Closing the Gap – From Moral Judgement to Moral Responsibility

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Overview of problem (1)

- Moral accountability discourse on how to maintain ethical organizations assume a centrality of company ethical codes and standards.
  - Reliance on moral concepts

- Assumption that clear moral content will be effective and sufficient way to ensure moral contexts (i.e. capacity for moral accountability) and actors capacity for sensitivity to moral values and norms, regulating accordingly behaviour within and outside the firm?
  - Moral Contexts
Ethical codes (1) - a traditional (rationalist) approach to ethics

• Actors capacity to behave “in line with the norms” and ethical codes = traditional approach to ethics (Simmons, 2006)

• origins: utilitarian and deontological moral theories (Woiceshyn, 2011) and the broader philosophical tradition on reason positing that
  
  – (1) moral judgment and understanding is achieved via superior cognitive reasoning, judging problems involving justice, duties, rights, harms and benefits (Haidt, 2001) can be based on knowing what is good / bad in moral terms (moral content / code) and that
  
  – (2) application of general abstract moral principles (content) to any situation that involves moral dilemmas faced best way to deal effectively with difficult ethics and morality problems and safeguard common social life from ethical misconducts (Jonsen and Toulmin, 1988).
A problem of accountability arises

- At the root of accountability is transparency and the notion of the giving and the receiving of “an account” - privileging **hierarchical forms of accountability** - an element of “duty attached to the giving, and some form of privilege in the receiving of an account** (Roberts, 1991; Roberts and Scapens, 1985).

- Discharging accountability on managerial structures:
  - Being required to “give an account” considers management as guardians of moral accountability in organizations - in addition to their financial accountabilities in the firm.
A problem of *accountability* arises (2)

  - Relies on assumptions of actors who are *fully* rational and able to give and maintain coherent accounts of themselves, their principles and actions at all times.
  - Assumes an understanding of the person as an autonomous self-sufficient, self-aware and fully rational subject (Simmons, 2006)
  - Capable of and striving towards maintaining (moral) identity, and a triumph of reason based cognition in order to answer the question of how to best navigate and effectively resolve the dilemmas in the social and ethical complexities of social life in complex organizations.
Fundamental origins of this gap: theory advances

• from the perspective of post-modern moral philosophy
  – the traditional approach to ethics (Simmons, 2006), at odds with the understanding of human morality and actors as autonomous rational agents are post-modern moral philosophers looking to morality lying in wider process of sociality.

• from post-conventional cognitive development theories, explore two modes of self and mature cognition:
  – The Modern Autonomous Self (MAS) relying on self-identity autonomy, and reason as a basis for morality—the modernist ethics, which Butler sharply critiques.
  – The Post-Modern (post-autonomous) Processual Self (PPS)
Butler’s *Giving an Account of Oneself*.

- Butler argues against the autonomy and independence of the person as moral agent and the lack of capacity to give explicit, coherent accounts of their acts and themselves.

- Although a person is present in a given context, one’s moral identity in action simultaneously requires an-Other (an alterity) for its constitution (Borgerson, J., 2005, quoting Butler, 1987/1999). Thus, for Butler, speaking is always a *speaking-to* (Simmons, 2005) a specific other.

- Rendering any **moral judgments by this less than fully aware subject inadequate**; she argues that our very human condition does not undermine the possibility for moral responsibility (Simmons, 2005).

- The **basis for morality is the narrative which opens up the process of our very exposure to the others** (in their specificity and their concreteness), and not self-identity which underlines the traditional approach to ethics (Simmons, 2006).
Butler’s Giving an Account of Oneself.

- For Butler a person cannot be ever fully morally accountable for in addition to one’s conscious rational knowledge (and one’s ethical intentions and principles) there is the “unthought known”, as the experiences of the “other” are imposed upon us prior to self awareness and agency.
  - This is also a recurring idea in psychology concerning early stages of child development (Piaget 1962) and even beyond pre-linguistic development. In the process of giving an account of themselves children may not always be able to say or understand the whole story and cannot tell it for reasons they do not fully understand.

- Human beings are “opaque” to both themselves and the other. Therefore, moral accountability may only arise through the process of interaction with others.
Cognitive development theory to help clarify Butler’s vagueness

- Borgerson (2005), Kenny (2010) and Butler herself (Borgerson, 2005, quoting Butler, 1987/1999) suggest that she is intentionally vague in offering theoretical insights on the nature of subject, subject consciousness (meaning making, or way of understanding) and agency,

- Use of cognitive development theories - to help understand Butler’s ethics presupposition for a responsive, processual self that is ekstatic, opaque to itself and emergent.
  - To argue that different understandings of self and accountability of moral actors matters to move away from a traditional modernist view on ethics towards an understanding of ethics as dialogue
Cognitive development theories

- Broad theoretical tradition ranging from moral cognitive development theory (Kohlberg, 1969; Gilligan), to constructivist ego development theory (Perry 1970; Loevinger 1966; 1976;), development theories in humanistic psychology (Gendlin, 1962; Rogers, 1961; 1971), radical empiricism theories in human learning (Dewey, 1929; Kolb, 1984), and cognitive development theories (Hunt & Schroeder 1961; Schroeder Driver & Streufert 1967).

- Development seen as an epistemological meaning-making process involving affective, rational and (moral) cognitive components –

- Focus particularly on link between meaning making and judgment, assuming that what individuals are able to become aware of and reflect upon is reflected in their way of understanding, (Akrivou & Bradbury, 2011; Loevinger, 1976 Kegan & Laskow-Lahey, 2009; Lahey Laskow, 1986); offering a link between a subject’s way of understanding, their (moral) judgments and actions.
Although they appear similar by their general grouping as post-conventional, mature cognition is two aspirational opposing modes or ideals that people use in a normative way to approach the general question of how to understand how to be moral and approach moral problems, and figure out ethical responses in contexts involving moral dilemmas and ethical complexity.

(TABLE 1)

- The Modern Autonomous Self (MAS) relying on self-identity autonomy, and reason as a basis for morality—the modernist ethics, which Butler sharply critiques.
- The Post-Modern (post-autonomous) Processual Self (PPS)
The essence and dynamics which govern meaning making: subject’s quest of critical autonomy understood as “the goal of identity” (Akrivou, 2008; Loevinger, 1976).

Cognitive meaning making relies on the mastery of abstract, assimilative rational processing rooted in the Piagetian (1971), concept of “formal operations”. Functioning, rendering assimilative complexity as a higher / end goal of the conventional development path.

- an ideal for “self-authorship” (Kegan, 1994)

rely on the assumptions which are critiqued by Butler, namely that the person is self-aware, autonomously self-grounded, able for giving a rational, independent account of self, interacting with other self aware and rational agents whose aspirational ideals of identity is independence and autonomy.

- Ok hierarchical forms of accountability coupled with Individual capacity for reason to judge (or, negotiate) independently self-interest, and cultural /ethical norms.
• Post-modern Processual Self (PPS) essence is the integration of rational cognition with intuitive and affective experiential ways of knowing. Loevinger was the first theorist who used the term “being integrated” - higher level capacity for harmonization between thought, behaviour and action (Akrivou, 2008; Loevinger, 1976), capacity for accessing reality directly (in context) and through symbols, or abstractly (Cook-Greuter, 1999; Loevinger, 1976).

• This shift allows dual knowledge cognition (combining rationalist with affective and intuitive understanding) whereby “each situation is experienced and interpreted in its newness, not as the past. (Rogers, p. 152, on felt meaning).

• Theorized capacity for meaning making and understanding in terms of situations which involve ethical responses in the PPS is the re-centering of one’s moral faculties in the emergent process of intuitive, fluid knowing.

• Moral reasoning thus is less forced from abstract mental schemas (such as beliefs, principles, interests, etc) but is directly related to one’s moral responsiveness, experienced not in the mind but from within the contexts of interaction, where moral problems and cases are being discussed and experienced in the relational narrative processes (Akrivou, 2008; Kegan, 1994; Kegan & Laskow-Lahey, 2009).
How MAS and PPS differ

In common:
- Both are related in that they focus attention on how to deal with problems of multiplicity and relativism. Both can be pro-active and creative, in contrast to conventional moral conformity (clan / group etc)

How they differ:
- the MAS privileges reason - Recognizing the importance of context, MAS may rely on systems thinking (at best) of each actor independently to resolve moral complexities.
- the PPS is based on dual knowledge cognition: Reason + an emergent experiencing process that integrates concepts and contexts in moral reasoning. It practices moral context sensitivity in action.
- The rationalist MAS is looking to moral judgment as universal, abstract content based and assumes that reason guides moral judgment, while the PPS is looking to moral judgment as an aspect of culture and highly relevant to context, and assumes the primacy of contextual emergent responses (with reason utilized more as a post-hoc construction and justification mechanism for reflection, communication and social influence).
Aspirational ideal of PPS more realist (acting ethically in moral contexts)

- Based on the theory it is argued that the PPS is a **pragmatist in the real sense** (Rorty, 1991) who is not only able to think, but also to engage in morally responsible praxis, in response to what is truly present in contexts of relational narrative processes.

- As a result of this link with reference to Rorty, the PPS is intentionally acting with a **capacity for a new trans-system or cross-form way of organizing and understanding reality** (Cook-Greuter, 1999; Kegan, 1994).

- In Kohlberg’s later completion of cognitive moral reasoning theory with the addition of a seventh stage of cognitive moral processing (Kohlberg and Rynearson, 1990) it is described as capacity for giving inwardly answers to the question “*why be just in a universe that appears unjust*”, the responsibility that moral issues and responsibilities “are neither arbitrary, nor need to be grounded in social convention but instead are objectively grounded as laws of nature”. This is reminiscent of Perry’s (1999) highest developmental stage of commitment of the self in a relativist world.
Dialectics and Dual Knowledge

- The previous analysis suggests that the integrative path of the PPS is the better path to applied ethical practice in organizations. This is not to say that everyone should have a PPS; rather we are suggesting that the integrative process of PPS cognition may be a better way to integrate moral concepts and moral contexts.

- Thus, I argue it is a reasonable basis for ethics of dialogue, rooted in the narrative process (Butler), beyond a traditional modernist ethics.
Bridging moral judgement and moral responsibility

• The dominant modernist approach (overreliance on abstract universal codes based on philosophies of rational moral judgment to maintain ethical organizations) may be a limited one sided way to organizational ethics.

• Adding a dialectical, contextually sensitive approach to ethics and morality that is based on processual and relational responsiveness may be a profound way to enrich understandings of how to create ethical organizations.

• Reasoned concepts of moral judgment and experienced contexts of moral responsibility inform different aspects of moral life in organizations; emphasizing the need for integrating these two.
Moral Engagement based on Dialogue and Conversation


- We focus on Gadamer’s idea of conversation juxtaposing it to Habermas’ more rationalist and normative emphasis on dialogue

- “how is critical reflection possible” in conditions of dialogue (Kelly, 1990; 1988): Gadamer’s attention to the role of interpersonal qualities (White, 1994) as constituting the normative conditions governing critical reflection in philosophical and applied ethics, rather than a focus on the role of ethical norms and rules objectively existing outside the speakers.
Moral Engagement based on Dialogue and Conversation - Gadamer

• For Gadamer (1965) dialogue is seen as “a play of persons” (the speakers), arguing that the decisive focus on the interaction process in conversation: “to conduct a conversation means to allow oneself to be conducted by the subject matter to which the partners in the dialogue are oriented” (Gadamer, 1965, p.367).

• Conversational partners’ isolated understanding, is a priori a prejudiced understanding, due to historically effected consciousness - reason why Gadamer insistence that a consensus representing truth with regard to the subject matter (Warnke, 1987). Gadamer differentiates his conceptualization of conversation from cognitive (mentalist) conceptualizations of conversation by orienting towards the speakers themselves interpersonal understanding to eliminating subjectivity (White, 1994).

• Thus in Gadamer’s (1965), being in a conversation is about accepting being “…caught up in something larger, than his or her immediate intentions or subjective attitudes…..“
Implications and links to other works (management & applied ethics)

- **Agree with: critique of hierarchical forms of accountability** (Roberts, 1991; Roberts and Scapens, 1985), moral accountability that respects value and epistemological pluralism among participating persons more promising path for ethics than disciplinary approaches to ethics post-traditional organization of post-bureaucracy (Hendry)
  - Further implications may extend to questions of ethics critical management scholars’ work on the role of management as inadequate mechanism for compliance, often achieved via identity regulation and organizational control processes linked to politics of identity a mechanism for “the production of appropriate individuals” (Alvesson & Wilmott, 2002).
  - Unethical organizations often are known for a lip service to the abstract moral codes were used to hide and cover the total absence of morally engaged organizing.

- **elevate possibilities for re-imagining new metaphors of organization and management** (Morgan, 1977) as sustaining moral contexts
  - Focus on managerial integrity, as a most desirable “super virtue” in management (Solomon, 92)
  - Trevino et al., 1998; 2000; 2003 with their findings showing that managers / leaders who were acting to establish an ethical contexts, are perceived as moral managers *and* moral persons.