Embracing the Complexity of Moral Action

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> *A man was walking from Jerusalem down to Jericho when he fell among thieves who beat him and left him by the side of the road, naked and to all appearances dead. A priest was also passing that way and saw the man, but walked to the other side of the road to avoid him. Likewise, a Levite (a religious assistant at the Temple) passed by, moving to the other side of the road. But a Samaritan (a despised group) was moved with compassion for him, bandaged his wounds, took him to an inn and paid for his care* (Luke 10: 25-37).

This well-known story presents us with a time-honored image of doing good for others. Those who volunteer are often called Good Samaritans to praise them; Hospitals, charitable societies and volunteer organizations use the name to indicate their approach to helping.

But considered from the perspective of Lawrence Kohlberg's moral psychology the Samaritan's action does not count as "moral," because the Samaritan does not make a conscious choice "preceded by a judgment of right or wrong".[1] Instead, as the story reads, he is *moved by compassion*. This means he is swayed by his emotion[2] and therefore acting from influences that Kohlberg, following Kant, called heteronomous, since they are not based in the autonomy of reasoned action alone. Thus, though the Samaritan binds the victim's wounds and brings him to the inn, he is not from this perspective acting morally.

This odd conclusion is based in a commonsense idea about what it means to be moral: that ethics cannot just be doing the right thing but must also be doing it for the right reason. Kohlberg, in an effort to rescue the psychology of morality from relativism, moved away from the deterministic approaches that were broadly accepted in his day. Instead, taking his sources from Kant and other philosophers, he emphasized the importance of conscious moral judgment and decision making: "An action … is neither good nor bad unless it has been preceded by a judgment of right or wrong [by the actor]."[3] In later work he would call this the assumption of *phenomenalism*, opening up, but at the same time restricting the domain of morality to conscious, explicit moral reasoning.[4] In doing so, Kohlberg also posits a developmental hierarchy of moral reasons, with reasons associated with self-enhancement or social influence being less developed than reasons of concern for justice for others.[5] These assumptions have been widely

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[1] Kohlberg (1958, p. 5)
[2] See the section on moral emotion to appreciate the complexity of claiming that something is "an emotion."
[3] Kohlberg (1958, p. 5)
[4] Kohlberg, Levine, and Hewer (1983, p. 69)
[5] Kohlberg (1963, 1964)

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shared in early moral psychology.[6] Though the Kohlberg approach to morality acts as a helpful corrective to earlier mechanistic approaches, its insistence on the sole legitimacy of autonomous cognitive reasoning disallows other sociological and psychological aspects of the ethical situation such as personality, non-conscious influence, emotion, and even skilled action. It treats them as, at best, irrelevant and at worst a biasing influence on moral action.[7]

But moral action like that illustrated in the story of the good Samaritan is far more complex than moral reasoning alone. Indeed, one might think moral reasoning would be more the expert domain of the other actors in the story, the priest and Levite, who by profession have been steeped and practiced in moral judgment processes. But they, confronted with the same ethical situation at the roadside, rush by. As the story goes, the Samaritan has been first moved by an emotion that in turn seems to be crucial in shaping his response to the ethical situation. He appears to act immediately, without extended deliberation, and in doing so reaches across social divides to offer needed help. He may even have simply felt compelled to respond, without much moral reasoning at all, in order to "do what one has to do."[8]

The rich metaphor of moral action we find in the ancient story of the good Samaritan is open to a multitude of interpretations of the actors' motives. We use it here as a reminder that moral action cannot be reduced to one-dimensional explanations but must be understood in the complexity of the whole narrative. To try to pull a single thread of rational deliberation, or of emotional response, out of this dense weave of influences and processes would reduce the richness of this image of good acting to a thin caricature. The recent flowering of research in moral psychology is likewise transcending the narrow confines of the Kohlbergian approach and attempting to better grasp the complexity of moral action. It allows us to do justice to the richness of the ethical situation and to the variety of individual responses to it. We introduce here six aspects that capture the recent work on the complexity of moral action: *moral identity, moral reasoning, skill and habits, personality and character, moral emotion, and Bildung.*[9] We give a suggestion of the importance of each influence on moral action, some idea of the variety of their interactions, and discuss them in the light of the heteronomy debate. We build on this framework to suggest that almost all moral action has influences that Kohlberg would count as heteronomous. The processes of moral action are so intricately interwoven that it would be rare indeed to find pure rational deliberation as a singular, isolated influence. We conclude that psychology and philosophy will need to embrace the complex, heteronomous, weave of moral action in order to better understand its philosophical and psychological underpinnings.

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[6] Lapsley and Narvaez (2005)

[7] Walker (2004b)

[8] It is a widely shared finding in the study of moral exemplars that they often feel like they "must" do the moral thing. See the section on moral identity to understand this claim.

[9] The framework is taken from work by Huff and colleagues (Huff, in preparation; Huff, Barnard, & Frey, 2008). Work by Narvaez and colleagues (Narvaez, 2005, 2010) and by Keane (Keane, 2015) identifies other frameworks one might use.

1) Moral Identity

Even when people are *capable* of making reasoned moral judgments, this ability often does not result in moral action.[10] Blasi catalogued the consistently small correlations[11] that obtained between increases in ability at moral reasoning in Kohlberg's sense and taking the corresponding moral action. He labeled this disappointing state of affairs the *judgment-action gap*, and proposed *moral identity* as the motivational factor needed to bridge it. *Moral identity* is the possession of a particular kind of self concept[12]: a self concept with regard to issues of moral obligation, responsibility, and the good.

The judgment-action gap is most problematic for those approaches, like Kohlberg's, that have conscious moral judgment as the central aspect of the model.[13] These models use psychological consistency pressures as the main engine to bridge the gap.[14] If one judges something to be the moral thing to do, it is often quite uncomfortable to think that one has not done it. For Kohlberg, this consistency pressure to act morally comes from holding a principle (e.g. justice) and is thus about consistency with the principle.[15] Moral identity approaches are also powered by cognitive consistency but here it is consistency with one's moral identity and associated moral goals.[16] Thus, for Kohlberg, immoral action is a betrayal of a principle, but for Blasi, it is a betrayal of the self, with presumably more motivating power.[17]

With the addition of moral identity as an important motivator of moral action, we have our first heteronomous aspect of moral action. If individuals are acting because of their moral identity as, e.g. a caring person, then they are being influenced by some good for the self. Walker and colleagues[18] have shown that for some of the morally exemplary actors they study, there is a fusion of the sense of self with particular moral goals. Thus in acting in service of a moral goal (an autonomous action description), they are also acting in service of the self, which is identified with the goal (a heteronomous action description).[19]

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[10] This difficulty is recognized in foundational documents in all major religions and in documents as old as the Epic of Gilgamesh (--, 1989), from the 18th century BC.

[11] Both words in "consistently small" are important to note (Blasi, 1980). There is a *very consistent correlation* (about .33) between moral cognition and moral action, but this consistency is at best "somewhat modest" (Walker, 2004a, p. 2).

[12] Blasi (1984)

[13] Frimer and Walker (2008)

[14] Festinger (1957)

[15] Kohlberg's approach was philosophically based on Kant's (Frimer & Walker, 2008; Lapsley & Narvaez, 2005) and borrows its motivational structure from it. Indeed, in a well-known footnote in Kant's (1785/2011, p. 30-31) *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant bridges the gap by treating the feeling of *respect* or *reverence* (Achtung) for a principle as both a cognitive *and* a motivational construct: "through a motivation *self-wrought* by a rational concept" (durch einen Vernunftbegriff *selbstgewirktes* Gefühl).

[16] Blasi (1980)

[17] see Lapsley (2008), for a review

[18] Frimer and Walker (2009); Walker (2013)

[19] Badhwar (1993) argues that this fusion of self and moral goals helps to resolve the philosophical puzzle of altruism.

But the heteronomy of moral identity does not stop here. Many researchers have shown how one's identification with groups can be a source of moral motivation.[20] Hart[21] argues that "If the notion of identity is to contribute to an understanding of moral functioning, then it must be a construct with deep roots in a social world." Thus, moral identity itself is heteronomous. In research on rescuers in the holocaust, the Oliners[22] show that the largest category of these extraordinary helpers consists of those who helped because of their identification with certain groups that were committed to helping. Others helped because of moral identity commitments to abstract ethical principles, and still others helped because of the compassion they felt for individual victims. The theme again is one of the complexity of motives and influences in moral action. Here, social roles might come to the rescue of the priest and Levite in our story, with the hypothesis that they might be motivated to maintain purity by avoiding a person who is likely dead.[23]

This social embeddedness of moral identity is only one aspect of the multidimensional nature of the moral self. There is a voluminous literature showing that self-concept (and thus the moral identity that is a part of self concept) can have different facets that are relevant in different domains (e.g. religion, work, tribal affiliation, obligations to guests and travelers) with often only a modest drive toward unity.[24] Thus, moral identity, a central motivating influence on moral action, is shot through with heteronomy.

2) Moral Reasoning

There is now a growing literature in qualitative studies of morally exemplary individuals.[25] One of the central findings in all the reports is that none of the individuals studied spend much time doing reason-based evaluations of the right thing to do. For instance, none of the 24 computer scientists and engineers interviewed in Huff and Barnard[26] ever mention using the codes of ethics of their professional societies.[27] This was not for lack of time – the interviews lasted between 3 to 5 hours over two days, and the individual transcripts run from 12 to 21 thousand words in length.[28] Nor was it for lack of familiarity – some of the interviewees had written the ethics codes for their national organization. But morally exemplary individuals do share a common use of moral reasoning. They are constantly engaged in the instrumental use of reason to help them achieve, and to argue for, their moral goals. Recent work on moral cognition can help us to understand this odd disjunction of moral reason and moral action.

Conscious and non-conscious reason. Some cognitive processing requires effort – it takes concentration and working memory. But at other times, and for other kinds of stimuli, processing is relatively effortless, non-conscious, requires little in the way of working memory, and gives us access only to the outcome rather than the process (e.g. insight,

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[20] Snyder and Omoto (2008); Stürmer and Snyder (2010); Sturmer, Snyder, Kropp, and Siem (2006)
[21] Hart (2005, p. 260)
[22] Oliner and Oliner (1988)
[23] Hanson and Oakman (2008)
[24] for reviews, see Frimer and Walker (2008); Gergen (2000); Mischel (2004)
[25] Bronk (2012); Bronk, King, and Matsuba (2013); Hart, Murzyn, and Archibald (2013)
[26] Huff and Barnard (2009)
[27] Huff and Furchert (2014)
[28] Each interview transcript is 2 to 3 times longer than this chapter.

intuition, highly practiced routines). This latter kind of process has been called "system 1" processing, in partial reference to its earlier evolution. Controlled, working-memory-intensive, "system 2," processing gives us access to both outcomes (e.g. decisions, judgments) and also to the inputs and processes (e.g. assumptions, values, goals, evaluations, etc.). People may well have individual differences in the extent to which they use and develop one system or the other[29] but everyone uses both. In addition, by practice one can move routines from the effortful system 2 to the practiced system 1.[30]

Like Kohlberg,[31] when we think of cognition we normally think of conscious, deliberate, guided processing, or type 2 processing. Here, one has conscious access to both the processes and their outcomes. That is, we are aware of and deliberatively guide our selection of the things we consider, how and how long we consider them, and the conclusions we reach. This deliberation takes effort, is associated with intelligence, and can be abstract and hypothetical (e.g. What if the man at the roadside was not dead? Do obligations of compassion trump obligations of purity?). Type 1 processes are rapid, more hidden from our awareness, usually proceed without our conscious guidance, and we only have access to their seemingly self-evident conclusions. For this reason, type 1 processes are often called "intuitive," but might better be called highly practiced.

Contents of non-conscious reason. So far we have only talked about characteristics of Type 1 processes (e.g. automatic, fast, nonconscious). But it is, after all, the contents of these processes that might allow us to decide if the processes are autonomous or not. What are people (not) thinking about when engaging in type 1 and type 2 processes in the moral domain? We will mention here two approaches.[32] Work by Haidt and colleagues[33] suggests that there is a relatively small number of *moral foundations* that underlie moral judgment and action (e.g. in recent work,[34] 6 are listed: harm, fairness, ingroup, authority, purity, and liberty). These foundational moral evaluation schemas most often work in system 1, autonomously, and give rise to simple intuitions about whether something is morally good or bad, along with a characteristic emotional response (e.g. disgust for purity violations). Thus, coming back to the image, the Levite might, for non-consciously-processed reasons, automatically cross the road to avoid impurity. He would not be consciously deciding to do so, and might not even remember that he had.

Another approach to the contents of moral (non)cognition is a massively cross-cultural research program on values, which concludes that cultures do in fact share underlying values, though they differ in the emphasis they place on them. Depending on how finely one slices it, the program identifies between 10 and 19 values, but always grouped as a

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[29] Evans and Stanovich (2013)

[30] Theorists disagree on a range of issues about this approach, including whether there are 2 or even more systems, whether the difference is one of type (with a clear distinction) or of mode (with a range of intermediate positions), the extent to which they can be consciously controlled, and a host of other disagreements (Evans & Stanovich, 2013). Any generalization at this early stage of theorizing should be done with caution.

[31] Kohlberg et al. (1983)

[32] For two other approaches, see Cosmides and Tooby (2008) and Fiske and Haslam (2005).

[33] Graham and Haidt (2012); Graham et al. (2011); Haidt (2001); Haidt and Joseph (2004, 2007)

[34] Graham et al. (2011)

circle within a two dimensional space: 1) openness to change vs conservation, 2) self-transcendence vs. self-enhancement.[35] Some of these values seem easily to fall into autonomous sources of motivation (e.g. universalism, benevolence) while others seem not to (conformity, tradition).

Naturalistic Decision Making. Many models of reason (and most published research on reason) presume a *correct* way to reason[36] and this benchmark allows researchers to document ways people depart from the model, thus also achieving the goal of description. A glaring shortcoming of this approach is that the models implicitly restrict their reach to those places where the "correct" answer can be calculated, and thus ignore those domains of life in which people do important reasoning, but not of the kind the model can track. In response, many researchers are now adopting purely descriptive approaches to rationality. These approaches have variously been called naturalistic decision making,[37] real-life decision structuring,[38] grounded cognition,[39] and autobiographical reasoning.[40] Here, we refer to them all as naturalistic decision making.

Naturalistic decision-making research finds that perceiving situations and matching roles or solutions to them is more important than calculating outcomes of courses of action. For instance, chess experts match possible solutions to situations[41] and managers (one can imagine the Levite here) match situations to roles in a "logic of obligation."[42] It also finds that this sort of naturalistic decision making is best modeled *within domains*, based on the kinds of decisions made in those domains rather than in generic, one-size-fits-all reasoning models like those of Kohlberg.[43] The logic and function of autobiographical narrative is, for instance, much more complicated than that of simple historical truth-discovery.[44] Narratives about the self do have a directive function that involves understanding the past and predicting the future, but they also have important functions in self-definition.[45]

Finally, in the spirit of naturalistic decision-making, one must note the research that suggests that experts in a moral domain (e.g. science ethics, environmental ethics, business ethics etc.) do their reasoning using concepts that are at the middle level.[46] For example, when asked to comment on cases, philosophers who are expert in computer ethics use concepts like informed consent and privacy, while novice undergraduates tend to use higher-level concepts from consequentialist frameworks.[47]

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[35] See Cieciuch, Schwartz, and Davidov (2015) for several versions of this approach, and its history.
[36] Evans and Elqayam (2011)
[37] Lipschitz, Klein, Orasanu, and Salas (2001); Zsambok and Klein (2014)
[38] Galotti (2007)
[39] Barsolou, Simmons, Barbey, and Wilson (2003)
[40] Bluck, Alea, Habermas, and Rubin (2005); Habermas (2011)
[41] Newell and Simon (1972)
[42] March (1982)
[43] Evans and Elqayam (2011); Lipschitz et al. (2001)
[44] Habermas (2011)
[45] Bluck et al. (2005)
[46] Bebeau and Thoma (1999)
[47] Keefer and Ashley (2001)

Thus, like moral identity, actual moral reasoning, as it occurs in the real world, is embedded in the domains and tasks where it occurs, is often automatic in its action, is consistently (for both good and bad) intermixed with emotion, and only in part resembles the independent, generic, logical form imagined by theorists of autonomy. Reason does have a significant guiding role to play (see the section on Bildung below). But most forms of reasoning that guide moral action are blended with goal seeking based on (often laudable) desires. And these desires are rarely limited to abstract goals such as general justice or respect for the moral law.

3) Skills, Habit, and un-conscious moral action

Ethical education guidelines for middle school[48] and college[49] and guidelines for ethics instruction in computing,[50] dentistry,[51] psychology,[52] science,[53] and many other areas make explicit links between skill and ethical competence.

In the same way that skill is central to professional ethics, it is also a centerpiece of most Aristotelian approaches to virtue ethics.[54] We have already mentioned that most moral exemplars do not ponder ethical difficulties as much as they ponder how to achieve ethical goals. Much of the reason they have become exemplary is because they have invested large amounts of time and effort in following a particular moral goal. This continual practice helps their actions to become more skillful, often to the point where they feel effortless and unplanned, even automatic. Work on expertise[55] and habit[56] suggest that it is this kind of practice effect that can turn consciously guided action (playing scales, doing surgery, listening carefully) into automatic or semi-automatic routines – in the language of the previous section, moving from conscious system 2 to automatic system 1. At this point, many things that require attention or conscious weighing of alternatives become automatic and under normal circumstances can happen without further conscious guidance. This is helpful because it can free the actor to concentrate on higher-level goals or decisions. Of course, when circumstances are *not* normal, the most highly skilled actor can recognize the difficulty and "slow down when you should," switching to more controlled processes to guide action.[57] Thus these skills and the decisions that underlie and compose them, are automatic but still capable of following a moral goal (e.g. good surgery, thoughtful listening). To claim that these skills are not really moral, is to miss the embeddedness of real moral choices within them. The doctor, business manager, or soldier doing triage under severe time pressure uses moral decision procedures, trades off values, chooses goals, and evaluates outcomes and reasons, though with the speed and grace of expert automaticity. To ask that this trading, choosing, and evaluating be done consciously at all times would be to risk failure

[48] Narvaez (2006)
[49] Callahan (1980)
[50] Huff and Martin (1995)
[51] Bebeau (1994)
[52] De las Fuentes, Willmuth, and Yarrow (2005)
[53] Mumford et al. (2008)
[54] Snow (2010)
[55] Dreyfus and Dreyfus (2004); Narvaez and Bock (2014)
[56] Rothman, Sheeran, and Wood (2009)
[57] Moulton, Regehr, Mylopoulos, and MacRae (2007); Schön (1984)

of the entire enterprise. Because these procedures have become automatized, the skilled moral actor can make decisions under pressure, and even note when it is necessary to slow down to consciously evaluate things. But the morality must be trained into the system through extensive conscious practice, which include the appropriation of moral goals or even of the highest good. The Danish thinker Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) has revived this Aristotelian idea of ethical practice and developed a psychology of appropriation (understood as a internal process of embodying and incorporating the moral goal deeply into the self concept) that is still waiting to be unpacked for the context of moral psychology.[58]

It is important to note that this sort of automatized, skilled moral action is not confined to the professions. It is a part of the skills we all learn (more or less) as we mature from children to adults. As children we learn *self-regulation*, the process by which we manage goals and standards, selecting and ordering them and then monitoring them to make sure they're being met.[59] We also learn *emotional-regulation*, how to calm ourselves, recognize pain in others, how to share emotion with others, and to plan for stressful times.[60] And we learn *moral attentiveness*, recognizing situations as containing moral import, evaluating that import, spotting stakeholders, perpetrators, and victims.[61] All these are skills that can become highly automatized, with real moral decisions being pushed below conscious awareness in the service of more effective interaction with the world and others.

Much of the good work of highly skilled actors (care-givers, health professionals, engineers, rescue workers, social reformers) would be impossible without the skilled, automatized action that belongs to those professions. Some scholars suggest that the priest and Levite were professionally skilled actors, with a morality embedded in their profession that led them to prioritize purity over compassion.[62] But they might have simply been in a hurry, or not known what to do. Once we accept this embeddedness of morality in skilled behavior, it seems also reasonable to say that the more general skills that we must all learn (self-regulation, emotional-regulation, and moral attentiveness) are crucial to moral action. It is an open research question how much of our moral life is guided by this sort of automatic moral expertise, but to the extent that it is, its very automaticity counts against it as real morality in the eyes of autonomy theory.

4) Personality and character

Often what we mean by personality is the continuity of an individual's behavior across situations, a continuity that is "characteristic" of the way that individual interacts with the world – or, character. There has already been a great deal of ink spilled by psychologists and philosophers in describing the influences of cultural and situational pressures on moral action.[63] Here we suggest the relation of moral action to three levels[64] of

[58] Furchert (2012)
[59] Kuhl and Koole (2004)
[60] Aldao (2013); Tamir (2015)
[61] Reynolds (2008)
[62] Hanson and Oakman (2008)
[63] Some conclude that there is no such thing as personality or character (Doris, 2002). Most of these critiques have missed much of the recent history of personality theory, and seem to be refighting the

personality: *dispositions* (general personality traits), *characteristic adaptations* (smaller scale attitudes and commitments), and *narrative identity* (our story of who we are).

Dispositions. Despite some claims to the contrary, recent work has found reliable effects of personality dispositions in areas such as helping, cooperation, criminal behavior, and espoused moral values. Thus, "despite the pessimism of earlier reviews in this area, a growing body of literature suggests the importance of individual differences in helping."[65] The Big 5 is a widely accepted approach to personality traits,[66] consisting of 5 dimensions (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness), with each dimension being a broad level summary of more specific traits (e.g. extraversion has somewhat independent sub-traits of sociability and dominance). In their study of Canadians who won prizes for bravery or social service, Walker and colleagues[67] found that brave prize winners were more likely to score highly on dominance, while social service prize winners scored more highly on nurturance (an aspect of Big 5 agreeableness). Huff and Barnard found that, among the moral exemplars in computing they studied, the more extraverted exemplars tended to be involved in social change movements while some of the more introverted exemplars tended to use their craft to help individuals.[68]

These examples with extraversion suggest the complexity of the likely relationships of dispositional personality traits with moral action. Morality is related in varying and complicated ways to each of the Big 5 dispositional traits and it might be best to say these dispositions more describe the *different ways* that individuals are moral: individuals on different ends of a dispositional dimension can be *differently* moral rather than *more* moral.[69]

Characteristic Adaptations. This level of personality consists of the characteristic ways that an individual adapts to his or her environment(s). To say "his or her" already suggests that there is likely more than one way of adaptation, and more than one kind of environment. These aspects of personality differ from the broad trait aspects mentioned above in that they are more closely linked to particular motivations and cognitions and more likely to change over time (through therapy, Bildung, or environmental influence). Two examples of this level include prosocial personality and cynicism. Other characteristic adaptations that are relevant to moral action are optimism,[70] internal locus of control and efficacy,[71] and generativity.[72]

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skirmishes of the situation vs. person debates of the 1980s (Nisbett & Ross, 1980). There is indeed continuity across situations, if one looks for consistency in the pattern (or "behavioral signature") of how individuals respond to situations they construe as relevant (Mischel, 2004; Shoda, Mischel, & Wright, 1994).

[64] McAdams and Pals (2006)

[65] Dovidio, Piliavin, Gaertner, Schroeder, and Clark (1991, p. 101)

[66] John and Srivastava (1999); Roccas, Sagiv, Schwartz, and Knafo (2002)

[67] Walker, Frimer, and Dunlop (2010)

[68] Huff and Barnard (2009)

[69] See Hill and Roberts (2010); McAdams (2009) for a larger review.

[70] Oliner and Oliner (1988)

[71] Midlarsky, Fagin Jones, and Corley (2005); Penner and Orom (2010); Treviño, Weaver, and Reynolds (2006)

The prosocial personality is closely linked to beliefs about social responsibility and motivations driven by other oriented empathy.[73] It strongly predicts long term volunteering and spontaneous helping during accidents. And though it is enduring, the nature and extent of its commitments can change over time.[74] It is not surprising that someone who has a negative attitude towards others and suspects them of dealing selfishly and dishonestly will be unlikely to help those individuals. Cynicism has been most extensively studied in the organizational literature,[75] but has recently made an appearance in work on ethics in science.[76] In these and other domains, cynicism is a reaction to perceived inequity and unfairness, and the source of a disposition not to help others.

Narrative Identity. In one of the most careful studies of moral exemplars, Walker and colleagues[77] did extensive interviews with those who had been nominated in Canada for national prizes for heroic rescue or for sustained social service. They also interviewed a matched sample of "normal" individuals. They coded the interviews for how they structured their life narratives.[78] Prize-winners did not differ very much from non-prize winners in terms of Big Five trait characteristics or lower level characteristic adaptations, but they did differ markedly on how they told the stories of their lives. Exemplars' stories emphasized early secure attachment to parental figures, a lack of early enemies and presence of early support. Their narratives had more positive affective tone, they spoke more positively about communication, and were more likely to emphasize the needs of others. Finally, the stories they told also tended to see good coming out of bad occurrences, something McAdams calls a "redemptive" theme.[79]

The conclusion from this short review of personality research is that at every level of personality, one can find influences that shape moral action but are somewhat separate from considered moral reasoning. We can also conclude that *there is no single moral personality* and that personality characteristics and their expression dramatically shape moral behavior.[80] The priest, Levite, and Samaritan can surely be thought of as differing in the way they would tell their story about the ethical situation on the road to Jericho.

5) Moral Emotion

Philosophers often make a distinction between emotion-based and reasoned based influences on moral action. Almost all current approaches to moral cognition or emotion reject the necessary opposition of emotion and reason and often reject even the distinction between them, seeing reason, values, emotion, etc. bundled together in

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[72] de St. Aubin, McAdams, and Kim (2004)
[73] Penner and Orom (2010)
[74] Colby and Damon (1992)
[75] Dean, Brandes, and Dharwadkar (1998)
[76] De Vries, Anderson, and Martinson (2006); Mumford et al. (2007)
[77] Walker and Frimer (2007)
[78] McAdams, Reynolds, Lewis, Patten, and Bowman (2001)
[79] McAdams et al. (2001)
[80] Hill and Roberts (2010)

structured ways that support action.[81] Most models of cognition and of emotion see the two working in complex interaction rather than simply in opposition.[82] One makes a judgment (conscious or not) of unfairness and is angry. One feels disgust at terrorist beheadings or bombings and condemns them. One sees a suffering victim and is moved with compassion. Reason can lead us to fruitful questioning of our values and of our emotional commitment to them, but our empathic response to suffering can lead us to question the reasons we give for our non-involvement. Reason, too, can serve as a biasing influence, allowing us to rationalize bad behavior, just as the priest and Levite might excuse their non-helping with obligations of purity. Bandura[83] provides a model of the many different ways that reasoning can help to distance actors from the harm they cause. Thus both reason and emotion can support or undermine moral behavior.

In the same way that a once monolithic reason has now been shown to be multifaceted,[84] the notion that "emotion" is a single thing and opposed to reason has been found to be much more complicated. Theories of emotion range from evolutionary models that identify discrete states,[85] to appraisal theories[86] that emphasize the structure of a limited set of emotions, to cultural models[87] that see infinite variety. All these approaches recognize the complexity of emotions and share common errors in the way they sometimes treat emotion.[88] For instance, cognition, emotion, and motivation have often been approached as separate systems, while emotion, mood, and affect are often treated as synonyms. Emotion is reduced to a feeling without regard to its other components and is often treated as a single state (one is *angry*) instead of a process. As an alternative, Sherer and Peper[89] propose a list of components in the range of things that we call emotion, including: cognitive processes, physiological system regulation, motor expression, action tendencies, and associated subjective feelings. Each of these can change within any "one" emotion, like anger, and give it a different aspect or profile. They also propose a set of processes that humans (and some other animals) go through that involve or shape the emotion: initial appraisal, priority setting, action selection, behavior preparation, and behavior execution. Other processes like self-regulation, might be added to these.

One final note to this review of the complexity of emotion: they way we respond emotionally can change over time, both as a result of circumstances[90] and as a result of learning. Compassion, for instance, can be cultivated[91], as can empathy.[92] One can use

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[81] The massive interconnectivity of emotional and judgment areas in the brain (Pessoa, 2008) attest to this blending of cognition, emotion, and action, and Moll et al (2006) refer to (and also track over time) "cognitive-emotional" complexes in moral judgments.
[82] Evans and Stanovich (2013)
[83] Bandura (1999, 2002)
[84] Evans and Stanovich (2013)
[85] Ekman (1999)
[86] Ellsworth (2013)
[87] Cameron, Lindquist, and Gray (2015)
[88] Scherer and Peper (2001)
[89] Scherer and Peper (2001)
[90] e.g. trauma - Berntsen et al. (2012)
[91] Weng et al. (2013)
[92] Eisenberg (2005)

reason to reappraise the basis for an emotional reaction and moderate or intensify it.[93] And one can learn long-term patterns of reappraisal or of emotion regulation as a part of a program of self-education or therapy.[94]

What qualifies an emotion as "moral" is disputed,[95] but emotions that involve social evaluations are the most likely candidates. These include: disgust, anger, contempt, guilt, shame, compassion, pride, awe or elevation, and gratitude.[96] In the voluminous literature on each of these emotions, they are usually treated as though each is discrete. But there is clear evidence that they are at least overlapping in any real occurrence of an emotion.[97] Thus the moral emotions are emotions and like other emotions have intimate links to appraisal and reason, and direct and indirect influences on action. They cannot be separated easily from reason or from reasoned evaluation. Nor can reason be easily abstracted from emotion. Emotions, and thus moral emotions, are a mixture of cognition and emotion. Thus the Samaritan's acting "in compassion" can encompass the moral emotion of compassion, a compassionate cognitive judgment that this was a person in need, as well as the compelling motivation to help the other.[98]

The complexity of emotion, and also of reason, should give us pause in making any simple statements about the relation among the two, or the supposed autonomy of reason from the tangled weave. This is not bad news, for it allows there to be people who are passionately committed to principles of justice. It allows us to be moved by compassion and to ponder the parable as an impulse to reassessing our values.

6) Bildung

We have mentioned in earlier sections that moral action can be supported by a variety of cognitive, emotional, and perceptual skills one learns. But why would individuals want to learn these skills? Certainly having a basic level of skill in emotion regulation helps one be less distressed in everyday life. One can say the same thing for many other skills that are associated with moral action – they help one live in reasonable cooperation with others. So most people[99] will feel the need to develop these skills to some minimal level.

There is no good psychological terminology for this intentional attempt to become better at things moral. Colby and Damon document the pattern among the moral exemplars they interview, and speak of it as a "transformation of goals through social influence".[100] Others call it "control processes"[101] or self-regulation.[102] We propose a term from

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[93] Feinberg, Willer, Antonenko, and John (2012)
[94] Koole and Aldao (in press)
[95] Oatley, Keltner, and Jenkins (2006)
[96] see Haidt (2003); Tangney, Stuewig, and Mashek (2007) for a review
[97] Cameron et al. (2015); Ellsworth (2013); Hutcherson and Gross (2011)
[98] Indeed, compassion might be an excellent candidate for a central commitment that serves as a cognitive, emotional, *and* motivational construct, just like the moral emotion of respect in the Kantian sense which Kant describes precisely as a *self-wrought* feeling embedded in reasoning (durch einen Vernunftbegriff *selbstgewirktes* Gefühl)..
[99] Not psychopaths, perhaps. But it is likely the development of these skills that allows some psychopaths to "pass" and to take advantage of others (Fowles, 2011).
[100] Colby and Damon (1992, p. 169)
[101] Carver and Connor-Smith (2010); Carver and Scheier (2002)

German that sometimes appears in English: *Bildung,* which literally means to *build up* knowledge and character.[103] This is a kind of encounter with the world that serves the purpose of self-development. With its overtones of intentional construction of the self, we think it is a useful term for this process. Education in the sense of Bildung should also be "upbuilding" in the sense of facilitating the development of the whole person – including moral identity and virtue.

To engage in Bildung toward a more moral self one not only needs to identify the goal, but also incorporate it into one's personal identity and narrative, embody it not only in one's life philosophy but also in one's daily practice. Thus, moral education must include self-formation.[104] There clearly *are* individuals whose life trajectory arcs toward justice, or compassion for others, or concern for specific moral goals.[105] These exemplars of moral focus may not show up (and perhaps *should not* show up) in large samples of regular people. But studying them helps us to understand how extraordinary moral commitment develops.

An important thing to note in this arc of development is that it is a transformation of moral goals through *social influence*.[106] Some, but not all, of this social influence comes in reasoned (and sometimes passionate) discussion with others. The work of many researchers on moral exemplars also documents how they are embedded in social networks that help them achieve their goals but who also shape their goals. Thus even among those whom we are most likely to praise for leading lives of moral commitment, we find crucial influence from sources not based in conscious moral reason.

Conclusion: The Ubiquity of Heteronomy

This short survey of influences on, and processes of, moral action makes clear that in the broad range of action directed toward good only a quite small space might be called truly autonomous action. There are indeed times when even experts or moral exemplars pause and consciously reflect. But these do not seem likely to be a significant fraction of people's moral acting. What is the fraction? In his Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle suggests that the virtuous person was prepared (or "cultivated") for virtue by learning good habits.[107] The importance of habits for moral behavior can be seen from how much of our behavior they constitute. In experience sampling studies, habitual actions comprise 45% of everyday activity.[108] So we are talking about significantly large fractions of what we would like to call moral action being eliminated by a strict criterion of autonomy that follows Kohlberg's definition.

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[102] Boekarts, Pintrich, and Zeidner (2005); Cervone, Shadel, Smith, and Fiori (2006); Koole and Aldao (in press)

[103] Stojanov (2012)

[104] Huff and Furchert (2014). But note that self development is not always in the service of *moral* goals. McGregor and Little (1998) have documented the primary life goals of a sample of Western students, and identify agentic, communal, and hedonistic goals. These are not necessarily moral goals and thus suggests caution in looking for all self-development to be moral Bildung

[105] Colby and Damon (1992); Huff and Furchert (2014); Plaisance (2014)

[106] Colby and Damon (1992, p. 169)

[107] Aristotle (1941, NE 10.9 1179b4-31)

[108] Neal, Wood, and Quinn (2006)

Still, one has to be willing to learn such habits, one has to decide to begin incorporating them into one's lifelong practice. Thus, as Aristotle says, good habits start with practicing the good, and this is something the individual must decide to do. This brings us back, through Bildung, to the realm of the reasoning-action gap. In order to be able to act on one's moral judgment, reasoning, or philosophy, one must start to cultivate what one considers the good in one's own life. Such cultivation could in turn help explain why some people seem to be more ready or equipped to respond to an ethical situation. We should understand this Bildung as an active and in part autonomous process, where one seeks out teachers but also teaches oneself. This autonomy stands outside Kohlberg's conception of autonomy, which only looks at reasoning in the ethical situation itself and not at the processes of Bildung and appropriation as life long developmental processes.

But this does not supplant the need for consciously guided reflective reasoning in those situations that call for it. Even though much moral action is influenced by social, cultural, personality, self-identity, and emotional factors, there are still times when conscious moral reflection is helpful and even necessary.[109] Indeed, the work of many moral exemplars consists of constant moral critique of social systems that lead to injustice.[110] The work of personal moral development can be guided by reasoned argument. The parable of the good Samaritan is a reasoned attempt to influence people to reconsider their values. Parables like the one we have investigated may be one of the most appropriate mediums for Bildung because they facilitate reasoned reflection, emotional engagement, and appropriation.

The ubiquity of heteronomy suggests that the story of how moral action is best supported is more complicated than isolated, consciously guided, reflective reasoning. The multiple influences on moral action and their interactions are so diverse, layered, multidimensional, and extended over time, that considering them as a whole should change our evaluation of the role of conscious moral deliberation in moral action. If we want to learn how people do good, and become good, or to evaluate whether they or their actions are good, we will need to embrace this complexity.

[109] Besser-Jones (2011)
[110] Keane (2015)

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