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Human Agency: Language, and Duty, and Value. Philosophical Essays in Honor of J. O. Urmson by Jonathan Dancy; J. M. E. Moravcsik; C. C. W. Taylor

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Dancy, Jonathan; Moravcsik, J. M. E.; and Taylor, C. C. W., eds. *Human Agency: Language, Duty, and Value. Philosophical Essays in Honor of J. O. Urmson*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1988. Pp. xi+308. \$35.00 (cloth).

These essays are, according to Moravcsik, drawn together thematically by a common concern with the prerequisites of the successful human agent. So, the general question is, how is it that we do such and such a thing so well? In pessimistic times, that question can seem rather invigorating, although sometimes the approach leads also to the recounting of features of the human experience almost as is, rather than regarding them as the objects upon which philosophical scrutiny should bear. The book starts with a contribution from Urmson himself on knowledge, then moves to contributions on language use (by J. Hornsby; P. Suppes and C. Crangle; D. Wilson and D. Sperber) which suffer somewhat as self-standing pieces because they are components in continuing research programs. There are also interesting contributions on aesthetics (B. Vermazen; P. Kivy; K. L. Walton; T. Cohen) and ethics (A. Kenny; Taylor; Moravcsik; D. Heyd; Dancy; B. Williams). It is upon some of the latter that I wish to comment.

One common thread among some of the contributions on ethics is the following view: there are certain things which possess value which cannot be accounted for in terms of its assignment by some moral calculus such as utilitarianism. What I wish to do is show that the examples cited are not unaccountable in this way, and that, more generally, we should, in opposition to Williams, be at least unhappy about endorsing the view to which we have just referred.

In an informative article, Moravcsik considers the case of unconditional friendships—that is, those which will continue through loyalty despite the fact that either of the friends in question ceases to find it rewarding—to be clearly unresponsive to a utilitarian analysis. An account of friendship is offered which putatively possesses the virtue of transcending utilitarian considerations by asserting that each self has the capacity to possess relational properties when engaged in friendships, which properties are intrinsically fulfilling. Passing over the difficult question of the nature of these relational properties—which, as a necessary condition of their possession, require that we conceive of ourselves as possessing them—there still seems to be the following difficulty: do we necessarily desire to possess these properties, or do we only desire to possess them, as Moravcsik sometimes implies, if we adopt a certain conception of self? If the former, then one can offer a utilitarian account of unconditional friendship; if the latter, then what reason can we have for adopting this conception other than the utilitarian one in terms of individual and social well-being?

Supererogatory acts allegedly present a second example of what is valuable, independent of a moral calculus. Heyd ingeniously claims that, while there are moral reasons for acting in this way, these reasons do not flow from some model of the moral agent's duties; moreover, it is because of this that these actions have their especial and independent value. As Dancy convincingly shows, this claim is difficult to assess, yet I depart from him by thinking that the first part of Heyd's conjunctive claim may well be true. My reason is that it seems plausible that a moral calculus will not only assign values to ends but also, limited by some anterior conception of average human well-being, demarcate when pursuit of these ends becomes a duty. An action beyond the call of duty will be given, by this calculus, as much merit as all above-average behavior receives. This view accounts for the value of supererogation by undermining its supposed independence.

We are now in a position to trace out the two objections underpinning our opposition to Williams's view. First, as I hope has become clear, the notion of a moral calculus is always sufficiently flexible to incorporate those things of value that other philosophers claim fall outside it. Its flexibility makes it the perfect means for us to order and criticize our moral intuitions. If this is rejected, then the alternative position, as adopted by Williams, in order to be creditable, must give an account of how we reflect upon the legitimacy of putative moral principles. To say, as Williams does (pp. 190, 198), that such reflection is going to utilize an 'unsystematic' and atheoretical notion of 'importance' is more to point to an enigma than give a reply.

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Green, Ronald M. *Religion and Moral Reason: A New Method for Comparative Study*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988. Pp. xxi+278. \$29.95 (cloth); \$10.95 (paper).

As its subtitle indicates, this book proposes a method for the comparative study of religions. The author's announced aim is "to show that religion has its basis in a process of moral and religious reasoning common to all human beings" (p. xi). This process is, he claims, a deep structure of human thought.

The first chapter is devoted to a sketch of the deep structure. It is based on a conception of the moral point of view according to which it "involves a perspective of radical impartiality or 'omnipartiality' before the choices and issues facing us as moral agents" (p. 6). Morality so conceived can conflict with prudence, but both make claims on reason. This internal conflict "leads reason into the realm of religious thought and to the second component of the deep structure of religious reasoning: insistence on the reality of moral retribution" (p. 12). We fail to live up to the strict demands of morality and so deserve punishment rather than reward by way of retribution. This problem "gives rise to religious reasoning's third component: an awareness of the depth and intractability of human wrongdoing, and the need for suspension of moral self-judgment" (p. 19). Even this very brief outline of the deep structure should be enough to make clear its Kantian roots. The retributive demand of the second component is what drives Kant to postulate the existence of God, and the third component nicely corresponds to Kant's twin postulates of radical evil and divine grace. So the deep structure is, in effect, a generalized version of Kant's religion within the limits of reason alone.

The other seven chapters of the book are case studies in which this general picture of the structure of moral and religious reasoning is put to work in the analysis of a variety of specific religious traditions. They treat such diverse topics as religion and morality in traditional African settings, the decline of ethical monotheism in Chou China, divine command traditions in Judaic and Christian ethics, the moral pedagogy implicit in religious rituals, religious conceptions of distributive justice, and the moral lessons of Vālmīki's Rāmāyana.

Much of the material in these chapters is interesting in its own right. To my mind, however, these chapters do not add up to a cumulative case for the superiority of the proposed method of comparative study. An adequate method of comparison