



University of Tennessee, Knoxville
**TRACE: Tennessee Research and Creative
Exchange**

Masters Theses

Graduate School

12-2014

Reviving First Person Understanding in Ethical Inquiry

Matthew Allen Reese

University of Tennessee - Knoxville, mreese4@vols.utk.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_gradthes



Part of the [Ethics and Political Philosophy Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Reese, Matthew Allen, "Reviving First Person Understanding in Ethical Inquiry. " Master's Thesis, University of Tennessee, 2014.

https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_gradthes/3174

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at TRACE: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses by an authorized administrator of TRACE: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. For more information, please contact trace@utk.edu.

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Matthew Allen Reese entitled "Reviving First Person Understanding in Ethical Inquiry." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Philosophy.

Jon Garthoff, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

E.J. Coffman, David Palmer

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

Reviving First Person Understanding in Ethical Inquiry

**A Thesis Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville**

**Matthew Allen Reese
December 2014**

Abstract

Virtue Ethicists who follow the arguments set out in Elizabeth Anscombe's *Modern Moral Philosophy* have consistently referenced problems with modern ethical thought. It is unclear, however, whether a single theme unites their dissatisfaction. Discovering 'the problem' is important for two reasons: first, it is, itself, historically interesting were there to emerge a common thread running through modernity; second, it is potentially insightful for providing future direction to ethicists. In the following two sections I argue, respectively, that such a theme underlies modern ethics and, further, that it is problematic.

In Section I, I take up three influential dichotomies. I situate historical claims made by Alasdair MacIntyre (1982) and Iris Murdoch (1970) into a broader framework. MacIntyre argues that each Hume, and Kant and Reid incorrectly reduce the content of ethical thought to an impersonal moral value. Iris Murdoch, however, argues the problem with modern ethical thought is that it either concerns only overt actions, the behaviorist tradition, or internal movements of the will, the existentialist tradition. I argue that the problems described by MacIntyre and Murdoch are explained by a false dichotomy between Empiricists and Rationalists. Each neglect that apprehending morality requires first person understanding, that is, a method of understanding, which includes the world as it appears through the senses and my unique perspective. The problem of modern ethics is, therefore, one about *methodology*.

In Section II, I argue that first person understanding is necessary for a complete account of ethics. I move forward in two stages. First, I argue that first person understanding is indispensable to human action. In order to act, I must see doing so as choiceworthy, but this requires both my first and third person understanding. Hence, a gap emerges between why I act and why I am approved by modern ethics. Second, I argue that the gap is problematic: first it reduces the scope of moral inquiry; second, it separates morality from flourishing; third, it undercuts attempts to explain ethical overridingness. If this is plausible, it is important for theorists to reconsider the role of first person understanding in moral inquiry.

Table of Contents

Section I:	The Uniting Theme Among Modern Ethics	1
Part I	Two Problems With Modern Ethics: MacIntyre and Murdoch	1
Part II	The Underlying Problem with Modern Ethics	6
Part III	The Revival of Virtue Ethics	13
Section II:	The Importance of First Person Understanding in Ethical Inquiry	18
Part I	Responding to What is Good	19
Part II	Ethical Identity: Clarifying What is Excellent	22
Part III	Ethical Identity: Role Membership	25
Part IV	Ethical Identity: First and Third Person Understanding	30
Part V	The Indispensability of First person Understanding	32
Part VI	The Weight of Fulfillment	35
Bibliography		37
Vita		39

Section I – The Uniting Theme Among Modern Ethics

Ethics is a discipline aimed at understanding what is valuable about life and how one is to live; it is about what features are relevant in plotting one's next steps. On the broadest view it is concerned with capturing intuitions about *life guidance*, which is what most care about when asking, "how do I live?" That ethics captures this broader question is important because it motivates ethicists to respond to the widest set of ethical concerns, including those about *my life*. For ethics to offer the fullest sense of guidance, it must capture what is important about living morally, happy, as a businessman, as a father, and the rest, as each is situated in a complex human life. A prescription about how to live can only become the *thing to do* if it can obtain authority over the other ways of living that characterize my life.

To capture this broader question, my approach to ethics grounds itself in a broad understanding of the best life for any human, what I call flourishing. Intuitions about broadening the scope of ethics are especially referenced in the virtue ethical literature, but are not widely discussed.¹ By broadening the scope, I mean to approach ethics in a way that accounts for what I care about, that is, the breadth of values that might be included among my practical considerations. Hence, by flourishing, I do not intend to merely describe an important way that a life might go well, but offer a structure to conceive of one's life and *any* next step as better or worse. If anything uncontroversial grounds the thing I am to do it is that doing so is best in the broad sense that has accounted for the entirety of my practical considerations.

In this section I offer the historical motivation for this project. As I see it, the key problems in modern ethics, which I date between the 1740's and 1960's, stem from reductionism about ethical methodology. It is most easily seen in the dichotomy between Humean Empiricism and Moorean Intuitionism. Virtue Ethicists, those leading the charge against modern forms of reductionism, have struggled to locate what is *the* problem, which underlies modern ethics. Hence, I first offer two objections from Alasdair MacIntyre (1982) and Iris Murdoch (1970). I, then, situate historical claims made by MacIntyre and Murdoch into a broader framework. In the latter half of this section, I shed light on work by virtue ethicists to illuminate what has been problematic about such reductionism. In sections II, I argue why the underlying theme I shed light in this section is problematic for the future ethical theorizing.

I. Two Problems With Modern Ethics: MacIntyre and Murdoch

There are at least two stories told by virtue ethicists about how modern ethicists fail to approach ethical inquiry. MacIntyre argues that each Hume, and Kant and Reid incorrectly reduce the content of ethical thought to an impersonal moral value

¹ One might note both Anscombe (1958) and Von Wright's (1963) use of 'narrow', or otherwise MacIntyre's (1982) reference to the "ghostly quality" of ethics.

(henceforth, the *content* problem).² Iris Murdoch, however, argues the problem with modern ethical thought is that it either concerns only overt actions, the behaviorist tradition, or internal movements of the will, the existentialist tradition, which she thinks is a false dichotomy (Henceforth, the *action* problem). I begin with MacIntyre's story.

The modern ethical tradition, according to MacIntyre, is rooted in a false dichotomy between Hume, and Kant and Reid. On the one hand, Hume saw that morality must involve the passions and, hence, closed the gap between them by reducing morality to the passions. But, the passions, on his account, are not voluntary. Rather all action and all reason is generated from the force of 'I wants', 'It pleases me', or 'It pains me.' Humans are simply creatures, which directly respond to the passions. Moral judgments, therefore, merely reduce to complex expressions of desire and social cooperation; At work, I reason to complete a project because passion moves me and during a chess match to move my bishop if I wish to avoid checkmate. It is not that 'work' or 'chess' make my actions reasonable, only my desires, which might coincide with work or chess etiquette. That is, for Hume, the passions always underlie our reasoning, not the other way around.

But this obscures two distinctions: (1) The dependence and absence of any context-of-utterance for reason giving force and (2) what makes a reason good as opposed to making it forceful (p. 300). The first is a distinction about when an utterance such as "I want" might have force. Some utterances possess force that is dependent on a particular context, such as 'within a chess match' or 'at work', while others possess a certain force that transcends various context. Hume does not account for those that are dependent on a context. The second is a distinction between my good and my motivation for action. Depending on who gives me a reason for doing X, I may find the reason good, motivating, both or neither. Hume does not see that what is motivating might not be good and *visa-versa*.

Imagine the contrast between a standard competitive game of chess and my playing chess with a sick child for entertainment. Also take the following reason for acting, 'moving the bishop is the only way to avoid checkmate.' The two previous distinctions emerge. As to the first, on Hume's account, if I possess the desire to avoid checkmate, then moving the bishop is equally derivative from my passion in either situation. Appeals to 'I want' are for children, always seen this way, but progress from this simple way of thinking to practical reason is necessary if one is to flourish in varying contexts (p. 302). This construction fails to take into account that, first, unlike the standard competitive game, 'moving the bishop is the only way to avoid checkmate' is not the *same* kind of reason as when I play the sick child. It is necessary in the explanation of a reason to include why it is good or motivating in the practice and context. If I am playing chess with a sick child, then 'moving the bishop is the only way to avoid checkmate' may be a reason for *not* moving the bishop. This is not because my desire has changed, but because the reason is located in the context. The use of practical reason, that is, grounds what passions are appropriate for satisfaction in the context. Otherwise, my desires may fail. Beating a sick child at chess, foremost, will not likely grant the value I hoped, it may merely affirm my lack of decency, but more importantly, the value of playing chess with this child is open to a set of excellences through which

² Here I specifically draw from MacIntyre's 1982 paper, "How Moral Agents Became Ghosts." I thank Christopher Lutz for pointing out that MacIntyre's qualm with modern ethics is, by his other work, more nuanced. So this work need not be taken as a criticism of MacIntyre.

the value of that activity is apprehended. To obtain what is valuable the activity requires that I first recognize what is excellent, not what I desire.

As to the second, Hume reduces good reasoning to acting from desire, which is merely presented as a motivation to act, but this fails in two respects: desire satisfaction does not exhaust what is good about my actions and what I have a *good* reason to do is not clearly predicated on my desires. I agree to the former, but do not take up the issue in this work. As to the latter, what makes an act forceful and good clearly come apart. If my boss gives me reason to do some malicious act, say keeping my job, I may be motivated to do it, but not because the reason is a good one, nor because manipulation leads to anything good. By contrast, my boss may ask that I focus on some new urgent project, which for whatever reason, I do not desire to engage. My lack of desire, however, gives no clear evidence that this is a project worth avoiding. And, of course, the cases abound. What is a good reason in one case may not be in another; and either case may be more or less motivating.

Hume closes the gap between ‘I want’ and morality, but at a cost. ‘I want’ is redundant since the passions capture morality only if what ‘I’ am reduces to ‘wants.’ My desire, moreover, does not depend on the context of my situation or what is actually good. Rather my desires are at best flippant. Despite the superficial label, ‘I want’, desire on Hume’s account is entirely impersonal. Anyone unconvinced should recall that Hume did not think *personal identity* was a sensible concept.

Kant and Reid could see that Hume’s project falls short, but their approach to morality is no better; it neglects rather than misunderstands the passions. Their approach is, first, deontological³, deriving morality from a universal and impersonal law. The law is applicable to all rational beings because its value is rooted in rationality itself. That is, both agents and the law are valuable because rationality is the single locus of intrinsic value. The passions, therefore, were disconnected from morality in two ways. First, they did not factor into movements of the will. What it is to engage in morality, is simply to exercise one’s God given rational will, which is to respond appropriately to reason. Because the will was tied to rationality, neither Kant nor Reid saw that the will could have any causal antecedents, including the passions or whatever else is personal. Second, the passions were not the kind of thing that could be rational. Even if the passions were antecedent, they were not rational, and, hence, are not valuable for moral action. Reason underwrote the proper function of the will, not sensation, emotion or history. Although Kant and Reid thought they had located what is most personal, the rational will, they had only isolated morality, the will and reason from whatever else is personal.

As a result, Kant and Reid portrayed a moral agent that in any situation is given the choice between either the rational precepts of morality or their own passions. The moral law, not the passions, moreover, is the key to our happiness. It arises through conformity to the precepts of morality, rather than a direct pursuit via the passions. Happiness would, perhaps, arise through adherence to morality, not through trusting the mere pulls and pushes of sentiment. Reid is clear about the separation:

³ It is not clear, however, that Kant’s position was so extreme or even deontological. Please see Barbara Herman’s (1996) *The Practice of Moral Judgment*. I avoid this issue, however, for two reasons: (1) My project is to capture the Modern Ethical problem noted by MacIntyre into a broader framework; (2) At least Kant has *influenced* academic philosophy to favor deontology.

The road of duty is so plain, that the man who seeks it, with an upright heart, cannot greatly err from it. But the road to happiness, if that be supposed the only end our nature leads us to pursue, would be found dark and intricate, full of snares and dangers, and therefore not to be trodden without fear, and care, and perplexity (MacIntyre, 1982, p. 307).

To be clear, happiness does not arise because in pursuing morality our passions come into conformity with the movements of our will. Rather, both the law is imposed and happiness arises independent of my passions. At best the two are coincidental. My consciousness is valuable only if through rationality I come into closer connection with the universal law. Hence my life is not about unfolding a unique *personal* story, but about renewing my mind to resemble what is *impersonal*.

MacIntyre correctly grasps that the consequences running through ethics stems from a poor conception of the will. He draws our attention to two kinds of reductionism, both of which result in impersonal ethical content: The first reduces the will to arbitrary movements of desire; the second reduces the will to grasping a universal law. The dichotomy between Hume, and Kant and Reid resulted in a split between philosophical ethics and philosophy of mind. The content of ethical inquiry was not concerned with questions about personal identity, but rather something impersonal. MacIntyre suggests that this split, most importantly, affected “our beliefs about voluntariness and action; our beliefs about the relationship of each moral agent to his or her own past; and our beliefs about the kind of impersonality which morality requires” (p. 308). Voluntary action, and, hence, morality are reducible to moments of choice, which involve responding to desires or the will; morality is predicated on *moments* of desire or, otherwise, those that gave rise to reason. Morality is not the kind of thing that follows me. Nothing about my *history* including my development, relationships, experience, or naturally abilities among other things is, therefore, worth moral concern. It is only *if* the moral moment arises that a choice is required. When the moment of choice arises, the moral thing to do is choose that which has moral value as opposed to one that might have some other personal significance. If the structure of morality is so radically opposed to the personal content of my life, it seems likely that the structure is incorrect and, hence, that the impersonal content derivative from that structure is also incorrect. Hence, the structure and content of morality is not likely that found among the dichotomy between Hume, and Kant and Reid; either pole incorrectly reduces moral content to an impersonal description.

But the problem MacIntyre sheds light, although plausible, does not entirely capture the problem with modern ethics. Iris Murdoch (1970) proposes that the problem, rather than one about its impersonal content, is one about its ability to capture moral *action*. The problem arises between Existentialists and Behaviorists⁴. Like MacIntyre, Murdoch argues that both fail to properly conceptualize the will. On the one hand,

⁴ By “behaviorist” I mean to point at those conceptions of the mind focused on behavior. Hence I include other forms of functionalism, which suggest the self is explained by certain functional states exhausted by descriptions about inputs and outputs.

Behaviorists, following Wittgenstein, argue that the will is not relevant to moral inquiry for the latter, and stronger, of two reasons: (a) it is of no use; (b) it isn't there (Murdoch, p. 10). The former suggests that whatever is morally useful is understood via empirically means – a claim about practical understanding. The latter suggests a stronger claim that whatever *exists* is empirically verifiable – a claim about ontology.

Behaviorists, therefore, claim that whatever is meaningful about the will and morality is exhausted by public descriptive language. The will is irrelevant to morality because its existence as an internal concept is meaningless; there is no will to consider. Hence no events, including states of attitude, reflection, virtue, emotions, consciousness, or motives, are sensible qua *internal* events. 'Anger' or 'kindness', for instance, are both learned and identified by their outward behavioral pattern. Anger is reducible to 'her heart beat quickly, 'she gritted her teeth', 'her face became flush', 'she yelled, "Stop it!"' and whatever else occurred. These are merely reducible, moreover, to causation from external stimuli. There is *nothing* private attributable to any action. If any sense can be attached to my will or, better, can answer whether I made a decision, it is located between some external description about my environment and some further description about my overt behavior.

If it seems as though I have a kind of private imagery or language accessible only to myself and, so, that something is missing on this construction the Behaviorist will simply respond that any apparent private content is merely a reflection of the public thing(s), which it is about. In fact, I can only know my own inner content via an outer expression. Whether I am *really* angry is not true because I sense its subtle private uprising, but because it overtly displays itself. Whatever happens if I 'hold it in' is not anger, but something else also exhausted by external description of my overt behavior. With no sense of the will or any private objects to attach, morality is removed to the point of action. The way to be moral is to act in such a way as is third personally approved. The language of morality, therefore, reduces to action-guidance and what is right to a mere description about kinds of external action.

Existentialists intended to free morality and philosophy at large from the grip of external reductionism by arguing that freedom of the will, could, above all, cut across external analysis and description. Morality, therefore, was thought entirely contained in the will and its ability to direct one's life in both thought and action. Hence, Existentialists avoided the scientific and anything that might constrain it through causal explanation. Freedom became the highest goal of morality and, hence, the goals of morality were entirely aimed at breaking, rather than forming explanation. It arose that although the will was relevant, it was also too prestigious for any descriptions I might otherwise take upon myself. Attempts to locate myself on feelings, emotions, brain states, culture, history or whatever else, were therefore passed by as that which can either be overcome by the will or else do not capture what is truly self-making. Existentialism consequently imprisoned the will and, hence, morality to a kind of pure decision: Kierkegaard thought it was about faith and Nietzsche about power. All other intentions and actions were merely expressions of the so directed will, which, is all that I am.

The Existentialist response bears a striking resemblance to that given by Kant and Reid who, seeing Hume's conception of the passions was inadequate for morality, gave up the passions altogether. Existentialists, just as well, gave up that overt behavior held a supporting role in the moral structure. Rather than exhausting morality in overt behavior,

they argue it is exhausted in internal movements of the will. So Existentialism fails to capture morality in two senses. First, it fails to capture certain objects and characteristics, which are intuitively *mine*, including, among other things, my character, intentions, emotions, feelings, desires, physical body and, perhaps most importantly, my history. Separating any of these objects from my identity is not only a loss to some mode through which my will was expressed, but also a loss *to myself*.

Second, it fails to capture what is valuable about morality beyond the will. That is, there is something valuable about being moral, which is not reducible to either the properly or improperly directed will. Plausibly, who I am is the product of a developing my humanity, which, if done right, opens myself to what is more intuitively valuable about morality. If so, my moral status is not only dependent on my freedom, but also upon what it is to be human – an inescapable constraint, which informs my will and whose value is illuminated through development. The existentialist approach, however, is not clearly open to such constraints since their addition would require explaining the source of moral value in something other than my will.

Both accounts, therefore, isolate the will and deflate morality. Behaviorism isolates the will to overt behavior and, therefore, deflates what actions are morally evaluative to what is external, public and descriptive. Existentialism isolates the will to internal movements and, therefore, deflates what actions are morally evaluative to those, which are directly tied to the autonomous will. Hence the problem with morality is not merely a reductionism about *content*, but also one about capturing the breadth of moral action, whether internal movements of the mind or overt behavior.

Here it becomes evident that MacIntyre's qualm against moral philosophy fails to capture the problem with modern ethics. There exists a further problem among modern ethicists about which actions should be thought moral. The problem is not simply about excluding impersonal content; what I am on the existentialist picture is captured by the will, which is *entirely* personal. But if neither the problems of content nor action are clearly misguided, the question follows, "what is *the* problem of modern ethics?" In what follows I pick up this question by turning to a third philosophical dichotomy between Rationalism and Empiricists. First, I suggest that either paradigm fails to properly characterize the *methodology* of moral inquiry. Second, I argue that the problem of methodology captures those described by MacIntyre and Murdoch. Finally, I argue the revival in virtue ethics since Elizabeth Anscombe has largely been an attempt to locate and shed light on this problem.

II. The Underlying Problem with Modern Ethics

The dichotomies noted by both MacIntyre and Murdoch are accurate, but neither fully captures the deeper problem with modern ethics. I argue that, rather than characterizing the problem of modern ethics as one of *content* or *action*, it is one about *methodology*.⁵ The methodological problem is most clearly displayed between Humean

⁵ I should note that Murdoch is clear to avoid both the Rationalist-Empiricist dichotomy, but does not clearly connect that their problematic dichotomy about methodology underlies the Existentialist-Behaviorist split. I do not mean to suggest that she was not aware of the relationship. She seems well aware

Empiricists and Moorean Intuitionists. The latter captures the rationalist thesis, which says that what is knowable is apprehended through a unique rational faculty.

Each Empiricists and Rationalists, including Intuitionists, neglect that apprehending morality might require first person understanding, that is, a method of understanding, which includes the world as it appears through the senses. This includes the primary senses: optical, auditory, tactile, gustatory, and olfactory, as well as whatever else is particular to a person that might alter her unique perception including beliefs, physical composition and history. In other words, first person understanding fuels my conception about the way the world is, borrowing from John McDowell (1979), *from the inside out* (p. 331). There is a reality about my experience, which cannot be captured by a proposition or external description. It is a reality that is only understood, at least for humans, through *being me*.

Among what can only be understood, at least in part, through first person understanding includes, consciousness, free will and the phenomenological components of certain cognitive objects like intentions, beliefs, experiences, emotions, motives, etc. What it is that *I*, for instance, have a belief is not increasingly understood as I detach myself to discover a proposition or external description that it attaches (though these might tell me something about the belief). Rather, there is something extra, which I cannot understand by inquiring about an observer's perspective; that is, *what it is for me* to hold such a belief. There is, first, the raw phenomenological data as it engages my senses and, second, the fit that phenomenon has with the rest of my being, which results in *my* experience.

The distinction between first and third person understanding is easy to miss. Third person understanding need not refer to reasons or qualities, which exist outside the individual, but rather is a *perspective* which apprehends truth, or at least attempts to do so, from beyond the agent (as Nagel (1986) has described it, a *view from nowhere*). Whatever truth it captures about the world is distinct from what is unique to my perception; so it does not consider any particulars about my personal sensations, history, experience, or circumstance. According to Nagel, third personal understanding is fueled by a kind of intellectual optimism (Nagel 1986, p. 24), which grasps truths about reality, at least in part, through our imaginative capacities. Nagel writes,

We can add to our knowledge of the world by accumulating information at a given level – by extensive observation from one standpoint. But we can raise our understanding to a new level only if we examine that relation between the world and ourselves, which is responsible for our prior understanding and form a new conception that includes a more detached version of ourselves (Nagel 1986, p. 5).

That is, through the imagination, I withdraw from the contingencies of my subjective perspective to develop an impersonal point of view. I will return to this shortly.

As I see it, Hume's deepest impact on philosophy was his call to empiricism. It spurned from a deprived view of human understanding, which is reducible to the Copy Principle. It states: "All our simple ideas in their first appearance are deriv'd from simple

that Moore played an important role in modern troubles. I refer those interested to Murdoch (1970) *The Sovereignty of Good*, p.41.

impressions, which are correspondent to them, and which they exactly represent.” That is, any idea and the only kind of truth we have access is about mere *appearance*, reducible to sensation as operated on by the external world. Because human ideas are reducible to only raw sense data it is left open whether the world as it appears is identical with reality, the way it is *actually*. Hume writes:

Reason is the discovery of truth or falshood. Truth or falshood consists in an agreement or disagreement either to the *real* relations of ideas, or to the *real* existence and matter of fact. Whatever, therefore, is not susceptible of this agreement or disagreement, is incapable of being true or false, and can never be an object of our reason. Now ‘tis evident our passions, volitions, and actions, are not susceptible of any such agreement or disagreement; being original facts and realities, compleat in themselves, and implying no reference to other passions, volitions, and actions. ‘Tis impossible, therefore, they can be pronounc’d either true or false, and be either contrary or conformable to reason (Hume, David. A Treatise of Human Nature, III.I.I.9)

Reason, if it can lead to truth is, at best, about appearance, not reality. The passions, moreover, are not truth responsive. My emotions are not indicators of value or genuine perceptive faculties; there is no clear connection between the forces, which act upon them and the sensations they present. Hence, my experiences are not evaluative – they are not the kinds of things that are true, false, good, better, bad, worse or the rest. There is no moral world, or world at all, I can access beyond the senses.

It should not be confused, however, that Hume’s failure is rooted in any kind of reliance on first person understanding. His moral philosophy, again, stems from a radical form of empiricism, which entails three premises: first, moral terms are *about the mind*; second, moral terms are *natural*; third truth is apprehended through third person understanding. The third premise results from the former two. As to the first, Humean empiricists are non-cognitivists about moral truths. That is, what moral claims are *about* is not something in the world. There is no truth about whether some object in the world I judge is *actually* good, bad or the rest. My moral judgments are merely descriptive about my sense experience. Second, they are specifically about certain natural states reducible to the desire for pleasure or aversion to pain. Hence, moral truth merely extends to the existence of my desire. The only moral reality that I might interact is that in which the world appears to come into conformity with my desires, specifically about certain kinds of pleasure. Morality is entirely captured by the world-to-mind direction of fit.

As a result, my ability to engage in reasoning about the world is limited because the sensory data I have access is not evaluative; For Hume reason is not useful for discerning moral truth beyond the senses.⁶ The content of moral judgments, therefore, do not contain truth conditions because there is nothing objective that their truth depends. That is, moral judgments fail to track a moral reality because there is nothing about the world humans *could* track, not because it is clear there are no evaluative moral truths. Hence, Hume also forfeits an account of obligation since it would require a deeper

⁶ Exploring how much can be known through reason on Hume’s account is a deeper project I need not engage.

understanding of an objective value worth responding, which is not accessible on his theory. To assert, “harming my children is wrong” reduces to a desire that I see they are safe. Benevolence reduces to a desire that I see those I love prosper. Perhaps it is possible to talk about whether my emotions are pleasurable or useful for my life, but there is nothing to say about whether they are, in themselves, true, obligatory, right, or good. Hence, Hume reduces the importance of first person understanding to mere appearance by neglecting there is anything true or evaluative to grasp by its method.

By contrast, Rationalism best exemplified in the work of G.E. Moore and those who follow his arguments, Intuitionists, argue two important theses: first that the truth of morality exists independent of an agent’s mental states and, second, it is a domain that humans have epistemic access. Moorean Intuitionists argue that Humean Empiricists incorrectly pick out the *kind* of objects moral terms describe. Intuitionists deny Hume’s skepticism that moral terms are descriptive of the world and, rather, merely descriptive of *our minds*. They are not clearly cognitivists, however, because they so strongly avoid Hume’s empirical thesis, which seeks to reduce morality to natural properties. To say that the truth of moral terms is, as it were, anchored in the world, is misleading because it seems to suggest that morality is reducible to what is *naturally* in the world. Empiricists, incorrectly reduce moral terms – especially goodness, which, is the grounding value of ethical inquiry according to Moore – to natural properties, what he calls *the naturalistic fallacy*. That is, they incorrectly predicate the truth of moral terms merely on natural states or phenomena about the mind, like desire. The fallacy is illuminated, according to Moore, by a consistent “open feel” left over from such theorizing; a further question always remains about *why* the natural state, like desire or pleasure, is good. But this question can only be answered by reference to something further beyond the natural state, which is good (what he calls, the *open question argument*).

Moral judgments, for Moore, are attempts to grasp some real truth about the world, i.e. to perceive the property of goodness, which applies to a given situation, action or state of character. Given it properly captures that truth the judgment is either true or correct. But Moore, again, is keen to distance himself from Humean Empiricism. Hence, *what* I perceive when I intuit such and such is good is a non-natural property, which is not explainable in either natural or metaphysical terms. It is *real*, but also indefinable and nonanalyzable. Hence, its existence is assigned a mysterious object and, moreover, our ability to intuit goodness is equally unexplainable.

His criticism lands on something important, but his positive account illuminates a failure to see what is most problematic with Hume’s empiricism. Murdoch captures the point:

Moore was quite right (it was said) to separate the question ‘what does “good” mean?’ from the question ‘What things are good?’ though he was wrong to answer the second question as well as the first. He was right to say that good was indefinable, but wrong to say that it was the name of a quality (Murdoch, 1970, p.2).

Moore correctly points out that goodness is not clearly definable in naturalistic terms – that is, reducible to the existence of pleasure or desire-satisfaction. Whether some natural state is good requires a further explanation about *why* it is good. Goodness, rather, might

describe something abstract that, in virtue of, natural properties are ‘made’ good. Plausibly the mere existence of pleasure is not itself good, but goodness is something realized by the increasing conformity or relation to an abstract excellence or perfection.

Moorean Intuitionists fail, however, to recognize the deeper worry with Hume: his empiricism derives from an account of human nature that neglects the first person perspective. Hence, Moorean Intuitionists author a positive account, which falls victim to the same problem. The problem arises when one asks *how* humans understand morality. When Moore went on to describe that goodness is undefinable, he not only made ‘what is good’ mysterious, but he drove a wedge between sense and understanding. ‘Goodness’ only eluded reductionism to pleasure and desire, because *it was cut off* from first personal understanding.

Moore denies that goodness, in no way, is tied to a natural state. He misses that even if goodness requires a kind of natural state, the natural state need not suffice for goodness. Imagine, an Olympic speed skater preparing for her gold medal heat who has obtained a wide breadth of knowledge about maintaining balance while moving at a steady pace and also about the kind of attitude that is optimal before any race, which includes the proper degree of focus and fervor. Now imagine that ten minutes before beginning her race, a competitor, equipped with similar knowledge, slips a drug into her water. The only affect the drug has is inducing the Olympian to *feel* a rush of excitement similar to that of winning, but the athlete is not manipulated to believe she has won. I expect the result would not be pleasant. The emotion would be out of place – misapplied to the actual circumstance. The athlete’s hopes of winning the medal as well as her understanding of the emotions required to achieve it would immediately enter in creating a deep tension. She may be tempted to frustration or despair in response to the new sensation. It is not only that the Olympian would aim change her emotions to what is required for a better performance, but that the sensation would not achieve a state of pleasure. The excited feeling, that is, would not be interpreted as *good* because it lacks a proper fit with her further understanding.

The example demonstrates that sense does not exhaust understanding and, hence, what it is to understand something is good is not reducible to a natural sensation.⁷ It *does not* follow that goodness is, therefore, something *other* than a natural property, but Intuitionists seem to draw this conclusion. Moore did not see that interpretation is complex. As he saw it, morality was either directly apprehended through sensation or, otherwise, a peculiar moral faculty, which operates in isolation to other human senses or faculties. According to Moore we can sense a moral landscape, but only through a capacity, which *intuits* the fundamental moral truths. It is not at all clear, however, through what method Intuitionists believe we grasp moral truths. The faculty is equally as inexplicable as the properties it understands.

Neglecting first person understanding explains the problem with Moore’s Intuitionism. Because Intuitionists avoid Humean Empiricism and naturalism, they conclude that first person understanding is not a plausible method to grasp truth. Rather moral understanding located in a unique faculty, which is isolated from the senses. I take it that the worry Intuitionists face is as follows: if goodness is understood through the senses, then goodness is reducible, as Hume suggested, to merely this or that kind of

⁷ If pressed, I do not believe the psychological literature is at all lacking in studies, which demonstrate that sensory data and understanding come apart.

sensory data. The conclusion does not follow, but the worry drives intuitionists to argue that whatever is internal to the agent, beyond the intuitive capacity, is irrelevant to understanding morality.

The neglect of first person understanding, moreover, explains the false dichotomy between Humean Empiricism and Moorean Intuitionism (and, just as well, rationalists). For separate reasons each casts doubt on first person understanding and, hence, the self is, to that extent, limited from moral inquiry. Humean Empiricists deflate the self and with it, morality, to the mere apprehension of sensory pleasure. I have no access to truth qua first or third person understanding and, hence, anything beyond my desires or sensations that I might consider relevant to moral inquiry is left aside. Moorean Intuitionists isolate morality to a separate faculty and, hence, render anything else about myself irrelevant to moral inquiry. The problem with both accounts is not only that each limits the personal content available to moral inquiry. The deeper worry is that each limits first person understanding, which necessitates the impersonal content.

I do not argue that the problem with modern ethics is reductionism to third person understanding because the motivations for neglecting first person understanding are diverse. Hume doubts our senses can get beyond appearance. Behaviorists doubt there is anything internal at all. Existentialists and Intuitionists argue that the moral truths we apprehend are reducible to an isolated will or faculty. Each, nonetheless, is clear to separate morality from a robust conception of the self.

But even if one grants that the neglect of first person understanding underlies the history of modern philosophy since Hume and explains the false dichotomy between Empiricists and Rationalists, the question persists whether it is *the* problem of modern ethics. The neglect, I argue, can explain both the content problem described by MacIntyre and the action problem described by Murdoch. I begin with the former. Simply put, what has led to the impersonal content in modern ethics is that ethics is not pursued through a method, which is open to personal content. Hume grasped that sensation was relevant to morality, but failed to see that the passions characterized the self. Recall that Hume was a skeptic about personal identity; nothing about morality or reality could be personally understood. That is, Humean empiricism does not result in personal content because it reduces moral reality to the mere pushes and pulls of sentiment. I cannot understand whatever is objectively true about morality, because I have no method to access it. And as I have described, Kant and Reid did not remedy this problem. The reductionism to impersonal content described by MacIntyre is important, but the problem with modern ethics does not clearly spring from Hume, and Kant and Reid or their failure to pick out personal content.

Second, the neglect of first person understanding explains the action problem. Again, each Behaviorism and Existentialism include deflated conceptions of the self, which deflate my first person understanding about what actions are morally relevant. On the one hand, behaviorists fail to recognize that there exists an *internal* self. What I am is merely exhausted by descriptions of overt behavior. So even if I understand first personally that my judgment is inappropriate, say, I believe someone is worthless or below me for no good reason, my judgment is only meaningful if there exists an overt action to explain it.⁸ As a result, the set of actions relevant to moral inquiry is reduced

⁸ Here readers might recall problems that arise as displayed in Murdoch's (1970) example involving Mother-in-law M and Daughter D (p. 16).

merely to what is verifiable. A personal understanding about *what it is like* for someone to act moral is, at best, a separate question that ethics is not clearly interested. Because my understanding is reduced to descriptions of overt behavior, there is nothing I can understand as an internal movement that I might consider moral.

Existentialists, finally, reduce the self to the will, which, is neither reducible nor dependent on anything else I might be tempted to conflate with *myself*. That is, *I* am not identical with what I first personally conceive as myself including my emotions, desires, history, physical composition or other personal particulars. Such particulars are at best, temptations or influences; they are not sufficient for explaining my actions because they are not *my* emotions, *my* desires and the rest. At best my personal understanding of such particulars only aid in describing what I did or did not will. So, if I argue, “I did not mean to do that, I just can’t help it when I’m angry” or “Don’t blame me, it was a natural reaction!” it is plausible to think my emotions, not myself, are responsible. In either sense, my personal understanding only provides evidence for locating the will, which eludes my direct apprehension. So the set of morally relevant actions are only those movements of the will, not those I intuitively attribute to myself. Existentialists properly considered that my free will, which is first personally understood, is relevant to ethical thought.⁹ But they did not consider that there was anything else I might personally understand to constitute who I am. Thus, they gave up a broader sense of the morally relevant self.

It might seem, however, that I have not made it clear why the neglect of first person understanding is *itself* so problematic; I have only pointed out a set of theories that share this common thread and pointed out each possess a smaller scope than I am comfortable. Even if I believe each ethic is lacking, I am sympathetic to this critique. To say that ethics have missed or neglected this point does not clearly warrant that future ethics must include it. To be clear, in this section, I am merely arguing that the neglect of first person understanding is a common theme among modern ethical theories (at best, it is a common problem). Each has reduced the moral importance of who I am by avoiding in various degrees what else might be morally relevant as understood via my first person perspective. In Section II I argue for a view that says first and third person understanding are each indispensable to moral inquiry. If what I argue in Section II is correct, then it will turn out the neglect of first person understanding is not only problematic for modern ethics, but is a problem for future ethicists to avoid.

To summarize, the underlying theme among modern ethics emerges most clearly between Hume and Moore. The struggle over modern ethics begins with Hume’s Empiricism and is illuminated in multiple forms of moral theorizing that neglect first person understanding. For this work I do not mean to enter into the business of discovering who is to blame for failing to vindicate first person understanding. If no one is to blame, as I presume, the problem with modern ethics is more clearly stated that despite our best efforts the problem was not located. What is clear is that on one side we see Hume’s Empiricism influence both Behaviorists and, at its height, Logical Positivists. On the other side we see responses from Kant, Existentialists and Intuitionists each

⁹ To be clear, I do not mean to imply here that the will is therefore reducible to personal particulars, but, far from it, an approach to ethics that does not consider the will and such particulars so clearly distinct. The view I take up is beyond this scope of this work, but, perhaps, close to that described by Iris Murdoch (1970).

failing to locate the root motivating the successive steps in Hume's paradigm. Like the serpent's cunning that inspired us to resent God, Hume inspired modern philosophers to resent our God-given humanity. Deontologists, Behaviorists and Rationalists each took the apple and gave into an impersonal morality. And so all fell into "Salvation by works [as] a conceptual necessity. *What* I am doing or being is not something private and personal, but is imposed upon me in the sense of being identifiable only via public concepts and objective observers" (p. 15). Isolating morality to the Existentialist will, moreover, only generated a new brand of moral tyranny – that worked out through the properly directed will. The problem, of course, was not Hume, but the neglect of first person understanding; it is the modern ethical torch.

III. The Revival of Virtue Ethics

What is needed is an approach to understanding the self that grasps the broad scope of morality. It is not important that our conception conceive of the 'self' in its entirety, but only what is *ethically* relevant, what I will call the 'ethical self'. Virtue ethicists who follow Elizabeth Anscombe (1958) (henceforth, virtue ethicists) similarly argue that modern ethics have failed to capture the 'ethical self' and, as a result, virtue ethicists have taken interest to capture a fuller sense of morality. In what follows, I shift from the underlying theme of modern ethics, to recapitulating attempts by virtue ethicists to rebuild that connection between ethics and the self. I align myself with their work for two reasons: it is interesting in itself to capture the revival in virtue ethics as a response to the neglect of first person understanding; second, the virtue ethical literature is useful for understanding why the neglect is problematic and, ultimately, constructing a positive account.

The revival of virtue ethics began in 1958 when Elizabeth Anscombe penned a common dissatisfaction with moral theorizing. Both Anscombe as well as those who follow her arguments labeled, "Radical Virtue Ethicists,"¹⁰ believe that ethics cannot begin until we first answer certain questions about virtue. The problem, however, is not that modern ethics lacks an account of virtue or that virtue should take on a more substantial role in ethics. Instead, they argue that one cannot conceive of ethics without first returning to questions about virtue and, moreover, until one conceives of ethics with the proper methodology. If ethics is properly approached and its structure properly apprehended, it will become clear that virtue plays a central role.

Substantiating this conclusion requires a tear from what is common among modern ethical approaches, but, again, the problem has been difficult to locate.¹¹ Virtue ethicists since Anscombe have struggled to describe in what sense morality is improperly conceived and, so, whether a proper conception constitutes *radical reform*. I argued that the neglect of first person understanding underlies modern ethics. It seems evident that the revival in virtue ethics, beginning with Anscombe and extending throughout the virtue ethical literature, is an attempt to explain why this is problematic. In what follows I analyze arguments from Anscombe and other virtue theorists, particularly John

¹⁰ For those interested, please note Kurt Baier's (1998) *Radical Virtue Ethics*.

¹¹ Martha Nussbaum (1999) has even argued that because no clear unifying theme exists, virtue ethics should not be thought a unique domain for ethical inquiry.

McDowell (1979), Michael Stocker (1976) and Talbot Brewer (2009) to capture insight about what is required to establish the ‘ethical self’.

I begin with Anscombe’s argument that for any ethical theory to adequately describe moral responsibility it must sufficiently grasp how it what I ‘ought’ to do obtains personal authority. Moral responsibility is concerned with the existence of intrinsic value(s) in the world and how I should respect or respond to such value(s). Specifically, it is concerned with normativity – what justifies my response to such intrinsic value(s) (i.e. what I ‘ought’ or am obligated to do). Whether I respond appropriately (i.e. making a justified or unjustified response) is open to evaluation, not simply about what I did, but *who I am*. Again, why I evaluate different actions as ethical or not is due to what conception I believe the *self* consists and how much of that self I should think is relevant to ethics. Hence, failing to respond appropriately explains our rational in holding ourselves and others responsible for their behaviors; it is because that action is a relevant expression of their *self*. The important question for ethicists is, therefore, beyond establishing what is intrinsically valuable, answering what justifies an appropriate response, or, otherwise, giving a robust account of obligation.

Anscombe argues that modern ethicists, since Hume, have failed to give a sufficient account of why I am ethically obligated to do what is moral since morality does not capture the entirety of who I am. As I take it, even if I’m sure such and such is the moral thing to do, I may not be sure I should do the moral thing. Or otherwise, my moral considerations do not exhaust my ethical life. Moreover, an adequate account of morality requires a robust account of human action, which is relevant to the whole person because that is who the evaluation applies. That I ought to keep my promises or pay my bills is not simply a point about doing, but something further about *who I am*. The underlying trend in modern ethics, however, is a concern with action itself, that is, *its* evaluative status, not *my* obligation. Hence, modern ethics cannot be thought to answer, “why should I do these things?” to the extent that it is a question about explaining obligation to who I am because how I am to live is not fully captured by the actions I am obligated. A proper grounding for “why I should do these things” requires that the agent is considered indispensable to the evaluation, but the current paradigm of moral theory is not fit to do so; hence the question cannot be answered. We are left with two options: that ethics ignores this more robust question or that ethics is reformed. This is not to say modern ethics has failed to establish any foundation or incentive to describe why one ‘ought’ to act, but the conception is fundamentally missing something (hence its “narrow” figure). “There is a huge gap” in ethical inquiry; it is the disconnect between ‘ought’ and persons, which requires an account of human nature, human action, an understanding about the virtues and, above all, human flourishing (Anscombe, p. 18). If we take Anscombe seriously, as I do, we must discover how to make obligations relevant to the whole person.

Virtue Ethicists have consistently pointed to the same gap; those who have more clearly done so are John McDowell, Michael Stocker and Talbot Brewer. John McDowell (1979) argues broadly that morality is not codifiable (or, otherwise, it is not reducible to moral principles), but his argument more importantly aims at a positive thesis about the structure of morality.¹² He writes:

¹² Apart from McDowell’s argument and language a quick glance through his footnotes will show he aims at the same conception as Iris Murdoch.

My aim is to sketch the outlines of a different view, to be found in the philosophical tradition, which flowers in Aristotle's ethics. According to this different view, although the point of engaging in ethical reflection still lies in the interest of the question, "how should one live?", that question is necessarily approached *via* the notion of a virtuous person. A conception of right conduct is grasped, as it were, from the inside out (p. 331).

Ethics is not codifiable because morality, rather, is grounded in a kind of virtuous sensitivity. It is something understood from within and developed through experience, not in response to some principle or even that, which is translated into a public language. When I act virtuously, it is not clear that my actions are those exhausted by a proposition or codifiable principle. Rather, I act from a judgment, which is explained by, first, my understanding about how to live and, second, my understanding about the situation at hand. Why I act must be seen against the backdrop of my personal history and experience. That I am concerned for the welfare of a friend and, further, aware that he is in trouble and in need of comfort can explain missing a pleasant party to talk with him (p. 343). But attempts to capture my actions among generalizations will be approximate at best since my conception of how to live or the life a human being should lead is not exhausted by principles I seek to apply to my life. That I desire to care for a friend or, otherwise, "be kind" is not that understood via certain propositions. Instead, understanding my conception of life is pursued through grasping my distinct view of particular situations.

Taking such a step, however, is worrisome to ethicists. Principles, unlike sensitivities are public, comparable and more clearly evaluative. Those who are *rational* are clearly praiseworthy because they are *logical* – they are those whose actions express the relevant rule. However, once philosophers grant it is not public rules, which ground ethical inquiry, but rather something *private*, inextricable from the mind, it is to wonder whether humans are rational as previously thought. McDowell writes,

Vertigo [is] induced by the thought that there is nothing but shared forms of life to keep us, as it were, on the rails. We are inclined to think that that is an insufficient foundation... it looks, rather, like a congruence of subjectivities, with the congruence not grounded as it would need to be to amount to an objectivity. So we feel we have lost the objectivity... We recoil from this vertigo into the idea that we are kept on the rails by our grasp of rules (p. 339).

McDowell claims that the fear which haunts modern ethics is that our understanding, at best, is grounded in shared forms of human existence. To trust is nauseating to the point that philosophers recoil into the thought that morality is somehow more stable, more logical. They recoil, that is, into the imagination to wish morality did not involve all that I understand and experience, but is otherwise *out there* to study. To remain 'on the rails' I remove what I am to do from who I am. But if Anscombe is correct, what I am to do can have no authority unless so connected to myself.

Michael Stocker (1976) makes a further specification. He calls attention in ethics to the neglect of moral psychology arguing that modern ethicists “fail to examine motives and the motivational structures and constraints of ethical life” (p. 453). Modern ethics so focused on ‘indices’, and ‘externality-ridden’, ‘dehumanizing’, impersonal, ‘third-person’s-eye view’ descriptions have resulted in *disharmony*, *schizophrenia* and *bifurcation*.¹³ The bifurcation Stocker refers is a split between what is right and why I act in the context of specific activities and relationships. To possess the “right” motives prescribed by ethicists misses that moral action requires something other than a response to some externally perceived value; I do not understand morality by seeing whether my or others’ lives would be approved. Similarly I am not a friend merely because I understand their rationality is worth my respect, that our relationship is pleasurable or that it is good to treat them with kindness. In fact, no exhaustive list of external descriptions is sufficient. Each description fails to capture why I value *my* friend, which requires a personal answer. Neglecting the role of motivation in ethical inquiry is not only worrisome because, in application, we must talk about how to incentivize the public to act accordingly; rather to neglect motivation is to neglect that morality can capture the alignment between my personal values and my actions.

In this way schizophrenia enters in: when one tries to impose the results from one method directly as answers (of the same kind) to the inquiry of another. Why I respond to my friends is a personal question explained by a privately understood, personal answer about my experience and our histories. But to say that I treat my friend *morally* requires I answer as ethics demands – with public language exhausted by descriptions of publically recognizable value. That is, the method of inquiry necessary for understanding my response to a friend is first personal, but by modern ethical standards, I am forced to answer personal questions from a third personal perspective. At least two problems result: first, moral evaluations are passive to whether I value morality in a way my actions seem to express; second, bringing myself to value morality is not, itself, a moral activity. Hence morality accounts for my actions, but seems ill equipped to explain personal development.

Talbot Brewer (2009) devotes *The Retrieval of Ethics* to furthering the work of radical virtue theorists. Beyond tracking those points illuminated by McDowell and Stocker, he argues for the *evaluative outlook approach*, which says we act in light of some perceived goodness. I will be brief since I more thoroughly discuss this approach in Section II. For now it is worthwhile to note that *moral* goodness is included among the kinds of goodness that inspire our. On his approach, doing what is moral is not reducible to an action that is third personally *approved* as moral, but requires that I *interpret* the action I perform as a moral one. Brewer points us toward a compelling example to clarify what is unique about moral value. He writes,

Consider, by way of illustration, the hugs, kisses, and caresses of lovers. It is hard to deny that these are properly counted among the apt responses to the goodness or value that lovers see in each other. Yet one would have to be in the grip of a theory to insist that these are actions that lovers choose to perform on the strength of their recognition of some array of reasons for action (p. 160).

¹³ The same language exemplifies that found throughout the virtue ethical literature.

If this example displays, as Brewer seems to suggest, a response to the goodness of morality, particularly from the appreciation of another, then we have a fruitful intuition to exploit. If Brewer is correct, then it is to wonder how I must understand the action as a good one. In Section II, I argue that understanding and, hence, acting in light of moral goodness requires first person understanding.

But even if I am correct, I have not responded to Anscombe's worry; I will not have described that acting in light of what is morally good obtains authority over the other actions I might respond. To develop such an account, requires that three elements are explained: (1) An account of human understanding must be given to explain what is important about doing ethics in the broad sense I have described; (2) An account must be given about the fundamental values that constitute happiness, including the value of morality; (3) An account must be given about why I should think responding to moral concerns override other valuable actions. In Section II, I look to make progress on (1).

Section II – The Importance of First Person Understanding in Ethical Inquiry

In this paper I pursue whether the neglect of first person understanding is essential to future ethical theorizing. So far I have argued that Empiricists, Rationalists and modern ethicists have each neglected the importance of first person understanding. By first person understanding I mean to describe my understanding of the world as through the senses as well as whatever else adds to my unique perception including my emotions, intentions, beliefs, history and the rest (henceforth, personal characteristics). Empiricists deflate the moral self and with it, morality, to the mere apprehension of sensory pleasure and Rationalists isolate morality to a separate faculty apart from first person understanding. So, both render anything else about myself irrelevant to moral inquiry.

Both Iris Murdoch and Alasdair MacIntyre correctly see that the problem with modern ethics is that theorists have consistently failed to capture a robust conception of the moral self, which includes all that is valuable about myself for moral living. I have argued that this failure has resulted from the inability to substantiate first person understanding so that what is morally relevant includes all of ‘who I am’ that is relevant to what I will do, what I call *ethical identity*¹⁴. Plausibly, taking seriously all that is ethically relevant about myself will illuminate an improved direction for ethical inquiry and shed light on the importance of flourishing in moral theory.

I have not, however, made it clear why this should affect the future work of ethical and moral theorists. Even if, among others, Rationalists and Empiricists fail to capture the importance of first person understanding, it is not clear that some future theory must take my first person perspective seriously. So far, I have only made a claim about modern ethics that neglect first person understanding, not the way ethics is to be done; I have not made it clear *how* giving an account of first person understanding will illuminate an improved direction for ethicists or shed light on the importance of flourishing.

Hence, I move forward in two stages: first, I illuminate the distance between why I act and why I am approved by ethics that neglect first person understanding; second, I argue why the gap is problematic. As to the former, I argue for a plausible account of understanding, which broadly governs human action and illuminates the importance of my first person perspective. It says, why I see something is choiceworthy is grounded in my ethical identity, which governs my action on three levels. First, responding to what is good depends on my clarity about what is good. It is only through the self-correcting process of clarity that I can increasingly discover those goods worth responding such that my life is constituted by flourishing. Second, my action is partly determined by the roles that I take membership. Depending on the roles that constitute ‘who I am’ I will take certain excellences as good and, so, worth responding. Even if I am clear about the excellences of fatherhood or blacksmithing, they are not the sorts of goods I will strive unless I am a father or a blacksmith. Third, seeing something is choiceworthy depends on the dialectic between my first and third person perspectives. Hence, my first and third

¹⁴ If Marya Schechtman is correct that the characterization question is essential for a proper description of personal identity. What I am describing here as ‘ethical identity’ need not be distinct.

person understanding are indispensable to acting in light of what is best. By clarifying what is good, each about what roles are best to take up and their excellences, and interpreting my experiences as constituted by those excellences, I arrive at an increasingly full and proper understanding of flourishing.

As to the latter, I argue why the gap between human understanding and ethical understandings is problematic from three lines of support. For one, I argue that failing to explain first person understanding unnecessarily undercuts the scope and, so, importance of moral inquiry. Further, such theories are unable to explain flourishing; at best they explain an alternative way of living, but are unable to explain doing what is moral as a function of who I already am. Last, and most important, moral theories that fail in this way are unable to account for ethical overridingness. As a result each will, among other things, turn out impractical, unattractive and unable to explain personal development. So failing to account for first person understanding not only fails to explain how I might come to do what is ethically required; it fails to explain the value ethics demands. If this is plausible then it is of the utmost interest for ethical theorists to substantiate the importance of first person.

Hence, my argument is *not* merely that if my perception of goodness guides my action that, therefore, flourishing is central to ethical theorizing. Rather I argue that because first person understanding is indispensable to seeing what is good and so doing what is moral, it is essential to ethicists that flourishing is taken seriously. Moral theorists that focus on how, from a first person perspective, I can understand some moral action as good will hold an advantage of explaining moral action. That is, it is advantageous for ethicists to resolve the tension between moral approval and moral action by closing the gap between moral living and flourishing. In this way my work also serves to further the radical virtue thesis, like Michael Stocker, John McDowell and Talbot Brewer, who have argued that there is a gap between how I understand what to do and, by contrast, how modern ethicists have arrived at that answer.

I. Responding To What is Good

I begin by taking up and expanding upon Brewer's (2009) *evaluative outlook approach*; it says I act in light of some perceived goodness. The overarching task we are engaged as humans is that of living a fulfilling life. And, hence, why I act is because I see doing so as productive to my flourishing. When I enter into a new relationship, take up a new job, or set a goal to write a philosophy paper, I do so because I see it is good. Likewise when I am gripped with fear and so desire to flee, "the desire to flee is inseparably fused with a certain way of understanding why it would be good to flee" (p. 26). If I do otherwise, that is, what I genuinely believe is worse, my conception about how to live is, at least, less than human if not absurd.

An action is, what I call, *choiceworthy* if I understand its goodness can override the alternatives I perceive. Of course, simply because I see such and such as choiceworthy does not mean it is what I will do. My understanding about what is worth responding can draw from a variety of sources including my emotions, beliefs, imagination, physical reaction and more. If, while playing baseball, I must step up to bat after getting hit by the last pitch I must decide what is choiceworthy among that context. I

will likely feel an emotional pull to move away from the plate, but also a drive to do what is best for the team. Moreover, it is not clear that I can simply recall some statistics about the scarcity of getting hit or think about why it is good for an ideal baseball player to have courage; neither obviously illuminates what is good about exposing *myself* to such a risk. It is important that if I will step up to the plate that I see, at least enough to override my alternatives, what is good about taking bat so that I can step up to the plate.¹⁵

When I act I am making a claim about some good that is worth responding. If I act from a mistaken conception about why something is good or from a desire that is upon reflection utterly unfounded (for example, M&M's are necessary to a healthy diet), then I have done so from a kind of irrationality; I have failed to act from a conception about how to live, which is open to flourishing. Of course, eating M&M's may produce flourishing for other reasons, for instance, because they are tasty. Or to the extent I believe I am doing what is most healthy, my false belief or emotion may contribute to flourishing. Each the taste and emotion, however, are merely coincidental goods. My action in this case is a response to caring for my physical well-being, which if healthy will have an affect on my flourishing. Because M&M's are not adding to my health, I am not open to flourishing for the good that I was set in motion. So I acted for a good that, because I was mistaken, cannot contribute to my flourishing (even if coincidental goods are possible). I take it that to live a stable flourishing life, requires my life is not supported by mere coincidence, but a genuine understanding and pursuit of what is good. What is important here is not whether trickery is possible, but, rather, that acting from an understanding about what is good results in an ideal *pursuit* of flourishing. That is, it is the best way to engage in flourishing excluding I should expect it will arrive coincidentally or fear that my actions will be stifled.

The approach does not explain the choiceworthiness of my action in mere propositional terms, but is open to a fully articulate expression, which includes my phenomenological content. Why I went fishing is not limited to the mere explanation, "I had a desire to go fishing," but can further include what is unique about why I value fishing: the feel of the cool breeze as it comes off the water, the solitude found in the early morning, the sound of the water brushing up on nearby rocks and the sudden excitement felt when a fish finally bites.¹⁶ These further descriptions attempt to grasp the goodness I understand by capturing my phenomenology about the goodness of fishing. Even if my wife and I desire that 'Matthew go fishing' it is not clear we desire the same thing since the representational content of our desire differs. For one, she may have a vague representation of me finding rest on the lake while casting out a line, but fail to possess the phenomenal content I earlier described.

¹⁵ At this point, I am not interested in making a claim about what grounds any human perception of goodness such that one is better than another or, moreover, how overridingness is obtained. Of course, Friedrich Nietzsche, Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot and, by more than one interpretation, Immanuel Kant each have different suggestions for how this might happen. I am only interested, for now, in suggesting that *if* it is to be obtained, my action must be about some good that is choiceworthy. Later I will argue that whatever is choiceworthy requires a dialectic between my first and third person perspectives about what is good. That is, to ensure overridingness requires an action can override both my first and third person understanding of what alternatives are good. This, I take it, will rub against those accounts that claim either mere first or third person understanding is sufficient for overridingness.

¹⁶ This example is inspired by Brewer (2009) pg. 22-23.

The representational content is important because limiting it, to that extent, restrains a fuller explanation about my desire for fishing. Such shortcomings miss why I see fishing as choiceworthy. So, by failing to account for the representational content theories are suspect to missing why my decision to fish overrides my alternatives. It seems obvious that this can make the difference. Imagine that my wife and I, possessed the same propositional desire that ‘Matthew relaxes’, but different representational content about fishing and, say, hiking to swimming hole in the mountains¹⁷. Were we asked, “which do you choose Matthew to do?” (say either of us were given the power to make the decision), it’s not clear, which would win out. Due to the difference in representational content either one, but not the other, could turn out choiceworthy. As for myself, the thought of going fishing may clearly override that of hiking to a swimming hole even if both are somehow relaxing.

What is crucial to flourishing is that I *interpret* my decisions, actions, experiences and memories as good. When I make a decision, it constitutes flourishing to the extent I do so in anticipation of some excellence. That is, I act because it is somehow productive to flourishing. Then, through experience, and in memory when I return, I am subject to a conscious representation, which may be interpreted as a kind of good. Each is pleasant to the extent my conscious representation is an interpretation of some relevant goodness and, to some extent, constitutive of flourishing. Even my decisions that require taking a risk or ‘stepping into the unknown’ plausibly carry with them a representation of ‘adventure’ or ‘mystery’, that is unique. My representation may be tinged by past experiences or driven from imagination or, perhaps, something else that results in a pleasant conscious experience.

Of course, it is also possible that I act in response to a perception of goodness that I do not consciously understand. Hence, although it constitutes flourishing, I may not be able to put it into language. When children are asked, “why did you do that?” and they respond, “I don’t know,” obviously we should not conclude that there is no reason. Even if it is difficult to consciously grasp who I am, what I see as good or how my past affects my present actions, it is important that I form a conscious understanding to more carefully plot future steps. Only then can I intentionally apply it to reflection and criticism. I might wonder why I am less apt to trust others before recalling a series of failed relationships. Otherwise, it is not uncommon to find that my distaste for some food is the result of eating far too much as a child or getting food poisoning. In either situation, aiming to change my behavior requires I consciously uproot my underlying conception of goodness, which results in present behavior. But, of course, this is not always easy.

To ideally pursue a flourishing life requires that I increasingly understand what is good for flourishing. It requires two things: first, I must clearly understand what is good; second; I must understand that goodness is relevant to my life. Hence, Brewer (2009) writes:

We gain a full and proper understanding of the value of different intrinsically valuable activities as we see more clearly what place these activities might have in a good human life, and when their pursuit would cheapen our lives or distract us from the task of living a good life (p. 41).

¹⁷ This example is also inspired by Brewer (2009) pg. 26.

Plausibly to pursue a flourishing life, I should strive for a full and proper understanding.¹⁸ To possess an increasingly *full* understanding, I must be able to clearly see what is good about a particular context. To possess a *proper* understanding I must be able to see how that whatever is good about a particular context is relevant to who I am. In what follows, I expand upon what it is to each. First I take up a plausible conception about what it is to clarify what is good and, second, I argue that seeing some good as relevant requires taking membership with a role that the good is an excellence. Hence, the ideal pursuit of a flourishing life requires that I strive to understand, which roles to take membership, what is good about those roles and what is good in any given situation. Next I will move to discuss the importance of first and third person understanding in coming to understand what is good.

II. Ethical Identity: Clarifying What is Excellent

Again, the evaluative outlook conception correctly suggests that I do not always act on a clear conception of goodness, but perhaps only on a vague perception. It is not at all uncommon that upon acting, I find I was not thorough in reflection or was ignorant of how the experience might illuminate other, more valuable goods worth responding. In order to clarify what is worth responding, I can do either of two things: On the one hand, I may find that the only way to discover the goodness of something is through experience. When tasting some unknown foreign food, I may ask locals if they enjoy it or my friend if it tastes like anything I have experienced, but often there is nothing to compare it. So by my vague perception that it is safe and worth the adventure, I take the plunge and learn through experience.

On the other hand, my lack of understanding may require that, prior to action, I seek to discover what is good about a relationship, activity, foreign cuisine, etc. As a result I engage in the process of clarifying until I acquire sufficient insight to act. This may simply require reflection about how much insight is sufficient to act (perhaps I already have enough) or, it may require a more robust investigation. Whatever the case, my aim is to draw out some good till I see it clear enough to respond.

Taking from Bernard Lonergan, Robert Fitterer (2008) expands on the process of gaining clarity. Here I will only describe what is essential for this work. He writes,

For Lonergan, knowledge is an ongoing developmental structure, involving the whole person... The world does not simply impress itself upon us; neither do we project or construct the world. Rather, the agent goes back and forth between the particular data of presentation, insight, and judgment and returns again to presentation, spiraling upward in a self-correcting process of learning (p. 5).

The self-correcting process involves four levels: attention, understanding, judgment and judgment of value. It begins when I give attention to some data of presentation and form

¹⁸ Brewer takes activities as each intrinsically valuable in themselves and this is not an opinion I clearly endorse. I do not, however, believe that this possible, and likely minor, difference affects what I have to say about what it means to possess “a full and proper understanding.”

insights (generally understood as a mental event of ‘coming to comprehend’) and grasp the valuable content with increasing measure. Gaining insights is a matter of statistical probability that involve certain attitudinal and environmental changes to raise my likelihood of understanding. They include, among others, perseverance, risk taking, changing context, and the ability to recognize analogies (Fitterer, 2009, pg. 35). Moreover, certain inner conditions also foster insight including “balanced blood sugar, sufficient protein in one’s diet, adequate sleep, alertness, depth and diversity of past experience, asking questions, special training and knowledge, creative visualization, living in a culture that supports and values discovery and free thinking, and so forth” (Fitterer, 2009, p. 36).

To gain insight, I begin, apart from fostering the proper changes and conditions, by giving attention to the data of my phenomenal presentation. I do not, however, attend to data as I would a direct sense. I give intentional focus, rather, to what is relevant about my concerns, wants, needs, etc. Relevance is given to those pieces of data that appear relevant to the questions I care to ask, which, as I describe in Part III, are plausibly connected to the roles I do or could take membership. Then, by means of the data I attend I may, by means of a second-level cognitive event, draw a link between data from my presentation, which is provided by my imagination, experience and reflection on memories, or some combination. That is, I associate at least two pieces of data and through the perceived intelligibility form a hypothetical about a further meaning the data is owed, which reaches beyond the data I am presented.

In a third-level cognitive event, I then make judgments about the truth of my previous insight. This higher-level cognitive event seeks to make a claim through critical reflection that “verifies, denies, assigns a probability to, or seeks further evidence for the initial insight” (Fitterer, 2009, p. 39). Certain judgments, like when the lights turn off or when I feel pain from touching a hot stove, are immediate. I have no need to wonder seek further evidence about whether there is an alternate explanation. Other judgment are not so clear; I might imagine other possible explanations of the insight or form a conditional about ways to further test my hypothetical. If the conditional is satisfied, then perhaps I will grant the insight a higher probability or verification. Hence I gain insights about what is and why as I attend to and seek intelligibility among my conscious presentations. I then form insights of judgment by reflecting upon my insights of understanding. And through justification on this third level I may even attain knowledge. But I do not take it that a step toward clarity must constitute knowledge. It is up to epistemologists to decide the kind of justification, degree of coherence with my other beliefs and the rest that is required.

The first three cognitive events are displayed in Hellen Keller’s memoirs. When Anne Sullivan began teaching Keller, she held Keller’s hand under running water as she scribbled the letter “W” hoping that Keller would make the association. And through the experience Keller arrived at an insight, ‘aha!’ there is a connection between “W” and running water. Keller later affirmed that the insight set her free to a further exploration, where she affirmed that “W” indeed referred to water and further that “E” referred to the soil among many other signs. Her insight was not only about “W” referring to water, but also about signs and their ability to give meaning. By engaging in clarity she, then arose from a world of crude sense to one full of meaning and self-expression.¹⁹

¹⁹ This example is taken from Fitterer, 2009, p. 37-38.

Finally, on the fourth level we arrive at insights about value. Here I move to consider insights about what to do within the larger context of my past, social environment, beliefs, desires, future goals, and so forth. Through discovering what is valuable by drawing intelligibility from insights about value and testing or reflecting on their validity I rise above my current conception about how to live. And as I thoroughly engage in the process of clarifying what is valuable, I mature from “a fundamental orientation of satisfaction-seeking²⁰ to one of genuine value-seeking” (Fitterer, 2009, p. 45). Presuming there is a more valuable life to discover through such seeking, and barring mediating circumstances, this will result in a more accurate conception of flourishing and, hence, a better way of living. Hence, Fitterer affirms that apprehension of value is vital to moral growth. I cannot rise to live a robust moral life if I do not see it is good.

And this process illuminates something important about expertise. Whether about an academic discipline, how to live or something else, I make progress in expertise through the process of clarity. Experts understand more than those who are naïve, but also possess more data and intelligible relations to ask questions about. Hence, the expert is not only more justified in her claims, but also possesses a life that is open to the greatest amount of humility. Despite the expert’s confidence, she is aware of a much wider breadth of questions that are left to explore. So it should not surprise us if were a novice and an expert were asked the same question that the expert take more time to offer the same answer as the novice. After all, her understanding is imbedded in a far more complex and *questionable*, though not less justified, body of knowledge.

The model, moreover, resembles what empirical science has formalized, not because it is drawn from science, but more likely the other way around. The first three levels of the cognitive process correspond to empirical, hypothetical, and verification procedures (Fitterer, 2009, p. 41). The idea that this process is self-correcting should not be too surprising. Similar to empirical science, insights and judgments always remain open to further questioning. As the process redounds upon itself, the probability of its accuracy is raised. This is, moreover, a clue to its veracity since, as Lonergan states, any theory that claims to explain human understanding and learning must account for its own inception and development and justification (Fitterer, 2009, p. 52). Even if one were to attempt refutation, she would be forced to engage in the three or four level schema and, hence, reaffirm the operation.

Through increasing clarity about what is good, I am open to a more robust experience that my hopes, decisions, actions, memories and the rest are good. That is, to the extent I have clarity the goodness I experience I will possess a flourishing life. Obtaining clarity is important because it opens me up to further confidence that what I am seeing is good and a depth of understanding about why such and such is good. It is no easy task to form both confidence and depth without a very intentional engagement in the process of gaining clarity. Moreover, confidence and depth are not merely formed as I believe that some presented insight is correct, but as I seek to answer my questions and so expand upon what I have some clarity or know. A deep and confident understanding results from a pursuit of questioning and resolution, which is relevant to who I am. Then, the robust understanding I possess equips me for a more robust experience about what is good. So, even if someone were to draw flourishing from a misconception, it must be very well formulated to consistently respond to reflection.

²⁰ As I take it, this refers to a way of living that fails to seek a better conception about living well.

Still, it is not clear what we should think governs my focus toward certain pieces of data or, otherwise, certain kinds of questions over others. The issue underlies my attention at level one, the kind of intelligibility I draw at level two and the judgments I draw at levels three and four. If we are to form better conceptions about how to live, it is important that I direct my attention toward the data and questions, which support my flourishing. Lonergan suggests that each attention, understanding, reflection and judgment is elicited from an a priori desire to know. I am, however, not convinced that understanding of truth is itself valuable. I do not care to ask questions because fact heaping is pleasant. Rather, I ask questions because I care to live well, which is not exhausted by obtaining knowledge. In what follows I move to describe a plausible view about what governs my pursuit of understanding.

III. Ethical Identity: Role Membership

When I reflect on ‘who I am’ I most fundamentally conceive of myself as a member of some domain, which contains a criteria for excellent membership, what I will call *roles*. Taking from Reid Blackman (2012), roles are the sorts of things a person can be and are defined by a set of ends, where ‘having an end’ indicates the standard by which members are to be judged (p. 3). Husband has the end of caring for his wife, hedonist has the end of experiencing pleasure and philosopher has the end of pursuing wisdom. When I think about a good husband or hedonist I also consider more specific excellences, which for a husband include kindness, attentiveness, compassion, courage, understanding and others that pertain to caring for *my* wife.

In any given situation, why I see data as relevant and certain questions worth asking is, moreover, governed by the *roles* I see as good. The roles I am interested may either include those that underlie my ethical identity or those that have the potential to do so.²¹ If I conceive of myself as a husband, then seeing flowers at the store or a sink full of dishes are relevant to how I might show kindness toward my wife. What is good *qua* husband is pursuing the excellences of our relationship, e.g. kindness. So when I come across flowers or dirty dishes, I may see them as an opportunity to express kindness. And to the extent that I clarify what is good about being a husband, I can better act in light of its goodness across contexts.

To see what is good about a role requires it is conceptually understood. The end of a good knife is, despite my opinion, to cut and it is therefore good if the knife is sharp, durable and shaped so the blade can reach its target. If I say that a good knife is useful for driving in a nail or hurting someone, I am simply mistaken. I have confused what is good about a knife with what is good about a hammer or a weapon. Similarly if I am a husband, the end of caring for my wife structures what is good about my role. What is good about a husband is therefore that he offers encouragement, is patient to hear her thoughts, gives wise insight into her decisions, and the rest.

²¹ And of course, I may explore certain roles to the extent they pertain to others I already care about. I may have no concern for baking, but in lieu that my wife has a passion for it, and I am concerned for my wife, I may find motivation to explore what is good about baking. This, moreover, may ultimately foster an independent concern for baking that I do not pursue in virtue of my wife.

Whatever my opinion, it is not the case that abusing my wife can be what is good about my role as a husband. If I am deluded enough to think that part of being a good husband is showing dominance over her, I am simply mistaken about what it is good about being a husband.²² Plausibly the question will arise, “so then what role could explain the good of abuse?” I do not think it is strange to think that ‘abuser’ is an identity constituting role with the end, “to show dominance over others,” which is somehow good. Likewise, the end of a murderer might include certain excellences like ‘carefully stalks his prey’ and ‘chooses a weapon that won’t leave a trace’. To the extent I am a good abuser or murderer, I will pursue the excellences of that membership and reap its goodness.

Of course this might seem worrisome; if there exists something that is a ‘good murderer’, then am I saying *someone* is good if he is a good murderer? I see no reason to make the further claim. Simply because there are appropriate standards attributable to a good murderer, does not mean I have reason to pursue the excellences of that role or, further, that, as a human, I could consciously interpret the pursuit of its excellences as good. Moreover, it is logically possible that we can evaluate individuals by a standard appropriate to the kind(s) of which they are members and at the same time deny that what counts as a good member bears on what the member has reason to do (Blackman, 2012, p. 2). The two intuitively come apart. It is possible, for example, to evaluate someone as a ‘husband’ and ‘businessman’, but still make the following prescription, “You are a great businessman, but you *should* spend more time with your wife.” I see no reason to think my prescription must be isolated to those individual domains I evaluate. The more interesting question is whether the role in question is relevant to the most comprehensive domain that constitutes my life, as I take it, my humanity. But that is a further question I do not explore.

Conceivably there are few limits to the kinds of roles that might exist. We are only limited by our creativity. Some roles like ‘friend’ are possible between any two properly functioning humans. Others like ‘businessman’ could not be identified until a business could form. And, still again, others like ‘moral agent’ are plausibly vague and will require further clarity by ‘virtue ethicist’, ‘Utilitarian’ or again ‘husband’ and ‘friend’, which more clearly define my life qua moral agent. Other roles, like human, are those I am necessarily a member.²³ Whether I consciously affirm it or not, my phenomenology and the kinds of things I take as good are fundamentally structured by my human form. Given all is working properly, I will sense, build relationships, have memories, interpret new experiences and the rest all as a human.²⁴ As I see it, the more

²² Of course the utterance, ‘husband’ may carry different meanings across cultures. I do not see, however, that this neglects there is a kind of relationship, described by ‘husband’ with a certain set of ends that are best for a human, in that kind of relationship, to pursue.

²³ It seems like there are also roles that I am necessarily excluded. For instance, I cannot identify with ‘dog’ since it would require that I can minimally identify with how a dog functions so as to fulfill its less comprehensive roles as ‘domestic companion’, ‘bomb sniffer’, etc. Because I am not a dog, I cannot pursue the ends exclusive to dog.²³ Minimally, the roles I identify must be consistent with my life as a human, but I do not see it as plausible that humans can be dogs.

²⁴ Here I depart from Brewer’s suggestion that the most comprehensive role, which human beings engage is ‘living a good life’ (Brewer, 2009, p. 49). Rather I suggest ‘human’ is the most comprehensive and, therefore, that any further roles I identify can only contribute to my flourishing to the extent that their excellences are productive to those about being a human. I, however, do not take up what is good about being a good in this work.

interesting questions about role ethics are not about what could constitute a role, but, rather, about which roles are ideal for flourishing, especially for a human.

Depending on the role taken up, one's pursuit of flourishing can also turn out harmful. On the one hand, those who identify with 'outcast', 'burden' or 'idiot' may just as intuitively structure their lives according to what is good about their membership. Unfortunately such self-deprecating roles possess few or no goods that are relevant to humans. Not so surprisingly, those who conceive of themselves in this way are often paralyzed to see what is good about taking part in deeper community and so isolate themselves from others. Even if they desire acceptance from others or a friend, that is, they may not engage because their identity as, say, an outcast overrides their response. Of course the stories about how anyone comes to assume such a role are vast and complex.

On the other hand, it is not uncommon to find those who take identity with roles whose excellence is out of their control. Those, whose lives are primarily constituted by 'sport's fan' and believe this requires their team to win, have a lot riding on each game. But as a mere face in the crowd, there is little they can do to promote the excellence of their team. So they yell and scream, but it is in vain unless their team is winning. Likewise, parents who misconstrue their role as merely about the well-being of their child and, further, have no other identity-constituting commitments, are set to live vicariously through their children. Some do it passively and others aggressively, but, again, such parents have much to lose. Their lives rise and fall by the well-being of their children. Further, if they misconstrue that their child's well being is only achieved by lofty goals about fame and fortune, their lives will be largely spent waiting for their child to succeed.

Roles are important to ethical identity for two reasons: first, I've said they are necessary to form an accurate evaluation about my life; second, they determine what excellence I attempt to clarify and respond. Expanding on the latter, if I have a son and, therefore, take myself to be a father, I will, barring a separate overriding good, respond to what I believe is good about being a father. If, further, I take myself to be a baseball coach for his team, then I will also consider what is good about leading my team to victory. But differences quickly emerge depending on how I see that my role as a coach comports with my role as a father. It is all too familiar to that those who take up coaching to be good fathers turn out worse for it. That is, it is not difficult to imagine that on the field I might come to see it is important to, before anything else, perform my role as a coach. And as far as coaching guides my actions I will, at least during games and practice, see my son as a 'left fielder' and, to the extent my son is not a very good baseball player, possibly see him as a burden; and things spiral down from there.²⁵ It is important to consider that what is good for my life as a coach may not be that, which is good for my life as a parent. Often I must choose, which one I will favor if conflict arises or pursue in virtue of the other.

In order to flourish as a father, I must strive for a full and proper understanding of what is good about being one. Hence, I engage in the process of clarifying its excellences through each reflection and experience. For a robust interpretation, moreover, I must understand its excellences are worth pursuit in a way that can override my response to whatever else is or could be choiceworthy for my life. So it is important that I not only clarify what is good about my role as a father, but also that I clarify what is good about

²⁵ Examples like this also illuminate the importance of further work in moral psychology to describe how context can influence what roles I privilege over others.

roles, which could characterize my life. In doing so I will understand that performing my role is good with increasing confidence and depth.

If, for example, it turned out that it is best, whenever possible, to pursue the excellences of my role as a father, but, given the opportunity, I am not kind, patient or intentional to show affection, then I cannot say I have a full and proper understanding of my role.²⁶ I do not see them as choiceworthy goods to respond when, in fact, they are best. To the extent that I form a robust interpretation of my actions as good *qua* father, I will more likely grasp its choiceworthiness and properly pursue flourishing in my relationship. If I do not grasp that it is most choiceworthy, as here I have imagined it is, my failure may be attributable to either my inability to see the goodness about putting that role first or I have mistakenly take some other consideration as valuable in a way it is not. Either way my failure can be explained as a kind of ignorance.

So each role, as long as it minimally explains my identity, is open to certain complexity of goods that I may choose to explore, but that a role has excellences or that I have clarity about that those goods says nothing about whether I have reason to do it or, that it is best for my life. Grass counter, birdhouse builder or unknown planet contemplator are ostensibly not the kinds of roles that pick out a flourishing life. Rather, the excellence is only good for my life if I come to see it as choiceworthy and my experiences lend themselves to robust interpretations of that goodness.

Roles are essential to flourishing because they illuminate what is good about any given interpretation. That is, I flourish to the extent that I consistently interpret what is good *relevant* to who I am. If this is correct, then it is not plausible that some good constitutes flourishing, which is unrelated to the roles I take membership. How could it, if it is not something I care about? So if I am criticized for my poor piano skills, and I am not a pianist, then it will not be the kind of criticism I worry about. Likewise if I neither am nor desire to be a father, pursuing the excellences of fatherhood will not govern the questions I ask or what I do. And, hence, neither the goods of a pianist or father will contribute to my interpretation of flourishing.

Last, roles assist in explaining that flourishing is activity and not merely achievement oriented. If achievements exhaust what is good about any interpretation, then it is worrisome whether my *life* may be characterized as flourishing. Plausibly there is more to flourishing than seeing a desired state of affairs realized (here I am especially imagining the Humean sense of desire-satisfaction). If flourishing is reduced to this kind of achievement-oriented life, then the majority of my flourishing would be characterized by longing for that prized moment and returning in memory. I, at least, hope there is more to flourishing.

A flourishing life, specifically that characterized by few activities, is not reducible to an obsessive-compulsive return to satisfy the same desires. That is, whether it is appropriate to describe flourishing in terms of desire or not, many desires are not satisfied as certain conditions are realized, but *encouraged* through my interaction. When playing a rugby match, my satisfaction is not reducible to a good pass, winning a ruck or scoring a try. Rather, the satisfaction of any particular spurns on my engagement to do it again. Often when I win a ruck, I immediately move to the next to do the same and even when

²⁶ Here I suggest we must imagine it is, all things considered best since it might turn out that a genuinely full and proper understanding about the goods of being a husband could reveal it is not as valuable as some other role that does or can characterize my life.

the game is won, I look to play again. Or, more simply, we might imagine what is good about playing a game of ‘catch’ where the goal is precisely to repeat the same action time and time again. It seems odd to analyze these actions in terms of resulting state of affairs because, upon satisfaction, I immediately recoil to repeat the action. This calls for a more nuanced understanding.

Better, what I am doing is not merely described by a kind of *satisfaction*, but rather a kind of *expression*. My return is explained, at least in part, by my interpretation that some relevant excellence was expressed. And through my clarity of that goodness I experience flourishing. What is good about playing another rugby match is that I reaffirm my role as a member of that team and, through engagement, am open to further clarify, experience and form memories about what is good. In playing the game I see what is good about my life as a rugby player. Hence, my life is open to a more robust characterization of goodness.

So, rather, what is good about my life is that I am *achieving* or *expressing* excellence. Here we can return to the force of Brewer’s example mentioned in Section I, although I do not hope to entirely explain the phenomenon here. He writes:

Consider, by way of illustration, the hugs, kisses, and caresses of lovers. It is hard to deny that these are properly counted among the apt responses to the goodness or value that lovers see in each other. Yet one would have to be in the grip of a theory to insist that these are actions that lovers choose to perform on the strength of their recognition of some array of reasons for action (p. 160).

It is not necessary for a husband, that is, to *do something* to enjoy his relationship with his wife because the well-being of their relationship (and, hence, his flourishing) is not exhausted by intentional movements. He does not flourish to the extent that he only *performs* kind or affectionate actions, but also to the extent that he understands their relationship is *constituted by* kindness and affection. A husband staring into his wife’s eyes is not *making* their relationship good he is *enjoying its goodness* and it draws him further in to deep affection. Hence, in a single moment he can flourish when he expresses his affection *by* looking at her, but also *from* his clarity about the overarching goodness of their relationship; so the two can occur simultaneously, but the former is not required.

This illuminates what is so painful about an identity crisis. Here it might be beneficial to note MacIntyre (1977), who argued an epistemological crisis, is also a personal one. When, for whatever reason, who I am is thrown into jeopardy, I cannot live well because there is nothing to govern understanding about whether my life is good. Of course I might still understand what is good about being a father, a kind of athlete or the rest, but if I am not clearly any of these, then *my life* cannot clearly flourish. So, I am left in confusion about what to do because I do not know who I am.

I close by illustration of what is good about being a runner. For a *runner*, flourishing results from bringing together certain excellences carefully developed overtime. What is so enjoyable is that she finds herself in her element when the gun goes off – every piece of her is intentional – she explodes from the starting blocks, her arms move at just the right angle, her knee drives up into her abdomen and her breathing is on rhythm. She’s responding correctly from her experiences that gave rise to her clarity

about what is good and how to respond including, her coaches' instruction, plyometrics, weight lifting, and time spent on the track. And in that moment she flourishes because she understands and so grasps her own well being. She may get a medal and praise if she wins, but when she reflects she won't focus on the podium, not if she's a runner. Rather, she will enjoy the memory of *running*, which is the closest thing she may have to doing it again. And the same goes for music, family reunions and anything else, where one clearly expresses what is excellent about who she is.

IV. Ethical Identity: First and Third Person Understanding

Last, and most important, my first and third person understanding is vital to my clarity of goodness and, hence, action. Neither is isolated from any level or process I have mentioned. Rather each contributes to a more robust interpretation of excellence and, hence, flourishing. Each is indispensable to arriving at, first, a full understanding and, second, a proper understanding about what is good. I suggest each the former and latter require a dialectic between both perspectives and, hence, neither is indispensable.

Recall that to possess an increasingly *full* understanding I must increasingly see what roles are better to identify, what is good about the roles I identify and what is good in a given context; in each way I am getting clearer about what is good. To act in light of some perceived good requires two locus of understanding: first, my understanding about what is happening in my present situation and, second, my understanding about what excellences exist. In any experience I bear a unique phenomenology that includes my sights, smells, beliefs, emotions, goals and the more. To the degree each is relevant, it is impossible to disregard my first person understanding. The two, moreover, depend on and influence one another such that I arrive at a judgment about what is good. Recall that clarifying what is good requires humans engage in the natural self-correcting process between apprehension, understanding and judgment. My first person understanding provides the data to construct insights through my third person understanding, including my imagination and use of counterfactuals, to form valid insights. Just as well, my first person understanding provides a check on the insights I develop by drawing in new data that may confirm or invalidate the story I have constructed. And recall that my first person understanding is not merely reducible to the apprehension of sensory data, but it also informs my judgments through my history, emotions, beliefs and more. Even if I make use of my imagination to associate two insights derivative from my third person perspective, it is not clear that I am able to do so in a way that is *purely* third person. Plausibly both perspectives are always present, even if one is more directly attended or developed than the other. My imagination is at least partially fed by my first person experiences and the judgments I make about a second level hypothetical meaning will further require first person input. In any given situation I do not purely rely on my third person perspective, but derive judgments that exist from the dialectic between my perspectives, what I call a first order dialectic. Then through sensing, reflecting, imagining, forming conditionals, obtaining verification and more, I can see what is good about different roles including those I identify and what is good in my present context. To the extent I lack in either, I will lack what could be vital to arriving at a more accurate verdict and, so, more likely fail to properly assess what goods exist.

To possess a *proper* understanding of what is good I must recognize its *place* in my life. It is not only important that I possess a robust judgment that in my situation there exists some good, but it is important that I see that whatever is good is relevant to who I am for it to be choiceworthy. Here, again, both perspectives are indispensable. But forming a value judgment, does not obviously derive from a dialectic between my first and third person perspectives. Rather it is, on the one hand, informed by my judgment about what is good (from my first order dialectic). On the other hand, it is informed by my narrative understanding, which includes the roles that characterize my life their excellences, the thread that ties them together overtime and what is good for progressing that more complex story. This is informed, at least, by the history that has led to my present experience and understanding of potential future significance. So here it seems that neither side of the dialectic can dispense with first or third person understanding. Each, if you will, is intricately woven into either side of the conversation. Moreover, neither perspective is privileged, but rather each plays an invaluable role in the process of coming to see what is good and what is worth responding. I call this a second order dialectic because the resulting judgments from the first pose one side of the conversation and the second order dialectic is impossible without the judgments determined by the first.

And neither process should be unintuitive since when making prescriptions to another about how to live, we strive to grasp their internal dialectic and, then, take part in that discussion. When a friend is about to make a poor decision about, say, staying in an abusive relationship, buying a luxury car when already in debt or quitting a job due to a frustrating afternoon, it is necessary to grasp what she understands is good and how that fits into her life. In such cases I cannot always appeal to a third person evaluation, “but that’s a bad relationship,” “you don’t have the money” or “you’ll be unemployed,” or just any first person particular. In each case there is something further to understand about why *she* sees it is valuable. When I am empathizing, I am attempting to locate where she has gone wrong in her personal conversation. It is only if I can grasp the underlying judgment that I can directly confront the mistaken conception and contribute to a, more accurate dialectic, which results in a better pursuit of flourishing.

Finally, it is important to note that although it is possible when eating to focus on taste or in theorizing to focus on imagination, many situations are so simple. Further choosing to act without input from a particular form of understanding is not often an option or requires intensive training to bring under control. That is, it is not as if I can simply isolate my emotions or give up a belief when deciding what to do. Likewise, I cannot refuse to acknowledge vague or unjustified perceptions about my obligations or will I naturally do so well at considering the relevant counterfactuals. More realistic, my emotions are set off in ways that are difficult to control, subconscious beliefs about who I am prevent me from taking the step of courage I believe is good and misguided ideals about my future often prevent me from taking as relevant what would otherwise be choiceworthy. Just as I should not undercut the importance of third person understanding in ethical action, I should also not undercut the importance of my first person understanding. To the extent either is removed, I will fail to grasp the conversation that results in the decisions made with a strong understanding about what is good to do.

In conclusion, first person understanding is indispensable to moral action. When I act I do so in light of some perceived goodness. My flourishing results to the extent that I

interpret it as expressing relevant excellences about the roles I take membership. My experience at any moment is increasingly valuable to the extent that I possess a full and proper understanding about what is good in that context; that is, it is valuable to the extent I have clarity about what is good in the situation and understand how that goodness is relevant to my life. My first and third person understanding are, further, indispensable to attaining a full and also proper understanding about what is good. By the lights of modern ethics, however, it is only important to understand that moral action is, by third person understanding, the thing to do. If what I have said is plausible, a gap emerges between why I am approved, by the lights of modern ethicists, and, otherwise, why I act. Next I turn to why this gap is problematic.

V. The Indispensability of First Person Understanding

If what I have said is plausible, a gap exists between why I act and why I am approved by modern ethics that reduce the importance of first person understanding. Here I argue that the gap formed from the neglect of first person understanding is problematic for three reasons: first, it unnecessarily undercuts the scope and importance of moral inquiry; second, theorists are unable to explain an alternative way of living and, so, are unable to explain flourishing and, hence, a moral life; theorists are unable to explain ethical overridingness. Finally I will discuss some challenges that arise with creating a positive account if what I have said is plausible.

By failing to take first person inquiry seriously the modern ethicist neglects that it is even valid to respond to questions about the goodness I understand via my first person understanding. And this is wrong since, for one, it unnecessarily undercuts the scope of moral theorizing. My first person perspective is vital for seeing and so responding to what is good about even morality or, otherwise, to see a moral action is choiceworthy for two reasons: on the one hand, it is necessary to ensure moral actions are not hindered and, on the other hand, it is necessary to promote moral action. Hence, reducing the scope of moral theory from my first person perspective provides two deficits for humans who strive after moral living. To the degree that the dialectic is neglected, I am on my own to make sense of why it is good to do what is moral. Moreover, if ethicists abandon this plausible domain of inquiry, it is not obvious that some other discipline will pick up the slack. At best, if psychologists and counselors attempt to help, they will be forced back to ask moral theorists about why morality is worth responding. But there will be no answer to give. Hence, I do not suggest moral theorists should be quick to give up such ground without good reason.

Second, the neglect of first person understanding is problematic because it fails to explain how *my life* could be sufficiently moral. Carrying out the precepts of modern morality requires that my life is constituted by the relevant moral domain like ‘Utilitarian’, ‘Deontologist’, ‘Existentialist’, and so on. Because their excellences, however, are not identical with those that constitute the flourishing life of, say, a father, husband or friend, it is inevitable that conflicts will arise with my life as a ‘modern moral agent’. The conflicts arise, to be clear, simply from the fact that their excellences are not identical. When they do, I am, then, forced choose, which will govern my actions. But unless I am caught in the grip of theory, I will likely seek the excellences of fatherhood or

friendship and so on. I would not only choose them because their excellences more clearly result in a flourishing life, but because I value *approval*, first and foremost, as a father, friend or something else. But modern ethics call me to do something very different, to strive for excellences that do not clearly entail flourishing and to seek approval from the ivory tower. If ethicists fail to empathize with what will result in me flourishing, they will also lack authority because the life they prescribe is not better and, so obviously worth responding. I suggest that ethical inquiry is not useful to describe a new way of living that is moral, but to make sense of living a moral life. Then it can explain moral action in a way that human understanding is responsive and, so, obtain authority over who I am.

Third, if my construction is plausible, ethical overridingness will be difficult to explain without first person understanding. That is for something to be the thing I *should* do requires an explanation about why it is the thing to do among my alternatives. I offer five reasons to think that morality without ethical overridingness is insufficient. First, structuring morality in this way leads to an impractical conception of action guidance. There is, whether I consciously recognize it or not, a story about why I act and why I see some action as good. If ethics cannot provide a prescription about why I should see some action as valuable, then I am asked to do something absurd – to I see it as good and relevant to my life when it is not. To raise it above those other things I genuinely value, I am reduced to table pounding that doing otherwise is ‘irrational’, but with no explanation about why *that* is valuable. The tactic reduces to bullying and is dehumanizing since to act rationally I must give up my human understanding about what is good.

Second, speaking to those that reduce morality to third person understanding, it is unintuitive to think that caring for my children is attributable to my role as a kind of ‘moral agent’ and not my role as a ‘father’. Because my action requires my identity is formed in response to some role, if I am to do what is moral in a way that is beyond coincidence, I must conceive of a different role to guide my life whose excellences only illuminate third person considerations. So I must deny that my life as a father is sufficiently moral. But it is very odd to think that the concern a good parent shows for his child by sacrificing for her well being and guiding her to live the best possible life is not moral to the extent is explained qua father, i.e. as an expression of *his personal care*. Doing what is moral, however, requires an explanation about the third person excellence he satisfies. Worse, what I am *obligated* to be to my children is not a good father, but rather a kind of moral agent. And for those who treat their children poorly, it is not their fatherhood I evaluate, but rather their ability to respond properly to third person understanding. I am pulled to think this is an unattractive picture of morality. It unnecessarily reduces that ethics can make evaluations qua the roles that characterize our lives.

Third, if moral living does not clearly override my first person concerns, moral self-improvement is unexplainable. Without a sufficient explanation about why I should most value morality, it is an imposition to my good life that I identify as a ‘moral agent’. It is not clearly choiceworthy, but I am obligated to respond. If morality is conceived in this way, then I can understand H.A. Prichard’s (1912) aversion to virtue ethics, “[The achievement of virtue] does not help us to discover what we ought to do in life as a whole and why; to think that it did would be to think that our only business in life was self-improvement” (p. 34). Prichard’s point is that it is inconceivable to think that morality

demands the entirety of our lives, but if we are obligated to be virtuous, this is the conclusion we face. If virtuous living, like Utilitarianism or Deontology, amounts to what is right, but not what is choiceworthy, then becoming virtuous reduces to slavery and the idea of being a virtue ethicist is uninspiring. And he would be correct if virtue ethicists did not account for ethical overridingness. I take it, however, that is precisely what radical virtue ethicists seek to discover.

The worry here should not be missed. If doing what is moral does not amount to what is choiceworthy, then theories *must* avoid obligations tied to self-improvement because such a life is one of endless labor. At least two problems arise. First this conception is forced to overlook the dire need for self-improvement in personal and, more broadly, community living. It is not only helpful that I mature in my virtues, but it is necessary that I engage in development to do what is required in moral situations. So although I am told to do what is right, theories that shy away from self-improvement, to that degree, cannot give assistance about how to become a person who lives a moral life.

Further, moral theories that cannot capture development will fail to render guidance because they cannot capture adequate evaluations and prescriptions. Development is not always a linear process from wrong to right or from bad to good. That is, improvement does not necessitate either better actions or better outcomes; it often requires failure. Hence, a good father does not understand his daughter's action are obligatory simply because he understands *the action* is right or good. Rather he seeks to discover *why* she failed, which includes understanding the entirety of who she is. Likewise, his prescriptions (such that she could live a better ethical and moral life) are only helpful when both he understands the best life she could live and he understands what she sees is good. Only then can he guide her through various misconceptions, experiences and the rest to a better life. A strong sense of guidance requires any good father to see his daughter in all her complexity.

Fourth, if it is not clear how coming under the authority of morality constitutes a better life, it is worrisome to consider the end goal of morality. If meeting moral demands requires living a worse life, then the spread of moral living amounts to spreading lives that are less valuable to possess. Of course Utilitarians and others strive for precisely the opposite conclusion, but by reducing the importance of first person understanding in a flourishing life, it is open to wonder whether modern ethics does not undercut the potential for a more valuable world. If so, we will have restructured the world to meet the demands of morality at the cost of flourishing.

Last, if it is not clear how morality grasps ethical overridingness, then ethics is reduced merely to a kind of evaluation among others. As long as morality constitutes a separate way of living, then I am not clearly accountable for being a good friend, parent or the rest. Rather, being a good friend, parent or moral agent is merely a kind of evaluation. By establishing overridingness, however, performing the moral action is authoritative because it is *best*. If I fail to do what is moral, I am subject to a kind of irrationality; I have failed to live a better life.

These failures rub against our initial reason for discussing ethics and morality – to explain how *I* should live. Modern ethicists have only explained my life in part and this leads to a number of problems. For all of these reasons, attempts to live moral theory do not amount to flourishing from an increasingly full and proper understanding. I cannot have a full understanding because moral action does not require I see why my action is

good. Moreover, I cannot have a proper understanding because it is not important that moral actions hold a place in my life. Worse, it is not that I am required to do what is moral whether or not I understand its goodness or fit; I am required to do what is moral *and* there is no goodness or fit to understand.

VI. The Weight of Fulfillment

Finally it is important to take note of the relationship between flourishing and moral living. As it stands in contemporary ethics, it is not clear that doing what is moral constitutes flourishing. As I take it, to argue that flourishing is vital to moral maturity requires that a full and proper understanding about what is good results in moral maturity. The latter, however, requires at least the following: first, flourishing will more likely result from an increasingly full and proper understanding about what is good; second, I am more likely to do what is moral with an increased understanding about what is good and *vis-a-verca*. The former, I take it, is plausible from what I have laid out in this paper; recall that a full and proper understanding is not only about what I see as good that applies to who I am, but also about taking membership with what is best. Clarifying each will plausibly result in increased flourishing. The latter, however, is not clearly true. At this point, from what I have said, there is no reason to think that that when I ultimately discover what is good that it will not reduce to, say, a form of hedonism, which fails to capture our moral intuitions. So it is worrisome, at least *prima facie*, that if ethicists agree to the indispensability of first person understanding, that morality will lose the importance we hoped it had.

But continuing in modern moral trends is not clearly a better option. If, as I have argued, first person understanding is indispensable to human action, then giving up first person understanding entails the reduced conception of morality I described in Part V. Further, it will turn out that to do what is moral may require that one *lack* an understanding about what is good. After all, my first person understanding of flourishing might override the moral action. This does not seem to square with the precepts of philosophy if we are suggesting people, at times, *shouldn't* understand nor is it attractive to think one must choose between flourishing and morality. And for now I see no reason why ethics or moral inquiry cannot aim to make sense of how moral living constitutes a flourishing life.

Still the task cut out is, by no means, easy. Arriving at a full and proper understanding of moral living will require we fill the gap that Anscombe (1958) called us to fill with “an account of human nature, human action, the type of characteristic virtue is, and above all of human ‘flourishing’” (p. 18). Further there are a number of epistemological questions to answer about how flourishing or moral living requires a grasp of truth. Last for humans to consistently do what is moral will require that a role can be identified with the following characteristics: first, its excellences sufficiently capture our moral intuitions; second, its excellences are plausible for choiceworthy action; third, it is broad enough to constitute identity for any human; fourth; it must be firm in a way that can weather the complexities and difficulties of life. I will only briefly expand on the fourth. A difficulty with making sense of morality in the personal way I have described is that most roles that characterize my life can easily change. To name a

few, my life as an athlete will end when I can no longer meet certain physical standards, my employment can terminate, and my life as a husband can suddenly end if my wife passes away. It seems difficult enough to pick one that is sufficiently moral and it is all the more difficult to discover one that can provide a robust flourishing life and is also stable. I do not pretend to have answers to each of these questions or think it will be easy. Nonetheless, if first person understanding is indispensable, then it is important that ethicists' press into discovering what is so valuable about morality such that it obtains the authority to govern our lives.

References

1. G.E.M Anscombe. (1958). "Modern Moral Philosophy." *Philosophy*, 33, 1-19.
 2. Kurt Baier. (1998). "Radical Virtue Ethics." *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 13, 126-135.
 3. Talbot Brewer. (2009). *The Retrieval of Ethics*. (New York: Oxford University Press).
 4. Robert Fitterer. (2008). *Love and Objectivity in Virtue Ethics*. (Canada: University of Toronto Press).
 5. Barbara Herman. (1996). *The Practice of Moral Judgment*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
 6. Alasdair MacIntyre (1977). "Epistemological Crises, Dramatic Narrative and The Philosophy of Science." *The Monist*, 60, 453- 472.
 7. Alasdair MacIntyre. (1982). "How Moral Agents Became Ghosts." *Synthese*, 53, 295-312.
 8. John McDowell. (1979). "Virtue and Reason." *The Monist*, 62, 331-350.
 9. Christian Miller. (2009). "Empathy, Social Psychology, and Global Helping Traits." *Philosophical Studies*, 142, 247-275.
 10. Thomas Nagel. (1986). *The View From Nowhere*. (New York: Oxford University Press).
 11. Martha Nussbaum. (1999). "Virtue Ethics: A Misleading Category?" *The Journal of Ethics*, 3, 163-201.
 12. H.A. Prichard. (1912). "Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake." *Mind*, 21, 21-37.
 13. Michael Stocker. (1976). "The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories." *The Journal of Philosophy*, 73, 453-466.
 14. Marya Schechtman. (1996). *The Constitution of Selves*. (New York: Cornell University Press).
- George Henrik von Wright. (1963). *The Varieties of Goodness*. (New York: The Humanities Press).

Vita

Matthew Reese earned his bachelors of arts in philosophy from the university of Tennessee in Knoxville before continuing on to pursue a master of arts in philosophy. As an undergraduate, he became especially interested in ethics and the study of character, which led into a focus on virtue ethics and moral psychology. His studies also led to research on personal identity and the role of narrative in a flourishing life. During his two year graduate career he attended three international conferences, which included: the 39th Conference on Value Inquiry held in Bowling Green, Kentucky, the 2013 Conference on Narrative held in Manchester, UK, and the 2014 International Society for MacIntyre Enquiry 8th Annual Conference held in Athens, Greece. His most significant accomplishment, however, was marrying Sara Reese in the summer of 2013. Just before successfully defending his thesis, he and his wife moved to Nashville, TN where he began his studies at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and work with young adults at Brentwood Baptist Church.