

Are intelligible agents square?*

Clea F. Rees

Forthcoming in *Philosophical Explorations*

Abstract

In *How We Get Along*, J. David Velleman argues for two related theses: first, that “making sense” of oneself to oneself and others is a constitutive aim of action; second, that this fact about action grounds normativity. Examining each thesis in turn, I argue against the first that an agent may deliberately act in ways which make sense in terms of neither her self-conception nor others’ conceptions of her. Against the second thesis, I argue that some vices are such that the agents concerned would make more sense to neither themselves nor others if they were to reform, and, furthermore, that an agent may make more sense to herself and others by becoming more, rather than less, vicious. I conclude that both theses should be rejected.

In *How We Get Along* (2009), J. David Velleman argues for two related theses: first, that “making sense” of oneself to oneself and others is a constitutive aim of action; and, second, that this fact about action grounds normativity. I argue against both theses using a variant of an argument which Velleman himself earlier used against the moral psychology presupposed by popular philosophical accounts of agency, deliberation and action. Velleman argued that the moral psychology of such accounts was impoverished

*I would like to thank members of the moral psychology reading group at Cardiff University for illuminating discussions of *How We Get Along* and the anonymous referees for this journal whose encouragement, criticism and patience greatly improved this paper. Special thanks are due to Jonathan Webber who read several drafts and provided invaluable advice on publication.

because it admitted only agents who were “square” in that they did “nothing intentionally unless [they regarded] it or its consequences as desirable” — unless, that is, they viewed the action or its consequences “under the guise of the good” (1992a, p. 3). I argue that the account of agency proposed in *How We Get Along* implies a similarly impoverished moral psychology. Although Velleman’s agents may act in ways which they regard as opposed to the good, insofar as they do they will be frustrated *qua* agents and wish to reform. That is, although Velleman’s agents may be frustrated in their squareness, they will be squares nonetheless.

In section 1 I outline Velleman’s model of agency, paying particular attention to the discussion of acknowledged vices and “rational dead-ends” which is crucial to his defence of the second thesis. My discussion suggests that intelligible agents must be squares in virtue of their agency. By ‘intelligible agent’ I mean any being who aims to make sense of herself to herself and others by acting in accordance with her own and others’ conceptions of her. According to Velleman’s first thesis, all agents are intelligible in this sense.

Section 2 explores the sense in which actions must be “aimed at intelligibility” on Velleman’s view and demonstrates the richness of his account by explaining its ability to accommodate the intuitive claim that genuine agency need not involve “trying to make sense”.

In section 3 I explain two examples of action which cannot be accommodated by Velleman’s account despite its sophistication, and argue that the first thesis, at least, is therefore untenable. Returning to vices and rational dead-ends in section 4, I argue that the second thesis should also be rejected because the aim of intelligibility can favour vice as much as virtue.

1. INTELLIGIBILITY AND NORMATIVITY

Velleman argues that intelligibility is constitutively crucial to agency, deliberation and action¹:

... action consists in behavior that follows considerations that make it intelligible to the agent. Action is... behavior aimed at intelligibility... (Velleman 2009, p. 133)

... action constitutively aims at making sense, by following considerations that render it intelligible. ... Without this aim... we would be incapable of acting for reasons, would not be agents, and would therefore be exempt from the force of reasons altogether. (Velleman 2009, p. 146)

The aim of making sense to ourselves and others grounds the unity necessary for the existence of selves as deliberative agents who act particular parts on a social stage. In this context, making sense is a matter of making folk psychological or causal-psychological sense (Velleman 2009, pp. 27, 185). Intelligibility is not the only motivation. Instead, it “exerts a fairly minor, modulating role” which shapes our desires for such things as gastronomic sensations, functioning limbs or Mozart sonatas (2009, p. 28). It informs both the particular ways in which we reconcile and act on our desires and the specific desires that we come to have.

How We Get Along weaves together at least three potentially distinct notions of intelligibility. Apart from psychological intelligibility, Velleman discusses both narrative intelligibility and authenticity. On Velleman’s view narrative and psychological intelligibility are distinct aims of practical reason but they are not independent: narrative intelligibility depends on psychological intelligibility but not *vice versa* (Velleman 2009, p. 185). This is because psychologically explicable actions are necessary, but not sufficient,

¹For a weaker version of the view, see the summary of his earlier claims in Velleman (2002, p. 94).

for narrative explanation (Velleman 2009, pp. 185–186, 203). What narrative adds to psychological intelligibility is *emotional* sense and stories are understood as temporally extended, affectively laden sequences of events and actions which end in an emotional resolution². Unlike psychological intelligibility, however, the aim of narrative intelligibility is largely optional although additional narrative intelligibility may compensate for some loss of psychological intelligibility provided that the decision to forgo the latter in favour of the former is itself psychologically explicable (Velleman 2009, pp. 204–205).

Inauthenticity comes in many different flavours some of which may undermine either psychological or narrative intelligibility or both, depending on the type of failure involved (Velleman 2009, pp. 202–203). I will focus on Velleman’s discussion of authenticity as it relates to the psychological intelligibility which he takes to be the constitutive aim of action.

In bad faith, or any other form of inauthenticity, the agent ends up acting on a false conception of what he is doing, and so he fails at practical reasoning. . . . practical reasoning aims at self-understanding, which the agent can attain by enacting a conception of what he is doing, but only if that conception will be true of its own enactment. A false self-conception inevitably yields self-misunderstanding, which frustrates practical reasoning. . . (Velleman 2009, p. 26)

The example Velleman gives of “bad faith” in connection with psychological intelligibility is that of Jean-Paul Sartre’s waiter “who plays the role of a waiter as if it weren’t a role” — as if, that is, his “inherent waiterliness” caused his actions rather than his behaving in accordance with his conception of a waiter (Velleman 2009, p. 25). The waiter could avoid inauthenticity in one of two ways: either by allowing himself to depend on automatised habits and skills, or by “playing a self-enacting waiter who is admittedly fitting his behavior to a conception of what a waiter would do” (Velleman 2009, p. 26).

²In section 3, I raise some doubts about the independence of causal-psychological intelligibility from narrative intelligibility. Although I cannot pursue the point here, one might wonder whether the former is even entirely distinct from the latter.

Velleman sometimes states the goal of agency as behaviour which is (psychologically) intelligible *and* authentic (2009, e.g. 159, 177), but as illustrated above, he also connects these two aspects very closely so that the constitutive aim of action — that is, psychological intelligibility — appears to be, or to partly be, a matter of behaving in accordance with a (psychologically) authentic self-conception. If inauthenticity undermines self-understanding and, hence, intelligibility, then action must, in aiming at intelligibility, aim to avoid inauthenticity.

It is important to be clear that this does not mean that authenticity is the mark of agency. Even if action is behaviour aimed at authenticity or if action constitutively aims at authentic behaviour, inauthentic action remains a possibility because the aim may not be satisfied. The bad faith waiter may be self-deceived, believing the erroneous self-conception on which he acts. In this case, his actions will be inauthentic but they will not thereby fail to be actions. It is clear how this undermines intelligibility and self-understanding — the waiter will fail to understand himself or to make sense to himself of a self which is genuinely his. A vicious circle is involved here — self-misunderstanding grounds action which further undermines self-understanding. Conversely, one might successfully avoid inauthenticity without instantiating agency. That is, one's behaviour might be authentic without amounting to action. Velleman discusses an example in which somebody allows himself to be swept along by a “flood of grief, forgetting himself in thoughts unaccompanied by the self-conscious ‘I think...’” (2009, p. 24 fn. 16). In this case, the behaviour is not aimed at intelligibility and therefore fails to be action even though it may be more intelligible than any behaviour aimed at intelligibility could be. As Velleman puts it, persisting “in the exercise of rational agency is not always a rational thing to do” (2009, p. 24 fn. 16).

What is important in Velleman's discussion of authenticity, I think, is its focus on the importance of *accurate* self-understanding. Action is not simply behaviour aimed at making sense in light of just any old self-conception one might care to consider but,

rather, behaviour aimed at making sense of oneself to oneself in light of an *accurate* self-conception. However, an accurate self-conception is not uniquely fixed — one does not simply discover one’s self as one might discover one’s blood type. Instead, one *creates* one’s self-conception and part of the aim of agency is to create and act on a self-conception which one can authentically enact — that is, a self-conception which one can *make* true of oneself.

Velleman’s conception of agency is both forward- and backward-looking. The agent is analogous to an actor participating in an improvisation. The point of action is to do what makes sense and is therefore future-orientated (Velleman 2009, pp. 132–133, 2007). But what makes sense is what makes sense in terms of the agent’s self-conception just as for the improvisational actor it is what makes sense in terms of the character she is playing.

... a rational agent resembles an improvisational actor in that he tries to make sense in causal-psychological terms, by acting in ways that can be understood as caused by his motives, habits, and other characteristics. (Velleman 2009, p. 185)

So agency is also past/present-orientated since it is sensitive to the agent’s past and present motives, aims, characteristics and situation. The agent’s self-conception needs to accurately represent relevant features of herself which matter. This is not to say that these factors determine the agent’s action in some sense that removes her from the picture. As Velleman puts it, the agent is “writing” rather than “reading” what it makes sense to do since it is the *agent* who has the aim of making sense and therefore decides what to do in light of those factors she considers relevant to that aim. That is, it is the *agent’s* aim of making sense of herself to herself and others which gives agency an orientation which looks to *both* past/present and future. Her past and present motives, aims and characteristics are unlikely to uniquely determine a self-conception, leaving the agent to choose how to conceive of herself in a way which is both true to the features of herself which matter and which she is able to genuinely make her own as she acts on

them.

Moreover, the agent can revise her self-conception and change her motives, aims and characteristics. This is why some “wishful thinking” can support, rather than undermine, authenticity (Velleman 2009, p. 91). Other revisions will likely be more transparent. But, as I explain below, both the revised self-conception and the process of revising it must make sense in the light of her current self-conception just as an improvisational actor must enact any process of personality change and development in the light of the character she is currently playing. The agent’s current self-conception, like the improvisational actor’s current character, is the starting-point in light of which the agent decides what makes sense. Any such starting-point constrains what can make sense but, without one, there could no more be anything that it would make sense to do than there could be anything that would not do so.

INTELLIGIBILITY AND RATIONAL DEAD-ENDS

Velleman considers the objection that acting in ways which make one intelligible to oneself and others *prima facie* includes acting in ways which demonstrate vices such as laziness, insofar as these are recognised by oneself and others (2009, p. 31). This is problematic because Velleman wants to argue that our concepts of “appropriateness or rightness or goodness” are grounded solely in causal-psychological intelligibility (2009, p. 27). The moral themes which run through our ways of life emerge, Velleman argues, from our need to make sense of ourselves to ourselves and others.

Velleman’s response involves distinguishing a genuinely lazy agent from one who is merely “laid-back or easygoing” (2009, p. 32). Whether an agent and those around her are likely to describe her as “lazy” or “easygoing” depends on whether her behaviour harmonises with her other desires, values and so on. If her apathy or procrastination prevents her from achieving goals or fulfilling commitments, she and others are more likely

to describe her as “lazy”. In this case, the agent does not make as much sense to herself as she would if her desires and attributes were in harmony and this may provide her with a reason to change herself so that the epithet ‘lazy’ no longer applies. If the agent does not have goals or desires which are frustrated by her lack of action, however, Velleman claims that she and others are more likely to describe her as “easygoing” precisely because her behaviour is not seen as needing modification. Such an agent has no vice of laziness to overcome. It is not, that is, that it makes sense for her to continue to be lazy because she is not lazy. Rather, what makes sense is for her to continue to be easygoing and easygoing-ness, unlike laziness, is not a vice.

So an agent who really does suffer from the vice in question — that is, one who can be properly described as “lazy” or, at least, one who can properly describe herself in this way — would make more sense to herself if she were to have overcome her laziness³. Velleman thinks that it may make sense to the agent to undertake the process necessary to overcome her vice. In this case, two things make sense to the agent: first, the agent would make more sense to herself in the light of a revised self-conception than she can in the light of her current self-conception; second, attempting to change so that the revised self-conception replaces her current self-conception makes sense in the light of her current self-conception (Velleman 2009, p. 33). Alternatively, self-reform might not make sense to the agent even though she would make more sense to herself if she were to have successfully completed the process. In this case, one thing makes sense to the agent but the other does not: first, the agent would make more sense to herself in the light of a revised self-conception than she can in the light of her current self-conception; second, attempting to change so that the revised self-conception replaces her current

³Velleman’s argument here assumes that resolving the conflict by abandoning ambitions currently frustrated by her laziness either isn’t an option for the agent or is one which would result in her making less sense to herself than she would if she overcame her laziness. I doubt that overcoming an acknowledged vice will always make more sense than alternative ways of resolving such conflicts but will not pursue the point here.

self-conception does *not* make sense in the light of her current self-conception (Velleman 2009, p. 33). That is, the agent might be trapped in a “rational dead-end” (2009, p. 31).

An agent in a rational dead-end is in a condition *A* such that she is frustrated by her acknowledged vices. From this position, she can see a condition *B* which would free her from these frustrations. She would therefore make more sense to herself in *B* than she does in *A*. However, although she is in some sense capable of overcoming her vices and realising *B*, it does not make sense to her to engage in the necessary process of self-reform given that she is currently in *A*. Although the agent would make more sense to herself were she to have revised her self-conception, revising her self-conception does not make sense to her. The self-described “lazy” agent, for example, may be so averse to the expenditure of effort that reform makes no sense to her even though overcoming her laziness would free her from the very frustrations which motivate her use of the epithet ‘lazy’ (Velleman 2009, p. 31).

An agent in a rational dead-end cannot make as much sense to herself as an agent not in one. Since agency is partly constituted by the aim of making sense to oneself and others, an agent in a rational dead-end cannot completely succeed in being an agent.

As described, the agent does seem to be “stuck” and her agency impaired. But one might reasonably worry that something has gone awry in Velleman’s response to the initial objection. Whether a particular agent regards herself as having a vice depends, at least in part, on whether her various attitudes and commitments generate conflicts. Whether an agent who does consider herself to have a vice is in a position to overcome it depends, at least in part, on the details of the conflicts generated and the relative weight accorded by the agent to the conflicting ends involved. For example, an agent might consider her trait to be a vice because it hinders her pursuit of a cherished goal but whether or not it makes sense for her to overcome that vice may depend on when she recognises the conflict: if she perceives the conflict only when the goal is no longer accessible to her, it may not make sense for her to overcome the vice even though she

would have made more sense to herself if she were to have overcome it and it would have made sense for her to overcome it had she recognised the conflict earlier. Whether it would have made sense for her to overcome the vice at the earlier time will depend partly on how heavily the agent weighs the ends which that vice hinders, such as career success, against the ends which partly constitute it, such as avoidance of the sort of effortful activity required to overcome laziness. But an agent who regards herself as having a vice is one who *wishes* to reform — or, more accurately, one who wishes that she were to have reformed — even if she cannot. Even non-virtuous agents, it seems, are necessarily vice-hating.

To use Velleman’s own earlier term, it seems that agents must be squares simply in virtue of their agency (1992a, p. 3). They may be unsuccessful by their own lights or unable to rid themselves of the vices they perceive in themselves. But they wish to be free of those vices.

INTELLIGIBILITY AND THE CONTINGENCY OF MORALITY

One might object that my discussion attributes to Velleman the claim that the aim of intelligibility guarantees morality when in fact he claims only that it exerts a “pro-moral” pressure which encourages, but by no means assures, its emergence (2009, p. 2). On this interpretation, Velleman’s response to the objection that his view implies that vices provide their possessors with *prima facie* reasons to act badly is not intended to rule out the possibility of an agent’s having reasons for acting viciously but only to illustrate how the aim of making sense of herself to herself and others *may*, given appropriate conditions, shape an agent’s desires so that being less vicious — that is, having overcome a vice — would provide a gain in intelligibility. Although the aim of intelligibility would encourage virtuous or wish-to-be-virtuous agents in general, particular vicious agents might nonetheless make excellent sense to themselves and others. The general tendency

for intelligibility to provide pro-moral pressure notwithstanding, such agents might be anything but square. After all, Velleman thinks that there is no guarantee of moral progress. Indeed, there was no guarantee of any morality at all:

...practical reason is not in itself moral; it is merely pro-moral, in that it has encouraged us to develop a moral way of life. (Velleman 2009, p. 2)

That is, human morality is contingent. Had things gone differently for us, we might have developed no sense of morality despite being equipped with just the same capacities for practical reason. The nature of action and agency — the aim of making sense of ourselves to ourselves and others — grounds morality, on Velleman’s view, not in the sense that it made morality inevitable but that it made it possible or, perhaps, probable. This is an “insecure” morality because it admits “the possibility of its having failed to develop, and indeed the possibility of social or individual configurations from which various kinds of rational progress, including morality, are not rationally accessible” (Velleman 2009, p. 2).

However, Velleman emphasises that this “is not a matter of doubting whether we have ‘reason to be moral’ ” but of “appreciating the contingency of morality” (2009, p. 2). That is, morality is not an optional extra *for us*. *Our* practical reasoning — agency, action, intelligibility — cannot be separated from morality because morality *has*, as it happens, developed among us. Given the background of human social and cultural development and an individual who is not, for example, raised by wolves or otherwise isolated from normal human interaction, that individual will develop into a *moral* agent even though the same individual in other individual circumstances or in the context of a different pattern of human development might develop into a non-moral agent.

Though not true for all creatures like us, then, for us, the pro-moral character of practical reason has resulted in forms of life which include moral themes. For us, intelligibility has produced, and continues to encourage, a world with a moral aspect. We therefore inhabit a moral world and, for us, what makes sense is a question of what

makes sense in a world coloured in this way. Had we not developed like this, there could have been no question of an agent's having a reason to act lazily just as there could have been no question of an agent's having a reason to reform or to wish to be less lazy because, in such a world, it would make no sense to speak of an agent's being 'lazy' at all. I take Velleman to have something like this in mind when he says that "a vocabulary of action-types and practices contains significant incentives, because it structures our practical reasoning, by framing the options over which we deliberate" (2009, p. 5).

The sense in which morality is contingent according to Velleman does not, then, mean that intelligibility might not favour morality when considering an individual human agent in an actual human context. Intelligibility favours honesty, for example, even when other, weightier motivations favour deception (Velleman 2009, p. 150). I take it that this is why Velleman takes the objection that "considerations of what's intelligible seem to diverge from considerations of what would be best, and so... from genuine reasons for acting as well" in the case of an agent who has a vice such as laziness to be one requiring a response despite the contingency of both morality in general and the character of human morality in particular (2009, pp. 3, 31). If, therefore, I am right in suggesting that Velleman's response implies that such an agent must be vice-hating, even though not virtuous, and if, as I shall argue, such a view is problematic, then doubts would be cast on Velleman's "Kinda Kantian" strategy in general (2009, p. 149). This will be so not because interpersonal interaction might be stymied in particular cases — where, for example, others think an agent 'lazy' while she considers herself 'laid-back' — but because doubts will be raised about the possibility of grounding shared values — morality — in intelligibility alone, even given the contingent fact of human moral development.

I will argue that, as Velleman pointed out in 'The Guise of the Good', agents need not be square (1992a). First, I argue that action need not aim at making causal-psychological sense of oneself to oneself or others. Second, I argue that this aim cannot ground normativity in any case because causal-psychological intelligibility may not only

fail to favour virtue but positively encourage vice. Before presenting these arguments, however, I need to explore in greater detail what it means for behaviour to be aimed at causal-psychological intelligibility on Velleman's account.

2. MAKING SENSE

The account of agency and action developed by Velleman in *How We Get Along* depends crucially on what it means for behaviour to be "aimed at intelligibility". Despite the subtlety of his account, Velleman sometimes fails to make full use of the resources it provides. This is important because these resources make it possible to classify as actions a variety of phenomena which might otherwise be taken to constitute counterexamples to Velleman's conception of action. Although I argue in section 3 that Velleman's account cannot accommodate all cases of action despite its richness and sophistication, that argument depends on an appreciation of the resources which it does offer and the range of cases which it can accommodate.

I begin with a remark Velleman makes in *How We Get Along* concerning a range of cases in which he claims that trying to act in an intelligible way "makes no sense at all" (2009, p. 138 fn. 25). In these cases, Velleman suggests, what makes sense is to temporarily suspend one's agency. I agree that trying to make sense does not make sense in these cases but do not think that this means that one has reason to temporarily stop being an agent. This suggests that such cases might be examples which involve agency and action even though what is done does not make the required sort of sense. I suggest, however, that Velleman's account can accommodate these cases. Not only does Velleman's conception of agency provide sufficient theoretical resources, but both an earlier discussion of the phenomenon in question and his treatment of other, relevantly similar cases in *How We Get Along* are analogous to my proposal.

SENSE IN FLOW

Consider Velleman's remark that

... there are occasions when trying to do what makes sense, makes no sense at all. On such occasions, the rational thing to do is to leave off being an agent for a while. I discuss this issue at length in 'What Good Is a Will?'... (Velleman 2009, p. 138 fn. 25)

It might, that is, make second-order sense for an agent to do what makes no first-order sense to her. But the sort of intelligibility demanded by Velleman's criterion for *action* requires the agent to enact her self-conception. That is, for a case to be one of action, it must be one in which the agent does what makes first-order sense to her. Second-order sense is insufficient for action or agency which is why what makes (second-order) sense in such a case is for the agent to "leave off being an agent for a while".

'What Good Is a Will?' is concerned with cases in which the will and consciousness of agency would "get in the way" of performing an activity as efficiently and fluidly as possible. The initiation of the activity may well make (first-order) sense to the agent. That is, initiating the activity may well make sense to the agent in terms of her self-conception. Moreover, the things which the agent does as part of the activity would make (first-order) sense of the agent to herself were the question of intelligibility to arise because they also make sense in terms of her self-conception. That is, Velleman is not claiming that it makes sense to do what makes no sense. Rather, what makes sense is to stop *trying* to make sense so that the agent can better do what would make sense if she were to reflect on the question.

I take it that the quotation above refers most clearly to Velleman's discussion of activities which can involve what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi refers to as "flow" (Velleman 2007, pp. 213–214; Csikszentmihalyi 1990, 1997). Such highly demanding activities are characterised by genuine but realistic challenges which require the exercise of well-developed physical or mental skills. This means that all of a subject's "psychic energy"

is absorbed in the activity to the exclusion of extraneous questions and tasks. All of the subject's attention is required for the successful performance of the activity and so questions concerning, for example, whether she should instead spend her time doing something else do not arise. The experience of flow is thus characterised by a focus on task-related stimuli rather than on subjects' own inner states.

Velleman quotes Csikszentmihalyi's claim that flow involves a "loss of consciousness of the self" (Velleman 2009, p. 214; Csikszentmihalyi 1990, p. 64). Velleman comments that

Not surprisingly, it also involves a suspension of deliberation... (Velleman 2007, p. 214)

However, the passage which Velleman cites in support of this claim does not seem to establish what he takes it to. The passage in question reads:

In normal life, we keep interrupting what we do with doubts and questions. "Why am I doing this? Should I perhaps be doing something else?" Repeatedly we question the necessity of our actions, and evaluate critically the reasons for carrying them out. But in flow there is no need to reflect, because the action carries us forward as if by magic. (Csikszentmihalyi 1990, p. 54; quoted by Velleman 2007, p. 214)

If this is right, what it establishes is the suspension not of deliberation generally but only of deliberation regarding which activity to engage in. Deliberation concerning how to engage in that activity might still be involved. Although Velleman claims that such activities "require us to think with our bodies, without pausing to make up our minds", it seems unlikely that this is true of all the activities Csikszentmihalyi has in mind, even though it seems plausible for some paradigmatic examples such as fast-moving sports. People may experience flow while engaged in a range of activities which include not only badminton and white-water rafting, for example, but also artistic, scientific and literary endeavours, conversation and stock broking (Csikszentmihalyi 1990, 1997). What this suggests is that flow is characterised by a lack of conscious deliberation concerning

whether to engage in the activity where this deliberative lack results from *either* a general absence of conscious deliberation — as when one “thinks with one’s body” while cycling — *or* an exclusive focus of conscious deliberation on thinking about the activity itself — as when one becomes completely engrossed in writing a story or proving a theorem.

Neil Roughley points out that flow in sports suggests that flow is characterised not by a complete lack of intentions, as Velleman claims, but instead by the absence of what he calls ‘decisional’, as opposed to ‘spontaneous’ or ‘routine’, intentions (2007). But while this may be plausible in the case of at least some sports, even this seems implausible for activities such as Alexander Fleming’s studying the inhibitory effects of mould on bacterial growth; writing great poetry; or conversing with a good friend (Csikszentmihalyi 1997, pp. 75, 104, 114–115, 1990, pp. 50, 187–189). What seems essential to flow is neither a lack of intentions *per se* nor a lack of decisional intentions but, rather, *engrossment* in the activity. Such engrossment is incompatible with any perceived need to decide whether to continue with the activity — one cannot be engrossed in something if one is wondering whether one should be doing it in the first place. Many activities — constructing a complex philosophical argument or a highly structured form of alliterative poetry such *cynganedd*, perhaps — will nonetheless involve deciding how to carry them out even though the question of whether to carry them out at all is held in abeyance. Moreover, in order for an experience to be one of flow, any such conscious deliberation about how to carry an activity out must consist of higher level or more abstract decisions rather than decisions concerning the nitty-gritty details of implementation. A writer experiencing flow, for example, might be thinking about the development of a character or the structure of the plot but not about details of spelling and grammar. In order to become sufficiently engrossed in telling a story to experience flow, one must have mastered the technique of writing so that one is able to apply the technique while concentrating solely on the story itself. So whether Fleming experienced flow when examining his mould will depend not on a lack of conscious deliberation *per se* but rather on his level of engrossment

in the content of his work. If he was wondering whether he should be picking up the children from school or worrying about how to spell ‘penicillin’, then he will not have been sufficiently engrossed in the process of discovery to experience flow. If, on the other hand, his conscious attention was entirely absorbed by the action of the mould on bacteria and wondering what mechanisms might underlie the effects, then he may have been sufficiently engrossed to experience flow.

While this does suggest that flow excludes consciously deliberating about what it makes sense to do, I take it that the view Velleman proposes in *How We Get Along* and his discussion of flow in ‘The Way of the Wanton’ is subtler than that apparently presented in ‘What Good Is a Will?’ and criticised by Roughley. In particular, I take it that the mere fact that “trying to do what makes sense, makes no sense at all” does not show that flow excludes action, acting for reasons or the formation of intentions. As Velleman points out early in the book, his account need not commit him to the implausible view that intelligibility is “the ultimate aim of every action” (2009, p. 27). Rather,

The aims of our actions. . . are whatever they ordinarily seem to be: pleasure, health, friendship, chocolate. Self-understanding is not an aim ulterior to these aims — not something for the sake of which we pursue them. It is rather an aim with respect to our manner of pursuing these and other aims, which we pursue for their own sakes. (Velleman 2009, p. 27)

Given this and given the range of activities which can involve flow according to Csikszentmihalyi, Velleman’s footnote reference to ‘What Good Is a Will?’ is somewhat puzzling. Although his discussion there does seem to support the claim that “*trying* to do what makes sense” sometimes “makes no sense at all”, it is not clear why he takes this point to support the further claim that “the rational thing to do is to leave off being an agent for a while”. Since action and agency do not require that one *try* to make sense but only that the aim of making sense shapes the way in which one pursues the other aims one has for their own sakes, flow need not exclude agency. I think this is just as well since Velleman’s

view would be considerably less plausible if it implied that Pauling had to cease being an agent as he became engrossed in studying chemistry, insects and minerals; investigating molecular structures; or campaigning against nuclear testing (Linus Pauling Institute 2011; Csikszentmihalyi 1997, pp. 62, 125–126). Fortunately, the view developed in *How We Get Along* does not commit Velleman to any such claim. On the contrary, one might have thought that flow constitutes an especially *good* example of the way in which the aim of making sense of ourselves to ourselves “influences which desired objects we choose to pursue, how we harmonize them with one another, organize our efforts toward them. . .” (Velleman 2009, p. 28) since our self-conceptions might well shape which activities we choose to engage in, the skills we practise and develop as we do so, and the ways in which we focus our attention on activities which matter to us, blocking the distractions and self-questioning which would otherwise interfere with our ability to pursue what we value.

Indeed, in ‘The Way of the Wanton’, Velleman points out that both the phenomenon of flow and the loss of self-consciousness and deliberative action aimed at in the Taoist tradition challenge Harry G. Frankfurt’s well known distinction between agency and ‘wantonness’:

Actors in flow have. . . achieved a higher wantonness. They . . . have dispensed with self-regulation . . . [but] only because it has been so effective as to render itself unnecessary. And their capacity for self-regulation remains in reserve in case it is needed. Hence, their wantonness is also a consummate example of agency. (2008, p. 188)

This suggests that even if the activities which Csikszentmihalyi has in mind count as instances of flow because “evaluative judgment is suspended” — rather than because evaluative judgement is confined to that inherent in, and essential to, the activity itself — Velleman’s view in ‘The Way of the Wanton’ accommodates them as instances of agency (2008, p. 185). As I’ve argued, this seems entirely consistent with the view of agency laid out in *How We Get Along*, despite its incompatibility with Velleman’s suggestion that “the rational thing to do” in such cases “is to leave off being an agent for a while” (2009, p. 138 fn. 25), and is explicitly supported by the distinction Velleman draws

between the second-order rationality of temporarily forsaking first-order sense in order to abandon oneself to grief, and the “ability to think along with oneself” which “is a long-term accomplishment of rational agency” (2009, pp. 24–25 fn. 16).

It is worth comparing Velleman’s discussion of those who sheltered or assisted refugees fleeing the Nazis despite the dangers. Their “entire self-conceptions. . . made refusal [to help] unintelligible coming from them” (Velleman 2009, p. 156). Although Velleman is concerned to make a point about the irrelevance of moral deliberation to much human morality, his remarks have implications for agency, too. The rescuers’ experiences were relevantly similar to experiences of flow: they did not question what they should do or why they were doing it but simply did it. Again, I take this to be consistent with deliberation internal to the activity of helping itself: considering where best to hide refugees, for example, or figuring out how to lead them along mountainous escape routes under cover of darkness. Unlike cases of flow, the rescuers may be consciously concerned with the details of rescuing the refugees and need not be engrossed in the way required for flow. Nonetheless, the cases are relevantly similar: both involve agents doing precisely what makes first-order sense without *trying* to make sense and without consciously deliberating about *what* to do as opposed to *how* to do it. The mere fact that “trying to do what makes sense. . . makes no sense at all” no more implies that flow requires a temporary suspension of agency than that the rescues do (Velleman 2009, p. 138 fn. 25). Flow is indeed “a consummate example of agency” and the account of agency in *How We Get Along* does not imply otherwise (Velleman 2008, p. 188).

Having explained how Velleman can understand actions as aimed at intelligibility even when agents are not *trying* to do what makes sense, I next argue that Velleman’s first thesis — that action constitutively aims at “making sense” of oneself to oneself and others — should nonetheless be rejected. Unlike the cases discussed above, my argument appeals to actions which involve not setting aside the question of what it makes sense to do in order to better pursue it, but deliberately acting in violation of the answer.

3. ACTION WITHOUT SENSE

I want to suggest that it is possible to act without making sense in Velleman's terms. It is possible, that is, to interact with the world *qua* agent without making sense of oneself to either oneself or others. It is possible to act in a way which is not intelligible in terms of either one's own self-conception or others' conception(s) of one. This need amount to acting in a way which is neither unmotivated nor without reason. Indeed, in a loose sense of "making sense", what one does may well make sense to oneself, at least. But this need not amount to making sense in terms of one's self-conception — to making sense *of* oneself to oneself.

I begin with a disappointed agent who may have reason to act against her current self-conception and to become somebody quite different despite this not making sense in the light of that self-conception. I also discuss a fictional example which, like the cases of flow and rescue discussed by Velleman, involves only a temporary change but which, like my disappointed agent, involves an agent acting against his self-conception. If, as I suggest, these cases involve genuine agency without the relevant kind of intelligibility, then the first thesis should be rejected: aiming to make the relevant kind of sense cannot be partly constitutive of action if some actions aim to make this sort of sense to neither the agents who do them nor those who observe them.

FRACTURE, DISAPPOINTMENT AND GRIEF

Consider an agent who responds to great disappointment by deliberately and suddenly acting on her immediate impulses after a lifetime of shaping them in accordance with a self-conception as careful, cautious, timid, reserved and considerate. Perhaps this is due to a sudden revelation that she has been living a lie and would make more sense to herself as a wild, impetuous adventurer with little time or patience for others. But need

this be so? Might she not decide she is simply tired of who she is and become somebody different without that somebody making better sense to her? Might she not be tired of making sense to herself and others? Might she not deliberately set out to surprise and shock both herself and others? If she explicitly rejects making sense to herself, is she not still acting?

Perhaps one could not always act in this way. In order to become someone else, one has to become someone else for more than a moment and that may require making sense to one's new self and others. But the moment of fracture, the act of repudiation of self and the taking up of a new skin seem to be quintessential actions, if not at all typical ones. Is such a rupture simply irrational? Why should it be? The move need not be unmotivated. It need not be without reason. But it may be without sense.

An agent might also decide to become somebody else for a time without necessarily committing to a permanent change. In *Goodnight Mister Tom*, Michelle Magorian describes an episode in which Will, an evacuee who has experienced friendship for the first time after escaping his mentally ill and abusive mother, comes to terms with the loss of his best friend when Zach is killed during an air raid (1983). As part of his grieving process, Will *becomes* Zach. Whereas Will is quiet, cautious and easily embarrassed, Zach was loud, impetuous and delighted in being the centre of attention. Will skips school, borrows Zach's bike and proceeds to hurl himself down hills until he stops falling off. He adopts Zach's turns of phrase, gestures and daredevil attitudes. He asks himself not only what Zach would have him, Will, do but what Zach would himself do and not only acts on Zach's imagined advice but enacts his imagined actions. The villagers who observe him are astonished by his behaviour. They are astonished, that is, by the fact that *Will* is saying and doing things which would not have surprised them in the least coming from Zach.

Will acts, in other words, "out of character". He acts in a way which would make sense *were he Zach* but which does not make sense of *Will* to Will or to others. Of course,

what Will does makes sense in some minimal sense. What he does is not unmotivated. Will has his reasons for acting as he does. But his actions do not make sense in terms of either his conception of *himself* or others' conception of *Will*.

But is this action? More specifically, does Will's behaviour involve *Will* doing? Is Will involved *qua* agent? I am inclined to say that Will is, indeed, acting and that his behaviour involves a series of actions attributable to him. After Zach's death, Will experiences a period of numb misery and detaches himself, as far as possible, from the world. One might say that he "goes through the motions". He goes to school, does his chores and attends his art lessons but takes no particular interest in anything. He finds no joy but only temporary escape even in drawing which he loves. He cannot draw anything requiring creativity or affective engagement but is confined to executing emotionally neutral still lifes. What he does is "in character" but Will himself seems oddly disengaged from it. In Velleman's terms, Will seems not to "participate" fully⁴ (Velleman 1992b). He does not, that is, participate fully *as an agent*.

In contrast, when Will "becomes" Zach, he is depicted as taking control of his life, as actively participating in the grieving process and as being fully alive in the present. Yet this is the very point at which he acts "out of character".

One might think that Will is doing no more than play-acting, pretending or making believe. But his "becoming" Zach is too serious and too all-encompassing for that. If his enactment was bounded by limits consistent with his conception of himself — if, for example, he borrowed the bike on a weekend and laughed at himself as he shyly used Zach's phrases and gestures — that would seem the right description. His actual enactment, however, is all-absorbing. The enactment literally absorbs *Will* so that he himself disappears from the stage for a time. The enactment is temporary only because it runs its natural course and not because Will conceives of it as constrained from the

⁴Velleman borrows this terminology from Harry G. Frankfurt (1988).

outset.

If this is, then, action proper, surely it is *Will* acting. Who else is there, after all? The only other obvious contender is Zach but even if he were alive — surely a prerequisite for agency — Will’s enactment of Will’s conception of Zach could hardly count as *Zach’s* acting. Do Will’s actions make sense of himself to himself and others? It seems implausible to think so in Velleman’s sense of enacting his self-conception since he is enacting his conception of Zach rather than himself. No peculiar feature of Will explains his unusual response to his friend’s death which is why the villagers are so astonished by his behaviour. If anything, their conception of Will — and, indeed, Will’s self-conception — would tend to *increase* rather than to decrease that astonishment. Of course, Will’s actions make sense to Will in *some* sense but they cannot make sense of Will to Will and others in Velleman’s sense. They cannot count, that is, as Will’s enacting his self-conception given that there is neither any special feature of Will to explain his grieving in this way nor any cultural norm to explain people generally grieving like this. Will’s actions could count as intelligible in Velleman’s sense only if the idea of enacting one’s self-conception is trivial. To borrow Velleman’s analogy, the idea would need to allow an improvisational actor to enact *any* character while still counting as playing a particular character. *Any* behaviour which would make sense for *some* character would thereby make sense for *all* of them.

The crucial point in this case is that Will’s actions do not make *folk psychological* or *causal-psychological* sense in Velleman’s terms because they fail to make sense in terms of Will’s motives, aims and characteristics. This is not to say that Will’s actions are unintelligible but only that they lack the kind of intelligibility which Velleman takes to be a constitutive aim of action. Perhaps unsurprisingly given that he is a character in a novel, Will’s actions do make *narrative* sense — that is, in the context of “a story with an emotionally intelligible arc” (Velleman 2009, p. 202). Even though Will’s actions are neither intelligible in terms of the reader’s conception of Will nor recognisable as

part of a standard cultural grieving sequence, the emotional sequence involved remains familiar. I suspect it also suggests that Velleman is mistaken in classifying grief as “stable, because [its] eliciting conditions and resulting behaviours are not conducive to change” (2009, p. 198). Will’s grief is not, indeed, a *single* emotion at all — rather, his grieving is a process involving several familiar stages beginning with a kind of numbness following the initial shock, passing through rage and denial, and ending in an acceptance and recognition of loss. The stage in which Will enacts his conception of Zach involves elements of both denial of loss and celebration of life. Although grief does not ordinarily involve the griever enacting her conception of the grieved-for, it often involves stages of numbness, denial, anger, celebration and acceptance. ‘Grief’ is one term for many emotions and is itself a temporal sequence with an emotional narrative.

What this suggests is that psychological intelligibility — even minimal psychological intelligibility — understood in “purely cognitive” terms is not an essential aim of action (Velleman 2009, p. 27). Action need not be shaped by the agent’s “motives, habits, and other characteristics” because narrative sense does not, *contra* Velleman, require “purely cognitive” psychological intelligibility (2009, p. 185). The fact that the emotional sequence of Will’s grief alone allows the reader to make sense of his enacting his conception of Zach also suggests that folk-psychological explanation requires behaviour to make sense in terms of neither agents’ own nor others’ conceptions of them. Will’s enactment, while certainly highly unusual, is sufficiently explicable in folk-psychological terms for the villagers and the novel’s readers to understand and make sense of it because it makes sense in light of Will’s *emotional* attachment to Zach. Although I cannot pursue the point here, I suspect this is because to explain an action in psychological terms — that is, by invoking “the attitudes and attributes of a character” — will frequently involve more than “purely cognitive” explanation (Velleman 2009, p. 185). After all, why think that it is possible to make sense of somebody’s attitudes, habits and aims in entirely non-affective terms?

The role of Will's feelings in the episode also explains why Will's actions seem entirely genuine — why, that is, there is no temptation to dismiss Will's enactment as in any way inauthentic. Even though Will acts on his conception of Zach rather than himself, his actions *feel* sincere because the reader can identify emotionally with Will's experiences.

One might say that Will does what makes sense *to* himself but not *of* himself. Like my disappointed agent who throws caution and sense to the wind, Will acts in a way which cannot be understood as enacting anybody's conception of Will even though his actions are neither unmotivated nor without reasons. They seem, like those of my disappointed agent, nonetheless to be *actions* expressing genuine *agency*.

4. SENSE WITHOUT VIRTUE

If one abandons the first thesis, one can retain the second without resorting to a view which depicts all agents as squares. On this view, action need not aim at making sense but normativity is grounded in action which does. In deliberately setting out to avoid doing what will make her intelligible to herself and others, the agent who seeks to do what jars against her self-conception rejects the pursuit of what she regards as good. The view can thus accommodate a range of moral psychologies while retaining a basis for normativity in intelligibility. Despite this advantage, I suggest there are at least two reasons to reject the second thesis.

First, I argue that intelligibility cannot ground a shared morality because at least some vices are characterised by conflicts internal to neither agents' self-conceptions nor others' conceptions of them, but by external conflicts between what the agents actually value and what others think they should. Such cases are characterised by agreement regarding relevant features of an agent's character considered purely descriptively but by disagreement about the normative valence appropriate to them. In such cases,

intelligibility and the possibility of a shared morality diverge dramatically because the self-same characteristics considered positive by their possessor are judged negatively by others. In a case of this sort, an agent would make more sense to neither herself nor others if she were to have overcome her vice.

Second, I argue that an agent may actually make more sense to herself and/or others by becoming *more*, rather than less, vicious.

CRUELTY WITHOUT CONFLICT

One might begin, then, by bringing pressure to bear on Velleman's claim that others will tend to ascribe a vice to just those agents who ascribe it to themselves. Recall that Velleman suggests that an agent will tend to be described as "lazy" by both herself and others if her inertia conflicts with her other projects, values or commitments. In the absence of such conflicts, both she and they are more likely to use terms such as "easygoing". Even if there are exceptions — one can imagine an agent who is so "laid-back" that the new school year arrives without uniforms for the children; the critical window passes without crucial observations being made; or the defence counsel faces the court without an adequate brief — the claim seems generally plausible. Some aspects of people's characters are assessed relative to individual commitments and aspirations. The talented but genuinely unambitious are not thereby guilty of laziness even if they might be criticised on other grounds.

However, what seems plausible in the case of laziness seems less plausible in the case of some other vices. An agent may be described as "ruthless", "cruel" or "lacking in compassion" by others partly in virtue of a lack of conflict between the vice and her other projects and commitments. Even if two agents act similarly, the person who unhesitatingly pursues her ambitions regardless of the impact on others is generally a less sympathetic figure than the one who feels some degree of pity. Yet the former may

be even less likely to describe herself as vicious precisely because of the lack of conflict which prompts others to condemn her with particular vehemence.

On Velleman's view, agents aim to make sense to each other as well as to themselves. We negotiate our identities in the context of social interactions and there is a pressure towards harmonising our conceptions of ourselves with the ways in which others understand us (Velleman 2009, pp. 66–68, 2000). Such a pressure towards harmonisation is crucial to the claim that the aim of intelligibility encourages the emergence of a *shared* moral understanding. But in at least some cases of persons described by others as “cruel” or “merciless” but by themselves as “hard-headed” or “realistic”, for example, neither side seems likely to accept the other's description. The source of disagreement lies not in differing descriptive conceptions of such agents but in differing evaluative assessments of shared descriptive conceptions. Others agree with the agents about the sorts of motives they are likely to act on, the means they are likely to employ to achieve their ends and the ends they pursue or are likely to pursue described in purely descriptive terms. Moreover, there is no obvious reason to expect that the agents would make more sense to *anybody* if they were to have reformed. This is because the conflicts are external rather than internal to the agents in question: they do not appropriately value what others think they should. The aim of making sense to both themselves *and* others will militate *against*, rather than encouraging, reform. Given the agents' current self-conceptions and others' conceptions of them, they would actually make more sense to neither themselves nor others if they were to have overcome their vices.

TAKE MILK FOR GALL

Moreover, it seems that an agent might make more sense to herself and/or others if she were to become *more* vicious. First, consider Lady Macbeth's musings on receiving the letter from Macbeth telling her about the witches' prophecy:

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be
 What thou art promised. Yet do I fear thy nature.
 It is too full o'th' milk of human kindness
 To catch the nearest way. Thou wouldst be great,
 Art not without ambition, but without
 The illness should attend it. What thou wouldst highly,
 And yet wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,
 And yet wouldst wrongly win.

(Shakespeare 1988, act 1 scene 5 14–21)

Macbeth is conflicted: he has ambitions for the crown but is too kindly and lacking in vice to fulfil them. The solution which Lady Macbeth urges upon her husband is not to moderate his ambitions but to set aside his kindness in order to pursue them unfettered. Whether or not Macbeth would make more sense to himself as a result than he would if he were to curtail his ambitions, it seems that he would certainly make more sense to his wife. More importantly, an unconflicted Macbeth who had extinguished his kindness would make more sense to his wife than the currently conflicted one. Moreover, Lady Macbeth clearly believes that Macbeth's ambition is sufficiently strong to offer her a basis for encouraging this change. That is, Lady Macbeth can make sense of Macbeth's taking steps to eliminate his kindness given her current conception of him. So an agent may make more sense to others by becoming more vicious.

Second, Lady Macbeth would make more sense to herself if she could set aside her own qualms:

Come, you spirits
 That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
 And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
 Of direst cruelty. Make thick my blood,
 Stop up th'access and passage to remorse,
 That no compunctious visitings of nature
 Shake my fell purpose. . .
 And take my milk for gall. . .

(Shakespeare 1988, act 1 scene 5 39–47)

Of course, Lady Macbeth goes mad but this is because she is not, despite the best of intentions, able to set aside her ethical feelings as completely as she had hoped. She does

not quite succeed in becoming the monster she sets out to be. This is not a rational dead-end since it makes sense to her to take the steps she can to become entirely ruthless. Rather, she is not quite able to pull her self-reform off. This does not alter the fact that her efforts are aimed at eradicating conflicts between kindness and ruthless ambition by eliminating the former and accentuating the latter.

In terms of her current self-conception, Lady Macbeth would make more sense to herself if she were less conflicted. In that sense, she would make more sense to herself if she were to have become a reformed — that is, a less conflicted — character. Of course, there are at least two ways to resolve the conflict and she might make more sense to herself if she were to have become more kindly rather than more vicious. I take it, though, that ambition is a sufficiently strong motive that it would not make sense for Lady Macbeth to embark on the project of mitigating her ruthlessness or hunger for power. Moreover, Lady Macbeth seems to have a reasonably accurate self-understanding since she really does have kindly feelings, a seriously ruthless streak and a lust for power. Of course, her understanding is far from perfect else she would not embark on a process of self-reform which drives her mad. Perhaps she is, after all, in a rational dead-end but fails to recognise this: not only does she correctly think that she would make more sense to herself if she were to have become more ruthless, but mistakenly believes that it also makes sense for her to shape her behaviour in accordance with the aim of becoming so. If so, Lady Macbeth's actions depend on a failure of self-understanding which is ultimately her undoing. Her belief that it made sense for her to take the steps she did to foster "direst cruelty" in herself in order to realise her ambitions was simply, if tragically, erroneous.

This example nonetheless suggests that an agent may make more sense to herself by becoming more vicious because a slightly different character, beginning with slightly less kindness and slightly more ruthless ambition, might well not be driven mad by the same actions. Moreover, even Lady Macbeth might have been able to successfully complete

the process of self-reform if she could have taken things more slowly, gradually shaping her character by eliminating kindness, fostering cruelty and nurturing ruthlessness over an extended period of time rather than attempting to effect change in a matter of hours or days. Alternatively, a more accurate understanding of her own vulnerabilities might have enabled Lady Macbeth to take steps to protect her sanity during the process of self-reform rather than dismissing them as mere womanly weakness. So aiming to become more vicious may make sense in terms of a conflicted agent's self-conception.

This suggests that intelligibility can favour abandoning virtue and fostering vice both from the perspective of the agent herself, in the light of her self-conception, and from the point of view of others, given their conception of her. Vice, then, may make as much sense as virtue and the second thesis, like the first, should be rejected. Intelligible agents, it would seem, may be far from square.

REFERENCES

- Frankfurt, Harry G. (1971). 'Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person'. In: *Journal of Philosophy* 68.1, pp. 5–20. JSTOR: 2024717.
- (1988). 'Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person'. In: *The Importance of What We Care About: Philosophical Essays*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. Chap. 2, pp. 11–26. Repr. of 'Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person'. In: *Journal of Philosophy* 68.1. 1971, pp. 5–20.
- Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly (1990). *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York et al.: HarperCollins/Harper Perennial Modern Classics.
- (1997). *Finding Flow: The Psychology of Engagement with Everyday Life*. New York: Perseus Books/Basic Books.
- Leist, Anton, ed. (2007). *Action in Context*. Berlin and New York: de Gruyter/Mouton.

- Linus Pauling Institute. *Linus Pauling Biography*. Oregon State University. URL: <http://lpi.oregonstate.edu/lpbio/lpbio2.html> (visited on 27/04/2011).
- Magorian, Michelle (1983). *Goodnight Mister Tom*. London: Penguin/Puffin.
- Roughley, Neil (2007). 'On the Ways and Uses of Intending'. In: *Action in Context*. Ed. by Anton Leist. Berlin and New York: de Gruyter/Mouton, pp. 216–230.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul (1994). *Being and Nothingness*. Trans., with an introd., by Hazel E. Barnes. Distributed by Random House. New York and Avenel, New Jersey: Gramercy Books.
- Shakespeare, William (1988). *Macbeth*. In: *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*. Ed. by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor. Compact. Oxford: Oxford University Press/Clarendon, pp. 975–999.
- Velleman, J. David (Mar. 1992a). 'The Guise of the Good'. In: *Noûs* 26.1, pp. 3–26. JSTOR: 2215684.
- (July 1992b). 'What Happens When Someone Acts?' In: *Mind* 101.403, pp. 461–481. DOI: 10.1093/mind/101.403.461.
- (2000). 'From Self Psychology to Moral Philosophy'. In: *Philosophical Perspectives* 14: *Action and Freedom*, pp. 349–377.
- (2002). 'Motivation by Ideal'. In: *Philosophical Explorations* 5.2, pp. 89–103. DOI: 10.1080/10002002058538724.
- (2007). 'What Good Is a Will?' In: *Action in Context*. Ed. by Anton Leist. Berlin and New York: de Gruyter/Mouton, pp. 193–215.
- (2008). 'The Way of the Wanton'. In: *Practical Identity and Narrative Agency*. Ed. by Kim Atkins and Catriona Mackenzie. With an intro. by Catriona Mackenzie. Routledge Studies in Contemporary Philosophy. New York and London: Taylor & Francis/Routledge. Chap. 8, pp. 169–192.
- (2009). *How We Get Along*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.