on Dewey's moral philosophy, while Aristotle and Dewey are alike in believing that deliberation and judgement should be guided by context rather than rules, for Dewey relativity to context also applies to any general rule or principle, whereas Aristotle assumes the existence of fixed moral truths (Pappas 2008: 48).

Not surprisingly, given the extent to which his worldview presupposes and had been heavily influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution, Dewey has little time for Aristotle's teleological conception of human nature. Referring to the idea that human conduct should be regulated by the fixed moral aim

that is the distinctive *telos* of human beings, Dewey says that it is a view 'foisted by Aristotle upon western culture and endured for two thousand years' (1922:224). He also reminds readers that for Aristotle, 'slavery was rooted in aboriginal human nature' (ibid: 109).

For Dewey the moral obligations of role occupants depend on the state of society and are subject to change as its state changes. Selves are seen as biosocial artefacts of a way of life, and the moral truths they recognize are also its artefacts. As noted in Chapter 2, (2.9.0,2.10.0), the consequences are evident in the different ways of life and value systems found within and between societies and the change in these ways and systems over time. Pappas notes that the 'noble intention of virtue ethics is to recover the personal character of morality from modern rule theorists', but that this is an end which Dewey achieved without falling into the excesses and reductionism of contemporary virtue ethics (2008: 138,142).

Dewey would not deny that moral agents are or can be concerned with character considerations (virtues, ideals, projects) and also with act considerations (rules, principles, consequences), but there is no reason to take either one as defining the paradigm of moral engagement. In fact, both are instances of a more general concern of a moral agent: to search [for] and to choose what each particular and unique morally problematic situation requires (2008: 144).

6.2.0 Alasdair MacIntyre's virtue ethics

Aristotelian convictions are endorsed by an influential contemporary philosopher, Alasdair MacIntyre, who has strongly encouraged the development of virtue ethics. In a Prologue to the third edition of *After Virtue* (2007), he explains that when he wrote that book he was already an Aristotelian but had subsequently become a Thomist, in part because he had become convinced that Aquinas was in some respects a better Aristotelian than Aristotle⁴⁸.

⁴⁸ In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre refers to American Pragmatism very briefly in his critique of emotivism. Pragmatism, he says, had prepared minds for the subsequent adoption of emotivism in America, just as intuitionism had prepared them for its adoption in Britain (2007/1981: 65-66).

MacIntyre's views on virtue ethics are contrasted with relevant views of Dewey's in a book by Stephan Carden (2006). The book starts with the sentence 'Alasdair MacIntyre is a central figure in the resurgence of interest in the virtues as fundamental concepts in moral philosophy; many of his ideas, however, were anticipated by John Dewey, who also regarded the virtues and the development of character as primary moral ideas' (2006: 1). But as Carden points out, while many of MacIntyre's specific ideas were anticipated by Dewey, the differences between their philosophies are substantial. In contrast to Dewey's belief that moral progress necessarily requires a readiness to engage with the world as it is and to adapt moral norms to changing social conditions and needs, MacIntyre is committed to the concept of a distinctive *telos* for human beings. He maintains that moral progress lies in adopting a unified worldview within an established tradition of virtuous conduct and creating the social conditions necessary for its maintenance. He differs strikingly from Dewey in his views on the reforms that would be needed in the structure of modern societies to offset the effects of modernity on the exercise of moral agency. On the other hand, MacIntyre's view on the ills of modern society are broadly complementary to Dewey's.

6.2.1 MacIntyre on the compartmentalization of roles

MacIntyre attributes the malign effect of social structure on the capacity for virtuous conduct in modern societies to the exceptional degree to which social roles are compartmentalized in these societies. He sees the effects as follows:

So individuals as they move between spheres of activity, exchanging one role for another and one set of standards for their practical reasoning for another, become to some important extent dissolved into their various roles, playing one part in the life of the family, quite another in the workplace, yet a third as a member of a sports club and a fourth as a military reservist. Within each sphere such individuals conform to the requirements imposed on their role within that sphere and there is no milieu available to them in which they are able, together with others, to step back from those roles and those requirements and to scrutinize themselves and the structure of their society from some external standpoint with any practical effect (1999: 322).

To illustrate the moral significance of his argument, MacIntyre uses the example of the head of a commercial organization who, to retain customers and boost share prices, exaggerates the progress made by the organization's scientists on a research project. The scientists are not permitted to contradict the head's optimistic statements. But when the same scientists report their results in professional journals, nothing is allowed to justify deception. Thus, the norms of deception that govern behaviour in one role differ from those that govern it another. Compartmentalization is reinforced by norms that insulate spheres of activity from one another, norms that would, for example, discourage a company executive from suggesting at a board meeting a measure that would be in the public interest but not in the company's. This reinforcement goes unchallenged because, according to MacIntyre, there are no milieus in the home or workplace or anywhere else where people might critically reflect together on their experience and how it might be changed by a transformation in their way of life.

Those who are at home in the compartmentalized society will have acquired the ability to adapt to the norms of its different compartments and its fragmented ethics. Those who have not acquired the necessary adaptability will fare badly.

Someone who, for example, insists upon observing the same ethics of truthful disclosure in every sphere of life, holding her or himself and others accountable for their deceptions in the same way, whether it is a matter of conversation within the family, the pledges of politicians, the presentation of products by advertisers in the marketplace, or the information given to patients by physicians, will acquire a reputation not for integrity, but for social ineptitude (1998: 236).

MacIntyre's view on the effect of compartmentalization in encouraging agents to differ between social roles in the moral obligations they observe is complementary to Dewey's views of the self as a stable configuration of inconsistent constituent selves (2.4.0) and the effect of social structure in undermining the appeal of personal moral convictions (2.8.0). Like Dewey, MacIntyre attributes the malfunctioning of modern societies in these respects to the social imperatives of capitalism, and like Dewey he believes the remedy lies in a reorganization of social

structure⁴⁹. But the two differ strikingly in their views on the form that reorganization should take.

6.2.2 Characteristics needed by moral agents

MacIntyre claims that only individuals living in a particular kind of social setting could acquire the characteristics needed to be a reflective moral agent. This setting would be one where there are milieus in which practices dictated by established standards can be subjected to reflective critical questioning. It would be one where this critical questioning is based on 'some more or less shared conception of what it is to be a good human being that focuses upon those qualities which individuals possess or fail to possess *qua* individuals, independently of their roles, and which are exemplified in part by their capacity or their lack of capacity to stand back from and reconsider their engagement with the established role-structures' (1999: 317). Those qualities are the virtues, central to which are two without which the others cannot be possessed: the virtues of integrity and constancy. To possess integrity is to exhibit the same moral character in different contexts. To possess constancy is to 'pursue the same goods through extended periods of time, not allowing the requirements of changing social contexts to distract them from their commitments or to redirect them' (1999: 318).

individuals with these two virtues will learn not only how to occupy some determinate set of roles within their social order, but also how to think of their goods and of their character independently of the requirements of those roles. They will, that is to say, be inhabitants of not just one, but of two moral systems, that of the established moral

⁴⁹ Probably both would agree that Capitalism intensifies rather than creates the problems they identify. According to the philosopher David Wong, the problems of compartmentalization are also recognized, and condemned, by Confucianism. He explains that the most common exemplar of ethical excellence discussed in Confucian texts is the *junzi* (noble person), who will ignore conventional expectations if they require unethical conduct and does what is right whatever the pressures to do otherwise. These 'exemplars of ethical excellence are precisely distinguished from "village worthies" (Analects 17:13) who are the "thieves" of virtue by conforming to conventional expectations of ethical conduct' (Wong 2014: 342)

order with its assignment of roles and responsibilities and that developed within those milieus in which that assignment has been put to question. . . Those whose social and cultural order is such that the two systems present requirements that it is difficult to render compatible will be forced either to think their way through a series of more or less painful choices or to find some strategy for evading these choices (1999: 318).

Dewey would share MacIntyre's enthusiasm for the virtue of integrity, while noting a problem in its observance when moral dilemmas cannot be resolved except by declining the obligations of one role in favour of those of another. He would also welcome the stress on providing for the continued questioning of the established moral order. But he would have strong reservations about MacIntyre's view that it is virtuous to not allow changing contexts to distract agents from the pursuit of the same goods. As noted earlier, for Dewey, to pursue commitments without regard to changing contexts would be to ignore the effects of these changes on the goods that ought to be pursued.

6.2.3 Characteristics of MacIntyre's model society

While both MacIntyre and Dewey believe that the motivation and capacity of individuals to act morally varies with the kind of society to which they belong, there is little in common between the two in their views on the type of society to be striven for. For Dewey, it is one that sets high value on democracy and evidence-led procedures in policy-making, and on educating children in ways that foster habits of acting that contribute to the general good. He believes the outcome would be a society better able to respond sensitively and in the interests of all its members to ever-changing internal and external circumstances.

Like Dewey, MacIntyre despairs of the ethics of modern societies: 'Politically the societies of advanced Western modernity are oligarchies disguised as liberal democracies' (1998: 237). He complains that they exclude most of their citizens from membership of the elites that determine the range of choices available to voters. More importantly, conventional politics excludes discussion about the value of different ways of life, even though the effect of government decisions is

to ‘promote some – the way of life of the fashionably hedonistic consumer, for example – and undermine others’ (ibid: 238).

MacIntyre’s model society is one with Aristotelian characteristics⁵⁰, a community in which members recognize the necessity of observing the standards that Aquinas identified as the precepts of natural law, and thereby demonstrate their understanding that relationships must be governed by the norms of truthfulness, responsiveness to the needs of others, and the keeping of promises. But, says MacIntyre:

strict observance of these norms of a kind that involves a practical understanding of their point and purpose, rather than a mere fetishism of rules, requires the cultivation and exercise of the virtues of prudence, temperateness, courage, and justice. So the life of such a society will embody to some significant extent a shared practical understanding of the relationships between goods, rules and virtues . . . that will be embodied in and presupposed by the way in which immediate practical questions receive answers in actions (1998: 247).

Such communities, he says, must be small-scale and as self-sufficient as possible to protect themselves from the ‘destructive incursions of the state and the wider market economy’ (ibid: 248). In these small communities the individual is not fragmented into separate roles. In each sphere of activity (such as workplace, family, and parish), similar virtues are required of the individual and the same vices are likely to be revealed. People will encounter the same other people in different spheres and – a point particularly important for holders of political office – cannot avoid being judged on their actual character rather than a role-specific persona honed by techniques of

⁵⁰ MacIntyre is sometimes described as a Communitarian, but this is a description he brusquely rejects – ‘something I have never been’ – in a prologue to the third edition of *After Virtue*. In the same prologue (2007: iv), he says he rejects the values of the liberalism supported by the values of community as understood by the sort of contemporary Communitarianism advocated by Amitai Etzioni. MacIntyre’s particular objections to Communitarianism are described elsewhere (MacIntyre 1998: 243-246).

self-presentation. 'Where adaptability is now the key virtue of the dominant and conventional forms of politics, integrity is the key virtue of the politics of local community' (ibid: 249).

Although he would find much to agree with in MacIntyre's analysis of the effects of social structure on moral agency in modern societies, Dewey would not endorse the view that a practical solution to the ills of modernity lies in the creation of small communities that depend as little as possible on the state. For him, this would have been an example of what he suggested, in an early publication, could be described as *the* philosophical fallacy: 'It consists in the supposition that whatever is found true under certain conditions may forthwith be asserted universally or without limits and conditions' (1922: 175). He would point out that MacIntyre's idea that the criterion by which social arrangements should be assessed – 'the best account we have of the good' (1999: 320) – could never have a static content. That is because it refers to attitudes and institutions that are subject to unintended change resulting from alterations in the social and material environment, and, in an intelligently directed society, to intentional change informed by continuing enquiry into ways of improving the wellbeing of its members⁵¹. These changes would of course be experienced as changes in the conduct expected of and by role occupants in the numerous role relationships in which they are engaged.

6.3.0 Swanton's virtue ethics theory applied to role ethics

Another version of virtue ethics that has been used as the foundation for a treatment of role ethics was developed by Christine Swanton (2003) and applied by her to the ethics of professional roles. She believes that her

⁵¹ Dewey would have endorsed the cogent critique of MacIntyre's political ideas by Keith Breen (2005), who argues that a more feasible way of addressing the problems created by compartmentalization would be to attempt to modify particular ways in which modern societies function. As an example, he suggests that it might be possible to modify modes of production in a way which took account of the fact that work is an intimate part of workers' lives and identities, and not simply a means of consumption.

version can accommodate what she correctly describes as a central issue for the ethics of professional roles in a way that is beyond the reach of 'orthodox virtue ethics' (2016: 689).

The central issue that Swanton has in mind is posed by the contentious claim that in their professional roles, lawyers and other professionals may be permitted or even required to act in ways that conflict with 'ordinary morality'⁵². Ordinary morality' is not defined in the article but the way the term is used suggests that it refers to a community's common understanding of the moral considerations that ought to apply to the conduct of people in their roles as members of the community, whatever other roles they may occupy. The contention is over the claim that conduct incompatible with those considerations is excused if it is required for the effective enactment of a professional role.

Opponents of the claim argue that professionals have no such licence, except in rare cases of 'tragic dilemmas' (Swanton 2016: 687). Swanton's view is that the 'obligations of lawyers [and occupants of other professional roles] acting in a professional capacity may quite characteristically conflict with the demands of "ordinary morality"', but that holders of professional roles are not permitted let alone required to act immorally. There is only an apparent contradiction here, according to the author, one that is a consequence of the mistaken identification of 'morality *tout court*' with 'ordinary or broad based morality'. In her view, that 'identification fails to take roles seriously as part of morality' (ibid: 689), whereas:

What might be called virtue *proper* is not basic virtue as such: that is, being good *qua* human being in a sense where roles and so forth are abstracted away. Virtue 'proper' such as generosity proper, is generosity in which all fields of the practical relevant to excellence in an agent's generosity (such as the narrative particularities of her life, her cultural location, and her roles), are integrated in an excellent or good enough way (2016: 702, emphases in original).

⁵² For the purposes of this chapter, the description 'lawyer' refers to advocates in an adversarial legal system.

From the standpoint of Dewey's analysis of moral agency, Swanton's distinction between 'basic virtue' and 'virtue proper' is not recognized. From that standpoint, all intelligible interactions are between occupants of roles, and role morality is not *part* of ordinary morality, it *is* ordinary morality. Occupants of certain professional roles are permitted to do things that others may not do, but on the socially shared understanding that doing them requires special expertise and that they serve ends that are socially recognized as morally desirable. On this view, the purpose of the role-specific obligations of occupants of professional roles is to help ensure that their actions do serve such ends.

6.3.1 Virtue ethics and the professional role

Swanton's conception of the professional role is based on the 'Standard Conception' of the lawyer's role as defined by another philosopher, Tim Dare (2009). For her, that conception requires that a role has the following characteristics: it is derived from the distinctive function of the institution in which it is embedded, it is robustly (that is, strictly) differentiated from other roles by that function, and the differentiation of the role 'produces role obligations that quite characteristically conflict with "ordinary morality"' (2016: 688).

Evidently much turns on how the distinctive function of the institution is specified, and common candidates are rejected by the author. For example, for her the distinctive function of law is to protect a legally differentiated aspect of justice; it is not to make citizens virtuous or to maintain justice in general or any other distinctive aspect of the good. Similarly, the distinctive function of business is to produce 'goods and services in such a way as to increase owner value' rather than to contribute to 'the broad social good, or even some distinctive aspect of that good broadly conceived, such as prosperity or making life easier in general' (ibid:688- 689).

The Standard Conception of a role has little in common with the sociological concept of role. Rather, the former is being used more as a rule: a rule that specifies the conduct required to implement the distinctive function of an

institution. The effect of the rule is to make a distinction between the Standard Conception of a role and the way the role is understood by many of its occupants and occupants of counterpart roles. For example, whatever the distinctive function of law, the role of a judge is likely to be seen by many judges and occupants of counterpart roles as that of dispensing justice in general. Similarly, many business executives and those who buy the products of their companies see the function of their roles as that of contributing to some aspect of the social good, such as that of providing clean water or cheap food rather than that of increasing owner value. For Swanton, the advantage of the Standard Conception is that it allows concepts of virtue and rightness that can take competent performance into account in a way that other conceptions cannot.

According to Swanton, the reason why supporters and opponents of what she describes as 'simple orthodox virtue ethics' believe it is incompatible with the Standard Conception is the view that that the virtuous *phronimoi* – the possessors of practical wisdom – can discern whether actions conform to a standard of rightness yielded by their virtue ethical ideal, and this standard does not permit acts contrary to ordinary standards of virtue. Swanton rejects the criterion of rightness specified here as inadequate because it makes no provision for competence. She insists that practical wisdom alone is not enough to ensure rightness of action in the performance of a role. Wisdom in a role is 'necessary for *ethical* expertise in relation to that role', but so is technical expertise (ibid: 691)⁵³. In short, the claim seems to be that only if the enactment of a professional role is directed towards achieving the distinctive function of the institution in which it is embedded can a proper standard of rightness be applied – a standard that takes account of both ethical expertise and technical expertise.

⁵³ Swanton concedes that those without enough expertise may seek advice, but dismisses this as 'second best'. In fact, given the high degree of specialization now characteristic of professionals, for them to seek advice from others is commonplace and often essential. In any case, moral rightness depends not primarily on the extent of technical competence, but on the disposition governing its deployment.

6.3.2 A proposed target-centred virtue ethics

Swanton's proposal is to replace the 'qualified-agent' criterion of right action with a target-centred criterion of rightness embedded in what she describes as a 'target-centred' virtue ethics, based on roles. She adds in a footnote: "'Right" in my sense does not mean praiseworthy: a right action need not be praiseworthy and praiseworthy actions can be wrong' (ibid: 693, fn. 13). This view of right action assigns rightness to the agent's attainment of the contextually determined targets of role-differentiated virtue (ibid: 693). 'For example, the target of a caring doctor in assessing a patient is not to make her feel good but to give an accurate diagnosis, but in a respectful way'. The target of a caring friend, on the other hand, is to make the patient feel good in an affectionate way (ibid: 694). Meeting the targets of role-differentiated virtue may be incompatible with such basic virtues as compassion or justice, yet remain compatible with morality. That is because, according to Swanton, the implementation of the distinctive institutional function is subject to the constraint of role-differentiated virtue, and role-differentiated virtue is subject to the constraint of basic virtue. This seems to mean, for example, that provided she points out serious defects in a house to a prospective purchaser and does not exaggerate its good features, an estate agent fulfils her moral obligations if she uses her role-differentiated virtue of skilful salesmanship to persuade the client to overlook the defects and thereby attain the agent's contextually determined target of selling the house.

6.3.3 Basic virtues and role-differentiated virtues

According to Swanton, a basic virtue (such as courage or generosity) is one derived from a conception of goodness as a human being, but the target or aim of a basic virtue is vague and underspecified in relation to roles. For example, the basic virtue of honesty does not specify that 'you should state the bad features of your product and not overhype or exaggerate its good features' (ibid: 696). On the other hand, she says, a role-differentiated virtue is one necessary to the effective performance of the role. Such virtues are exemplified for the author by the judicial virtues specified in an article by Lawrence Solum (2003): 'judicial wisdom, judicial courage, judicial temperance, judicial good temper' (ibid: 696). Swanton insists

that role-differentiated virtues need to retain a central place for virtue as a benign quality of character. 'Though we want our lawyer to zealously advocate on our behalf we do not want lawyers in general to be ruthlessly callous in their pursuit of their client's interests' (ibid:696). Thus, apparently, a zealous advocate who treats witnesses considerately but seeks a verdict that will please the client but be unjust is still regarded as complying with the norms of ordinary morality. Similarly, a prosecutor who persuades a jury to convict someone of a crime she did not commit complies with the norms of ordinary morality as long as she is careful to present all the evidence fairly.

Implicit in Swanton's view is the assumption that it is realistic to expect lawyers and others to be capable of the feat of strictly observing relevant basic virtues as they attempt to achieve objectives that are incompatible with some of these virtues. Arguably, the outcome she seeks would have a higher probability of being achieved if it was the objectives of professional endeavours that were required to be virtuous. Recall that for Dewey the virtues are those he describes as praiseworthy dispositions that are realized consistently and impartially in pursuit of morally commendable objectives (2.7.3). For lawyers, one such virtue would be an impartial disposition to act justly both to clients and those they oppose. Sometimes doing so might require zealous advocacy and conduct that in other circumstances would be unkind. Here there is no incompatibility between acting effectively in the role and observing basic virtues, and the distinction between basic virtues and role-differentiated virtues has no place. Of course, in practice professionals like everyone else are not consistently virtuous, and no doubt the importance of success frequently takes precedence over considerations of virtue.

In sum, from the standpoint of Dewey's analysis, Swanton is correct in arguing that the manner in which lawyers and others discharge their obligations in their professional roles should be subject to the constraints of ordinary morality. But for him, this would also apply to the objectives of their performances. He would have found incomprehensible a conception of a professional's role (the Standard

Conception) which allows conduct that is contrary to . . . 'conceptions of "basic virtue", such as compassion or justice' (ibid 693).

The subject of the next section is another analysis of the relationship between the obligations of professional roles and those of ordinary morality, but here the purpose is to argue that there are circumstances in which occupants of these roles are justified in acting immorally.

6.4.0 A Rawls-based privileging of professional roles

Tim Dare (2016) believes that lawyers and others are sometimes permitted to do things in their professional roles that are not allowed by ordinary morality, and he proposes a defence of the practice. Like Swanton he does not define the term 'ordinary morality'. His use of it suggests that he too is using it to refer to a community's common understanding of the moral considerations that apply to the conduct of people as members of the community, whatever other roles they might occupy.

Dare starts his argument by effectively identifying flaws in attempts to use classical utilitarianism or rule utilitarianism to resolve the issue. He bases his own alternative on the idea that 'the justifications for institutions or practices may differ from the justifications for conduct within those institutions or practices' (ibid:714), an idea proposed by John Rawls (1955). Applying Rawls's idea to the obligations of occupants of institutional roles, such as that of lawyer, Dare proposes that a particular action of the occupant of an institutional role is justified if the following conditions obtain: (i) the institution is one of demonstrable goodness; (ii) the achievement of its goodness requires the existence of the role concerned; (iii) the obligation that is believed to justify the action is essential to that role; and (iv) the particular action is required by that role obligation. 'The roles and role-obligations established by justified institutions can function as independent sources of moral obligation for those acting within them' (ibid: 715). Further, the design of the institution remains subject to ordinary morality, which means that if the requirements of the role allow actions that are deemed

unacceptable to ordinary morality, on which the requirements were based, it is always possible for external critics to press for a change in them.

One of the examples used in support of the argument is that of a lawyer who pleads a statute of limitations on behalf of a client who wants to avoid payment of a just debt. The lawyer cannot be criticized for this action, according to Dare, if it is allowed under the rules of practice, even though it may be blameworthy by the standards of ordinary morality. In other words, the practice rules relieve the lawyer of any responsibility for breaches of ordinary morality.

Is Dare's argument persuasive? Not from a Deweyan perspective, which would see it as justifying the institution in maintaining immoral practices and its agents in being willing to implement them without protest. The warrant for Dare's argument is unclear, and he undermines it when he refers to the resources of ordinary morality being used to construct institutional roles (ibid: 716), and when he stresses that considerations of ordinary morality may well prompt attempts to reform rules of practice (ibid: 718). In making these points he seems to be acknowledging that the purpose of rules of practice is to ensure that the actions of lawyers and others serve ends that are socially recognized as morally desirable.

Occupants of professional roles embedded in institutions see themselves as agents of them, and that is how they are seen by others. These agents bear responsibility for their actions, whether or not the actions are permitted or required under the institution's practice rules, and whether or not the agents are individually able to change the rules. Relevant here, though it may not seem so at first, is a parable told by Alasdair MacIntyre at the start of his article on the compartmentalization of roles in modern societies (Section 6.2.1 above). The parable is about J, a man responsible for running his country's railway system. With the firm encouragement of his superiors, J had acquired the habit of taking no interest in the freight carried by his trains, a habit that he maintained when the freight comprised munitions and Jews on their way to extermination camps.

When subsequently questioned about this, he said

I did not know. It was not for someone in my position to know. I did my duty. I did not fail in my responsibilities. You cannot charge me with moral failure (MacIntyre 1999: 312).

As MacIntyre says, 'if we condemn J, we are treating him as justifiably responsible, not only for his actions and for his knowledge of them, and not only also for his practical reasoning, but in addition for having failed to question the hitherto unquestioned' (1999: 313).

If J were a lawyer working with rules of a practice that required him to help achieve outcomes that he knew were unjust, he would have no obvious moral justification for failing to press for reform of these rules. In Dare's view, it would indeed be open to the lawyer to press for reform, but not in the role of lawyer. He quotes Rawls:

questions regarding one's actions in this office are settled by reference to the rules which define the practice. If one seeks to question these rules, then one's office undergoes a fundamental change: one then assumes the office of one empowered to change and criticize the rules, or the office of reformer . . . (Rawls 1955: 27).

That view licenses the lawyer, in his role as lawyer, to continue his apparently willing collusion in the preservation of rules that produce unjust outcomes. While there are no doubt lawyers who welcome the support this licence gives them, there is no obvious reason why morally responsible lawyers should find the situation acceptable. And it is in their role as lawyers, the role in which they are obliged to act on flawed rules, that they should protest, and to the extent feasible, decline to act on them. If they simply accept these rules, and especially if they resist changing them, they are as open as J of MacIntyre's parable is to the charge of moral failure.

The article considered in the next section proposes a version of role ethics that is very different from those considered so far in this chapter. In the view of its authors, this version has resources that justify regarding it either as a rival to existing first-order normative theories, or as an important supplement to them.

6.5.0 A role ethics based on relationship-specific duties

Proposing their new version of role ethics, Jeremy Evans and Michael Smith (2018) remark that ‘One of the most commonly held views of morality is that being a good person *simply is* to be a good spouse, a good parent, a good citizen, and so on, where each of these roles determines a specific set of duties towards a specific set of individuals’ (2018: 600). For these authors, this is the commonsense view of morality and expresses the primary thesis of role ethics, which, they maintain, is that the virtues or duties or both of social life are largely determined by social roles. They argue that a role ethics based on this view warrants being ranked with the ‘three major normative traditions: utilitarian, deontological (especially Kantian), and those involving virtue ethics (especially Aristotelian)’ (ibid: 599). In so far as it is based on existing role relationships, the origin of this proposed version of role ethics is the same as that of Dewey’s analysis of moral agency (2.3.0).

6.5.1 Precursor: Relational Regulation theory (RR)

Evans and Smith base their proposal on a theory named Relational Regulation theory (RR), developed by a psychologist Tage Shakti Rai and a psychological anthropologist Alan Page Fiske (2011). That theory is itself based on Fiske’s Relational Models theory (1992). The authors of these theories claim an impressive range of empirical support for them.

According to Fiske’s theory, people in all cultures use the same four basic mental models, sometimes in combination, to coordinate almost all social interactions. The names of the models indicate the kind of interaction they entail: communal sharing, authority ranking, equality matching, and market pricing. The article by Rai and Fiske (2011) extends Fiske’s theory by specifying a distinctive moral motive

for each of the four models, a motive that maintains it. These motives are as follows: the maintenance of unity (communal sharing model), of hierarchy (authority ranking model), of equality (equality matching model) and of proportionality (market pricing model). While the motives are universal, the circumstances in which they are activated and how they are implemented vary between cultures, ideologies, and individuals (ibid: 57) and will depend on locally prevailing norms and obligations. On this view any action, including violence and unequal treatment, 'may be perceived as morally correct depending on the moral motive employed [i.e. which one of the four] and how the relevant social relationship is construed' (ibid: 57). The derivation by Evans and Smith of their conception of role ethics from this theory is summarized next. It will be described as RR+

6.5.2 RR+: the role-ethics version of RR

For Evans and Smith, the four distinct mental models in RR+ are those that apply to the four basic types of role relationship: hierarchical, egalitarian, communal, and transactional. Role occupants have a duty to promote the welfare of their role partners by maintaining the fair distribution or pursuit of goods in a way specific to the different structures of the relationship types. 'The happy and often efficient result is that individuals raised within a moral community typically converge on a coordination schema that promotes the welfare of both parties' (2018:605).

The description by Evans and Smith of each of the role-relationship models and its distinctive duty in RR+ may be summarized as follows. The *hierarchical* model describes such role relationships as those between parent and child, and teacher and student. These relationships are regulated by a duty to preserve the hierarchy by distributing or pursuing goods according to the relative status of the participants. Deference from subordinates and stewardship from superiors is required to maintain the structure of the hierarchy. The *egalitarian* model refers to such relationships as those found between potential reciprocators, such as friends, colleagues, and voters, who meet as social equals in a sphere of activity. In these relationships the duty is the maintenance of equality in reciprocal

relationships by ensuring that goods are distributed and pursued equally over time. The *communal* model describes such role relationships as those between team members and between lovers. For this model the relevant duty is that of maintaining unity. Ownership over goods is communal. Harm or benefit to one is seen as harm and benefit to all. The fourth type of role-relationship model describes those of the *transactional* kind, for example those between buyer and seller, lawyer and client, and employer and employee. In these relationships, the relevant duty is the maintenance of proportionality, to ensure that participants receive transacted goods (wages, fees, and so forth) proportional to their merit.

The authors propose that RR+ as a role-ethical theory of right action requires agents to act on the duty (the maintenance of unity, equality, hierarchy, or proportionality) specific to each of the various types of role relationship in which they engage. In doing so, they would promote the welfare of occupants of complementary roles in their relationships, the manner of doing so depending on the type of the relationship. Any departure from fairness in the regulation of the relationship would be contrary to its distinctive duty.

Evans and Smith believe that their version of role ethics, RR+, 'can make a claim to being a first-order normative theory itself, one that posits four fundamental welfare-promoting role duties that apply to four relationship types' (ibid: 613). Is this a tenable claim?

6.5.3 The claim of RR+ to be a first-order theory

There is an element of Rai and Fiske's RR that Evans and Smith have either ignored or abandoned in transforming it to RR+. This is that communities and individuals vary in the situations and manner in which the four moral motives or duties are activated. For example, RR theory recognizes the moral relationship of communal sharing as one that applies to a group – such as a family, an ethnicity, a military unit – in which the rights and obligations of group members are common to all of them. The moral motive in a communal-sharing relationship is the preservation of unity, and 'is directed toward caring for and supporting the integrity of in-groups

through a sense of collective responsibility and common fate' (2011: 61).

According to Rai and Fiske, this is the motive that explains such sacrifices as those that people are willing to make for the sake of family or nation. But, as the authors explain, it is also the motive that explains why the Hutu massacred hundreds of thousands of their common enemy, the Tutsi, in the Rwandan genocide of 1994, and why the killing of a rape victim by her family may be seen by her family and others as a justified honour killing. In short, the preservation of unity in a communal relationship serves whatever objectives its participants have, and whatever concept of fairness is condoned by prevailing moral standards.

In their description of RR+, Evans and Smith seem to assume that as long as its distinctive duty is properly observed, each type of relationships always serves benign ends. They maintain for example that the essentially exploitative or oppressive role of slave-owner would be proscribed because it does not accord with any of the four permissible ways of structuring a relationship. The duty prescribed by hierarchy is not an exception. Even 'if there were some relevant asymmetries between subsets of the population, the duty of hierarchy is fundamentally a stewardship role and can never countenance exploitation or oppression' (2018: 610). This shows, according to Evans and Smith, that although there are individuals who perform such roles as those of slave-owner and assassin, RR+ can identify why these roles are morally defective.

Rai and Fiske take a very different view of the duty prescribed by hierarchy in the case of slavery, a view that clearly illustrates the difference between RR and RR+. They argue that while slavery may have served selfish interests, it 'could not have taken hold in and been maintained in any of the cultures in which it has been legitimized without Hierarchy motives to morally legitimize it' (2011: 69). For these theorists, it is simply being blind to the truth to ignore the fact that what are widely and properly regarded as evil practices in some cultures are often facilitated by the same moral motives that are widely regarded as having good outcomes elsewhere. Dewey emphatically endorses this view of the cultural relativity of moral codes (2.8.0).

The conduct that is regarded as exemplifying relationship-specific duties also varies within a society. Some families that epitomize the parental stewardship and deference of children that mark the hierarchical type of relationship may be seen by others as perpetuating the evils of patriarchy. A community of paedophiles may have the same interest in preserving the unity and integrity of its communal relationship as a community of monks. In some communities, what counts as fairness in the maintenance of unity in a communal relationship may condone or even encourage the honour killing of daughters.

Clearly, if moral distinctions are to be made between different uses of the same type of relationship, the source of the distinctions cannot be merely fairness in the observance of the duties that maintain the relationships. What is missing are criteria for assessing whether the objectives and conduct of participants in the relationships are morally commendable. For example, the honour killing of daughters by members of her family would not be considered commendable if the practices of family members were subject to Dewey's criteria of moral rectitude. These would make the following demands on family members: that their practices should contribute to the common good, rather than to a good reserved for the beneficiaries of patriarchy; that they should at least not cause harm to any other family member; that the obligation to respect the right to life that family members expect others to observe should also be observed by family members themselves; and that dispositions which show a concern for the welfare of one another that is impartial are evident in the performance of their roles as family members.

To secure the missing criteria, RR+ would need to be linked to another normative theory, and in fact Evans and Smith explicitly acknowledge this possibility and consider the advantages of RR+ as a 'second-order normative theory'.

6.5.4 The claim of RR+ to be a second-order theory

The authors propose that one possible strategy for their version of role ethics would be for it to be treated as 'a second-order normative theory that follows from a more traditional form of consequentialism, such as welfare utilitarianism'

(2018:612). They also suggest that their theory might be seen as a second-order entailment of virtue ethics, or as a complement to utilitarianism or virtue ethics that would extend its reach to 'the class of duties we have as social creatures embedded in morally relevant relationships and communities' (ibid:613). An obvious problem here is that RR+ would then be saddled with the legacies of the first-order theories that its originators had wished to avoid. As an example of these legacies, they mention the injunction against according the interests of one's own children a higher value than the interests of others' offspring. Evans and Smith concede that, if their relationship models became subordinate to a first-order theory, conflicts could arise between the duties distinctive of the preferred relationship model and the prescriptions of the first-order theory. For example, welfare utilitarianism might suggest that the welfare of society would be better served if organizations abandoned their long established hierarchical and transactional models of the relationship between employers and employees in favour of one that was more communal.

When matters of social policy are involved, prevailing values determine the model that will be adopted and the ends that it will serve. These values will also determine the practicality of any alternative model that might be proposed. On the subject of social policy, Rai and Fiske conclude: 'Efforts to change practices we find abhorrent, or to foster practices we deem good, will require us to understand which social-relational models are most conducive to human welfare under specific socioecological circumstances' (2011: 69). For example, the communal-relationship model may encourage the so-called honour killing of a rape victim by her family in one setting, and the family's devotion to her care and support in another. Which it will be depends not on the model but on the prevailing values of the community and the social conditions that sustain them.

These considerations suggest that the most fruitful use of the taxonomy of relationship models would be, not as an adjunct of traditional moral theories, but as an extension of Dewey's analysis of moral agency. His analysis offers the criteria of morally praiseworthy objectives and conduct

that could be used to distinguish between benign and malign versions of the different models. The models would extend the resources of his analysis by distinguishing the features of the different types of role relationship. The problems that would ensue from treating their taxonomy as a complement to traditional normative theories would be avoided.

6.6.0. Conclusions

MacIntyre's version of virtue ethics preserves its Aristotelian conviction that human beings have a fixed moral aim that is their distinctive *telos*. In fact, the historical and geographical variability of values and value systems amply supports Dewey's view that a distinctive *telos* is not to be expected of real-world selves. These are selves shaped by a particular way of life and generalized other to choose and perform their social roles in a way that is intelligible to fellow selves, however alien it may seem to selves elsewhere. It is a way of life that changes as its priorities or circumstances change, in intended and unintended ways. It is possible to imagine, but unrealistic to treat as a viable society, one in which participants choose and perform their roles in a way that fits MacIntyre's virtue-ethical conception of the good life.

While he differs from him in his inferences for policy, MacIntyre echoes and complements Dewey's views on the ills of modern society. Both stress that integrity of character requires consistency in the realization of virtuous disposition in different roles, and both lament its widespread absence. And both note that actual choice of roles and of how to perform in them is heavily constrained for many by a social structure that maintains an uneven distribution of power between different sections of society and a dominant ideology concerned primarily with economic success.

Swanton believes that her version of role ethics resolves one of its long-standing problems: that of an apparent incompatibility between the moral obligations of lawyers (and others) when acting in their professional roles and their obligations as citizens. She argues that virtue in a professional role is manifested by actions

aimed at targets within the range of the distinctive function of an institution, in a manner differentiated by virtues specific to the role and constrained by basic virtue. Thus, for a lawyer, it would be virtuous to apply the role-differentiated virtue of zealous advocacy to achieve a verdict favorable to the client, as long as the lawyer avoids being callous when examining witnesses. From a Deweyan standpoint, the argument is unacceptable because it appears to license the virtuous professional to pursue objectives that are not morally praiseworthy, such as an unjust verdict, as long as the manner in which they are pursued conforms to the constraints of ordinary morality.

Dare does not share Swanton's view. He believes that lawyers and others are sometimes permitted to do things in their professional roles that are not allowed by ordinary morality. He maintains (following Rawls) that provided the role and the observance of its rules are essential to the achievement of an institution's moral goodness, its practitioners' actions are justified if they are required or allowed by those rules, even if the actions are morally questionable from the standpoint of ordinary morality. From a Deweyan perspective, Dare's argument offers no justification for the claim that an institution is entitled to maintain immoral practices, and makes an untenable distinction between the obligations of an institution and those of its agents. The least that should be expected of morally responsible lawyers and others similarly placed is that they should protest at being required to act on flawed rules, and when feasible, decline to do so.

Evans and Smith present a radically different version of role ethics. In their view, morally correct conduct would consist in acting fairly on the duty (the maintenance of unity, equality, hierarchy, or proportionality) specific to each of the four types of role relationship that occur. For example, in role relationships of the transactional type, such as between buyer and seller, role occupants have a duty to transact goods (value or payment) proportional to their merit. As a putative first-order normative theory, the main problem with the proposal is that the formal characteristics of the relationship models would be the same whether used in the service of a benign or a malign objective. As a second-order theory, it

would have to contend with the problems of existing first-order theories that it was intended to avoid, and there would be the potential for conflict between its prescriptions and those of the dominant first-order theory. These problems would be avoided if the relationship models were treated as an extension of the resources of Dewey's model of moral agency,

If it has succeeded in its aims, this chapter has demonstrated the strengths of Dewey's analysis when used as a standpoint from which to analyse other ways of studying the ethical features of roles. His analysis illuminates the shortcomings of methods grounded in traditional normative theories and of methods that either impose unwarranted constraints on what is morally praiseworthy or assume that the objectives of role occupants are not subject to moral considerations.

Chapter 7

Overview and conclusion

The central aim of this thesis was to show that John Dewey's analysis of moral agency could be augmented and made more widely applicable when recast as one that understood moral agency as the enactment of self in the choice and performance of social roles. The justification for this view was the belief that the recasting could illuminate fruitful and previously unrecognized connections between Dewey's analysis and contributions by others to the analysis of role morality and to factors that affect it. This short chapter presents an overview of the thesis that focuses on the connections that have been identified and their significance.

7.1.0 Basic assumptions of Dewey's analysis of moral agency

Dewey grounds his analysis in the observation that moral obligations arise naturally in, and are constitutive of, the variety of role relationships – some close, others remote – in which members of a society engage. He sees the regulation of the mutual reciprocal expectations that people have of one another's conduct in these relationships as the purpose of morality, its *raison d'être* (2.3.0; Introduction (ii)). Society's interests are well served, he believes, when that regulation consists, not in the unthinking observance of customary moral standards, but in the application of standards that are justified by rational reflection.

Dewey's analysis presupposes core elements of the sociology developed by George Herbert Mead (Chapter 1). This explains socialization as a process by which, as a product of interaction in role relationships, an organism acquires a model of the culture to which it is exposed – a 'generalized other'. The organism thereby becomes endowed with a consciousness of its own unique selfhood, and an understanding of its own and others' conduct as the choice and performance of social roles. In this way, the internalization of the generalized other, which embodies the community's system of normative regulation, equips individuals to

function as exponents of the culture of their communities, enabling them to act in situationally appropriate ways in their various social roles and when responding to others. As choosers of roles and the ways they are performed, selves perform their agentic function of deciding whether their choices will maintain or modify the construal of the selfhood they have acquired. Mead describes the object of this construal as the self's 'Me', and the arbiter of the self's choices as the self's 'I' (1.3.2).

Some decades later, British philosophers noted important implications of these views (3.1.0). Dorothy Emmet observed that productive social action depends on the existence of mutual expectations between participants in role relationships and on these expectations not being too often disappointed. In other words, social life would be impossible without the predictability that these mutual expectations make possible. Bernard Mayo explained that for participants in a role relationship, the comprehension of what they and others are doing depends on their knowledge of what roles are being enacted, and the conduct expected of occupants of those roles. This would be so whether the role was a familiar one or as fleeting as that between someone helping a fellow passenger on a bus (3.1.2). Mayo also pointed out the necessity of distinguishing between the socially recognized obligations of a role and the individual's own interpretation of their import, an interpretation which may sometimes prompt rejection of the obligations. More recently, an account of the developmental process by which the self achieves the detachment and reflective intersubjectivity required to exercise its agency reflectively – an account based on Mead's sociology of self-formation, – has been proposed by the social psychologists Jack Martin and Alex Gillespie (3.2.0-3.2.2).

7.2.0 Dewey's concept of the self

Dewey describes character or self as the combination of the agent's stable dispositions to respond to similar stimuli in a similar way (2.4.0). The agent's choice and performance of social roles is governed by whether the choice seems likely to maintain or modify her preferred construal of her character.

Dewey notes that the agent's dispositions may be stable without being consistent with one another. He describes the agent's self at any point as a combination of constituent selves that commonly are not consistent with one another in their dispositions but that form a consistent configuration (2.4.0). The recasting of Dewey as a role-focused theorist points to ways in which his concept of the self can be extended with contributions from the theories of his fellow pragmatists. In William James's version of the multi-versioned self, it is seen as a combination of role-specific or group-specific selves, some of which vary markedly in the self that is enacted in them (1.3.1). For George Herbert Mead, such differences occur because the self is motivated to choose and perform its roles in ways that maintain consonance between its preferred construal of its own self (or the one to which it aspires), and the perception of how the realization of that self is construed by others, the capacity, as Mead puts it, to take their roles (1.2.2).

For Mead and Dewey, the self is seen as a member of an interdependent community of selves whose potential for effective agency is dependent on successful interaction in role relationships. Ian Burkitt has recently explained why the same concept is endorsed by relational sociology (3.3.3). As Hans Joas has shown, it is a concept that has implications for the assumptions of the rational actor model of action, which includes the assumption that agents act autonomously in relation to their fellow agents and the environment (3.3.1-3.3.2).

Joas draws on the theorizing of Dewey and Mead to develop a theory of the creativity of action. This explains that the agent's autonomy of action is an endowment of intersubjective processes. These processes also make possible the reciprocally oriented interaction with others that is needed for the agent's potential for action to be realized. When action is not routine, its specific goal emerges from a process that may start with vague aspirations and often entails the reciprocal adjustment of means and ends. Creativity is a requirement of effective action in the process of discovering goals, in the negotiations with others needed to achieve them, and in responses to actions initiated by others.

7.3.0 Contributions by social researchers to Dewey's concept of the self

The concept of the self has been further developed by the theorizing and research of social researchers. The field studies of Harold Garfinkel (4.1.0) and Irving Goffman (4.2.0-4.2.2) endorse key aspects of the Meadian microsociology presupposed by Dewey, and reveal how interaction processes are involved in the maintenance and modification of role norms. Garfinkel's study of decision-making by jurors illustrates Joas's alternative to the rational actor model of action: it was not until after they had completed their deliberations and reached their verdict that the jurors could construct an ordered account of how it had been reached (4.1.0). Erving Goffman's ethnographic studies illustrate how people vary their conduct in ways intended to convey an impression of a role-specific self that they wish to have attributed to themselves by others (4.2.1).

Other researchers have investigated the determinants of the likelihood of any particular role-specific self being activated. Sheldon Stryker reports successful testing of his hypothesis that the likelihood is determined by the social networks in which the agent is active and in which a constituent self and its role are valued (4.4.1).

Research studies have also been reported that support the proposal of George McCall and J.L. Simmons: that the likelihood of a constituent self being activated is determined by its position in a 'somewhat plastic' hierarchy of role-specific constituent selves that are variable in their compatibility with one another and ordered by their importance to the individual's self-construal (4.5.2). This idea augments the concept of the multi-versioned self and offers an innovative way of conceptualizing the extent to which it is inclined to act in a morally praiseworthy manner. At any point in the lifespan, the hierarchy corresponds to what other theorists describe as the agent's ideal self. Since the ideal self or prominence hierarchy is the construal of self that the agent would most like others to endorse, it presumably also reflects the degree of importance attached by the agent to being and acting as a morally praiseworthy person overall, a *moral* self.

(4.5.2-4.5.3, 4.6.2). Other things equal, the rank of a role-specific self in the hierarchy determines the likelihood of its choice when it is among the candidate selves that could be activated. For example, it may be assumed from his conduct that self-as-naval-commander occupied a dominant position in the structure of Horatio Nelson's prominence hierarchy and in his construal of his ideal self (4.6.3).

An empirical measure of the importance to the agent's self-construal of being a morally praiseworthy self has been developed and tested in a number of studies by Karl Aquino and Americus Reed (4.7.1-4.7.2). The researchers found that the scale is in fact predictive of the likelihood of morally commendable conduct. Using a similar scale in another series of studies, Jan Stets found that score on the scale predicted the likelihood of making morally commendable choices when faced with moral dilemmas. Those with higher scores were also less likely to report feelings of guilt or shame over those choices, and less likely to be among those who were found to have cheated in a laboratory experiment (4.7.3). The significance of these studies for Dewey's analysis is that they were essentially (albeit unwittingly) testing his conviction that the self's construal of its character is realized in its morally significant choices and performance of its social roles (2.4.1).

7.4.0 Role choice and moral perplexity

Usually the self's enduring dispositions determine the choice and performance of a role, but circumstances arise that are morally perplexing, and there is need for moral deliberation over the choice. Dewey maintains that this entails imagining the consequence of possible choices for the constitution of the self, and deciding what sort of self the agent wants to become (2.5.0). The concept of the prominence hierarchy can be used to describe this process. When experiencing moral perplexity, the agent's problem is to choose a role-specific self the enactment of which is consonant with the agent's prominence hierarchy – the ideal self, which was presumed to be also its *moral* self (4.6.2).

Dewey realizes that, contrary to the assumption of traditional normative theories, no single formula can resolve all the kinds of moral perplexity to which moral

relationships are subject (2.5.0). He argues that the process is subject to three different sources of normative influence on the agent's decision-making (2.7.0), for each of which he specifies a criterion by which the moral praiseworthiness or otherwise of an agent's actual or prospective response to it may be assessed.

One source of normative influence is the agent's desires and intentions – the Good – that the response is expected to achieve. The criterion of assessment is whether the object sought by the choice and performance of a role is one 'which at the same time brings satisfaction to others, or which at least harmonizes with their well-being in that it does not inflict suffering upon them' (2.7.1). Another source is the Right – the socially recognized obligations of the role. For this source the criterion is whether the agent believes that the observance of its obligations serves the common good, and that they are as binding on her own judgement and action as they are on those from whose observance of them she benefits. (2.7.2). The third source is the desire for the approbation of others for conduct in the role that reveals character traits that are commended – the virtues – rather than traits that are condemned, the vices. In this case the criterion is whether the virtue is a praiseworthy disposition that is realized whole-heartedly, consistently, and impartially in pursuit of morally commendable objectives (2.7.3). Dewey points out that while these three sources of normativity can converge in their influence, they often do not and instead cut across one another. In consequence, uncertainty and conflicting ideas and the need for individual choice are inherent features of moral judgement (2.7.4).

The rendering of this core of Dewey's analysis of moral agency in role-theoretic terms points to its potential value when used as a standpoint for assessing widely discussed cases of moral judgement and examples of the work of other analysts of role morality.

7.5.0 Applications of Dewey's analysis to controversial moral judgements

When based on Dewey's analysis of moral agency, an examination of controversial moral judgements is less likely than those based on alternative analyses to overlook or misinterpret relevant evidence when applied to cases of moral judgement, as illustrated by the examples reviewed in Chapter 5.

In the case of Huckleberry Finn, the examination shows that he was subjected to pressure in opposing directions by two prospective role-specific selves, one as a member of white society, the other as a friend of a slave. In choosing between them he struggled to fit together his notion of right conduct with the normative expectations he had of himself in the two roles, and with the appeal of the slave's vividly expressed construal of him as a loyal friend (5.1.1). Alternative examinations of the case miss this drama and impute motivations to HF that were not faithful to the evidence of Twain's text (5.2.0-5.2.4).

A Dewey-guided examination of the dilemma of Milgrams's volunteers challenges the conclusion of other analysts that, in agreeing to administer potentially lethal electric shocks to fellow human beings, the volunteers who had done so were guilty of acting inhumanely. An examination informed by Dewey's theory of normativity shows that instead they had been tricked into believing that administering the shocks was what was expected of a responsible collaborator in important research. Compliance had therefore posed no threat to their self-construal as morally responsible persons, though it had distressed them (5.3.0-5.3.2). The anguish of those who obeyed and the defiance of the minority who did not revealed the role conflict that alternative forms of analysis had failed to recognize (5.4.0-5.5.0).

As well as offering plausible deconstructions of moral dilemmas and agent's responses to them, a Dewey-guided analysis is able to offer a plausible analysis of the *absence* of the experience of a moral dilemma in cases of grievous collateral harm, where the harm is seen by those responsible as the unintended consequence of the virtuous and socially authorized performance of a role, such as

the role of pension trustee (5.5.1). In the case examined, the reason for the absence of a dilemma seems to be the trustees' belief that their policies and the moral obligations they observe do not need to take into account the lethal effects of tobacco products on their users.

7.6.0 Applications of Dewey's analysis to others' analyses of role morality

As the examples reviewed in Chapter 6 show, the role-focused presentation of Dewey's analysis is also a useful standpoint from which to analyse both the ethical features of roles based on versions of traditional normative theories, and contemporary forms of the analysis of these features that differ from Dewey's.

While it has some features in common with Aristotelian virtue ethics as a basis for considering the ethical features of roles, Dewey's analysis differs from it in his conception of the sociality of the moral self, his emphasis on its plasticity, his conviction that particular virtues cannot be defined by enduring features of conduct, and his rejection of the idea of a fixed human *telos* for human beings (6.1.0). His analysis also differs from that of the contemporary Aristotelian, Alasdair MacIntyre, in these respects (6.2.0) and in his ideas on the type of society to be striven for (6.2.3). But some of the latter's views are complementary to Dewey's, including those on the way the structure of modern societies encourages agents to be inconsistent in the moral obligations they observe in different roles (6.2.1) and in most of his views on the characteristics of moral agents (6.2.2).

Christine Swanton applied a novel version of virtue ethics to role morality that she has developed to contest the claim that in their professional roles, lawyers and other professionals may be permitted or even required to act in ways that conflict with 'ordinary morality' (6.3.0). She argues that because such role-differentiated virtues as the zealous advocacy expected of a lawyer is always subject to the constraint of basic virtue, the lawyer has a duty not to be callous in her treatment of defendants or witnesses (6.3.1-6.3.3). From a Deweyan standpoint, the argument is unacceptable because it appears to license the virtuous professional to pursue objectives that are not virtuous (such as an unjust verdict) as long as the

manner in which they are pursued conforms to the constraints of ordinary morality. Unjust verdicts do not contribute to the common good.

Tim Dare does not share the view that in the performance of their professional roles, lawyers and others are always subject to the constraints of ordinary morality (6.4.0). He proposes that they are permitted to act immorally in their professional roles if the institution they serve is one of demonstrable goodness, and the immoral act is allowed by the institution's rules of practice. Dewey would have found this an attempt to justify the institution in maintaining immoral practices and its agents in implementing them without protest. Dare himself points out that the design of institutions remains subject to ordinary morality, and to modifications based on it.

The final project examined in Chapter 6 was a proposal by Jeremy Evans and Michael Smith that, like Dewey's analysis, is grounded in the duties that arise naturally in role relationships. These authors argue that these relationships are of four types – hierarchical, egalitarian, communal, and transactional – and that virtue lies in the fair observance of the duties constitutive of each type (6.5.2). From a Deweyan perspective, the most obvious problem with this proposal is the assumption that virtue requires only that participants in a relationship fairly observe whatever duty is required to maintain it. On that view, a community of thieves which fairly observed the duty to maintain its unity could be as virtuous as the crew of a lifeboat. What is missing are criteria to determine whether the objectives of participants in a relationship serve morally commendable aims. That problem would be solved if the proposal were treated, not, as the authors propose, as a first-order theory (6.5.3) or as supplement to a traditional theory, but as an extension of the resources of Dewey's analysis (6.5.4). The missing criteria would then be available, and the proposal could be the basis of a useful elaboration of them.

7.7.0 Factors that affect the analysis of moral agency

Dewey points out that individual and society are interpenetrating entities, and that therefore social conditions are involved in the formation of character and thus in the exercise of moral agency. But in his view, its exercise is greatly constrained by the social structure of modern societies, and he maintains that their structure is the origin of most important ethical problems (2.8.0). What is required, he believes, is for society to become genuinely democratic in form, and committed to discovering by experiment the social policies that have the most favourable effects on its members. It would be a society in which the members had been educated and socialized in ways that would realize its potential (2.8.1).

Later philosophers have proposed modifications of Mead's sociology which at the same time complement Dewey's understanding of ways in which the exercise of agency is affected by social conditions. One such factor, identified by Lonnie Adams, is the power differences that exist between occupants of superior and subordinate roles in social action. These differences are a potential source of discord that is integral to social action rather than a contingent product of a form of social structure, though the form of social structure often amplifies the malign effects of the differences (3.5.0). The issue of dominance is also considered by Gil Richard Musolf, who refers to Dewey's view that domination by the ruling groups of the capitalist system reduces workers to a slave-like condition, while at the same time manipulating them to see the rulers' interests as their own. Musolf turns to an idea of Mead's – role-taking refusal – to describe the refusal of the powerful to take the role of the oppressed, thereby helping to persuade the latter of the legitimacy of their inferior status (3.6.0). Bruno Frère and Daniel Jaster argue for the value of acknowledging the existence of a common repertoire of different perspectives (for example, the perspective of Family Welfare) as the grounds on which people draw to justify their own conduct and to recognize the justifications of conduct chosen by others (3.7.0).

7.8.0 Cultural variability of moral codes

For Dewey, the binding force of a society's moral code is relative to the society's organization and culture. Its principles are facts, as real and significant as the social conditions to which they are related, and may have no significance in another culture. This view is implicit in an account of moral agency that sees it as the realization of self in social roles, given that the expectations of conduct embodied in many of these roles (including those essential to the survival of the community) are determined by the particular social conditions with which the occupants must contend (2.9.0).

The distinctive anthropological assumptions of Dewey's analysis of moral agency are broadly justified by a review of the evidence conducted by another philosopher, David Wong. The review shows that society's morality is specific to its particular circumstances, that its function is the promotion and regulation of social cooperation, and that it is important to distinguish between the truth of the moral code as locally understood and the credibility of the factual claims that support it, such as a claim that it is natural for women's interests to be subordinated to those of men (2.10.1).

7.9.0 Conclusion

In the view of distinguished advocates of his work, John Dewey's moral philosophy is a fitting replacement for traditional alternatives, and rivals the best of those derived from them. Yet that estimate of the value of his work is uncommon, to judge from the comparative rarity of allusions to his ideas in mainstream discourses on ethical theory. Among possible reasons for this, one is that Dewey's own presentation of his analysis of moral agency does not facilitate the recognition of their import by contemporary theorists. Its import may be made more widely apparent by the role-focused rendering of his analysis and a consequent improvement in the visibility of its connections with the theorizing and research of others.

The recasting of Dewey's analysis of moral agency as that of self-enactment in the choice and performance of social roles has been shown to have three important outcomes. One is the identification of useful contributions to the resources of his analysis and to factors that affect its application. Another is the evidence that the analysis is well supported by the reflections of common sense and the findings of research. A third is the evidence of its effectiveness as a standpoint from which to assess moral judgements and the foundations of alternative ways of assessing them.

In revealing the potency of Dewey's analysis when used to examine moral judgements or alternative methods of analysing them, the role-focused rendering also makes clear the importance of identifying the roles that are being enacted, and of assessing the effects of the influence of Dewey's three sources of normativity on role choice and performance. The result may be the wider recognition of the diagnostic insights that are made possible by his treatment of normativity, and the value of his criteria for assessing the moral worth of an agent's response to the different sources of normativity that he identifies.

Dewey's analysis of moral agency is functionally dependent on the sociology it presupposes. By making explicit the contributions to his analysis of George Herbert Mead and William James, and of those who built on their ideas, the new rendering demonstrates the necessary interdependence of sociology and moral philosophy. It is Dewey's understanding of this interdependence and the concepts of role and self that sets his moral philosophy apart from others.

If the recasting proves persuasive, there are various ways in which it is likely to be found useful. The most obvious is as a foundation for future studies of the ethical features of particular roles, and perhaps the reconsideration of some previous studies in the light of Dewey's analysis. Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrate both such uses. The wider use of his analysis for this purpose may promote a more general understanding of the importance of the concepts of role and self in the study of moral agency. The recasting may also be useful in future attempts to integrate

philosophers' studies of moral agency with studies in other disciplines. A recognition of the significance of Dewey's treatment of normativity may prompt psychologists, sociologists, neuroscientists, and others to reassess some current convictions about the study of moral agency in their own disciplines.

Finally, the foregoing developments, together with the intuitive plausibility of Dewey's analysis in its recast form, may increase the attention given to role ethics. That may help role ethics to become seen as a keystone of mainstream moral philosophy, instead of as one of its specialist domains.

Appendices to Chapter 4

These appendices offer fuller descriptions of the studies mentioned in Chapter 4. The ideas tested in these relatively recent studies contributed significantly to the development of the pragmatist model, and the details of them provided below allow a judgement of their strengths and limitations.

Appendix A: The causal ordering of the salience and prominence of constituent selves

The objective of this study by Philip Brenner, Richard Serpe, and Sheldon Stryker (2014) was to determine the causal ordering of salience and prominence in the case of self-as-science-student. The study used data from three rounds of a national longitudinal survey that follows a panel of underrepresented students (minorities, women, and first-generation university students) in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) at 48 American colleges and universities. At each of the three rounds of the survey – the rounds conducted in Spring 2006, Autumn 2006, and Spring 2007 – the students were asked to complete the same online questionnaire.

The measure of salience was a set of questions that asked students to say how certain they were (from ‘certain I would not’ = 0, to ‘certain I would’ = 10) that they would mention their desire to be a scientist on meeting each of four different categories of person – a co-worker, a person of the opposite sex, a friend of a friend, and a friend of a family member. The measure of prominence was a set of questions that asked students to indicate their degree of agreement/disagreement on a five-point scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree) with the following four statements: ‘Being a scientist is an important part of my self-image’, ‘Being a scientist is an important reflection of who I am’, ‘I have come to think of myself as a “scientist”, and ‘I have a strong sense of belonging to the community of scientists’. Responses to the measure of salience and that of prominence achieved high scores on a standard test of internal consistency.

The analysis of the results showed a causal ordering from prominence to salience that was strong and positive within each round of the survey: the more the constituent self as science student was valued, the greater the likelihood of it being invoked. Measures of prominence and salience in the first and second rounds of the survey had strong and positive effects on prominence and salience in the second and third round rounds respectively. In other words, the relationships observed between the prominence and salience of the self-as-science-student were stable over the 18-month period of the study.

Appendix B: The predictive model of moral selfhood developed by Aquino and Reed

(i) Development of a measure of moral selfhood

To develop a measure of the importance of the moral self to self-construal, Karl Aquino and Americus Reed (2002) started by establishing nine moral traits, each of which had been mentioned by at least 30 per cent of a sample of 112 male and female business undergraduates at an American university when asked to list 'personal traits, characteristics, or qualities that a moral person possesses' (ibid: 1426). The following were the nine traits: caring, compassionate, fair, friendly, generous, helpful, hardworking, honest, and kind. Aquino and Reed argue that all these traits are either characteristic of a moral person or call to mind such characteristics. Their view was supported by the responses of three diverse groups of respondents invited to assess to what extent each trait needed to be possessed by someone to be considered a moral person. The respondents were asked to make their assessment of each trait on a scale from 1 (absolutely unnecessary) to 5 (absolutely necessary). The results showed that, on average, the respondents scored each trait above the mid-point of the scale, and therefore as essential to the description of a moral person.

The next step was to establish a method of measuring perceptions of the relationship between this set of moral traits and two aspects of their importance to the self: their importance to self-construal and their importance to the self's

activities. To measure its importance to self-construal, seven statements about the set of moral traits were chosen; for example, 'It would make me feel good to be a person who has these characteristics'. To measure the importance of the traits in the individual's activities, six statements were chosen; for example, 'I am actively involved in activities that communicate to others that I have these characteristics. Next, all 13 statements were used to measure the two aspects of the importance of the moral traits. A sample of 363 undergraduates at 3 American universities were asked to visualize the kind of person who possessed the 9 moral traits and then to indicate their agreement with each of the 13 statements by assigning a score to it of between 1 (strongly agree) and 5 (strongly disagree).

The statistical analysis of the results showed that 5 of the statements met criteria for identifying a measure of what the investigators describe as 'internalization': the centrality of moral traits to self-construal. Six statements met criteria for identifying a measure described as 'symbolization': the importance of being seen to act on these moral traits. After being transformed into a scale, the 11 statements were included in a national survey of alumni of an American university located throughout the United States. The analysis of this survey showed that with the removal of one of the statements measuring symbolization, the results confirmed the earlier findings.

The construct validity of the two five-item scales (the extent to which they measured what they were intended to measure) was assessed by administering them together with established measures of relevant other variables to new samples, and comparing the results. For example, one of the other measures was a scale measuring sympathy, on the assumption that a moral person would show concern for the welfare of others. The results showed that both measures were very modestly correlated with the measure of sympathy. In general correlations with all the other scales were weak, but the pattern was broadly as predicted and it was held to support the construct validity of the scales. A further test showed that responses to the two scales from the same sample on different occasions were modestly correlated, when administered between 4 and 6 weeks apart

depending on the sample. The investigators assert that the importance to self-construal of the moral traits is not stable, and that it may be influenced by situational stimuli and 'certain personality traits' (ibid: 1432). The scores on the scales were found to be weakly correlated with a scale measuring 'impression management'.

A variety of other tests of construct validity were conducted. In one, scores on both scales were found to be correlated with the emphasis given to moral characteristics in self-descriptions (written 3 months later) by high-school students. In another, adults' scores on the scales were found to be correlated with the odds of reporting having engaged in some form of volunteering for an activity that promoted human welfare in the previous 2 years.

(ii) Test of the model

The most exacting test of the scales is the extent to which the scores on them can predict morally significant conduct. For the first such test, 145 high-school students who had completed the two 5-item scales three months earlier were invited by the class teacher to bring in gifts of cans of food for distribution to the needy. The venture was presented as a contribution to an established school-based programme of activities to promote civic involvement. The gifts were to be put in a box over a two-day period, either 30 minutes before the start of school or during the lunch break. Whether students brought any gifts and the number they brought was secretly recorded by the teacher. The results showed that the strongest predictor of whether gifts was brought was the sex of the student: girls were more than twice as likely as boys to bring gifts. The only other predictor was Internalization, the scale measuring the centrality of moral traits to self-construal. For every unit increase in the score on this scale, the odds of donating cans increased by 80 per cent. For the number of cans brought, as distinct from simply whether any were brought, the only significant predictor was symbolization.

(iii) Comment

The reviewers of A&I studies, of which this was the first, conclude that more research is needed to illuminate the ‘nuanced interplay’ of internalization and symbolization. Arguably, it would be better simply to jettison the symbolization scale. Its findings are unclear, but more importantly, the reviewers (two of whom are its originators) do not consider the possibility that at least some respondents who possess all nine moral traits that are used to identify the moral self may nevertheless shrink from agreeing with statements so suggestive of self-promotional intent as ‘I am actively engaged in activities that communicate to others that I have these characteristics’. Perhaps what explains the unattractive characteristics noted above as associated with high scores for symbolization is that those who score highly tend to be more concerned with appearing to have a virtuous self than with being one. The reviewers themselves report that those with high scores for symbolization but low scores for internalization can be motivated to act more praiseworthily by situational factors, such as the recognition of praiseworthy conduct, that emphasize its reputational value. To the extent that the symbolization scale is seen as measuring not the importance of acting on moral traits but merely of having a reputation for doing so, this may also colour the meaning ascribed to statements in the internalization scale when they are administered as a combined scale. The outcome may be to reduce the predictive power of the internalization scale and perhaps help to explain why studies sometimes produce contradictory results.

Appendix C: The predictive model of moral selfhood developed by Burke and Stets

Jan Stets (2013) describes seven research projects which she and Michael Carter conducted from 2007 to 2009 to investigate self-construal as a moral self and its relationship to moral conduct and emotions (Stets 2013; Stets and Carter 2011, 2012). The participants were students – average age 21 years, and of varied ethnicity – attending a southwestern university in the United States. The studies used questionnaire surveys to reveal the extent of a student's self-construal as a moral self, its association with choices they had made in a series of common moral

dilemmas, and the emotions their choices had evoked. Each survey was followed by a laboratory study in which the students' propensity to act dishonestly was secretly observed. A total of over 3000 students – 40 per cent male, 60 per cent female – took part in the studies.

(i) The questionnaire surveys

The questionnaire component of the studies required students to complete a test of their attitudes to justice and care as attributes of moral conduct. For this test, students were asked to score themselves between 1 (agree) and 5 (disagree) to indicate where they saw themselves between each attribute on twelve bipolar scales: honest/dishonest, helpful/not helpful, stingy/generous, compassionate/hard-hearted, untruthful/truthful, not hardworking/hardworking, friendly/unfriendly, selfish/selfless, principled/unprincipled (Stets and Carter 2011: 204). The data were subjected to a form of analysis that could be used to show where each participant's individual total score placed her or him on a scale measuring position, between high and low, of self-construal as a moral self.

The students were also presented with a list of common moral dilemmas they were assumed to have faced. For example: had they or had they not copied another student's exam answer, donated to a charity, kept or returned an item they had found. The students were asked to report on the choice they had made the last time they were in the situation or, for those who had not experienced it, the choice they would have made (Stets and Carter 2006: 202). They were then asked to indicate how they felt, or would have felt, about their choice. For this purpose, they were required to indicate which of the following 8 emotions best represented how they felt: happy, disgusted, fearful, angry, sad, shameful, guilty, empathic. Other reactions investigated included the emotions aroused when there was a discrepancy between own and others' construal of the self as a moral self, and when they behaved in ways which they believed ought to induce shame and guilt.

(ii) The laboratory studies

Several weeks after the questionnaire survey, the students in each of the seven studies participated in a laboratory study in which they were told (untruthfully) they would be testing a new college entrance examination. The test required them to answer six verbal questions and six maths questions, each worth 10 points. The participant's answer to each question appeared on a computer screen, which also showed the correct answer and the student's score to date. Three of the studies were designed to reveal active cheating. In these the students were allowed to discover that they could use the escape key to change their answers, but were urged not to do so. In the other 4 studies all participants were deliberately over-scored by 20 points on 3 occasions. They were given a worksheet on which to track their correct scores, to help ensure that they would notice the over-scoring. After the test they were told that the computer program was still under development and that they should report any errors, such as grammatical errors, incorrect answers, scoring problems, or unclear questions.

The results of the studies showed that both in the surveys and the laboratory studies, the assumptions of identity theory were fairly well supported. Students with higher scores on the scale of self-construal as a moral self were more likely to report making morally praiseworthy choices in the moral dilemmas, and to be less likely to report feelings of guilt and shame. Negative feelings were more likely to be reported when there was a discrepancy between own and others' construal of the self as a moral self. Shame and guilt were more likely to be reported for blameworthy conduct when participants reported that people *should* experience these emotions when they engage in such conduct. In the laboratory studies of cheating, 30 per cent of the students cheated. They were less likely to do so, the higher their score for self-construal as a moral self. Over-scoring was not reported by 50 per cent of the students, but failure to report it was not predicted by self-construal as a moral self. Stets considers several possible reasons for the latter finding, including the possibility that over-reporting was not considered sufficiently consequential to be seen as a moral issue.

Appendix D: The effect of occupation-specific selves on moral judgement

This study was conducted by Keith Leavitt, Scott Reynolds, Christopher Barnes, Pauline Schilpzand, and Sean Hannah (2012). Its aim was to investigate the influence on moral judgement of moral obligations embedded in role-specific selves.

The subjects studied were two samples of engineer-managers. One sample comprised 47 members of America's National Society for Professional Engineers (NSPE), most in managerial positions in industry. The NSPE requires its members to observe universalistic principles of giving priority to public safety in their decisions and not gaining employment or contracts by unfair practices. Nevertheless, managers are often expected to regard their principal responsibility as the more particularistic one of furthering the interests of shareholders and other stakeholders. The other sample comprised 88 employees of a large U.S. federal government engineering agency, most in managerial positions. Role-specific selves were made salient by asking participants to recall distinct memories of them. In each of the two groups (NSPE members and government employees) one sub-sample was asked to recall a memory in which they had behaved as a typical engineer (the more universalistic constituent self). Another sub-sample in each was asked to recall a memory in which they had behaved as a typical manager (the more particularistic constituent self). A third sub-sample was asked to recall one 'manager' memory and one 'engineer' memory (order randomized among participants). To increase the vividness of the memories, participants were asked to say what they were wearing at the time, and to write one or two sentences describing the memory from an observer's perspective. As further reinforcement, images representing the constituent self being recalled appeared on their computer screens.

The measure of moral flexibility/probity used referred to a named Indian city where, it was said, corruption was rife and winning contracts usually required making gifts to government officials. Participants were asked whether U.S. firms wishing to win civil engineering contracts there 'should engage in gifting to gain a

foothold? Why/why not?' They were informed that their responses would be used in making some important policy recommendations. Responses which indicated that gifts or bribes should be used by U.S. firms (flexible moral judgements) were scored 0, and responses indicating they should always abstain from doing so were scored 1. The results were as follows. There was no significant differences between the samples in the likelihood of saying that gifting should never occur. But for the sample comprising members of the NPSE, a sub-sample primed to make the self-as-engineer salient were significantly more likely than those primed to make salient the self-as-manager (87 per cent versus 47 per cent) to rule out gifting. For the similarly primed sub-samples of government engineers, priming did not make a significant difference to the likelihood that gifting would be approved.

The researchers concede the following limitations of the study. Moral judgement is not a reliable proxy for actual conducts. The study design was not one that could reveal the psychological processes by which particularistic obligations influence moral judgement. Different occupation-specific selves may not be equally susceptible to becoming salient. And the findings do not indicate how or how often shifts in these constituent selves occur in everyday life. Nevertheless, the researchers conclude that their study shows that when an individual has more than one occupation-specific self, whichever of them is salient will have disproportionate effects on moral judgement. They also conclude that the particularistic obligations felt by a constituent self to others in a counterpart role, such as that of client, can be enough to override universal standards, largely because these obligations are perceived to be moral obligations.

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