

## BOOK REVIEWS

Joyce, Richard, *The Evolution of Morality*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2006, pp. 271, US\$32 (cloth).

Richard Joyce attempts two things in this book. The first is to give an empirically grounded descriptive account of both the evolution of morality and the nature of moral judgement, showing how morality might be a biological adaptation. The second is to investigate the metaethical implications, if any, of such an account.

Chapter One involves an easy to understand discussion of the standard fare of selection pressures driving the evolution of cooperative behaviours: kin selection, mutualism, direct and indirect reciprocity, and group selection. Helpful behaviour enabled our ancestors to make more babies and therefore, so the argument goes, natural selection may have favoured the trait of making moral judgements.

In Chapter Two Joyce explores the nature of moral judgements. He stresses that moral judgements are more than just inhibitions, they involve prohibitions: desiring not to do something vs. judging that one *ought* not to do something. It is an important distinction to make because inhibitions can be accounted for by prosocial emotions without recourse to any explicit moral thinking. Prosocial emotions by themselves fall short of explaining the nature of moral judgements because making moral judgements requires a certain type of understanding, namely (*inter alia*) the ability to understand prohibitions. The rest of this chapter is devoted to describing how moral judgements are different from other normative evaluations, in that they are both inescapable and authority independent (or more specifically, the folk *think* that they are). Moral judgements, in Joyce's view, express both beliefs and conative non-belief states. Hence, they can be said to be both truth apt and expressing a particular attitude or feeling—as such, Joyce rejects a *pure* non-cognitive view of moral judgements.

Chapter Three fleshes out the relationship between morality, language, and moral emotions. Language is a prerequisite for having moral concepts, and moral concepts are a precondition for moral emotions. To have moral emotions such as guilt, one needs to have particular evaluative concepts like *desert*, but such concepts are available only to language users, because they require an awareness of the conventions surrounding the use of moral *words*—namely, that they are ways of expressing ‘subscription to certain practical standards’ [84]. Hence, the ‘emergence of certain prosocial emotions, the “arrival” of certain concepts, and the advancement of language are all entwined’ [105].

Why might natural selection favour the innate capacity to make moral judgements over say strong inhibitions or desires? Much of Chapter Four focuses on how the employment of moral judgements could be a selective advantage. Due to their unique motivational character moral judgements increase fitness by ‘increasing the

likelihood that certain adaptive social behaviours will be performed’—this is often achieved by motivating long term (and fitness enhancing) actions over short term (and often fitness reducing) actions. Moral judgements are more effective than mere desires and inhibitions because they have ‘practical clout’, strengthening one’s commitment to fitness enhancing cooperative behaviour by overriding other considerations. One way natural selection could have done this is by tinkering with our emotional capacities: we make moral judgements by projecting our emotions onto the world, thus enabling the conceptual transition from inhibitions to prohibitions. Evidence for this hypothesis is that we treat moral properties as if they are an objective part of the world. Joyce thinks anthropology and psychology support his view that morality is an innate adaptation: morality is ubiquitous and ancient, humans seem to come prepared for making moral judgements, there appears to be a reliable sequence of moral development, and we are able to draw a distinction between moral and conventional rules from a very young age.

The second part of the book turns to metaethics. Chapter Five critiques particular attempts to vindicate some form of prescriptive evolutionary ethics by appealing to some fact(s) about evolution, ultimately concluding that they are unsuccessful. Chapter Six, the last chapter before his conclusion, is where Joyce develops his argument for moral scepticism. He asks, ‘can we make sense of its having been useful for our ancestors to form beliefs concerning *rightness* and *wrongness* independently of the existence of rightness and wrongness?’ (Harman’s Challenge) [183]. The answer to this question, Joyce maintains, is yes. Because evolution has primed us to have moral beliefs, our justification for the truth of those beliefs is undermined. We can give a full genealogical account of the evolution of morality without appealing to the truth of those beliefs—natural selection only needs us to behave as if those beliefs are true for morality to have been a selective advantage. Unlike, say, mathematical or particular perceptual beliefs, the selective advantage in having moral beliefs is in no way dependent on those beliefs actually being true. This genealogical account does not show that our beliefs are false, only that they are unjustified. So, to this end, Joyce is not an *all out* moral sceptic, he occupies the more subtle position of moral agnosticism. Having asserted that moral facts are not reducible to facts about evolution in Chapter Five, Joyce goes on to investigate another avenue the moral naturalist can take: moral facts are in some way reducible to ‘items that figure...in the genealogy of moral beliefs’ [190]. As before, Joyce concludes that the reduction does not succeed. No natural fact(s) can account for the inescapability and authority (‘practical clout’) of moral values. Hence, we are not in any position to make metaphysical claims about the existence of moral facts.

As you can see from the all too brief summary above, much has been said in this book and there is much to say in response (the vast majority of which is positive). In what follows I will outline, not so much a criticism of Joyce’s views, but what I think is an equally plausible alternative to Joyce’s picture.

The first section of the book contains an interesting and plausible account of the evolution of the capacity for moral judgement—admirably grounded in empirical evidence. But I think that Joyce is too hasty to posit an innate moral faculty—even as a ‘best account’ of the evidence to date. Moral nativism offers just one possible explanation for the (unique) human capacity to make moral judgements. Another explanation is that this capacity is based on a collection of non-moral cognitive

capacities, none of which are specialized to operate in the moral domain (Joyce, in fact, notes this possibility in his introduction). Under such a view, our moral capacities are not underwritten by a genetically encoded moral faculty; they are a product of other non-moral capacities.

Much of Joyce's nativist argument relies on the unique character of moral norms and the difficulty of the learning task: 'A creature equipped only with all-purpose intelligence simply cannot invent or be taught moral judgment, cannot be taught how to turn a dislike into a disapproval, because "getting it" requires a certain kind of brain: a brain with specific kinds of mechanisms that are geared for such learning' [139]. Even if we are to accept Joyce's picture of folk metaethics I don't think that the nature of the learning task warrants moral nativism. Joyce relies on a Poverty of the Stimulus argument: there is an information gap in the moral learning situation which cannot be bridged by general purpose learning mechanisms or the environmental resources available to the learner. Hence, the moral learning task requires an innate moral faculty. Evidence for this is the ability of small children to be able to identify the differences between moral and conventional norms along lines of authority, seriousness, and justification.

But infants need not come to the moral learning environment equipped with a moral faculty for moral learning to be possible. Our non-moral emotional capacities and reasoning abilities are enough to make salient the necessary features of the moral domain. Consider the studies involving the moral-conventional distinction: in these studies the moral transgressions typically involved another's well-being and welfare, situations that are emotionally salient, unlike conventional transgressions. A three year old child can identify the affective consequences of pulling little Janie's hair, but the affective consequences of wearing pyjamas to school are not so salient. As such, it is no surprise that very young children making the distinction identify only a small class of moral transgressions, specifically those pertaining to harm and welfare. Children respond to situations that are affectively salient—the moral-conventional distinction can be learnt.

The folk metaethics Joyce employs can also be accounted for without recourse an innate moral faculty. Enculturation of prosocial emotions can provide the strong motivational force in moral judgements, contributing to their perceived inescapability and seriousness. The counterfactual resilience of moral norms with respect to their independence from authority (i.e., it is always wrong to pull little Janie's hair irrespective of whether authority figures say it is) can be accounted for in the way children can reason the consequences of particular actions. In the moral cases these consequences will elicit particular emotions (for example empathy and distress) whereas in the non-moral cases these emotions will not arise. The emotional consequences in moral cases will remain salient irrespective of any directives from authority—hence children identify moral norms as being more authority-independent than conventional norms. Emotional responses to actions involving harm and welfare could form the basis for the development of rudimentary moral concepts, without appealing to moral nativism.

Moreover, moral development takes time (sophisticated moral judgements don't appear until adolescence) and takes place in highly structured moral environments—almost all children's stories have a moral theme of some kind. So, moral nativism may not be the best option. The acquisition of moral concepts could be the product of non-moral capacities interacting with highly structured moral environments.

If the concept of a moral norm is not innate, what are the consequences for Joyce's moral scepticism? The answer to this question will depend on the relationship between moral concepts and moral facts. Joyce's view is that the concept of a moral norm is innate. It enables us to 'categorize the world in morally normative terms' [181]. But if moral concepts are learnt from our environment, then there is a possible causal role for moral facts in the formation of moral concepts. Perhaps we learn moral concepts from our environment *because* of the existence of moral facts. Or perhaps we learn moral concepts from our environment *irrespective* of the existence of moral facts. If morality is not innate, it does not necessarily follow that moral beliefs depend on moral truths (just think of many religious beliefs). But if morality is not innate, then the genealogical history Joyce offers is not complete. Hence the force of Harman's challenge is weakened, opening the door for moral facts to enter morality's genealogical history.

*The Evolution of Morality* covers a lot of ground—from evolutionary biology and moral psychology right through to metaethics—which is no mean task for a book of 271 pages, and Joyce has done admirably well. This is a book rich in ideas. His hypotheses, although sometimes speculative, are empirically grounded and his analysis impressive. His explanations are clear, concise, and easy to read. And, unlike many other books in this field, Joyce actually gives an account of the *nature* of moral judgement and how moral psychology fits an evolutionary point of view. This book is accessible to those without any background in evolutionary theory, moral psychology, or metaethics, but it will also provide stimulating and thought provoking material for those working within such fields. Overall, Joyce has produced an original and important contribution to a lively debate.

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Laycock, Henry, *Words Without Objects: Semantics, Ontology and Logic for Non-Singularity*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006, pp. 202, £35.00 (cloth).

Many languages mark a distinction which is commonly referred to as the 'mass/count distinction'; e.g., the distinction between the two occurrences of 'hair' in 'There is hair in my soup' and 'There is a hair in my soup'. Often, the mass/count distinction is drawn primarily with respect to nouns and noun-phrases (or particular occurrences thereof); and it is drawn (at least in English) using syntactic criteria such as the presence or absence of plural morphology and the licensing of particular kinds of determiners and quantifiers ('much' versus 'many', etc.). Such purely syntactic criteria lead to the following sort of classification:

*Mass-Nouns*: 'air', 'snow', 'clothing', 'knowledge', ...

*Count-Nouns*: 'beach', 'sheep', 'clothes', 'belief', ...

*Dual-Use Nouns*: 'hair', 'cloth', 'pain', 'justification', ...

Even more so than the question of how exactly the mass/count-distinction is to be drawn, linguists and philosophers have been exercised by the question of how this distinction should be interpreted semantically and whether it has any ontological implications.

Henry Laycock's recent monograph constitutes a welcome addition to the literature on the mass/count distinction, especially since it marks the first published book-length examination of these issues by a philosopher; moreover, *Words Without Objects* also constitutes Laycock's return to this subject area after some valuable earlier contributions several decades ago. Despite a voluminous literature on the mass/count distinction since the 1970s, primarily conducted from the perspective of model-theoretic semantics, I agree with Laycock's assessment that, in many ways, this area is still very much uncharted territory, particularly as its ontological significance is concerned.

Thus, almost forty years later, Davidson's [1967: n. 9] 'problem of mass terms' is arguably still unresolved, and it is high time that more philosophers lend this worthwhile area of study the sort of attention it deserves. I very much hope that Henry Laycock's monograph will inspire, as it should, a resurgence of interest in what is after all, as George Boolos's seminal work on the semantics of plurals and second-order logic has shown, a prime breeding ground for questions concerning meaning, truth, reference, and quantification.

Although much of Laycock's view, to my mind, remains puzzling and obscure, it is certainly sufficiently provocative and intriguing in its unfamiliarity to warrant examination in the literature. The primary semantic aim of Laycock's study is to give an analysis of the phenomenon of non-singularity; his outlook attempts to be non-reductive, in that it resists the assimilation of the non-singular mode of expression to the singular mode of expression. Among nouns, the non-singular mode of expression is represented by both the category of mass-nouns (or, as Laycock calls them, 'non-count nouns' or 'NCNs') as well as by the category of plural count-nouns; the singular mode of expression, on the other hand, is represented primarily by the category of singular count-nouns. And although Laycock insists that the contrast before us is semantic and not ontological, he nevertheless invokes the apparently ontological category of 'stuff' to account for the denotations of at least a certain central subgroup of NCNs, nouns such as 'air', 'water', 'ice', and 'mud' which he terms 'pure' NCNs. (What makes these NCNs 'pure', in Laycock's view, is that they lack any semantic connections with cognate singular count-nouns [42–3]; in this respect, they differ from such 'impure' NCNs as 'snow' and 'sand' as well as 'furniture' and 'clothing', which in his view do bear semantic connections to such singular count-nouns as 'snowflake', 'grain of sand', 'piece of furniture', and 'clothes'; since the denotations of these 'non-pure' NCNs, for Laycock, are thus closer to those of singular and plural count-nouns in being 'object-involving', they do not require the radical revisions in our outlook which are needed to accommodate the 'pure' NCNs.) With respect to the semantics of plural count-nouns, Laycock finds himself to be largely in agreement with the combination of semantic irreducibility and ontological innocence advocated by the Boolos approach.

What is especially provocative and puzzling about Laycock's views, then, is his position concerning the semantics of 'pure' NCNs, as well as the ontological and logical implications which, in his opinion, flow from this semantics. Of course, for as long as there has been any interest in the grammatical count/non-count distinction at all, this phenomenon has been thought to be associated in some way with the (alleged) 'thing'/'stuff' dichotomy as well as with the distinction between what we count and what we ('merely') measure. What is novel about Laycock's approach is what he makes of these purported connections, in semantic, logical, and

metaphysical terms. As the title of his book indicates, we are, in his view, dealing here with a category of ‘words without objects’. Because such a category is unfamiliar to us and, if Laycock is right, cannot be accommodated in our familiar thinking about meaning, reference, truth, and logic, we have been at pains either to ignore its existence or to reduce it to the category of singular count-nouns with which we are more comfortable. Whoever engages in serious talk involving ‘quantities’, ‘instances’, ‘aggregates’, ‘parcels of matter’, and the like, in connection with such pure NCNs as ‘air’, ‘water’, ‘ice’, and ‘mud’, is, in Laycock’s view, guilty of what he calls the ‘strangely mesmeric tendency to privilege the singular’ [115] and of imposing an ‘alien logic’ [24, 28] on a class of expressions which deserves its own status. Since, as far as I can see, Laycock’s charge affects all of us who have ever written on the count/non-count distinction, his sweeping indictment and, as well, the new direction he suggests, deserve to be taken seriously.

As far as the central subgroup of ‘pure’ NCNs is concerned, Laycock’s main motivation for the radical departure he urges us to embark on is that he finds our discourse involving these nouns to be lacking in full-fledged criteria of identity and persistence over time. In the case of such nouns, even when what we say appears to be straightforwardly denotational, so Laycock maintains, nothing that could be said to remain the same over time has been singled out by our words; rather, what is indicated by expressions like ‘the ice in my drink’ is at most a potentially unstable and fluctuating amount of stuff: ‘Evidently, to the extent that they apply at all, the concepts of identity-criteria and persistence-criteria do not apply in the same straightforward manner to what expressions like “the ice” denote as to what expressions like “the cat” denote’ [23].

These conclusions concerning our apparently denotational talk involving NCNs also have far-reaching repercussions for the interpretation of quantificational expressions containing such nouns, such as ‘all ice’, ‘no ice’, ‘some ice’, ‘much ice’, or ‘most ice’. Exactly how apparent quantification over the denotations of ‘pure’ NCNs, as in ‘All water is pure’, is to be interpreted, unfortunately, remains underexplored in Laycock’s book: the substitutional approach he favours [134–5] appears to yield the wrong results for such statements as ‘Most water is polluted’, whose truth is independent of how many pointings or referential acts involving water are also pointings or referential acts involving polluted substances [135, n.20]; but no alternatives to the substitutional approach are offered. Thus, in the absence of a more developed theory, it is difficult to see how NCN-reference and quantification could be made to work without at some stage invoking the more familiar, object-involving and identity-bearing, semantic values utilized by the canonical approach.

Moreover, at least in the eyes of this particular reader, Laycock’s central claim, that our apparently referential talk involving ‘pure’ NCNs is in fact non-identity-involving and fails to single out a determinate semantic value, requires more conclusive evidence. Laycock cites in support of his claims such considerations as the fact that we would, for example, ordinarily continue to speak of ‘the ice in my drink’, even as the ice is slowly melting away, so that the amount of ice, or the particular parcel of matter at issue at one time, cannot be numerically identical to that present at the next time. But compare this to ‘the cake at the birthday-party’: as more and more of the cake is eaten, we may equally continue to speak of ‘the cake’, until it is completely gone, just as ‘only when all of the ice which you added to your drink has melted will that ice have finally ceased to be’ [22]. Thus, in the absence of further

considerations to the contrary, the obvious reply to the considerations Laycock presents is that we are dealing here simply with the phenomenon of change of parts over time, which can apparently occur just as naturally in the case of ‘pure’ NCN-denotations as it can in the case of other noun-denotations. In particular, I fail to see how there is a sufficiently substantive difference here between the so-called ‘pure’ NCNs like ‘air’, ‘water’, ‘ice’, and ‘mud’, and the ‘non-pure’ NCNs, like ‘snow’, ‘sand’, ‘furniture’, and ‘clothing’, to warrant the postulation of an entirely distinct, non-objectual and non-identity-involving, semantics, logic, and metaphysics.

On the metaphysical side, Laycock attempts to elucidate the category of ‘stuff’ by citing the work of ecologists and environmentalists on the boundless and fluctuating nature of water [7–9] as well as the tradition of romanticism in music and art [170–1], at the very beginning and at the very end of his work; however, these remarks are too condensed and metaphorical to facilitate the reader’s grip on the puzzling idea of how there could be something, e.g., some water, without there being any particular thing. Thus, given its wide-ranging and shattering break with our familiar semantic, logical, and metaphysical tradition, I suspect that, for many of us, Laycock’s study contains too few details to cure us once and for all of our deeply engrained tendency to ‘singularize’.

In sum, if Laycock is right, then we have all suffered for a long time—in fact, to be precise, since the time of the Presocratics—from something like a collective delusion, viz., the ‘singularizing tendency’; its accompanying object- and identity-involving semantics, logic, and metaphysics is tailored specifically to the needs of singular count-nouns. The possibility of an apparent mass deception of this sort and its possible causes are of course worth investigating.

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## Reference

Davidson, Donald 1967. Truth and Meaning, *Synthese* 17: 304–23.

Sher, George, *In Praise of Blame*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. x + 145, US\$35. (cloth).

George Sher’s latest book is quite good, a clear, thorough, subtle, and mostly successful treatise on blame and blameworthiness. His aim is twofold. First, he wants to explain the connection between bad acts and their agents. Blame is a reaction to an agent for what she has done, but it’s quite unclear just how we get from disapproval of some action to blame for the actor. For one thing, agents are enduring, whereas actions are temporary. For another, why, if it’s simply her action that is bad, do we condemn the *agent* at all? Second, he wants to explicate the nature of blame, a stance or attitude towards an agent based on a judgment that she has violated some moral standard. What precisely is the nature of that stance or attitude? What is it that blaming someone *adds* to the judgement that she did something wrong? The book is more or less divided equally in its treatment of each general issue.

In addressing the first issue, Sher begins with Hume’s view that the badness of a person’s action reveals the badness of her character. While it does provide an

illuminating account of the relation between agents and their acts, however, the view succumbs to some serious problems. First, there seems to be no necessary relation between the size of a character flaw and the degree of wrongdoing of the act: trivial flaws can yield massively bad acts and vice versa. Second, agents would be just as blameworthy for performing acts as for failing to perform acts (for lack of opportunity) if they had the same character flaw in each case. But then this means that, on Hume's view, blame turns out to be utterly independent of what an agent actually *does*, which can't be right.

On the other extreme, theorists like C. A. Campbell focus exclusively on the badness of actions while failing to account for how we might blame the agent *for* those actions. On his view, one's character yields various impulses, and one simply decides among them, either giving in to one's immoral desires, say, or resisting them. But then how does the agent's action reflect badly on *her*, given that it fails to have its source in her character? What's needed, then, is a middle route, something that will connect the bad-making features of actions to the agent's psychology, and then connect that psychology to the *agent*. Sher's answer is precisely tailored to satisfy these desiderata. Various of one's psychological elements—beliefs, desires, and fine-grained dispositions—can interact in ways that produce the bad actions for which one is blamed, and it is these elements that serve to relate the agent to her actions in the appropriate way, for they are essential to making the agent what she is (on any plausible construal of personhood).

The second main issue Sher addresses is the nature of blame itself. He begins by showing why the two most popular proposals—utilitarian and Strawsonian—fail. The utilitarian account suggests blame is simply the overt expression of disapproval for the performance of some bad act or character trait in order to make the agent improve her actions or character in the future. While this may occasionally be true, the account is seriously incomplete given the fact that blame can often be private: I may blame someone without his being aware of it. In trying to patch up this view in various ways, we are led eventually to Strawson's affective account, according to which the reactive attitudes (e.g., resentment, indignation, and guilt) are what blaming someone adds to the belief that what she did was wrong. However, this account fails as well, insofar as it cannot make sense of the idea of *blameworthiness*, of how it is that blame is something a wrongdoer can deserve, given that (on Strawson's view) responsibility is just to be understood in terms of susceptibility to the reactive attitudes: I don't perceive some blame-deserving features of you in light of your wrongdoing and then express my resentment, say; instead, my feeling of resentment is simply the sort of response elicited in ordinary humans by such behaviour. And even if we try to abandon Strawson's own relentless naturalism, the general Strawsonian view is still flawed, primarily in virtue of several clear counterexamples. The generalization on which the Strawsonian view relies is that blame is always accompanied by anger or the withdrawal of goodwill, but this simply isn't true. I don't get angry or hostile towards: (a) a loved one when I blame her for failing to tell a sensitive friend a hard truth, (b) a criminal I blame while reading a news story about his burglary, or (c) a person I blame for having performed misdeeds in ancient history. Indeed, we can blame people without passion, or even with regret, so what blaming adds to the belief in wrongdoing can't simply be a negative affective response.

What does it add, then? The data an adequate theory of blame must explain are the attitudes and activities that often accompany it, and these include anger, hostile



behaviour, reproaches or reprimands, and apologies. Now even though blame may not be accompanied, in any particular case, by *any* of these reactions, one must at least have their root *dispositions*. Is blame, then, just the disposition to have or express these sorts of things in certain circumstances? Not quite, because this would leave it mysterious why the various reactions are unified, and it would still fail to explain just what the relation is between the dispositions and the belief that the blamee has done something wrong. What's needed, then, is an account of the *goal* presupposed by the having of the various dispositions. The unifying goal, for Sher, turns out to be the desire ('D') 'that the person *not have done* what he in fact did' [102]. And while it may seem as if I couldn't be motivated to the activities of the blame-related dispositions by a past-oriented desire like this, Sher assures us this isn't the case. We can actually be moved by such desires in three ways: (1) we may feel badly about not having gotten what we wanted; (2) we can make public the fact of our unsatisfied desire; or (3) we can substitute for the original desire the pursuit of a different, albeit achievable, goal. And as it turns out, the motivational basis for each of the four dispositional data is linked to D in one or more of these ways: anger and hostility are traceable to (1), stemming as they do from a frustration of our desire that a wrongdoer not have done what he did, whereas reproaches and apologies are traceable to a combination of (2) and (3), insofar as we may be moved to apologize or reproach to express publicly both our unsatisfied moral desire and our commitment to morality generally, or we may be moved to do so in order to satisfy the closely-related desire that the blamee (either ourselves or another) at least come to appreciate the wrongness of what was done. The overall view, then, is that what blame adds to the belief that someone did something wrong is 'a set of affective and behavioral dispositions, each of which can be traced to the single desire that the person in question not have performed his past bad act or not have his current bad character' [112].

There is much more of interest in this book than I have the space to discuss, including an illuminating defence of the possibility of blaming people for character traits over which they have no control, as well as a provocative discussion of the nature of blameworthiness. And as should be obvious, I have great admiration for the overall project. Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning a few reservations. First, what ultimately motivates Sher's own positive account of the nature of blame is the alleged failure of the Strawsonian approach, but I wasn't entirely convinced of this failure. For one thing, one might genuinely wonder about the nature of Sher's purported counterexamples, about whether or not my attitude towards the loved one, the criminal, or the bad person living long ago is properly construed as *blame*, in which case the absence of anger or hostility alone implies nothing incomplete about the Strawsonian account. In the first case, admonishment isn't necessarily blame—as the case of admonishing one's children without blaming them reveals—and it's more likely that, in the last two cases, one is simply judging the activities to be wrong without blaming the wrongdoers as well. That is, once one begins to articulate cases in which resentment or the withdrawal of goodwill is absent, it becomes much less easy to think of them as cases in which blame occurs at all. Indeed, there seems little *point* to blaming those long dead, or those with whom one will never come into contact. Doing so would display a kind of fruitless, perhaps even pitiable, fetish.

Nevertheless, even if the attitude in these cases *is* blame of a sort, perhaps the type of blame targeted by the Strawsonian view is simply more circumscribed, reserved for blame with a particular point. In other words, what Strawsonian blaming—constituted

by the expression of the reactive attitudes—may be capturing is simply the way in which we ordinarily *hold* one another morally accountable; it is our expression of the basic demand for goodwill to our fellow agents, a way of reminding ourselves and others of the requirements of remaining as members of good standing in the moral community. If this is so, then perhaps Sher's objection to the view is just a non sequitur.

A second worry is that it is difficult to think of the backwards-oriented attitude Sher takes to be central to blame to be a *desire*. Instead, desires are typically thought to be both forward-looking and to take as their objects states of affairs that the desirer takes himself to be able to contribute to bringing about. Sher's blame-constituting desire, however, has neither feature. Instead, the attitude 'that the wrongdoer not have done what he did' seems much more like a *wish*, an attitude whose object is constrained neither by temporal orientation nor by the agent's relation to it. (Sher admits in passing in a parenthetical remark [103] that the relevant desire might 'more accurately' be called a wish, but then he neither returns to this point nor uses this language again). But if it is indeed a wish, then the motivational connection between that attitude and Sher's blame-expressing dispositions becomes much harder to understand. The appropriate attitude in response to an unsatisfied wish, after all, is *disappointment*, not anger, hostility, reproach, or apology. Why think, then, that my belief you've done something wrong, in combination with my mere *wish* that you'd done otherwise, should motivate any of the variety of blame-accompanying attitudes and activities? Indeed, why think it would motivate anything other than disappointment, sadness, or resignation?

Finally, while Sher's treatment of blame is thoroughgoing and fascinating, one might very well wonder why there is hardly any mention of *praise*, blame's positive analogue. If we take there to be symmetry between the structure of praise and blame, it turns out to be unclear just how Sher's account of blame would apply to praise. For instance, expressions of praise aren't obviously traceable to 'desires' that the action in question have been performed. Indeed, praise is often reserved for the supererogatory, in which case the action might have been neither expected nor even considered, let alone wanted. Of course, a possible reply might be to deny the alleged symmetry between praise and blame, and another might be to distinguish between praise for adherence to duty and praise for what goes above and beyond. But at any rate, it would have been valuable had Sher at least have broached the issue somewhat. Perhaps, though, this is simply a topic I will have to wait for Sher to explore in what I hope is the sequel to come, *In Praise of Praise*.

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Campbell, Tom, *Rights: A Critical Introduction*, London and New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. xix + 229, US\$31.95 (paper).

Tom Campbell's book, published in the Routledge Contemporary Political Philosophy series, is one of several recent books on rights. It begins with a short but informative preface. Here five core questions are asked: what are rights? who can have them? what rights do they have? what rights should they have? and, finally, how

can rights be made secure? These questions are addressed throughout the remainder of the book.

The book is organized into four main parts. Chapters 1–4 (which constitute Part One of the book) are concerned with conceptual and normative issues raised by rights. I should add, though, that the brief historical discussion of rights near the beginning of Chapter 1, emphasizing criticisms by Bentham, Burke, and Marx, is on the skimpy side. Part Two of the book takes up various institutional arrangements, with chapters devoted to legal rights (Chapter 5), to human rights (Chapter 6), and to societal rights, some of them rather informal (Chapter 7). Part Three looks at human rights; it uses as its organizing motif the idea of three distinct ‘generations’ of human rights—with civil and political rights as the first and earliest generation, social and economic rights as the second, and collective or group rights as the third and most recent generation. The respective chapters in this part take up, in turn, a right typical of each generation; thus, Chapter 8 addresses freedom of speech (from generation one), Chapter 9 takes up the generation-two right to sustenance, and a third-generation right, collective self-determination, is the focus of Chapter 10. The book concludes, in Part Four, with a chapter on ‘Democratic Positivism’ in which Campbell sets out his own preferred approach to rights.

Early in the book Campbell offers two main characterizations of rights. They are, in one of his characterizations, said to be justified and socially secured entitlements [xiv]. In the other characterization, rights are connected with rules or norms [27]; here rights and associated duties (duties owed to someone in particular) are set out in a specific and connected fashion, with sanctions attached for cases where the relevant duty has been shirked or violated. These two formulations are similar, though each identifies a feature missing from the other—the first one makes explicit mention of justification and the second emphasizes the important role of sanctions (or remedies, as they’re described in Chapter 5) in an account of rights.

The question, though, is how one is to fit *moral* rights into these closely linked characterizations. Campbell successfully shows that not all rights will be legal rights; some will be set out in nonlegal ‘societally recognized public rules’ [28], rules the violation of which will be met with criticism, supported by social pressures and, in the strongest of cases, by shunning and even virtual ostracism. But what about moral rights, including human rights, which are not conventional in character, which are not established or socially recognized, and thus which do not come under Campbell’s preferred heading of established socially secured entitlements? Such rights are, says Campbell [28], better conceived as *reasons* for saying that some societal or legal right *ought* to exist (or ought *not* to). Campbell, in short, rejects the idea that rights ‘can “exist” whether or not they are socially recognised and implemented’ [xvi]; he suggests that truncated or putative rights, understood simply as statements of what ought to be, are best viewed as ‘manifesto’ rights [39].

But many people will want to refer to these justifying reasons, especially if they carry recognizable duties in their train, as themselves proper rights. Some attempt needs to be made to accommodate this perspective; otherwise Campbell’s account will strike many readers as an arbitrary and stipulative definition.

In the course of Chapters 2 and 3, Campbell distinguishes various ways in which two root ideas, choice and interest, can structure such diverse matters as the concept of rights [see 43, 45, 61], the normative justification of rights, and the issue of who can count as a proper rightholder.

In the end I found Campbell's account, using these two root ideas in such diverse ways, unsatisfactory. If we want to use interests, say, as justifying grounds for rights, as Campbell does [39, 40], then we cannot comfortably use interests as part of our *definition* of rights too. For, just as one explains something by referring it to something else (in that one cannot explain  $x$  by saying ' $x$  because  $x$ '), so one can *justify* something only by referring it to something *else*.

Chapter 4 was perhaps the main chapter where Campbell confronted the issue of justification without relying on interests. But the chapter was, I fear, disappointing. The discussion of Rawlsian justification was marred by the fact that Campbell did not refer to Rawls's preferred way of justifying constitutional rights, by reference to what Rawls calls the two 'moral powers' (as set out in his Tanner Lectures), and by the fact that Campbell took no account of the different and rather distinctive modes of justifying human rights that Rawls deployed in his 1999 book *Law of Peoples*. The discussion of Marx on rights was carried through, by Campbell, without reference to Marx's distinction of the socialist phase of classless society (in which rights would have a significant role) from the communist phase (in which they would not). Similar questions of omission could be raised about Campbell's discussion of Nozick.

Finally, in Campbell's capstone discussion of democratic positivism (in Chapter 11), he argues that consensus on the scope and content of rights has proven elusive; indeed, settling the scope and content of rights has proven to be a matter of ongoing dispute. Campbell proposes deliberative democratic procedures as a good way to make a decision in cases such as this. But he doesn't make clear whether a decision on this basis merely terminates dispute until the next vote, without coming to agreement, or whether it works well precisely because democratic debate and then voting is a reliable way to determine and then implement rights and other policies that are in the interests of a lot of people, at least a majority. Democratic voting that had the latter character would in fact be building consensus about the scope and content of rights and would become part of the justification offered for rights. This, presumably, is what Campbell hoped to achieve in his turn to democracy in this chapter. But he doesn't develop, or even suggest, a plausible argument for thinking that democracy could perform this task.

Finally, a minor point. The book could have done with a good bit more proofing and copyediting (there are numerous typos).

I don't want to end on a negative note. There were several discussions in the book which I thought instructive and on point. The discussion in Chapter 2 of Hohfeld's division of rights into four main types—claims, liberties or privileges, powers, and immunities—was very useful, as was the special attention Campbell paid to the different ways in which one could parse the conception of liberties and liberty rights. Then there was Campbell's interesting discussion of judicial review in Chapter 5, with contrasts drawn between the entrenchment of basic rights and styles of judicial review in the UK, in the US, in New Zealand, and in Canada. The criticisms here of American style judicial review by Campbell are especially worth pondering. Finally, Chapter 10 on different kinds of collective or group rights and on different models of collective self-determination was a suggestive piece of analysis.

Campbell's book offers a readable and useful survey of main conceptual and normative issues raised by rights. Beyond that, it raises challenging questions about the shortcomings of rights, especially in Chapter 1.

The book is a solid one for students. The text itself is clearly written and relatively uncluttered by notes. Many of the citations are given in the text, simply followed by a date; an inclusive but short set of bibliographical notes, arranged topically but covering all the chapters (more or less in order), are gathered at the end of the book, followed by notes for most, but not all, of the chapters; at the very end is an alphabetical list of full bibliographical references.

It is certainly a book that could be recommended to Campbell's primary intended audience—upper level undergraduates and postgraduate students in law, philosophy, and politics. In this regard, I especially commend Chapters 2, 3, 5, 6, 10, and 11.

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Van Hooft, Stan, *Understanding Virtue Ethics*, Chesham: Acumen, 2006, pp. 184, £40 (cloth), £13.99 (paper).

Van Hooft's book forms part of a series intended to provide 'short, accessible and lively introductions' suitable for undergraduates meeting a subject for the first time. On the whole, *Understanding Virtue Ethics* fulfils this task admirably.

The book can be divided into three parts. The first chapter deals with the differences between virtue ethics and an ethics of duty. Having concluded that virtue ethics is a superior approach to an ethics of duty, in the next two chapters, van Hooft moves on to consider a potted history of virtue ethics, beginning with accounts of Aristotle and Hume. Having considered the emphasis on self-affirmation introduced by Nietzsche, he corrects this by using Levinas to argue that the self only comes into being through contact with others: that a true self-affirmation is inherently social in character. In the final three chapters, he develops a positive account of the relationship between virtue ethics and justice using the work of Paul Ricoeur, before looking more deeply at some specific virtues and their application to moral issues. The book concludes with an extensive list of questions for discussion, together with a very helpful section on further reading.

Writers of any introductory work such as this have to make a decision about whether to attempt a survey of the whole field or to press ahead with presenting an account of what they take to be the most plausible approach to contentious areas. Van Hooft has taken the latter course and produced a book that develops a particular view of virtue ethics: this undoubtedly increases the liveliness and accessibility of the work, but at the cost of smoothing over some difficult areas and perhaps concealing some alternative positions that undergraduates would benefit from having to consider. Although it is helpful to introduce students to virtue ethics by setting up a black and white contrast between it and the ethics of duty, they very quickly need to move beyond such a caricature to an appreciation of the internal diversity of both positions. My only worry about van Hooft's book is that it may do too little to encourage such a progression.

What then is van Hooft's view of virtue ethics? It is particularist [21]. It 'understands morality as a social construct that has the function of ordering social life and giving meaning to the lives of individuals' [48]. It challenges 'moral realism and the objectivity of moral norms' and 'the centrality of reason in our lives' [48]. It

suggests that ‘if morality exists, it exists within us’ [28]. None of these views is, of course, necessarily wrong and van Hooft is certainly not the only virtue ethicist to hold them. Moreover, he explains his positions with engaging clarity throughout the book. But they are certainly not the only views possible on virtue ethics and van Hooft perhaps does not do enough to warn readers of this.

Examples of this smoothing process at work can be found in van Hooft’s chapter on Aristotle. It would be impossible within the thirty or so pages of this chapter to do more than present a cursory survey of Aristotle’s views and, within the limits of space, van Hooft does an excellent job. But I think that a reader would be unlikely to come away with a sense of the real scholarly problems in deciding what Aristotle’s views actually are on key issues. For example, the difficulties in understanding the meaning and the role of contemplation in the good life are rather passed over in favour of speculation that Aristotle’s claim that contemplation is the best life is directed only at the elderly [77]. Although van Hooft would have difficulty in supporting such an interpretation from the text, the danger here is less from his specific suggestion than from his domestication of that part of Aristotle’s views which makes him sound (as van Hooft admits) ‘reminiscent of Plato’ [72]. Later on, Van Hooft says [113] that we should interpret Aristotle

as offering us not a metaphysical theory about the rational souls of human beings that claims that all human beings are so structured as to pursue *eudaimonia* . . . , but a framework for understanding human beings and what they do . . . that begins with the premise that, fundamentally, all human beings pursue *eudaimonia*.

I am not at all sure that the distinction being made here is as clear cut as van Hooft would like it to be. What he is trying to resist is a reading of Aristotle that would interpret him as saying: ‘There are straightforward metaphysical facts about what human beings are like, and from these facts, we can read off various ethical results.’ Instead, following a ‘hermeneutic reading’ [112], we can postulate whatever we will about human beings:

Our postulate can be purely pragmatic. Whatever helps us make sense of human events and actions is a valid postulation.

[113]

Putting aside any scholarly concerns about how appropriate it is to read Aristotle in this way—and in fairness to van Hooft, this is not his prime concern in these passages—how appropriate is this as a way of doing ethics? To answer this question, I need to consider the way in which van Hooft develops his analysis by using the work of Paul Ricoeur.

According to van Hooft, Ricoeur attributes a tripartite ethical aim to human beings: the desire to live well, the desire to live well with and for others, and the desire to live well in just institutions [115]. Focusing on the desire to live well in just institutions, we can read off from this the need for pluralism in the political sphere, and the creation of a ‘political discourse [which] must respect the plurality of views and seek to create policy that is acceptable to all’ [122]. Well, perhaps. But what does such an approach have to say to the Islamist who denies the benefits of such a liberal political discourse? Or to the nationalist who aims, not so much to respect pluralism,

but to forge individuals into a nation? Presumably, you have to say that their 'postulation' regarding human beings is wrong. And probably it is. But considering such alternatives surely reveals quite how much has been concealed behind talk of hermeneutics and the 'primordial aspect of our being as human beings' [105]: van Hooft has a very specific idea of what human beings are and, broadly, that idea is one derived from modern liberalism. Nor would he be embarrassed by such a charge. He mentions [38–9] with approval the view of Alasdair MacIntyre that

because the metaphysical and rational foundations appealed to by most moral theories have lost favour with contemporary thinkers it has become necessary to draw the standards and norms that we are to live by from the communities and practices of which we are a part.

There is a certain irony in quoting MacIntyre in this context. Few other modern philosophers have criticized so heavily the emptiness of modern liberalism as an ideology or the emptiness of the modern state as a means to living well. The practices and communities that MacIntyre commends in his own work are those which have a richness of substantive internal goods lacking in modern liberal institutions.

None of this should be taken as suggesting that van Hooft's views are, in the final analysis, wrong or even implausible. His views are frequently persuasive and perhaps even right. But they are often argued using assumptions that are not necessary to a virtue ethics position nor even generally shared amongst modern virtue ethicists. And the limitations of an introductory work mean that he does not have to opportunity to develop a full defence of contentious positions.

Putting aside these criticisms, there is much to be welcomed in this book. A great deal of the book is relatively uncontentious. It is generally exceptionally clear and, by presenting a coherent approach to virtue ethics, gives students the opportunity to engage with a proper work of philosophy rather than just an introductory text book. It is certainly a helpful addition to work in this area.

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