CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Embodiment of Virtue

TOWARD A CROSS-CULTURAL COGNITIVE SCIENCE

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1. Introduction

The well-known Stanford Prison Experiment has recently become even more famous as a result of its Hollywood dramatization and its connections to incidents at the forefront of contemporary discussion in the United States, such as Abu Ghraib. Randomly assigned to roles as guards and prisoners, volunteers in the Prison Experiment quickly took on these social and emotional roles, and some guards became inventively sadistic.[1] Though this work by Zimbardo and colleagues has sometimes been taken to show that people with an ostensibly good character will act in evil ways depending on arbitrary external conditions, this is not quite what the evidence shows; even under the

1 Craig Haney, Curtis Banks, and Philip Zimbardo, "Interpersonal Dynamics in a Simulated Prison," *International Journal of Criminology and Penology*, no. 1 (1973): 69–97.

experimental conditions, not all of the guards took on an active role in perpetrating abuse. However, supported by the authority of the experimenters as well as the solidarity with their assigned group, what all of the other guards did do was to stand by as others committed dehumanizing abuse.

To begin our examination of the relation between embodiment and virtue, then, imagine how it would be for you to find yourself standing in the shoes of one of the "good" guards. One might stand by as members of one's group treat others inhumanely, as the subjects in the Prison Experiment did. Alternatively, certain individuals in certain conditions might stand up against perceived wrongdoing. What is important to notice here is the emotional conflict one would feel, whichever direction one ultimately chose. On the one hand, there is the empathic motivation to relieve the suffering of the victims. Yet there is equally the pull of emotional solidarity with one's group as well as—in real life cases—the motivation to protect not just oneself, but perhaps also family and friends, from the social, financial, and physical consequences speaking out.

Although the course of action one ultimately chooses in such a situation is of course of great import, the experimental evidence suggests that individuals imagining ahead of time how they would conduct themselves are often mistaken. So consider what your bodily behavior and experience might be in the moments before you ultimately chose to speak out or remain silent. How would the emotional conflict feel in your body? How would you direct your outward gaze, and how would you direct your mental attention? What action would feel most natural? Which actions would you find yourself inhibiting, holding yourself back from? Would you find yourself holding your tongue in order not to speak out, or resisting the impulse to respond forcefully to rebellious prisoners?

In this chapter, I will survey some specific ways in which virtue can be, and can fail to be, embodied by human beings. Much of the discussion of ethics in modern Western philosophy has focused on applying

abstract principles of right and wrong to outward actions. Even within such approaches to ethics, there are some obvious ways in which virtue and vice depend on embodiment. In physically abusing prisoners, guards use their bodies. And which types of actions will inflict suffering depend crucially on features of the prisoners' human bodies; the fact that turning on lights every few hours will cause sleep deprivation or that prolonged confinement in a dark space will cause psychological suffering both depend on features of human neurophysiological systems. We share many of the same conditions for pleasure and pain with other mammals, and a more minimal set of conditions perhaps even more broadly. So if we assume that the pain and pleasure caused to others is relevant to how we should act, then which traits count as virtuous depends at least in this minimal way on features of our embodiment, on what kinds of bodies we inhabit.

Adopting a cross-cultural and empirically based approach to ethics opens up a range of less obvious and perhaps philosophically more interesting ways in which virtue depends on, and can be supported by, our human embodiment. In this chapter, I survey three areas in particular. In section 2, I focus on the training of virtuous habits of body and brain, through habituation. Here inspiration from early Chinese philosophical sources is of particular importance in moving forward some contemporary debates over the stability of ethical virtue. In section 3, I focus more specifically on habits of internal attention to emotional motivations. This leads us to a discussion, in section 4, of ethical conflict as embodied in emotional conflict.

2. Situating and Training Virtuous Habits

One response to the perceived overemphasis in modern philosophical ethics on application of abstract principles to ethical decision making was to shift toward earlier Greek approaches, particularly virtue-theoretic models inspired by Aristotle. We can give a general characterization of such an approach as focusing on the question

"What kind of person should I be?" as the central question of ethics, rather than the question "How should I act?"[2] One should not be the kind of person who would turn sadistic in the role of prison guard, for instance, or even the kind of person who would stand by while others do. In emphasizing being a certain kind of person, with certain virtuous habits and tendencies, this approach to ethics is dependent on human embodiment in a different way. In particular, it requires a certain stability in the behavioral dispositions of an individual organism over time and across different environmental contexts. Yet more recent theorists including Gil Harman and John Doris have charged that simulations such as the Stanford Prison Experiment, as well as a number of more controlled demonstrations by Milgram and others,[3] show that the behavioral tendencies of human beings are not of the right kind to make virtue ethics empirically plausible. The empirical evidence seems to show that in many cases the correlation across situations may be, in general, no better than .30. That is, putting an individual brain-body system in different social and environmental contexts elicits very different behavioral tendencies. Simply put, human behavioral dispositions are narrow and unreliable, not global and stable.[4]

Edward Slingerland argues that these low correlations are actually strong relative to other psychological results and also perfectly

2 If incomplete; see, for example, Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

3 See, for example, Alice M. Isen and Paula F. Levin, "Effect of Feeling Good on Helping: Cookies and Kindness," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 21, no. 3 (1972): 384; John M. Darley and C. Daniel Batson, "'From Jerusalem to Jericho': A Study of Situational and Dispositional Variables in Helping Behavior," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 27, no. 1 (1973): 100; Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority* (Harper & Row, 1974).

4 See, for example, Owen J. Flanagan, *Varieties of Moral Personality: Ethics and Psychological Realism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991); John M. Doris, "Persons, Situations, and Virtue Ethics," *Nous* 32, no. 4 (1998): 504–530; John M. Doris, *Lack of Character: Personality and Moral Behavior* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Gilbert Harman, "Moral Philosophy Meets Social Psychology: Virtue Ethics and the Fundamental Attribution Error," in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 99 (139): 315–331.

admissible for many of our practical concerns.[5] For instance, in choosing a student to guard a donation box, we are justified in choosing someone who has not cheated on tests in the past over someone who has, even if past tendencies are not perfectly reliable predictors of future actions. Similarly, we might well recommend to our friends a mechanic who performs his services in a trustworthy fashion, even if he cheats on his taxes—that is, even though the mechanic's trustworthiness is less than completely global. In many cases we can settle for virtues that are less than perfectly reliable and less than completely global.

Nonetheless, being faithful to one's spouse one third of the time will hardly qualify as a virtue. For certain virtues we expect, at least in moral exemplars, 100% reliability. At least some moral exemplars in Chinese moral discourse do claim this kind of reliability. Slingerland notes, for one, "Confucius's famous declaration that he could go and live among the Eastern barbarians and not only maintain his moral perfection but in fact transform his social environment through his moral influence (*Analects* 9.14)." Early Confucian philosophy proposes to achieve something like this kind of stability through two complementary means.

For one, Confucian moral culture prescribes a fine-grained manipulation of the social context. As Slingerland puts it, "the early Chinese Confucians paid a great deal of attention to the power of the embodied situation—social role, dress, ambient color, and sound—to effect human dispositions and behavior."[6] According to Slingerland, this focus strengthens the empirical plausibility of virtue ethics, or at least this early Confucian version of the approach. To be fair, the empirical literature cited by Harman and Doris is intended precisely to show the power of social situations; it is just this power of such social context in

5 Edward Slingerland, "The Situationist Critique and Early Confucian Virtue Ethics," *Ethics* 121, no. 2 (January 2011): 390–419.

6 Ibid., 418.

determining behavior that critics take to show a lack of stable, global ethical dispositions in individuals. Still, perhaps the point here is that this very emphasis on the individual as the focus of ethical theorizing is problematic, and a problem implicit in the situationist critique of virtue ethics as much as in the modern theoretical alternatives to virtue ethics. Virtue ethics done properly is based on the idea that virtue can be embodied only in certain kinds of social situations as much as only in certain sorts of dispositions; the contention is that this is not a weakness but a strength of such an approach to answering the question of how we ought to be.

Perhaps more importantly for our purposes, manipulating the social environment can be seen, as in the Confucian context, as a means to enable the cultivation of stable dispositions towards certain types of behavior. These are ultimately intended to be dispositions stable enough to be maintained "even among the Eastern Barbarians," as we have seen. They are presumably also intended to be stable enough to be maintained by individuals cast in the role of a prison guard, or a supreme ruler. Slingerland describes in detail the method of cultivation employed by the teacher Mencius with an oppressive king who displays a profound lack of the virtue of benevolence (*ren*) in his dealings with his subjects. Mencius notes a story of the king's own display of compassion towards an ox being lead to ritual sacrifice—a narrow context. By means of creating emotional resonance between that narrow situation and the the broader set of situations in which the king relates to his human subjects, the teacher works towards a gradual strengthening and "extension" (*tui*) of the disposition toward benevolence in the king. In short, Mencius aims at fostering in the king benevolence as a global virtue.

The empirical literature cited by situationist critics of virtue ethics focuses on "untutored" dispositions, as Slingerland points out. Indeed, the interest of studies such as the Stanford Prison Experiment to critics such as Harman and Doris is that they challenge our own self-conception, by showing that untutored folks like us wrongly attribute

stable virtues to ourselves.[7] This point is crucial. The viability of virtue ethics may yet be vindicated by new studies on the ability of human dispositions in general, and ethically relevant dispositions in particular, to become more stable and more global through training.

As Slingerland notes, the Confucian emphasis on ritual (*li*) involves training bodily habits of behaving in prescribed ways. This emphasis on training bodily habits helps to explain how some of these might achieve stability across contexts. Perhaps stable, reliable, ethically relevant dispositions can be trained through the use of logical reasoning and emotional analogy alone. But, on the other hand, perhaps this stability can only be achieved through the training of bodily habits. Perhaps both are required, or perhaps neither is effective enough, even in conjunction with one another. Ultimately, this is an empirical question, though one that is largely yet to be explored. There is some preliminary evidence that academic training in ethical reasoning is not sufficient; ethics professors apparently do not in general display more consistency between their expressed attitudes and their behavior than others, nor do they show consistently better behavior in general, and their reasoning about ethical questions is affected by irrelevant factors such as the order of question presentation, just as it is for the rest of us.[8] In advance of other evidence, it seems likely that whereas ethical reasoning is fickle and subject to rationalization, bodily habits of perceiving suffering and reacting with kindness may be more ingrained and

7 There is a side issue here in that virtue ethics was revived in recent philosophy in part as an antidote to the perceived impracticality of utilitarianism and deontology, and to return to a more humanly practicable ideal. Still this selling point for virtue theories may yet be vindicated to the degree empirical work shows a viable method for training the mind and body so as to achieve more stable and more global ethical dispositions.

8 Eric Schwitzgebel and Joshua Rust, "The Moral Behavior of Ethics Professors: Relationships among Self-Reported Behavior, Expressed Normative Attitude, and Directly Observed Behavior," *Philosophical Psychology* 27, no. 3 (2014): 293–327; Eric Schwitzgebel and Joshua Rust, "The Moral Behaviour of Ethicists: Peer Opinion," *Mind* 118, no. 472 (2009): 1043–1059; Eric Schwitzgebel, "Do Ethicists Steal More Books?" *Philosophical Psychology* 22, no. 6 (2009): 711–725; Eric Schwitzgebel and Fiery Cushman, "Expertise in Moral Reasoning? Order Effects on Moral Judgment in Professional Philosophers and Non-Philosophers," *Mind & Language* 27, no. 2 (2012): 135–153.

less subject to situational factors. If so, this would be a further sense in which virtue depends on embodiment.

3. Embodying Attentiveness

In the previous section, we raised the question of whether training in certain external behavioral routines or, alternately, training in ethical reasoning would be more effective in cultivating the sort of stable global dispositions worthy of being called virtues. However, there is a third option: the training of attention. Perceptual habits of attending to certain aspects of the external environment and certain aspects of one's internal states may in fact structure many responses to ethically charged situations. Indeed, attentional habits may help ~~to~~ determining both the trajectory of an individual's ethical reasoning and also the trajectory of behavioral response.

In offering an empirically grounded analysis the situationist challenge to virtue ethics, Merrit, Doris, and Harman emphasize the importance of other-directed attention.[9] In Milgram's obedience studies, subjects were instructed by an authority figure in a lab coat to administer increasing levels of electric shock to a "learner," a confederate of the experimenters who acted out intense physical pain, protested, and finally collapsed. What is shocking about the results is the evidence of how far apparently normal individuals will go to follow the directions of an authority figure. Merritt and colleagues note, however, that variations of the Milgram experiment showed that when the authority figure was physically more distant, subjects' tendency to continue to inflict shocks to the "victim" was drastically lower. This and related evidence they take to show the crucial role in which external situations can structure attention to the embodied presence of authority figures and thus attention and deference to their suggestions. They

9 Maria Merritt, John Doris, and Gilbert Harman, "Character," in *The Moral Psychology Handbook*, ed. John M. Doris (Oxford University Press, 2010), 355–401.

thus echo the point relayed by Slingerland from the early Confucian tradition of the ethical importance of the external social situations we create and situate ourselves in.

A second relevant aspect of other-directed attention is attending toward victims. Merritt et al. note that in the Milgram obedience studies subjects were "viscerally" affected by the victim's cries and exhibited signs of affective and physiological arousal indicating stress. Interestingly, some subjects turn their heads "to avoid seeing the victim suffer," mask the victim's cries with their own vocalizations, or turn attention away from the victim and confine it to the mechanics of the procedure.[10] This human impulse to turn away is familiar to us, for instance from the good guards' actions in dramatizations of the Stanford Prison Experiment, and—perhaps in less extreme circumstances—from our own lives. There are two points here of special importance for our purposes. First, the virtue of care for others in such situations can be embodied in whether we turn our eyes away, or move away. Secondly, the disposition to turn away serves at least in part as a method emotional regulation, a means to decrease the stress of seeing another suffer. We return to this point in more detail in section 4. For now, however, note that some measure of this kind of distraction from others' suffering can be achieved through mental distraction, even when we do not physically turn away. Conversely, perhaps part of what is required in order to embody virtue is the disposition not to distract ourselves from the stress of seeing others suffer, not to become overwhelmed by it, but rather to feel our own emotional suffering in a full and balanced way.

Buddhist ethical texts claim that this kind of mindful awareness of the body, affective reactions, and other internal states facilitates wise judgment and virtuous behavior. They are not alone in emphasizing the connection between attention and virtue. William James asserted

10 Milgram, *Obedience to Authority*, 155, 161, quoted in Merritt, Doris, and Harman, "Character," 382–383.

that "the faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention, over and over again, is the very root of judgment, character, and will."[11] More recently, a small number of theorists including Goldie and, separately, Brady, have debated the role of "virtuous habits of attention" in facilitating the kinds of understanding required for moral development and ethical behavior: understanding of what is dangerous, what is shameful, what is praiseworthy, and so on.[12] Yet despite agreeing on the ethical importance of habits of attention, these Western theorists have not offered anything like the detailed practical guidance for, and philosophical analysis of, training programs aimed at developing virtuous habits of attention that is offered in Buddhist traditions.

The recent upsurge in research on attention training programs derived from Buddhist traditions, particularly mindfulness meditation, offers an opportunity to test the ethical relevance of training embodied awareness. Research has shown that mindfulness practice not only improves attention, perception, and metacognition,[13] and is associated with decreased mind wandering,[14] but also predicts introspective accuracy in bodily awareness,[15] and is correlated with more accurate first-person reports about emotional response.[16] These

11 William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (New York: Holt), 1890, Chapter 11.

12 Peter Goldie, "Emotion, Reason, and Virtue," in *Emotion, Evolution, and Rationality,* eds. Dylan Evans and Pierre Cruse (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 249–267; Michael S. Brady, "Virtue, Emotion, and Attention," *Metaphilosophy* 41, no. 1–2 (2010): 115–131; Michael S. Brady, *Emotional Insight: The Epistemic Role of Emotional Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

13 Antoine Lutz et al., "Mental Training Enhances Attentional Stability: Neural and Behavioral Evidence," *The Journal of Neuroscience* 29, no. 42 (October 21, 2009): 13418–13427; K. A. MacLean et al., "Intensive Meditation Training Improves Perceptual Discrimination and Sustained Attention," *Psychological Science* 21, no. 6 (May 11, 2010): 829–839; Benjamin Baird et al., "Domain-Specific Enhancement of Metacognitive Ability Following Meditation Training," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 143, no. 5 (2014): 1972.

14 Judson A. Brewer et al., "Meditation Experience Is Associated with Differences in Default Mode Network Activity and Connectivity," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 108, no. 50 (December 13, 2011): 2054–2059.

15 Kieran C. R. Fox et al., "Meditation Experience Predicts Introspective Accuracy," *PloS One* 7, no. 9 (2012): e45370.

16 Jocelyn A. Sze et al., "Coherence between Emotional Experience and Physiology: Does Body Awareness Training Have an Impact?" *Emotion* 10, no. 6 (2010): 803–814.

abilities may derive in part from temporary increases in neural activity in somatosensory areas,[17] as well as longer-term structural changes in the brain.[18]

If the psychological and neuroscientific exploration of how mindfulness practice works to train embodied awareness is still in its early years, testing of the Buddhist claims for a relation between mindfulness practice and ethical understanding is barely in its infancy. Condon and collaborators recently found that individuals training in either mindfulness practice or in compassion meditation were more likely than controls to help a bystander in need. Interestingly, there was no significant different between the two meditation types in helping behavior.[19] Kirk and colleagues drew a closer tie to embodiment with a study showing associations between mindfulness training, neural activity consistent with increased interoceptive awareness, and more altruistic and less punishing responses in the Ultimatum Game.[20] The Ultimatum Game is a simulation of economic behavior, in which one party, the proposer, is given the decision of how to split $10, say, with a second party, the responder, with the caveat that if the responder rejects the offer, neither gets any. Most equal offers are accepted. But as offers become increasingly less equal, they are more likely to

17 Catherine E. Kerr et al., "Mindfulness Starts with the Body: Somatosensory Attention and Top-down Modulation of Cortical Alpha Rhythms in Mindfulness Meditation," *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 7 (2013), http://www.frontiersin.org/Human_Neuroscience/10.3389/fnhum.2013.00012/abstract; Catherine E. Kerr et al., "Effects of Mindfulness Meditation Training on Anticipatory Alpha Modulation in Primary Somatosensory Cortex," *Brain Research Bulletin* 85, no. 3–4 (May 2011): 96–103.

Missing in references.

18 S. W. Lazar et al., "Meditation Experience Is Associated with Increased Cortical Thickness," *Neuroreport* 16, no. 17 (2005): 1893; B. K Hölzel et al., "Stress Reduction Correlates with Structural Changes in the Amygdala," *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* 5, no. 1 (2010): 11–17; B. K Hölzel et al., "Mindfulness Practice Leads to Increases in Regional Brain Gray Matter Density," *Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging* 191, no. 1 (2011): 36–43.

19 P. Condon et al., "Meditation Increases Compassionate Responses to Suffering," *Psychological Science*, August 21, 2013.

20 Ulrich Kirk, J. Downar, and P.R. Montague, "Interoception Drives Increased Rational Decision-Making in Meditators Playing the Ultimatum Game," *Frontiers in Decision Neuroscience* 5 (2011): 49.

be rejected. Chapman et al. investigated the emotional basis of these decisions by asking participants in an Ultimatum Game to indicate how well their feelings about the preceding offer were represented by photographs of faces displaying disgust, anger, contempt, fear, sadness, surprise, or happiness.[21] Not surprisingly, ratings of happiness dropped rapidly from a high when offers were equal (5:5) as the offers became less equal, with the proposer offering to keep $7 and give the responder $3, or to keep $9 and give the proposer $1. In contrast, ratings of disgust and anger increased dramatically as the offers became more unequal. Moreover, the researchers found that changes in facial muscles associated with disgust were correlated with subjective identification with disgust faces. This suggests that emotions such as anger and disgust drive the behavioral response of rejecting unfair offers in economic games.

Kirk et al.'s investigation suggests that individuals with increased interoceptive awareness were more willing to accept unfair offers, and thus that their actions were not driven to the same extent as controls by sentiments of anger and disgust. The authors characterize their results as showing that mindfulness serves to cultivate "rational" responses to economic exchanges in the Ultimatum Game. However, a note of caution is necessary. On the individual level, the costs of retributive response may indeed outweigh the benefits, both in these laboratory-based economic games and also in daily human interactions. Nonetheless, the enforcement of fairness norms serves an important communal function. And more generally, sentiments such as outrage or guilt driving outcome-based moral judgment may be adaptive in terms of reproductive fitness.[22] In his classic paper on the emergence of altruistic behavior, Trivers notes that moralistic aggression and indignation

21 H. A. Chapman et al., "In Bad Taste: Evidence for the Oral Origins of Moral Disgust," *Science* 323, no. 5918 (2009): 1222–1226.

22 Ernst Fehr and Simon Gächter, "Altruistic Punishment in Humans," *Nature* 415, no. 6868 (January 10, 2002): 137–140.

might have been selected for as a means to counteract the tendency of the emotional rewards of altruism to drive continual altruistic acts in the absence of reciprocity.[23] This gives rise to a possible explanation of Kirk et al.'s result: if feeling altruistic is emotionally more rewarding than feeling anger or disgust, individuals who are for whatever reason more fully and accurately aware of which emotional motivations are intrinsically punishing and which are not might be less motivated to engage in retributive emotional reactions and more motivated to cultivate altruistic ones. We turn to this further aspect of the embodiment of virtue, in the emotional reward of certain motivations over others, in the next section.

4. Ethical Conflict in the Body

There is considerable controversy about the about the role of embodied emotion in ethical concepts and ethical judgment,[24] and about the role of emotion in ethical motivation.[25] Nonetheless, as Hollywood dramatizations and first-person reflection help to illustrate, to face an ethical dilemma is often to face an emotional conflict, one that is expressed bodily and that we can feel in our bodies. To take one extreme example, Jonathan Bennett reads Heinrich Himmler's remarks in a 1943 speech as indicating that the principles the architect of the Final Solution held

23 Robert Trivers, "The Evolution of Reciprocal Altruism," *The Quarterly Review of Biology* 46, no. 1 (1971): 49.

24 Jesse Prinz and Shaun Nichols, "Moral Emotions," *The Moral Psychology Handbook*, ed. John M. Doris, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 111–147; Jesse J. Prinz, *The Emotional Construction of Morals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); B. Huebner, S. Dwyer, and M. Hauser, "The Role of Emotion in Moral Psychology," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 13, no. 1 (2009): 1–6; Bryce Huebner, "Do Emotions Play a Constitutive Role in Moral Cognition?" *Topoi* 34, no. 2 (2015): 427–440; J. Greene, "Emotion and Cognition in Moral Judgment: Evidence from Neuroimaging," in *Neurobiology of Human Values,* edited by J.P. Changeux, et al., 57–66 (New York: Springer, 2005); Mark Johnson, *Morality for Humans: Ethical Understanding from the Perspective of Cognitive Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

25 Timothy Schroeder, Adina Roskies, and Shaun Nichols, "Moral Motivation," in *The Moral Psychology Handbook*, ed. John M. Doris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 72–110.

to be moral ones forced him to overcome emotional reactions of sympathy that he did nonetheless feel for the living beings he was responsible for exterminating. Himmler apparently suffered from nausea, stomach-convulsions, and various other complaints; Bennett quotes and endorses the characterization by Kersten, Himmler's physician, of these ailments of Himmler's as "the expression of a psychic division which extended over his whole life."[26]

The motivation to avoid cognitive dissonance seems likely to be a widely shared aspect of animal psychology. Although Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance as a core drive has been controversial, a recent review by Gawronski argues that this core drive imposes a universal constraint on belief systems across cultures and species.[27] He notes, for instance, that the motivation to avoid cognitive dissonance seems to be present even in rats.[28] These sorts of results, in contrast to some of the earlier research, seem to suggest a kind of dissonance that is not dependent on language, but is instead a more embodied and broadly shared animal motivation. In light of such evidence, we can see part of the motivation to act virtuously as a motivation to avoid conflict within ourselves, an emotional conflict that is as much physiological as rational.

If the emotionally painful social consequences that encourage even "good" guards not to speak out are abundantly clear, it is less clear the nature of the forces on the opposite side of the emotional conflict. Aristotle emphasizes the role of emotion and of pain and pleasure in virtue (*NE*, Book II, Chapter 3). While agreeing with this broad emphasis, Buddhist traditions make a further claim that is interesting

26 Jonathan Bennett, "The Conscience of Huckleberry Finn," *Philosophy* 49, no. 188 (1974): 129.

27 Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson, 1957); Bertram Gawronski, "Back to the Future of Dissonance Theory: Cognitive Consistency as a Core Motive," *Social Cognition* 30, no. 6 (2012): 652–668.

28 Emma S. Lydall, Gary Gilmour, and Dominic M. Dwyer, "Rats Place Greater Value on Rewards Produced by High Effort: An Animal Analogue of the 'Effort Justification' Effect," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 46, no. 6 (November 2010): 1134–1137.

in light of recent research: that ethically wholesome emotional motivations actually feel good, while ethically unwholesome emotional motivations feel bad.[29] To be at all plausible, this sort of claim has to be bolstered, as the Buddhist account is, by a proposal for how we can come to see more clearly which of our own emotional motivations are pleasurable and painful, and thus by a corresponding account of how we might (many of us, much of the time) be mistaken about this. The essential idea as that, when we train a more fully embodied awareness in the way sketched in the previous section, altruistic motivations are revealed as being more pleasurable than their opposites.

Altruistic behavior can be rewarding in various ways, and in many cases helping others may be merely an instrumental goal in service of getting social or other emotional rewards for oneself. In a series of classic studies, Batson and colleagues tested a range of such egoistic explanations of helping behavior against their own empathy-altruism hypothesis that egoistic concerns are not the only motivation for altruistic behavior. Put another way, Batson's hypothesis is that some motivations for some altruistic acts do take as their ultimate goal the welfare of the other, rather than the motivation to help another always being proximate, in the sense of being merely a means to some other self-interested ultimate goal. The power of Batson's work lies in the groundbreaking experimental paradigms he used to isolate and test cases in which the posited egoistic concerns could be satisfied without altruistic action to relieve another's suffering. In some experiments, Batson and colleagues manipulated feelings of empathy in subjects by using similarity manipulations, such as providing a filled-out questionnaire indicating that the suffering person's values were similar or dissimilar to those indicated by the subject; in others they induced emotion-specific misattribution, by providing a placebo pill and information either that the pill had the side effect of

29 Maria Heim, *The Forerunner of All Things: Buddhaghosa on Mind, Intention, and Agency* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

inducing feelings of personal distress, or else that the that the pill had the side effect of inducing feelings of concern.[30] These manipulations allow a test of the empathy-altruism hypothesis against the competing view that all helping behavior is motivated by egoistic concerns, such as the motivation to reduce the empathic distress brought on by seeing another suffering noted above in Milgram's subjects. In high-empathy conditions in Batson's experiements, individuals provided with an easy possibility for removing themselves from a situation in which they observed another suffering were less likely to choose to escape than in low-empathy conditions. This counts against the idea that altruistic helping is driven by a simple goal of reducing aversive arousal. With similar manipulations, Batson and colleagues provided powerful experimental evidence against a range of more sophisticated egoistic explanations of altruistic behavior, including social evaluation and self-criticism.[31] Using a reaction time task, for instance, individuals in the high-empathy condition in one study showed no increases in cognitive association with concepts of social reward such as PROUD, HONOR, PRAISE, but did show a positive association with victim-related words. In another study, Batson and colleagues found positive changes in self-reported mood when the suffering of the other was ended, even when the possibility to help was taken away. One especially interesting study addressed a proposed egoistic motivation to gain vicarious or contagious good feelings when the suffering of another is relieved.[32] Contradicting the conclusions of a previous study, Batson and colleagues again found support for the empathy-altruism hypothesis. Although there was some evidence for motivation to experience vicarious relief in

30 C. D. Batson et al., "Is Empathic Emotion a Source of Altruistic Motivation?" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 40, no. 2 (1981): 290.

31 C. D. Batson and L. L. Shaw, "Evidence for Altruism: Toward a Pluralism of Prosocial Motives," *Psychological Inquiry* 2, no. 2 (1991): 107–122.

32 C. D. Batson et al., "Empathic Joy and the Empathy-Altruism Hypothesis," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 61, no. 3 (1991): 413.

the low-empathy conditions, individuals in the high-empathy condition did not increase their helping behavior when expecting to receive feedback from the person helped, and did not increase their interest in hearing about the suffering person's status dependent on the likelihood that the person's condition would in fact improve.

Batson's results, if correct, show that we cannot explain altruistic behavior in terms of expected future rewards, even internal ones. They explicitly rule out the hypothesis that subjects "learn through prior reinforcement that, *after* helping those for whom we feel empathy, we can expect a special mood-enhancing pat on the back," for instance.[33] Nonetheless, it is consistent with Batson's results, and perhaps also with the spirit of his proposal, to suggest that people are motivated to act altruistically because feeling altruistic feels good—that is, making another's welfare one's ultimate goal could be motivated by the hedonic reward of present altruistic emotional motivations themselves. It is important to note that emotional motivations can be seen as distinct from the external stimulation they arise with. When one encounters others suffering, such an experience may be painful, as it seems to have been for some subjects in the Stanford Prison experiment and Milgram's obedience studies. But the negative affective valence of such external stimuli can be met and held by an internal emotional motivation of friendliness. One way of reading the Buddhist claim is that this basic friendliness, just as it arises and before it can manifest in helping behavior, may itself be more pleasurable than the alternative ways of reacting to suffering. When this sort of basic friendliness comes into contact with another's success, on this account, it protects one against feeling envy, and manifests instead as what Buddhist translators have termed sympathetic joy. Equally, when this same internal quality of heart of basic friendliness and care comes in contact with suffering, it manifests as compassion, a desire to help.

33 Batson and Shaw, "Evidence for Altruism," 117, my emphasis.

It is conceivable that individuals could be motivated to cultivate an altruistic state just because it feels better to feel that way toward others than the relevant alternative emotional options. On one construal we could take this as just another sort of proximate motivation: one is only motivated to be motivated to help because that desire to help feels good. On the other hand, one could also take this as a claim about the nature of motivation: what it is to be motivated in a certain way is that it feels pleasurable to move oneself towards that goal. On this construal, what makes it the case that helping another is one's ultimate goal is just the fact that the physiological state that results in such actions is experienced as pleasurable. And if individuals are motivated to cultivate this basic friendliness because of its relative ease, simply by being more often in this emotional state rather than its opposites, they would more often be disposed to act for other's welfare in cases of need.

This is of course an empirical claim that we are deriving from Buddhist tradition, and as such subject to empirical refutation. Nonetheless, anecdotal evidence from a few recent investigations provides initial support for the idea that there can be a pleasurable internal response to suffering, or at least helps to clarify the notion for further testing. In a recent pilot investigation of the neural basis of compassion, Tania Singer asked the Buddhist monk Matthieu Ricard to help differentiate compassion from empathic distress by directing his mind for one hour in the fMRI scanner just toward images of suffering, feeling the distress that brings on, without allowing this to move into the emotions of well-wishing that the Buddhist tradition suggests are so important to train. According to recent comments by both Ricard and Singer, Ricard found this one hour nearly unbearable, and practically begged Singer to allow him to switch to his highly trained manner of responding to suffering with what he describes as "human warmth . . . love and compassion."[34] What this

34 Comments by Tania Singer at Mind and Life XXV, 2012.

suggests is that it is possible to train a more fully embodied awareness that feels the relief of altruistic motivations, and thereby can help to strengthen the power of these forces over others in cases such as the "good" guards' internal struggle. If proves right, it provides a yet a further way in which virtue depends on embodiment.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have brought together recent empirical research with Confucian and Buddhist philosophical proposals, in order to sketch specific avenues for further investigation of the embodiment of virtue. The aim of such a cross-cultural approach is to ensure that our explorations of embodiment and of virtue do not become—or remain—overly beholding to any one particular conceptual framework for understanding the human mind and human life.[35] On the topics of embodiment and of ethics this need is especially pressing—for the rationalism of modern Western philosophy and the cognitivism of recent empirical investigations of the mind, for all their achievements, have equally left of us blind to important aspects of lived experience, and of ourselves. Buddhism and Confucianism have their own blindspots, of course, and this is why dialogue is so valuable to all parties. I have sketched three areas where integrating cross-cultural reflection with recent empirical research may prove particularly useful in pushing our investigation into virtue beyond its current confines: the training of ethical dispositions in social contexts; the training of attentional habits in relation to embodied emotion; and finally the topic of conflict as well as resolution between embodied ethical motivations.

35 Jonardon Ganeri, *Attention and Consciousness: The Metaphysics of Autonomous Shadows.*, forthcoming; J. Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy*. 1st ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Jake H. Davis and Evan Thompson, "From the Five Aggregates to Phenomenal Consciousness: Towards a Cross-Cultural Cognitive Science," in *A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy*, ed. Steven M. Emmanuel (John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 585–597.

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