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Psychological Anthropology and the Moral/Ethical Turn

Aidan Seale-Feldman

20.1 Introduction

In the past decade, the ethnographic study of ethics and morality has exploded onto the anthropological scene, becoming one of the discipline's fastest-growing areas of research and theorization. Vital debates over approaches, concepts, and frameworks abound. What is the difference between ethics and morality? What qualifies as "the ethical," where is it located, and how can we study it ethnographically? How might anthropology study ethics and morality in dialogue with moral concepts beyond the Western philosophical tradition?

Within the broader field, the "ethical turn" has involved a number of approaches ranging from Foucauldian studies of ethical self-cultivation and virtue ethics, to ordinary ethics, and moral experience (Das, 2012; Faubion, 2011; Lambek, 2010a; Mattingly, 2014; Robbins, 2004; Throop, 2010; Zigon, 2007; Zigon and Throop, 2014). Among these approaches, psychological anthropologists have figured centrally, contributing to the development of neo-Aristotelian and phenomenological frameworks for the anthropological study of ethics and morality. Yet, prior to the current surge of interest, psychological anthropologists were at the forefront of earlier debates on morality. This body of research was concerned with questions of moral relativism, moral emotions, and the socialization of morality in early childhood. This chapter examines psychological anthropology's engagement with ethics and morality from early work in search of the universal qualities of moral values to contemporary developments in the anthropological study of moral experience and relational ethics. The review concludes with a consideration of future directions of psychological anthropology's engagement with ethics and morality and some methodological implications.

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20.2 Moral Universals

In 1990, *Ethos*, the flagship journal of the *Society for Psychological Anthropology*, published a special issue on moral and ethical relativism. This issue grew out of an ongoing conversation among scholars in psychological anthropology regarding the universality of moral values and the degree to which morality could be said to have universal features despite vast cross-cultural differences in what constitutes right and wrong action. This group drew inspiration from Boasian cultural relativism as an ethical position in and of itself, and combined it with a search for what Richard Shweder has called "universalism without uniformity" (Shweder, 2012: 95). In the 1930s, Ruth Benedict famously argued that "morality differs in every society, and is a convenient term for socially approved habits" (Benedict, 1934: 73). Benedict's definition of morality is illustrative of the relativist stance, the idea that different cultures have different moral norms which must be judged according to their specific moral system. Following this Boasian perspective, psychological anthropologists of the 1990s worked with a normative conception of morality as a domain of social life concerning shared "ideas and standards for human social relations" (Fiske and Mason, 1990: 132).

A central aim of the special issue was to identify a theory of human values that "encompasses and accords legitimacy to the obvious cultural and historical diversity in moral systems" (Fiske and Mason, 1990: 131) in a way that might allow for the possibility of radically different definitions of good and evil. At stake was the incommensurability between moral goods both within and across cultural groups, raising the question as to the very possibility of evaluating divergent moral orders on the basis of one's own moral code. In order to bypass the problem of incommensurability, Fiske and Mason argue for the utility of identifying "universal structures" that "might provide common ground for evaluating whether a behavior adheres to the rules for good performance of that type of behavior" (Fiske and Mason, 1990: 135). Among these, Fiske's "relational models" approach and Shweder's subsequent "Big Three" ethics of autonomy, community, and divinity serve as primary examples (Fiske, 1990; Shweder et al., 1997).

Alan Fiske's work on relational models aims to identify a universal framework that underlies moral decision-making (Fiske, 1990). Fiske developed his four-point model from fieldwork conducted in Burkina Faso, where he studied patterns of decision-making and the "implicit models" people used to evaluate proper behavior across four different types of social relationships. Fiske identified these social relationships as: (1) communal sharing, defined by qualities of solidarity and shared identity; (2) authority ranking, defined by asymmetries of power and deference; (3) equality matching, concerned with reciprocity and egalitarian justice; and (4) market pricing, concerned with value and cost-benefit calculations. A central focus of Fiske's research is the coexistence of multiple, conflicting, and incommensurable models used to evaluate moral behavior in a given social interaction.

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For example, Fiske describes an incident in Burkina Faso in which a group of indigo dyers asked him to buy them rubber gloves in town (Fiske, 1990: 195). Fiske bought them the gloves but was surprised when the group did not seem particularly thankful. Fiske complained to some friends in the village, and a few days later, the indigo dyers showed up with gifts. Fiske analyzes this incident as a case of incommensurable models – while the indigo dyers placed Fiske in the category of authoritarian European and thus followed proper behavior expected from the model of authority ranking, Fiske, seeing himself as the village anthropologist, felt they should be operating in a relationship of equality matching. Fiske argues that the disagreement in judgment of social behavior can be attributed to the incommensurability of models as applied to a given relationship. Although Fiske defined this four-part typology from his study of a West African ethnic group, he argues that all social relationships can be organized into these four types cross-culturally. The search for the universal model was motivated by the desire to "encompass the diversity of moralities within a single comparative scheme" (Fiske, 1990: 182) in order to enhance tolerance for differences in moral perspectives that once seemed strange by showing how they fit into this familiar model in a rational way.

Like Fiske, Shweder and his colleagues also developed research in search of a universal framework for the evaluation of morality that would still allow for diversity of moral codes (Shweder, 1990; Shweder et al., 1997). Based on an analysis of moral discourse in Orissa, India, Shweder and colleagues outline three clusters of themes that they argue defined the South Asian moral order: (1) the ethics of autonomy, concerned with issues of rights, harm, justice, and focused on protections of the individual; (2) the ethics of community, concerned with duty, interdependence, hierarchy, and formulated to protect the roles that constitute a given society or community; and (3) the ethics of divinity, concerned with sacred and natural orders, tradition, sin, pollution, and sanctity, an ethic formulated to protect the spiritual dimensions of both human and nonhuman life from degradation. Once defined, ethnographic examples of moral incidents and their resulting Oriya moral discourse are classified across these three groups in an inclusive manner, such that each incident might relate to more than one thematic cluster but to varying degrees and strengths. In one example, they examine a scenario in which a woman plays cards with friends at home while her husband cooks rice for them. According to Shweder and colleagues, this incident was evaluated by Oriyas as a moral breach because it challenged both the ethics of community, as the wife should be serving the husband if she obeys the social hierarchy, and the ethics of divinity, as the husband who cooks rice for his wife and her friends goes against tradition.

While these categories were developed from a study of a South Asian society, Shweder and colleagues argue that the "Big Three" could be found in all human societies. However, the relative emphasis on each category will differ cross-culturally, with, for example, liberal societies placing emphasis on

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values associated with the ethics of autonomy as opposed to the ethics of divinity or the ethics of community (Shweder et al., 1997: 138). A broader implication of the "Big Three" approach to ethics is its implicit critique of liberalism's claim to a universal morality, which is revealed to be predominantly concerned with the ethics of autonomy yet is only one of three ethical categories. As such, an overarching aim of Shweder's work was to engage the study of a South Asian moral order as a way to "call attention to neglected ideals latent in our own cultural history and living contemporary culture" (Shweder et al., 1997: 142).

The broader goal of ethical relativism in psychological anthropology was to find a way to account for radical differences in moral codes in a nonjudgmental way. As Shweder puts it, "the aim of ethical relativism is to give permission to diversity, to the extent that such permission is rationally warranted" (Shweder, 1990: 210). For the ethical relativists, this was achieved by identifying the culture-specific aspects of a given moral code that operated rationally and predictably alongside universal features of moral codes to produce a given moral judgment.

Concerns with moral relativism came to a head in the mid-1990s with the publication of a widely read debate between Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Roy D'Andrade on objectivity and militancy in anthropology (D'Andrade, 1995; Scheper-Hughes, 1995). D'Andrade, a psychological anthropologist specializing in cognitive anthropology, argued that anthropologists should bracket their own politics and "moral models" when conducting empirical research. By engaging what D'Andrade called an "objective model," as opposed to a moral one, the anthropologist would be able to describe the object of study in a more truthful way.

In response to D'Andrade's claims, critical medical anthropologist Scheper-Hughes made a strong case for "the primacy of the ethical" in anthropological research. Scheper-Hughes argued that, although the sensibility of moral relativism has a deep history in the Boasian tradition, such a stance had made it possible for anthropologists to "suspend the ethical" in the face of the other. In stark contrast to D'Andrade's call for an anthropology without politics, for Scheper-Hughes (1995), "the work of anthropology demands an explicit ethical orientation to 'the other'" (418). In crafting this argument, Scheper-Hughes (1995) draws from a Levinasian conception of ethics as a "first philosophy" in which ethics is defined as a universal and even "pre-cultural" orientation towards the suffering of the other (419). For phenomenologist Emmanuel Levinas, ethics is located in the encounter with "the Face" of the other, who makes a demand that calls on one to respond (Levinas, 1985, 1998).[1]

In the end, Scheper-Hughes's militant anthropology won out over D'Andrade's defense of anthropology as a politically disengaged science. Yet, the problem of applying a universal ethics to anthropological analysis without merely reproducing the anthropologist's own moral traditions and assumptions has remained largely unsolved. In an influential article on "moral

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anthropology," Didier Fassin suggests one possible solution: to engage in a reflexive and critical analysis of questions of ethics and morality as they surface in fieldwork (Fassin, 2008). Such an approach would analyze acts and situations within the moral discourse and historical and political context in which they have been produced. In doing so, Fassin makes a strong argument for the anthropological study of morality as a domain separate from an evaluative anthropology in which the anthropologist makes moral and ethical judgments. This approach helped to usher in the new "moral and ethical turn" in the discipline.

20.3 Moral Emotions: The Socialization of Sentiment

A second early approach to the study of ethics and morality in psychological anthropology was concerned with moral psychology. Influenced by the anthropological literature on emotion, self, and language socialization, as well as theories of moral development in psychology, this research focused on cross-cultural studies of moral sentiments. Key works include Shweder and colleagues' comparative study of culture and moral socialization in early childhood (Shweder and Much, 1987; Shweder, Mahapatra, and Miller, 1987) and Steven Parish's work on the development of "moral consciousness" in Nepal (Parish, 1991, 1994).

In the late 1980s, Shweder and colleagues undertook multiple cross-cultural studies of moral development that compared ideas of the moral and the ethical between people in Chicago and Orissa, India (Shweder, Mahapatra, and Miller, 1987; Shweder and Much, 1987). Using comparative data on the development of moral understanding among children aged between five and thirteen, as well as adults in two societies (South Asian and American), Shweder, Mahapatra, and Miller critique dominant theories of moral development in psychology and instead develop a theory of "social communication" (Shweder, Mahapatra, and Miller, 1987: 3). Ultimately, the authors demonstrate how "children are assisted in constructing their notions of right and wrong" (Shweder, Mahapatra, and Miller, 1987: 73) based on the particular moral framework in which they have been socialized. Building on theories of language socialization from linguistic anthropology (Ochs and Schieffelin, 1984), Shweder and colleagues' social communication theory of moral development highlights "the ways a culture's ideology and worldview have a bearing on the ontogenesis of moral understandings in the child" (Shweder, Mahapatra, and Miller, 1987: 73).

For example, a young Orrisan child learns the moral meanings of pollution and purity when they are taught not to touch their mother while she is menstruating because she is "polluted" (Shweder, Mahapatra, and Miller, 1987: 74). Experiences of moral socialization such as this are especially powerful as they are also charged with affective meaning – the child is suddenly

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separated from the mother for a period of time, a separation through which a moral lesson about pollution and purity is learned. As Shweder and Much define it elsewhere, a social communication approach to moral socialization highlights the processes by which "local guardians of the moral order persistently and powerfully trace for children the boundaries of a normative reality and assist the children in stepping into the frame" (Shweder and Much, 1987: 191). Perhaps most importantly, as in Shweder's research on moral universals discussed in the previous section, through the study of Orrisan moral judgments, Shweder and his colleagues take seriously the cultivation of what they call "alternative postconventional moralities" that do not depend on individualism and secularism but on "asymmetrical interdependency" in which the vulnerability of others serves as the point of departure.

Following the early work of Schweder, other psychological anthropologists have also contributed studies of moral development. Take, for example, Jean Briggs's (1998) analysis of the moral education of a three-year-old Inuit child. Following the tradition of psychological anthropology and its focus on the relation between individual and culture (Sapir, 1932), Briggs attends to a single girl's moral socialization over the course of six months by carefully describing a form of playful teasing that functioned as a traditional Inuit mode of educational questioning. Briggs argues that this playful mode of questioning ultimately serves as "a way of stimulating children to think and to value" by presenting them "with emotionally powerful problems that children could not ignore" (Briggs, 1998: 5).

While some psychological anthropologists explored moral psychology through the lens of childhood development, others, like Parish, drew inspiration from a flourishing literature on the anthropology of self and emotion (Lutz and White, 1986). Since the groundbreaking publication of Robert Levy's *Tahitians* (Levy, 1975), psychological anthropology had become widely recognized in the discipline for its approach to the cross-cultural study of emotion and ethnopsychology (Lutz, 1988; Rosaldo, 1980; see also Chapter 19, this volume). In the anthropology of emotion, a number of works highlighted the intertwining of morality and sentiment by approaching emotion as "a primary idiom for defining and negotiating social relations of the self in a moral order" (Lutz and White, 1986: 418).

Parish's ethnography *Moral Knowing in a Hindu Sacred City*, is a notable work that brings together considerations of emotion, self, personhood, and moral experience (Parish, 1994). Parish describes this project as a person-centered study of culture and mind in the Newari community of Bhaktapur, Nepal, with a specific focus on the "inner lives" of Newari people, the development of "moral selves," and the "making of moral consciousness" in relation to particular aspects of Newari Hindu culture. Throughout the text, Parish focuses on moral emotions, moral concepts, and ritualized rites of passage as sites that "link the moral order and the experiencing self, and sustain self-making and culture-making, thus producing ... moral knowing" (Parish, 1994: 279).

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At the heart of Parish's text is the idea of "moral knowing," a concept that links emotion, feeling, consciousness, and experience to the domain of culture, morality, and ethics. Parish starts by outlining the moral norms and codes people live by, focusing on the shared perception that society, *samaj*, is itself a moral force held up by one's sense of duty to *dharma*, right action. In this way, Parish identifies *dharma* as an ethical domain regulated by social expectations for conformity to the moral order. From moral norms, Parish moves to moral emotions, focusing specifically on the emotion of *lāj*, glossed in English as a combination of embarrassment, shyness, and shame. Parish sees *lāj* as a "moral state of being and consciousness" (Parish, 1994: 201) that serves both as a form of social regulation and self-evaluation. *Lāj* also has strong gendered implications, for the ideal woman is virtuous and expresses her virtue in shy and indirect ways through the embodiment of *lāj*. Additionally, *lāj* is implicated in relations of hierarchy, as the subordinate should feel *lāj* in front of his superior. As Parish writes, *lāj* is a deeply intersubjective emotion that "involves self-restraint that withholds personal desire from public interaction" (Parish, 1994: 203). As a moral emotion that involves moral judgment, *lāj* is both a desirable quality to be cultivated and an undesirable experience connected to feelings of shame. To lack the capacity to feel *lāj* is to be likened to an animal, that is, no longer fully human.

Parish's work signals an important transformation in the study of ethics and morality in psychological anthropology because it incorporates a person-centered approach that shifted the unit of analysis from moral discourse and the description of incidents and situations to the study of individual experience. In this way, his work can be considered an early, pathfinding text in the anthropology of moral experience that would be developed twenty years later.

20.4 Psychological Anthropology and the "Moral/Ethical Turn"

In the 2010s, a new field of anthropological inquiry began to emerge in the discipline. After years of what Sherry Ortner has called "dark anthropology," that is, studies of suffering and the structural, social, and historical forces that create it, anthropologists began to turn their attention to questions of care, ethics, hope, and alternative possible futures (Ortner, 2016). Joel Robbins has described this shift as a movement from "suffering slot" anthropology to "the anthropology of the good" (Robbins, 2013). The new "ethical turn" has figured centrally in the shift from "dark anthropology" to the "anthropology of the good" that has occupied the discipline for the past decade.

Like the earlier studies of moral relativism and moral emotion, the scholarship of the "ethical turn" has focused on the ways in which people relate to, interact with, and understand moral values in everyday life. Despite this shared interest, there are at least two major points of distinction between these periods of research. The first is the shift in emphasis from ethics and morality as collectively shared, cultural systems of meaning to a focus on phenomenological particularity.[2]

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The second, related distinction, concerns the introduction of moral philosophy, critical theory, and phenomenology into the anthropological study of ethics and morality.

Over the past decade, three major philosophical frameworks have emerged in anthropology's "ethical turn" (Mattingly and Throop, 2018). These can be described as (1) Foucauldian and neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics, (2) phenomenology of moral experience, and (3) ordinary ethics, which was influenced by ordinary language philosophy. This chapter focuses on the first two approaches, as these have been closely tied to the field of psychological anthropology.

The first approach, influenced heavily by the late work of Michel Foucault on technologies of the self, inaugurated the earliest body of literature in the "ethical turn" (Foucault, 1997a, 1997b). This work focused on processes of self-making, moral becoming, and the cultivation of virtue in particular cultural and historical contexts (Faubion, 2011; Mahmood, 2005; Pandian, 2009). In addition to Foucauldian approaches to ethical formation, subsequent anthropological studies of virtue have drawn inspiration from philosophers of neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics, such as Alasdair MacIntyre and Martha Nussbaum, who define the ethical as a domain of human action concerned with the cultivation of the good life (Lambek, 2010b; MacIntyre, 1981; Mattingly, 2014; Nussbaum, 1986).

The second approach in the anthropology of ethics and morality is influenced by phenomenology and is closely aligned with psychological anthropology (Zigon and Throop, 2014). Inspired by the phenomenological philosophies of Husserl, Heidegger, and Levinas, the anthropology of moral experience explores questions of ethics and morality by attending to subjectivity, intersubjectivity, affect, and embodiment from both person-centered and relational perspectives. Unlike the Foucauldian approach to ethical self-cultivation, moral experience attends to everyday lived experiences of uncertainty, dilemmas, and predicaments as they become morally and ethically meaningful in the context of particular lifeworlds, situations, and events.

Broadly speaking, what has made psychological anthropology's engagement with ethics and morality distinct has been its incorporation of phenomenology and its focus on individual subjective experience and the first-person perspective (see also Chapter 4, this volume). This is not surprising, as the field has historically been known for its studies of self, subjectivity, intersubjectivity, and experience, as well as for privileging the individual as a site of inquiry. At the same time, the degree to which studies of moral experience should continue to focus on the figure of the individual experiencing subject has come under debate in the context of broader disciplinary conversations on relationality (Strathern, 2020). In what follows, we will explore the contributions of psychological anthropologists to the "moral/ethical turn" from the early period of Foucauldian-inspired studies of ethical self-cultivation to contemporary debates on moral experience and relational ethics.

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20.4.1 From Foucault to First-Person Virtue Ethics

Michel Foucault's late writings on ethical self-cultivation hit the field of anthropology in the late 2000s and inspired a flood of research. Much of the early work in the "ethical turn" engaged this Foucauldian approach which made it possible to explore processes of self-making and autopoiesis in relation to sociocultural and political forces (Faubion, 2001). As a theoretical tool focused on embodied practices of self-creation, Foucault's approach to ethics meshed well with work in psychological anthropology, which had long taken the self and embodied experience as sites of inquiry (Csordas, 1994; Hallowell, 1955; Hollan, 1992).

Foucault's work on ethics is based on the study of ethical practices in Greek and Roman antiquity and in early Christian forms of confessional writing. These practices and forms of writing were techniques through which people creatively worked to transform their bodies, souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so they might become wise and virtuous persons. This form of self-cultivation was done freely through conscious choice, in which the self was shaped and created in a manner similar to the creation of a work of art. For this reason, Foucault describes ethics as "the conscious practice of freedom" (Foucault, 1997b: 284). At the same time, one implication of this theory of ethics is that the self is not some preexisting form but is ultimately a product of technologies of ethical self-cultivation, which vary across cultural and historical contexts. Importantly for Foucault, the autopoiesis of ethical self-cultivation is always linked to forms of power.

In Foucault's "ethical fourfold," he outlined four key categories through which to analyze ethical self-cultivation across historical periods: (1) ethical substance, (2) mode of subjectivation, (3) ethical work, and (4) telos. Ethical substance refers to the central material of ethical concern, such as the soul or social relationships, which will be transformed through ethical work. The mode of subjectivation involves the relationship between the actor and the moral injunctions, obligations, and forms of authority that orient ethical conduct and determine the meaning of the ideal subject. Ethical work, *askesis* (Greek for "training" or "exercise"), includes the specific work and practices done to transform oneself into a certain kind of subject. Lastly, the telos refers to the end goal, the mode of being that the project seeks to actualize. As the specific qualities of the ethical fourfold vary across time and cultural contexts, the form that self-making takes will reflect the historically specific "range of possibilities" that each category makes available (Zigon, 2009).

Foucault's ethics of self-cultivation influenced several anthropological studies. In psychological anthropology, perhaps the clearest engagement with this framework can be found in Zigon's ethnography, *"HIV is God's Blessing": Rehabilitating Morality in Neoliberal Russia* (Zigon, 2011). This book explores drug rehabilitation programs run by the Russian Orthodox Church and follows the ethical techniques and practices (such as prayer and confession) they use to remake moral personhood among drug users. An overarching aim of the text is to describe the process by which the church enfolds a neoliberal discourse into

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its therapeutics with the aim of transforming "addicts" into "good," responsible citizen-subjects of the neoliberal state.

Alongside the Foucauldian approach to ethical self-cultivation, anthropologists interested in the study of morality have also turned to the more humanist slant of neo-Aristotelian philosophers. The development of a dialogue between anthropology and neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics has been a major influence in studies of ethics and morality in psychological anthropology and the broader discipline. Aristotelian moral philosophy is concerned with the good life and human flourishing. For Aristotle, in order to flourish, one must cultivate wisdom that guides the definition of the good and what it means to lead a life worth living. Inspired by this perspective, a central question in this approach to ethics is simply, "how should we live and what kind of person do we want to be?" (Lambek, 2008: 134). A guiding assumption is that, while the definition of the good life varies across cultural and social contexts, the concern with the ability to live a good life, however defined, is universal (Mattingly, 2014: 11).

Among anthropologists engaging this approach, Cheryl Mattingly's work has been particularly influential for psychological anthropologists. Prior to this, Mattingly's early scholarship had been widely recognized for its contributions to the development of the narrative approach in medical anthropology (Mattingly, 1994, 1998). Mattingly's engagement with neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics is also informed by her work on narrative "emplotment," which focused on first-person experiences of suffering, healing, and hope in the clinic (Mattingly, 1994, 2011). Mattingly's book *Moral Laboratories*, an ethnography of African American families caring for children with serious medical conditions in the face of enormous social and economic barriers, has become a key text in the anthropology of ethics and morality (Mattingly, 2014). Inspired by both her interlocutors' stories of making do in the face of extreme struggles beyond their control, and neo-Aristotelian discussions of virtue ethics and the good, Mattingly focuses on the ways parents navigate everyday life, evaluate what it means to be a "good" parent, and experiment with alternative possible futures.

In *Moral Laboratories*, Mattingly argues for "a first-person virtue ethics that takes disempowered people's moral projects and their beliefs about the good seriously" (Mattingly, 2014: xvi). This theoretical position is set up in opposition to a Foucauldian approach to the ethics of self-cultivation, which focused on the role of power in shaping projects of ethical self-formation. Mattingly argues that one implication of the Foucauldian perspective is the erasure of individual agency as the self is revealed to be the result of discursive traditions. Foucault's critical perspective, Mattingly argues, contrasts sharply with how we experience ourselves in everyday life.

Influenced by phenomenology, Mattingly argues that focusing on first-person perspectives makes it possible to attend to practices of moral judgment and action from the standpoint of the experiencing subject. In doing so, the individual becomes the site of ethical agency as opposed to a product of social

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and historically shaped technologies of self-cultivation and "regimes of truth." By focusing on narratives of moral judgment and ethical practice from the first-person perspective, Mattingly centers the singularity of moral experience for a given individual as it is embedded in the ebb and flow of everyday life and the micro-dimensions of social interaction. In this way, Mattingly's first-person virtue ethics is thus closely aligned with the study of moral experience as defined by Zigon and Throop (2014). Yet, while Mattingly remains committed to virtue ethics and its centering on the good life as a universal moral project, Zigon and Throop's approach to moral experience emphasizes the need to bracket the Aristotelian suppositions of the ethical as a domain of judgment and action concerned with the realization of "the good."

20.4.2 Moral Experience: Individual or Relational?

The development of the phenomenological approach to moral experience is closely linked to the anthropology of experience that emerged in the 1990s (Csordas, 1990; Desjarlais, 1994; Kleinman, 1988; Scott, 1991). The turn to experience was a movement that aimed to serve as a corrective to what was perceived to be an anthropology overly focused on symbolic analysis and discursive forces, yet which rarely explored the everyday lived experiences of individual people from their unique embodied perspectives. From this lack, the anthropology of experience was born.

Within the anthropology of experience, a group of medical and psychiatric anthropologists began to study experiences of social suffering, that is, suffering which originates from social forces – economic, political, and other forms of oppression (Kleinman, Das, and Lock, 1997). A guiding interest was the value of understanding individual subjective experiences of suffering and how such experience was shaped by broader social, political, and economic forces of inequality (Biehl, Good, and Kleinman, 2007). A central figure in this intellectual zeitgeist was Arthur Kleinman, the psychiatrist-turned medical anthropologist who had become a force in the field for his work on doctor–patient interaction, the development of a new cross-cultural psychiatry, and the importance of illness narratives for understanding human suffering (Kleinman, 1988).

In an early essay titled "Experience and its Moral Modes," we find the beginnings of a notion of moral experience (Kleinman, 1999). Kleinman delivered this lecture in 1998 as part of the Tanner Lectures on Human Values at Stanford University. Based on an analysis of experiences of profound social suffering, Kleinman brings medical anthropology, social medicine, and cultural psychiatry into conversation with moral philosophy. A central focus of the essay is the association of the moral with what is "at stake" for a given person in their life. "Experience is moral," Kleinman writes, "because it is the medium of engagement in everyday life in which things are at stake and in which ordinary people are deeply engaged stakeholders who have important things to lose, to gain, and to preserve" (Kleinman, 1999: 362). As such, moral experience becomes visible when people are faced with threats of existential

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danger. In Kleinman's early formulation, an anthropology of moral experience is concerned with how people experience and live a moral life in the midst of uncertainty (Kleinman, 2006).

While Kleinman may have laid the groundwork, the approach of moral experience was fully developed in a 2014 special issue published in *Ethos*, organized by Zigon and Throop (2014). The guiding aim of the volume was to explore the relationship between morality and experience, the forms of experience that might count as moral/ethical, and the ways individuals recognize virtuous modes of being-in-the-world. Influenced by phenomenological philosophy (of the Heideggerian, Husserlian, and Levinasian varieties), both Zigon and Throop had begun formulating an approach to moral experience independently before collaborating on the concept. Zigon's early influential work on moral breakdown serves as an example of this approach, as it draws on Heideggerian phenomenology to define ethics as the work people do to return to everyday unreflective "dwelling" and everyday being-in-the-world after a breakdown (Zigon, 2007). Zigon writes, "the primary goal of ethics is to move back *into* the world; to once again dwell in the unreflective comfort of the familiar" (Zigon, 2007: 138). The concept of moral breakdown exemplifies the phenomenological approach to moral experience.

Likewise, in his ethnography *Suffering and Sentiment*, Throop combines cultural phenomenology with moral philosophy to study the sensory dimensions of moral experience and the embodiment of virtue (Throop, 2010). Based on his fieldwork in the Micronesian island of Yap, Throop explores processes of ethical transformation as they unfolded through social interaction. In a particularly powerful example, Throop describes the case of a young girl with a broken arm who undergoes traditional bone setting without anesthetic. Supported by her father, the girl is encouraged to endure her pain without tears. To endure suffering for others and to conceal one's emotions are central to Yapese understandings of virtue. By drawing on methods from linguistic anthropology and conversation analysis, such as video recording naturally occurring social interactions, Throop captures the process by which moral virtues are socialized in time, through language, the embodiment of pain, and the restriction of emotion. By illuminating the role of emotion and sentiment in articulating moral experience, Throop's work can also be located within the lineage of earlier research on moral sentiment in psychological anthropology (Throop, 2012).

In a departure from prior studies of ethics and morality in anthropology, the phenomenological approach to moral experience also shifted away from a notion of ethics and morality as a domain concerned with normative social behavior. Studies in moral experience reveal that a range of experiences may become imbued with ethical meaning, including those traditionally judged to be immoral or illicit, depending on the context in which they occur. For example, in an article by Angela Garcia included in the special issue, Garcia explores forms of care, virtue, and "moral striving" among people whose ways of living have generally been marked as immoral, nonnormative, and thus

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subject to institutionalized discipline and carceral punishment (Garcia, 2014). Drawing on her long-term fieldwork on heroin addiction in New Mexico's Española Valley, Garcia focuses on the moral contours of intergenerational heroin use through the story of a relationship between a mother and daughter who express care for each other by sharing heroin (Garcia, 2010). However, in order to see how heroin becomes an "ethical substance" that mediates relations of care, it must be understood in the social and historical context of dispossession in which it is embedded (Garcia, 2014: 56). From this perspective, intergenerational heroin use emerges as a mode of care through which one might assuage the pain of the other in a world defined by vulnerability. By showing how forms of care and moral experience are enacted by those deemed immoral in the eyes of the state, Garcia blurs the boundaries between moral and immoral and exposes the normative assumptions at work in such determinations.

Moral experience also signals a shift away from neo-Aristotelian approaches to morality that delineate the moral within the boundaries of "the good" and efforts to achieve it. While other approaches to ethics and morality draw on a vocabulary of dignity, obligation, responsibility, rights, and duty, from the perspective of moral experience, the range of moral sentiments and motivations are expanded far beyond this historically specific, Aristotelian terminology that has informed the Western tradition of moral philosophy (Zigon, 2014b, 2014a).

Among the most innovative aspects of the moral experience approach is the way that it opens ethics and morality beyond normative frameworks, a priori concepts, and predefined domains of the moral/ethical in social life. The study of moral experience engages the phenomenological perspective of "aspect seeing" that approaches the perception of any given phenomenon or situation as necessarily partial, always situated from a particular perspective and body in the world (see also Chapter 4, this volume). As such, moral experience may not necessarily be shared but instead emerges as a singular experience that might become ethical for a given person because of its relation to unique aspects of their particular life. As Zigon and Throop write, "Inherent in an aspectual understanding of moral experience is the recognition that the same object, situation, state of affairs, action, or quality may, depending on the context at hand, be deemed morally inhabited or ethically relevant, in different, possibly even paradoxical ways" (Zigon and Throop, 2014: 6). What distinguishes this insight from earlier work on the incommensurability of moral goods is its focus on the particular as opposed to the universal. By focusing on first-person perspectives, singular differences in what comes to be constituted as moral/ethical are brought into focus.

If any experience can become a moral experience, what indications and clues might we follow as ethnographers of moral experience in the field? Like Kleinman, Zigon and Throop suggest that moral experience often emerges within situations of uncertainty and events, moments, and actions that give rise to lived predicaments and dilemmas. By gathering data on first-person

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experiences of uncertainty and dilemmas through person-centered ethnography or narrative approaches, it becomes possible to understand a given experience and the way it may become imbued with moral meaning in the context of a life.

For example, in Sarah Willen's (2014) article, she describes the everyday lived experience of illegality for an undocumented migrant in Israel and the ways in which she crafts "inhabitable spaces of welcome," a "small zone of familiarity, comfort, meaning, and safety in the shadow of laws, policies, and practices explicitly designed to make people – in this case, unauthorized migrants – feel unwelcome" (Willen, 2014: 86). Such spaces, Willen argues, create openings for undocumented people to sustain their own ethical commitments and existential imperatives in a world otherwise defined by surveillance, abjection, and conditions of extreme constraint on agency. For the woman that Willen describes, her inhabitable space of welcome manifests as a relationship with her young daughter, who inspires her to strive in the face of the uncertainty of immigration status and the existential threats it generates.

While a number of scholars have focused on the individual as the unit of analysis, Zigon has argued that moral experience is not confined to individual experience but is also about "the making, remaking, and maintenance of relations" (Zigon, 2014b: 21). Recognizing that moral experience expands beyond the individual, Zigon and Throop argue that the study of morality also requires attention to relationality and attunement. For example, in Throop's article, "Moral Moods," he identifies the possibility for moods to become experiences through which moral concerns are revealed (Throop, 2014). Among many possible moods, Throop focuses on what he terms "moral moods," defined by qualities of distraction mixed with nostalgia, in which reflections on a better past shape perceptions of the moral failure of the present, and anxious anticipations about an unknown, but increasingly dark, future. Here, Throop engages Heidegger's analysis of a mood that strikes and prompts existential reflection in a way that discloses the nature of our relation with and toward the world. If, following Heidegger, mood is a form of attunement to the world, then moral moods signal an attunement to the way local moral concerns are revealed, negotiated, and contested in relation to various moods – for example, despair or nostalgia. Throop points out that, as moods float somewhere in the space between selves and the world, "the boundaries between self, other, and world are fused as a given mood atmospherically permeates our perception of the physical and social worlds within which we find ourselves enmeshed" (Throop, 2014: 70). As such, moral moods index the relationality of moral experience.

Ultimately, whether focused on the individual or the relational, the study of moral experience offers a lens through which to explore the potentially infinite variations, manifestations, and objectifications of the ethical in human life without importing a priori understandings of what qualifies as ethics and morality. In Zigon's recent ethnography, *A War on People*, he further develops this project in a new, more radical direction (Zigon, 2019a). Here, he begins to

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rethink morality and ethics and the concepts on which they rely, such as "the good," "the right," and "dignity." This work engages a phenomenological approach to destabilize a priori assumptions of ethics and morality and open a space from which to reconceptualize these key concepts. He calls this approach "critical hermeneutics" to mark its interpretive move of deconstructing the a priori, disclosing potentialities, and opening new possibilities for thinking and being morally otherwise.

Zigon's topic of study is the global drug war and the anti-drug war agonists that protest it through organizing, harm reduction programs, and everyday ways of being-in-the-world. Fieldsites included safe and supervised injection sites in Vancouver and Copenhagen and a New York City activist organization. Across each site, Zigon interrogates a key concept – community, freedom, and care – and performs a critical hermeneutic analysis to show how anti-drug war agonists use and define these concepts differently. For example, as opposed to the biopolitical project focused on "making live" that is bent on managing and normalizing the population in the name of health (Foucault, 2013), drug users in a supervised injection site in Copenhagen enacted what Zigon calls "attuned care." Attuned care is defined by radical acceptance, openness, and attunement to the unique singularity of others without judgment. Such care is starkly distinguished from the biopolitical care that seeks to transform "addicts" and reform their behavior.

At the same time, the role of "the good" in studies of moral experience has still not been settled. While Zigon argues that we should move away from the vocabulary of Western moral philosophy, Mattingly insists on the continued relevance and importance of the good as the North Star that guides people's projects of moral becoming. In light of this debate, we are left with a more expansive notion of moral experience that finds phenomenological approaches and engagements with first-person virtue ethics complementary. As a result, scholars who have taken up the concept of moral experience have done so in various ways.

For example, in a special journal issue on psychiatric care and the anthropology of moral experience, Neely Myers and Kristin Yarris engage Mattingly's approach of first-person virtue ethics as a frame through which to explore moral reorientation and experimentation in the aftermath of mental breakdown (Myers and Yarris, 2019). The authors argue that by focusing on moral personhood in the context of psychosis, it becomes possible to trace the ways people renegotiate their identity and articulate themselves as "good" persons in the eyes of their families, communities, and the often alienating and stigmatizing institutions of psychiatric care. In order to capture the lived experience of extraordinary conditions and the moral experiments it engenders, Myers and Yarris turn to Mattingly's articulation of moral experience because of its focus on a first-person virtue ethics that emphasizes moral becoming as a site of everyday experimentation with alternative possible futures.

Myers and Yarris locate Mattingly's first-person virtue ethics within the tradition of psychological anthropology and its focus on individual experience, subjectivity, and personhood, as articulated intersubjectively (Myers and

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Yarris, 2019: 5). Yet, despite the authors' focus on individual experience, in an afterward to the special issue, Mattingly emphasizes that, while the first-person perspective does require an individual experiencing subject, an "I," this subject is never isolated but always already relational. As Mattingly puts it, "relationality includes not only particular selves but also social structures, contexts, environments, the very materiality of the world" (Mattingly, 2019: 117). Most recently, Zigon has argued that ethics is fundamentally relational, offering "relational ethics" as a new domain of research focused on "the most fundamental of all ethical questions . . . How is it between us?" (Zigon, 2019b: 1005, 2021). This tension over the focus of research and the figure of the human – individual or relational – goes beyond debates on moral experience and cuts to the heart of psychological anthropology, the subfield that carved out a space for the study of individual experience in the discipline. For this reason, embracing what some have referred to as "ethics after individualism" may push the field of psychological anthropology in new directions.[3]

20.5 Conclusion: Future Directions

There is a long history of engagement with the study of ethics and morality in psychological anthropology. This engagement stretches back before anthropology's "ethical turn" to an earlier period defined by debates on moral relativism, moral universalism, and moral emotion. As interest in moral relativism waned in the context of calls for "militant anthropology," research on ethics and morality in psychological anthropology was displaced by concerns with experience, embodiment, and suffering. The second moment in the field's engagement with ethics and morality appeared in the 2010s alongside the emergence of the turn to ethics in the discipline writ large. Here, psychological anthropologists figured centrally in the development of two important frameworks for the study of ethics and morality: (1) first-person virtue ethics and (2) moral experience. Although both approaches share an interest in experience, debates have emerged regarding the figure of the individual and the universality of Western concepts of moral philosophy. What might be the implications of these debates as we look forward to the future directions of the field?

First, attention to relationality in research on moral experience may require rethinking its core methodologies, in which narrative and person-centered interviewing have figured prominently (Levy and Hollan, 1998; Mattingly, 2014; Parish, 1994; Zigon, 2012). While narrative may be a "fundamental human way of making sense of experience" (Mattingly and Garro, 2000: 19) and a means through which the teller constructs links between past, present, and future selves (Ochs and Capps, 1996), it also reinforces the centrality of the individual experiencing subject. Studies of moral experience focused on relationality may need to rely on different methods, such as participant observation and the multimodal methodologies of sound and video recording, in which the focus on the individual can be decentered.

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Second, in an age of climate crisis, cascading disasters, global pandemics, and a world shaped by ever-expanding tentacles of digital capitalism, it has become increasingly difficult to ignore the powerful role of nonhuman forces in directing human life – be they earthquakes or algorithms. The future of psychological anthropology's engagement with ethics and morality will take place on this new and unstable terrain. Already, some have begun to explore questions of ethics in relation to the nonhuman – for example, Zigon's work on the (im)possibility of empathic attunement by data-centric technologies (Zigon, 2019b), and my own research on the ethical demands of disaster (Seale-Feldman, 2020). At the same time, the psychic impact of living on a damaged planet demands that we continue to address the ethical and moral contours of care, empathy, therapeutics, and mood (Hollan and Throop, 2008; Stevenson, 2014).

Third, as calls to decolonize anthropology reverberate throughout the discipline, new challenges are posed to psychological anthropology and its approach to the study of ethics and morality. Although a central aim of moral experience is to bracket Western moral concepts, the phenomenology of Husserl, Heidegger, and Levinas is still firmly rooted in a European tradition of philosophy that also has its origins in Ancient Greece. What might it mean to develop an anthropology of ethics and morality in dialogue with philosophical traditions beyond the phenomenological canon? Such work might find inspiration by thinking with diverse literatures ranging from Black Studies and Queer Theory to the Kyoto School philosophers, which are already in direct conversation with phenomenology (Ahmed, 2006; Fanon, 2008; Kitaro, 1987; McKittrick, 2015; Moten, 2018; Nishitani, 1982).

Another decolonial challenge relates to calls for activist anthropology. Is it possible to combine the study of moral experience with engaged research shaped by a priori moral positions? While this question echoes an earlier moment in the field, when the debate between D'Andrade and Scheper-Hughes pitted moral objectivity against militant anthropology, it has a new sound today. The activist question is not predicated on a desire for moral objectivity but a sense that there is value in bracketing one's own "natural attitude" in order to explore the potentially infinite forms of experience that might become imbued with moral and ethical meaning. However, to bracket one's own moral a priori in activist research, which is by definition "a method through which we affirm a political alignment with an organized group of people in struggle" (Hale, 2006: 97), would be antithetical to solidarity.

Two decades ago, Charles Hale argued that aligning oneself with a political struggle and critically studying it can generate profound scholarly insights (Hale, 2006). Perhaps one aim of an activist psychological anthropology of ethics and morality would be to *selectively* study "neglected ideals latent in our cultural history" (Shweder et al., 1997: 142) and forms of ethical being-in-the-world and being-with others that have been marginalized, oppressed, and normalized by structures of power like White supremacy, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and biopolitics (Guenther, 2021; Hartman, 2019; Zigon, 2019a).

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To study, document, amplify, and live such alternative ethics might produce not only a "radical transformation of the means of perception" (Fanon, 1965, cited in Guenther, 2021: 18) but bring new worlds into being. In this way, psychological anthropology might also become a tool for liberation.

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Notes

1. The influence of Levinas would become central in later approaches to moral experience and relational ethics.
2. While these approaches are not necessarily in tension (see Lowe, 2018), a focus on morality's collectively shared dimensions may make it challenging to explore nonnormative ethics.
3. Here I borrow the terminology of Danish scholars of ethics and morality, who used the phrase "ethics after individualism" to describe their phenomenologically informed research on moral community (Louw, 2017).

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