Metaethics and Mental Time Travel: A Reply to Gerrans and Kennett

Abstract: In “Neurosentimentalism and Moral Agency” (Mind 2010), Philip Gerrans and Jeanette Kennett argue that prominent versions of metaethical sentimentalism and moral realism ignore the importance, for moral agency and moral judgment, of the capacity to experientially project oneself into the past and possible futures – to engage in ‘mental time travel’ (MTT). They contend that such views are committed to taking subjects with impaired capacities for MTT to be moral judgers, and thus confront a dilemma: either allow that these subjects are moral agents, or deny that moral agency is required for moral judgment. In reply, we argue for two main claims. First, it is implausible that moral agency is required for moral judgment, and Gerrans and Kennett give us no good reason for thinking it is. Second, at least some of the subjects in question seem able to make moral judgments, and Gerrans and Kennett give us no good reason to doubt that they can. We conclude that they have not shown a problem for any of the metaethical views in question.

*Introduction*

In “Neurosentimentalism and Moral Agency,” Philip Gerrans and Jeanette Kennett argue that prominent metaethical views fail to appreciate the importance, for moral judgment, of the psychological capacity for “mental time travel” (MTT).[[1]](#footnote-1) MTT involves experientially representing oneself in the past or future, as when you remember or imagine eating the pesto to help you decide whether to order it.[[2]](#footnote-2) Declared “one of the most fascinating achievements of the human mind,”[[3]](#footnote-3) MTT plays a major role in a variety of psychological activities involved in deliberation and planning. As Gerrans and Kennett (G&K) point out:

We exercise the capacity for mental time travel whenever we revise for this year a class we gave last year – remembering what worked and what didn’t – whenever we reflect on what kind of career or job would best suit us, whenever we plan a holiday or a shopping trip, arrange a meeting, organize a party, or commit ourselves to a course of study, an exercise program, or a marriage.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Undoubtedly MTT plays an important role in moral judgment as well.

But according to G&K, it is not simply important, MTT is *necessary* for moral judgment. And not just nomically necessary but metaphysically or conceptually, much as moral motivation is necessary according to motivational internalists about moral judgment.[[5]](#footnote-5) This necessity, they say, constitutes a “diachronicity constraint” which any adequate theory of moral judgment must accommodate. But certain prominent metaethical theories, G&K allege, are committed to the in-principle dispensability of MTT to moral judgment.[[6]](#footnote-6) Those theories, therefore, fail.

G&K dub the offending theories “synchronic” and identify two main versions thereof: sentimentalist and motivational externalist. Interestingly, they single out a common culprit: the dual process model of human cognition. This model, they say, “dominates the theoretical landscape”[[7]](#footnote-7) and foists on theorists an impoverished account of the human mind, forcing them to equate moral judgments with either tacit, cognitively impenetrable states (“gut feelings,” in the words of Jonathan Haidt) or with passive mental representations, i.e., motivationally inert cognitive states.[[8]](#footnote-8) *Synchronic* *sentimentalists* take the former tack, *externalists* the latter. Despite their superficial differences, then, synchronic sentimentalism and externalism are, on G&K’s reckoning, two sides of the same coin. And they face a common problem: since neither gut feelings nor passive representations require MTT, both accounts run afoul of the diachronicity constraint.

Our main aim in this paper is to rebut the case for the diachronicity constraint. We do this in Sections 2 and 3, after discussing the constraint’s metaethical relevance in Section 1. We finish with a word in defense of the dual process theory.

1. *Synchronic metaethical theories*

If there is a diachronicity constraint on moral judgment, who should worry? Let us consider G&K’s targets, starting with externalism.

Externalist theories are driven by two venerable, albeit controversial, metaethical ideas. First, moral judgments are individuated by their descriptive (truth-conditional) content. For instance, to be a judgment that x-ing is morally wrong just is to be a judgment that x-ing has some property F. (Externalists differ over F’s features: natural or non-natural, indexical-involving or not, consequentialist or not, etc.) Second, the relevant properties are inert: awareness of them never *entails* (supranomically) caring about them in any particular way, or at all. Together, these rule out motivational constraints on moral judgment.

Despite the popularity of these ideas, G&K name only two externalist targets, Philippa Foot and Adina Roskies.[[9]](#footnote-9) Foot and Roskies take moral facts to be relevantly like facts about etiquette and law, respectively. One can recognize what etiquette or law require without caring; likewise, Foot and Roskies say, with moral requirements. Though G&K do not mention this, we wish to note that “Cornell realists” are prominent externalists as well.[[10]](#footnote-10) Cornell realists take moral properties to be natural properties as characterized by welfare consequentialism, and they thus take moral awareness without moral motivation to be possible, even if psychologically unusual for humans.

Externalists do not deny that moral judgments require retrospective and prospective representations, in at least two ways. First, the *targets* of moral judgment frequently lie in the past or possible futures. Indeed, since actions are temporally extended, even judging current actions requires some capacity for representing what’s temporally non-present. Second, the *grounds* of moral judgment often lie in awareness of the causes (e.g., motives) or effects (e.g., on welfare) of the actions judged. On some externalist accounts of the nature of moral facts, moral judgments are themselves *constituted* by such representations. For instance, objective consequentialists such as Cornell realists take moral properties to include welfare effects, and these involve relations to what is temporally posterior to the actions having those effects. On accounts of this sort, judging that one ought to do A *requires* a future-oriented representation because it *is* such a representation.

However, this doesn’t mean that externalist theories satisfy the diachronicity constraint. For not just *any* retrospective or prospective representing is MTT. [[11]](#footnote-11) MTT is a distinctive *way* of having such representations, characterized by three features.[[12]](#footnote-12) First, MTT is an *activity*: creating and exploring an experientially rich conception of a temporally extended self. It isn’t enough merely to undergo passively the relevant experiences, as when haunted by PTSD flashbacks. Second, MTT is *experiential*. Merely remembering *that* one said something, or expecting that one will, isn’t enough: one must experientially remember or anticipate doing so. Third, it is *autobiographical*: the experiential contents must include the experiencer. Having experiences with entirely “objective” contents isn’t enough. For instance, if you saw a blue wall yesterday and now have a memory experience of *a patch of blue*, that is not MTT since *you* are not part of what’s experienced. For MTT you need an experiential memory of *yourself yesterday experiencing* the wall.

The first two features each suggest that externalists are indeed committed to the in-principle dispensability of MTT to moral judgment: the first because agency requires more than inert cognitions, the second – because it is difficult to see why moral facts would have to be represented *experientially*.[[13]](#footnote-13) So G&K have rightly identified a major target in externalists. (The problem for externalism presented by G&K is quite similar to the problem presented by internalism itself. In both cases, externalists are charged with a failure to appreciate necessary relations between moral judgments and some broadly conative feature of those who make them: motivation for internalists, MTT for G&K.)

Unlike externalism, sentimentalism has both synchronic and diachronic versions. That’s because sentimentalists take conative features to be central to moral judgment. So sentimentalists are at least in the right ballpark, and the only question is whether any given sentimentalist incorporates MTT in particular in his or her account.

G&K exempt from their criticism “sophisticated” sentimentalists such as Allan Gibbard and Simon Blackburn, since Gibbard’s and Blackburn’s accounts of moral judgment include *planning*, which G&K take to involve MTT. We’re not convinced that planning strictly requires MTT, for reasons given at the start of section three. But it doesn’t matter, dialectically. Gibbard’s and Blackburn’s versions of sentimentalism consist in identifying moral judgments with, precisely, active psychological features, including those richly involved in planning and deliberation. Since MTT is among those features, pronouncing dispositions to engage in it to be partly constitutive of moral judgments would be natural, not antithetical. Thus, even if “sophisticated sentimentalists” don’t explicitly include such dispositions in their account of moral judgment (nor anything which entails them), this doesn’t make sophisticated sentimentalism synchronic. Rather, versions of the view have *flexible* chronicity: they can take on board a diachronicity constraint if need be. If G&K can give good grounds for believing MTT to be necessary, Gibbard and Blackburn can incorporate in their account whatever role for MTT those grounds suggest as necessary.

G&K’s named synchronic sentimentalist targets – alleged adherents of the “gut feelings” school of sentimentalism – are Jonathan Haidt and Jesse Prinz.

The charge of synchronicity in Haidt’s case is ill-founded, we think. G&K focus on a rather early (2002) and incautious expression of his views; his later, more careful articulations suggest that he isn’t a synchronic theorist. He is a “sophisticated” sentimentalist, much like Gibbard and Blackburn. But his version of sentimentalism is in a certain way very different from theirs.

Gibbard’s and Blackburn’s type of sentimentalism consists in an account of the nature of moral judgment: moral judgments are “sentiments” (or, more broadly, some sort of pro/con-attitudes). But Haidt’s account of the nature of moral judgments isn’t sentimentalist in this sense:

the psychological basis of [my] theory [is] not a contrast of “cognition” versus “emotion”; it [is] a contrast between *two types of cognition* – reasoned and intuitive. Intuitions are often accompanied by affect … . Yet moral judgment is still a cognitive process – cognitive in the psychological sense that it involves information processing (mostly unconscious), and cognitive in the philosophical sense that moral judgments report beliefs that can be said to be better or worse, more or less accurate…[[14]](#footnote-14)

Haidt’s sentimentalism comes out not in his account of the *nature* of moral judgments, but of what makes those judgments *moral*:

Moral systems are [i.e., to be a moral system is to involve] interlocking sets of values, virtues, norms, practices, identities, institutions, technologies, and evolved psychological mechanisms that work together to suppress or regulate selfishness and make cooperative social life possible.[[15]](#footnote-15)

Haidt here gives a functionalist account of morality. “Morality” in this passage is contrasted with *non*morality, not *im*morality; the account is meant to shed light on what gives moral things their status as moral. By “moral things” we mean, for instance, moral intuitions, judgments and beliefs (as well as emotions, motivations, words, practices, etc.). On a functionalist account, things are moral in virtue of what they *do*, such as being part of, or playing a distinctive role in, certain sorts of attitude-involving psychological processes and social practices. Haidt sees this functionalist idea as an important corrective to the orthodoxy that morality is essentially about such things as welfare, rights, and fairness, i.e., about a certain subject matter. Such a content-based account, Haidt argues, builds into the very nature of morality what are actually features of culturally idiosyncratic WEIRD[[16]](#footnote-16) moralities. Functionalism allows a more balanced and comprehensive picture.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Haidt takes emotions and motivations as centrally involved in morality; relations to them are partly constitutive of it (of the moral-making role). Judgments, for instance, don’t count as moral unless they are accompanied by and relevantly related to them. He thus affirms the sentimentalist idea that morality essentially involves such things. It does so not because of the intrinsic nature of moral things (such as judgments) – as Gibbard and Blackburn would have it – but because of what’s involved in their being *moral*. Consider an analogy: money essentially involves certain practices – there can be no money in a universe without those practices. That isn’t because of the intrinsic nature of money – which may be bits of paper or sea shells – but because of what’s involved in something’s being *money*. Despite this deep difference between Haidt’s sort of account, on the one hand, and Gibbard’s and Blackburn’s, on the other, both are sentimentalist (and internalist[[18]](#footnote-18)).

Haidt’s account is non-synchronic with a vengeance. What makes a view synchronic is the paucity of conditions it places on the making of moral judgments; e.g., taking gut feelings or passive representations as sufficient. But Haidt is willing to say that for judgments to be *moral*, they have to be embedded in interlocking sets of robust norms, practices, identities, etc. Even though he doesn’t explicitly mention MTT as necessarily involved in these, it would hardly be embarrassing for him if it turns out that G&K are correct and MTT is required. He could just add whichever MTT-involving details are suggested by whatever grounds for the diachronicity constraint G&K give.

Prinz, however, is arguably a synchronic theorist. For Prinz, to judge that cheating is wrong is to have a certain sort of negatively-valenced emotion directed at cheating. Although Prinz takes moral emotions to be almost invariably associated with MTT-involving capacities, such capacities aren’t strictly required, on his account. There are two ways in which emotions, for Prinz, might seem invariably linked to MTT, but in neither case does it pan out.

First, emotions are associated with action tendencies, which might include tendencies to MTT. But Prinz explicitly denies that emotions strictly entail action tendencies.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Second, Prinz distinguishes moral emotions from their underlying sentimental dispositions, identifying the former with occurrent moral judgments and the latter with dispositional moral beliefs. At times, his characterization of the underlying states is rich enough to include dispositions to MTT. For instance, he says: “If you believe that φ-ing is wrong … you have *a long-term memory representation* that disposes you to feel guilt or shame if you φ, and anger, contempt, or disgust if someone else φs.”[[20]](#footnote-20) However, Prinz doesn’t mention anything involving MTT as part of these memory representations.[[21]](#footnote-21) Moreover, he doesn’t even seem to consider them strictly necessary for moral judgment. For instance, he countenances moral judgments which don’t stem from underlying moral sentiments at all, but from “extraneous facts” such as hypnotic induction, as in the famous Wheatley and Haidt study.[[22]](#footnote-22) These are still moral judgments, he says, albeit mistaken ones.

Prinz is thus a synchronic theorist. But it’s worth noting that he can easily become diachronic. He could do so either by expanding his account of moral judgments to include (not just emotions but) action-tendencies, where the actions in question include MTT; or he could take the relevant underlying dispositions – including dispositions to exercise MTT – as necessary. Neither would much alter the substance of his view. It certainly wouldn’t turn him into the sort of metaethicist that G&K think best positioned to capture the diachronicity constraint: a moral rationalist of a Korsgaardian type (more on this later).

*2. First case for the diachronicity constraint: the moral judgments of subjects with MTT deficits*

G&K defend the diachronicity constraint in two main ways. The first way – the subject of this section – is empirical. They cite literature on subjects with various neurological impairments associated with MTT deficits. The subjects in question, they say, manifest difficulties with moral judgment, a finding which, they reckon, suggests a dependence of moral judgment on MTT.

In particular, they cite the linguistic behavior of two sorts of subjects – dense anterograde amnesiacs and those with impairments to the ventromedial prefrontal cortex (henceforth, “vmPFC patients”). Both are relevant because each manifests deficits in MTT, though in different ways:

mental time travel [can] be compromised at different levels, depending on whether damage [is] to the episodic database or to the frontal systems which access and manipulate the data in executive processes. Classic cases of amnesia correspond to the former and frontal damage which leads to failures of executive retrieval and manipulation of autobiographical information to the latter.

In short, amnesiacs have lost the experiences, vmPFC patients the ability to use such experiences at will.

These subjects, G&K say, have trouble with certain moral judgments. In particular, they exhibit a “dissociation between third-personal knowledge and first-personal judgements,” an “incapacity … to translate … impersonal social judgements … into personal practical judgements.”[[23]](#footnote-23) G&K interpret this as evidence of the dependence of moral judgment on MTT.

G&K never argue that these subjects lack facility with *third*-personal moral judgments.[[24]](#footnote-24) Their focus is entirely on first-personal judgments, on the assumption that those who can make moral judgments at all can make these. That’s not obvious. Indeed, it is worth pointing out that Eslinger and Damasio, on whose work G&K draw in the essay, report that one of the vmPFC patients studied, E.V.R., is quite capable of making third-personal moral judgments,[[25]](#footnote-25) at least in the laboratory. Here is what Eslinger and Damasio tell us in this regard (examples taken directly from the Eslinger and Damasio paper referenced by G&K):

We also presented him with a series of problems requiring social judgment. For example: “A man walked into a grocery store and stole milk, bread, and cheese. He was caught, and it turned out that he had no money to support his three starving children. Was he right or wrong to do this?” E.V.R. responded, “Wrong. It did not belong to him… it was theft… it’s a matter of principle… if he needed food that badly, he would have to find other means…ask for it, beg for it, have someone give it to him…not steal it.” As another problem we asked: “Two people were shipwrecked on a desert island and ran out of food. The one person killed the other for food and survived. After rescue, he had recurring nightmares and went to a psychiatrist for treatment. The psychiatrist refused to treat the patient. Was the psychiatrist right or wrong?” E.V.R. responded, “Wrong… because the psychiatrist’s duty is to treat the patient for whatever his mental ills may be, not to judge whether he should have or shouldn’t have treatment.” On several other occasions of this sort, he always answered without hesitation, and with responses that examiners judged as sensible.[[26]](#footnote-26)

This suggests to us that even if vmPFC patients were shown incapable of making first-personal moral judgments, it won’t follow from this that they cannot make moral judgments at all, since they may still be capable of third-personal ones. But we don’t press the point. For suppose that the abilities to make first-personal and third-personal judgments can indeed dissociate. A diachronicity constraint with respect to first-personal judgments only would still be of great interest: at very least it would rule out all synchronic sentimentalist and externalist accounts of first-personal moral judgments – a significant result.

So let us consider the evidence for the claim that vmPFC patients are incapable of making first-personal moral judgments. It’s well-known that vmPFC patients exhibit problematic behavioral tendencies such as difficulty making decisions and (some of them) anti-sociality.[[27]](#footnote-27) And, of course, amnesia makes it very difficult to implement plans. But none of *these* difficulties is as such a problem for synchronic theories. For such handicaps may just involve trouble *acting* on moral judgments, not difficulties in *making* them. And the crucial issue is whether the subjects have troubledoing *that*. Do they?

G&K mention only two subjects in this connection, and neither provides a compelling case. One is the above-mentioned E.V.R., a vmPFC patient who, despite significant cognitive ability, has profound decision-making deficits. The sole evidence Gerrans and Kennett provide for the claim that E.V.R. has difficulty with first-personal moral judgments is this:

Deciding where to dine might take hours, as he discussed each restaurant’s seating plan, particulars of menu, atmosphere, and management. He would drive to each restaurant to see how busy it was, but even then he could not finally decide which to choose … .

[I]n referring to tests of social cognition during which he had to come up with solutions to social problems, Saver and Damasio report that ‘E.V.R. noted with his customary insight that he came up with many options but “…I still would not know what to do.”’[[28]](#footnote-28)

This is inadequate. Deciding where to dine doesn’t necessarily involve *moral* judgment. Nor is it clear that E.V.R.’s decision-making deficit is distinctively *first-personal*. We aren’t told, for instance, that E.V.R. finds it easier to determine where *others* should dine.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Moreover, while E.V.R. has not, so far as we know, been asked directly to make first-personal moral judgments, in other studies, vmPFC patients have been asked to make such judgments.[[30]](#footnote-30) The results of those studies, consistent with previous findings by Greene et al., suggest that such patients make moral judgments that are simply systematically *different* from those of controls in being more utilitarian. There is no indication that vmPFC patients *fail* to make moral judgments. G&K presumably aren’t relying on the assumption that utilitarian judgments are not moral judgments at all.

In addition, even if E.V.R. does have more trouble with first-personal judgments, an alternative explanation of this is available: such judgments tend to be more important to us than third-personal judgments are. Consequently, in arriving at them, we aim for higher thresholds of information, certainty, and expected value. We thus tend to struggle with them more.

Last but not least, we must ask whether a deficiency in MTT is the best explanation of either E.V.R.’s decision-making deficits or of the idiosyncratic moral reasoning style of vmPFC patients in general. Damasio has a compelling alternative explanation: E.V.R. has intact cognitive processes but an impaired ability to make use of emotionally significant information. The former without the latter suffice in the lab, where a person must reason about a small number of clearly delineated options, represented verbally. But in real life, options are numerous and scattered across sensory modalities. It is very difficult to assess the merits of all potential options with the help of cognitive processes only, and we need the help of emotional cues, we need to feel the “emotional valence” of different options. E.V.R., however, due to ventromedial damage, cannot make use of such cues – none of the potentially great number of options he can think of “feels” right or wrong to him – and consequently, he has difficulty making up his mind.

G&K are aware of this alternative interpretation, and they reject it. But they don’t give a good reason for rejecting it. All they say in this regard is that what is distinctive about Damasio’s story is the “poverty” of its characterization of the process of rational deliberation: “[Damasio] and others sometimes speak as if what is lost by ventromedial patients is the ability to associate explicit semantic representations such as linguistic thoughts, or the reasoning processes which manipulate them, with emotional valence…” But this, they say, “leaves out the fact that choices are made and upheld in an autobiographical context generated by mental time travel, not just via the association of hedonic states with options.”[[31]](#footnote-31)

As responses go, this one is rather unhelpful, for it is question-begging. G&K dismiss the account as impoverished on the ground that it doesn’t incorporate the diachronicity constraint. They can’t then call upon their own dismissal to support their case for that constraint. We conclude that E.V.R.’s case provides no support for the diachronicity thesis.

The second subject whose case is discussed in the target paper is an amnesiac described by Stuss about whom G&K say:e

[She] appears to show a … dissociation between third-personal knowledge and first-personal judgements. When asked to assess someone’s (her own) significant problems at work from a third-personal perspective (that of a supervisor), she was able to analyse the situation competently and make appropriate recommendations. Yet asked for similar judgements from a first-personal perspective, she refused to agree with her previous recommendations.[[32]](#footnote-32)

This seems to us a tendentious reading of the case. Here is Stuss’s description:

[Due to her amnesia,] she was unable to return to full productive employment. Partial disability was a logical conclusion. The patient, however, was unable to accept this solution. Role playing was used to increase her knowledge of her situation and to assist her in taking the appropriate steps to remedy it. This was done in a very concrete manner, with the patient sitting in the supervisor’s chair opposite the chair where she (the patient) had previously been sitting. She was asked to be the supervisor and to analyze the situation of the patient (herself) who was “sitting” in the other chair. Her analysis and recommendations in this role-playing situation were totally appropriate: **continuation of her loss of privilege to drive a car; obtaining a disability pension because of her inability to maintain a full-time employment; and presentation of a logical procedure to investigate the best type of pension**. When she was removed from her role-playing position and physically changed chairs to sit in her own chair, and then asked to make similar judgments about her own life, she stated that **she was determined to return to work and would be able to return to her presurgery level of functioning within a year or two**. [bolding ours] [[33]](#footnote-33)

The third-person/first-person conflict here is that in role-playing her supervisor, the patient displays significantly less optimism regarding her long-term prospects than she does when not role-playing. Qua supervisor, she recommends preparation for long-term unemployment. Qua self, she expresses conviction in her ability to return to work. This seems to us completely normal; perhaps wishful thinking temporarily eased by adoption of a less biased perspective. It certainly doesn’t exhibit a distinctive difficulty in making first-personal *moral* judgments.

Stuss’s own conclusion is that “[t]wo deficits appeared to be paramount: unawareness of the implications of her problems and inability to use knowledge that she possessed for decisions about the future.”[[34]](#footnote-34) Neither of these confirms G&K’s interpretation. Her “unawareness of the implications of her problems” seems to consist in wishful thinking about her prospects for improvement: a familiar problem in practical judgments about both moral and non-moral matters, not essentially related to MTT. Her “inability to use [her] knowledge” is another instance of a decision-making difficulty which, once again, isn’t enough to establish an inability to *make* *moral judgments*.

Of course, it is possible that E.V.R. and the amnesic described by Stuss are just not good test cases. The best test case for G&K’s hypothesis would be a patient whose *sole* cognitive impairment consists in a deficiency in the capacity for mental time travel. To our knowledge, there is only one such patient, K.C.[[35]](#footnote-35) K.C. has been studied thoroughly by cognitive neuroscientists with an eye todetermining the ways in which the different memory systems function and the extent to which they can function independently of each other. Unfortunately, so far as we know, he has not been tested with the aim specifically of assessing his capacity for moral judgment.[[36]](#footnote-36)

There is, however, reason to believe that patients with similar deficits are capable of making moral judgments. In particular, the famous H.M. – a patient who suffered from severe anterograde amnesia and moderate retrograde amnesia and whose case is well-documented – does seem to have retained his capacity for moral judgment. Consider the following report:

[B]eyond [his] fragmentary memories, he has beliefs, desires and values that are always present. … He is altruistic: when I asked him to tell me about Dr Scoville (with whom H.M. had several appointments before his operation) he said, “He did medical research on people — all kinds of people. What he learned about me helped others too, and I’m glad about that.” His social behaviour is appropriate and courteous. Years ago, when he and I were walking from the MIT Clinical Research Center to the Psychology Department, he would cup my elbow with his hand to guide me down the sidewalk. He has high moral standards with respect to right and wrong in his personal conduct…. He has a conscience. For example, when explaining why he could not fulfil his dream of being a neurosurgeon, he cites the fact that he wears glasses, and that blood might spurt up onto his glasses, creating an obstacle to his vision and causing him to miss his target in the patient’s brain, thereby causing the patient harm.[[37]](#footnote-37)

Extrapolating from H.M., we suggest that empirical evidence, however tentatively, points away from the idea that MTT is strictly necessary for first-personal moral judgments. (Note that H.M.’s judgment that he shouldn’t become a neurosurgeon is first-personal). Certainly, G&K haven’t shown the opposite to be true.

But suppose they had, or that such evidence were forthcoming. What would follow? By our lights: not much. The probative value of such empirical evidence isn’t as great as G&K seem to think. So far as we know *a priori*, there may be any number of deep but contingent correlations between MTT and moral judgment. Documenting correlations tells us only what *is*, not what *must* *be*. Indeed, some externalists have posited precisely such deep but contingent correlations between moral judgment and motivation.[[38]](#footnote-38) For instance, Richard Boyd points out that:

for normal human beings … the capacity to *recognize* [morally relevant facts about] the extent to which others are well or poorly off [and] to *anticipate correctly* the probable effect on others’ well-being of various counterfactual circumstances – depends upon their capacity for sympathy, their capacity to imagine themselves in the situation of others… . [And] sympathy is *motivationally* important: … when we put ourselves in the place of others in imagination, [we take] pleasure in others’ pleasures and [feel] distress at their misfortune, and we are thus motivated to care for the well-being of others.

So even externalists can and should allow that:

the morally unconcerned person, the person for whom moral facts are motivationally irrelevant, probably suffers a *cognitive* deficit with respect to moral reasoning. Such a person would have to be deficient in sympathy, because the motivational role of sympathy is precisely to make moral facts motivationally relevant. In consequence, she or he would be deficient with respect to a cognitive capacity (sympathy) which is ordinarily important for the correct assessment of moral facts.[[39]](#footnote-39)

It follows that evidence that the morally unmotivated display difficulties in making moral judgments is no reason for externalists to fret.

Externalists can say, similarly, that MTT plays a role in first-personal moral judgment analogous to the role played by sympathy in other-regarding moral judgment.[[40]](#footnote-40) Remembering and anticipating the outcomes of our actions[[41]](#footnote-41) tends to be more efficacious, cognitively and motivationally, when it is vividly experiential. It would thus come as no surprise if impairments in MTT tended to yield difficulties in first-personal moral judgment (and motivation). Since this would be due to contingent facts about human psychology, it would pose no problem for externalists.

*3. Second case for the diachronicity constraint: an argument from the normativity of morality*

G&K also argue that the diachronicity constraint follows from the normativity of morality:

(1) “[M]oral judgments are essentially normative” (606).

(2) “[Moral] judgments can be normative only for moral agents” (606).

So,

(3) “[M]oral judgements require moral agents” (606). [(1), (2)]

(4) “[M]ental time travel is necessary to moral agency” (606).

So,

(5) Moral judgments require mental time travel. [(3), (4)]

We have doubts about (4), the idea that moral agency requires MTT, partly due to cases such as those we considered in the previous section. For instance, it seems odd to deny that H.M. is a moral agent, although of course, he can exercise his agency only in limited ways. But our main worry with regard to (4) is that, however important the capacity for MTT may *in fact* be to moral agency, we seem able to conceive of moral agents who lack the capacity.[[42]](#footnote-42) G&K’s case for (4) centers largely on empirical data regarding the decision-making and planning deficits in subjects with impaired MTT. But as we’ve noted, without further argument, that shows at best that moral judgments require mental time travel *nomically*, something synchronic theorists can accept. (Since moral agency requires planning abilities, our reasons for rejecting (4) are ipso facto reasons for rejecting the claim that planning requires MTT.)

Be that as it may, replying to this argument simply by challenging (4) isn’t satisfying. For since neither passive representations nor gut feelings require moral agency, (3), the claim that moral judgments require moral agents, would rule out synchronic theories all on its own. So even if (3) cannot by itself establish the diachronicity constraint, its truth would be dire for G&K’s synchronic sentimentalist and externalist targets. ((3) is also interesting in its own right.)

G&K are strikingly confident of (3). And they seem to expect that readers will be fully on board also, as they don’t much argue for it, and even denigrate its denial, calling the latter ea “radical doctrine.”[[43]](#footnote-43) This is a serious mistake. A natural, common idea is that the necessity goes the other way round: that is, moral agency requires some capacity for moral discernment or conceptualization (and thus judgment) but requires something else in addition – at very least, some ability to be *influenced* by one’s judgments. Russ Shafer-Landau, for instance, in the glossary of his textbook, defines “moral agent” as “One who can guide his or her behavior by means of moral reasoning and so someone who is fit for praise or blame.”[[44]](#footnote-44) If moral agency requires moral judgment *plus something else*, then moral judgment doesn’t require moral agency. In any event, G&K’s *synchronic* opponents certainly won’t accept (3) without further ado.

Given the prima facie plausibility and near-universal acceptance of (1), the claim that moral judgments are normative, the remaining crucial premise is (2), the premise according to which moral judgments can be normative only for moral agents. Unfortunately, G&K’s case for (2), while intriguing, relies on undefended assumptions. In brief, they rely on two robustly rationalist assumptions, the first of which is classic moral rationalism:

MR. The moral is a species of the rational: moral requirements are rational requirements, moral motivation is rational motivation, etc.

The second is a rationalist account of what genuine normativity consists in: on this account, what it means for something (e.g., a judgment) to be normative for Sally is for it to bear a profound link to her rational motivational capacities and tendencies. We leave it at “profound link” because further details are dialectically unnecessary, not to mention tricky and controversial. For our purposes, a minimal assumption suffices: that, whatever their details, the required capacities and tendencies involve *some* degree of rational agency on Sally’s part. For that vindicates “normative rationalism”:

NR. Necessarily, facts and judgments are normative only for rational agents.[[45]](#footnote-45)

MR and NR don’t logically guarantee (2), but it’s a short step from them to it. If NR is true, every kind of (genuine) normativity requires rational agency – including, of course, that of moral facts and judgments. According to MR, among the forms of rational agency are forms of moral agency: *moral* motivational capacities and tendencies. All (2) adds is that *those* (moral) rational motivations are the particular ones required for *moral* normativity.

We think this accurately reflects G&K’s line of reasoning.[[46]](#footnote-46) But oddly, G&K seem not to realize that they must argue for MR and NR. They acknowledge that MR is a substantive assumption, but don’t actually defend it. And they treat NR as self-evident. To illustrate, immediately following the list of MTT-involving activities quoted at the start of this paper (we engage in MTT when we “commit ourselves to a course of study, an exercise program, or a marriage,” etc.) – they continue:

In so committing ourselves … we provide reasons for ourselves in the future, reasons which will be *ours*, but which we would otherwise not have had. In this way we construct ourselves as particular, temporally extended, *agents*. [a] **Our diachronic reasons, made salient to us via our capacity for mental time travel, are thus in a position to compete with synchronically occurring wants. In effect they become normative for us.**

EThe capacity for mental time travel is arguably required in order [b] **for *any* demand to be normative for a person – for them to have reasons whose force is independent of immediate stimulus bound responses.** Morality … is very widely taken to be a normative domain. [c] **We suggest that the process of becoming an agent capable of engaging in this normative domain just is the process of learning to transcend the present moment, both cognitively and behaviourally. This necessarily involves the meta-cognitive capacity to conceive of and adopt reasons which extend over time.**[[47]](#footnote-47)

We find [b] especially striking, as they seem to regard something’s being “normative for” Sally as equivalent to her “hav[ing] reasons whose force is independent of immediate stimulus bound responses” – as if the shorter phrase just abbreviates the longer. In fact, [b] is a substantive, controversial claim about normativity. Properly understood, it’s a version of normative rationalism (NR).[[48]](#footnote-48) (They give no stronger argument elsewhere.)

We say “properly understood” because of two ambiguities in [b], both of which can make it seem much less controversial than it is. The first has to do with the meaning of “force”. Like “strength” and “weight”, “force” can be used for both normative and psychological features: a student’s reason to study may have more normative force than her reason to party, even if the latter has more psychological force. If “force” is construed normatively in [b], then [b] is much less objectionable, since normativity is indeed widely taken to involve reasons the *normative relevance* of which is not exhausted by stimulus-bound responses (whatever that would mean). But G&K intend “force” *psychologically* in [b], as evidenced by [a] and [c], and of dialectical necessity. On the normative construal, [b] is pretty trivial, and incapable of helping their case.

There is a similar ambiguity in “normative for”. Philosophical uses of “normative” aren’t the only uses. In ordinary parlance, for X to be “normative for” a group G is often simply for X to be *normal* for G: incorporated into the planning of members of G in a systematic and unquestioned way. For instance, it’s normative for Americans to stand 2-4 feet away when talking to strangers: they intentionally, even if unconsciously, adjust their distance accordingly. Taking “normative for” in [b] this way could account for some of its plausibility, for it would then mean that the relevant demands must figure into the agent’s planning in the relevant ways, which may involve having reasons with the kind of psychological force posited. But understood this way, [b] changes the subject, since this is not the kind of normativity meta-normative theorists are concerned with. Standing 2-4 feet away is paradigmatically *non*-normative in philosophical discussions of normativity. It isn’t even normative in weak “rule-implying” or “norm-relative” senses.[[49]](#footnote-49)

The problem, then, is that G&K don’t argue for their rationalist assumptions, and their synchronic opponents won’t grant those assumptions. Sentimentalists, of course, reject moral rationalism, as do most externalists. Prinz, for one, is blunt about it: “Philosophers who want to show that moral norms provide robust reasons for action are embarking on a fool’s errand” (125). (Prinz also rejects normative rationalism.[[50]](#footnote-50)) Foot famously rejects MR.[[51]](#footnote-51) Externalists these days enjoy embarrassing riches in accounts of normativity, some of the most prominent and developed of which reject both moral and normative rationalism.[[52]](#footnote-52) Normativity-based arguments against externalism must engage with these accounts, not ignore them or assume their self-evident falsity. We conclude that when it comes to (2), and so (3), G&K still have their work cut out for them.

*Conclusion*

G&K haven’t shown that, empirically, incapacity in MTT correlates with incapacity in moral judgment; indeed, a review of the evidence suggests exceptions to that alleged correlation. Nor have they shown that such a correlation would actually favor a diachronicity constraint. They have shown neither that MTT is necessary for moral agency, nor that moral agency is necessary for normative moral judgments, nor finally, that motivation by principle is necessary for either moral agency or judgment. We conclude that synchronic theorists needn’t be discomfited by anything G&K have said.

We would like to note here that in a later paper, Kennett argues for another way in which MTT is crucial for moral agency: motivation by principle.[[53]](#footnote-53) MTT “enables us to see particular alternatives or courses of action as consistent or inconsistent with our principles, plans, and self-understanding.” And if we can’t do that – “[i]f we are not bound by any coherent principles, plans, or commitments” – “we are not diachronic agents and so we won’t meet the threshold for accountable moral agency” (114). We encountered her paper after we had more or less completed the present response, but we can easily note its relation to our conclusions here. In a word, we aren’t convinced of the strict requirement of MTT for motivation by principle, but it doesn’t matter: for even if it is required, nothing worrisome for synchronic theorists follows.

We aren’t convinced that MTT is supranomically necessary for motivation by principle for the same reason we aren’t convinced it is necessary for planning. Representations with past- or future-oriented, autobiographical content, crucially, awareness of one’s past actions or future options as consistent or inconsistent with one’s principles do seem necessary: but MTT involves experiential representations of those sorts, and we seem able to conceive of agents motivated by principle without such experiential representations. Of course, in real humans those representations are often richly experiential. But if they’re required, perhaps it’s only by human nature. But suppose MTT is required for motivation by principle, and suppose, in consequence, it is required for moral agency. That would underwrite (4), the claim that MTT is required for moral agency. But (4) is problematic for synchronic theorists only in conjunction with (3), the idea that moral judgments require moral agents. And (3) is supported (directly) only if moral judgment requires motivation by principle, or (via (2)) only if the normativity of moral judgments requires agents capable of motivation by principle. But Kennett doesn’t assert, much less defend, either assumption.

There is a final question we wish to consider before closing this discussion: what of the dual process theory? As we noted, G&K allege that the model is by its nature antithetical to diachronicity. We deny this. The diachronicity constraint, even if it were proven to be a constraint on moral judgment, would have *limited* relevance to the dual process theory.

On dual processes models, there are two kinds of psychological processes: intuitive-emotive “System 1” (faster, perceptually triggered, automatic, implicit, and parallel) and cognitive-deliberative “System 2” (slower, abstract, voluntary, explicit, and serial). Such theories have much to offer, we think, including to metaethicists. We think that this will be true even if there is a diachronicity constraint. Why suppose otherwise?

G&K think the diachronicity constraint is (true and) best captured on robust internalist, rationalist assumptions. Let’s assume they are right. In particular, let’s suppose, first, that awareness of rational requirements can be intrinsically motivating. And, second, that (per MR) this includes awareness of *moral* (rational) requirements. Third, and finally, suppose that the intrinsic motivations, at least in the moral case, include motivations to exercise moral agency, including in MTT. If they’re right about all this, what shall dual process theorists say?

They can say one of two things. First, they can take intrinsically motivating awareness of moral requirements to be of System 1 and/or System 2. A natural suggestion is that moral intuitions are System 1, while moral beliefs are System 2. Dual process theorists may say that either System 1 or System 2 processes, or both, or some of each, are intrinsically motivating.[[54]](#footnote-54)

Second, they can posit further processes. The “dual processes” studied by dual process theorists needn’t *exhaust* mental processes to be interesting. Perhaps rationalists can bring to light psychological processes which are neither System 1 nor 2. In that case, new fields of inquiry are opened up, including in the empirical relations between Systems 1 and 2 processes and these.

Offhand, neither way of accommodating internalist rationalism seems problematic. It seems clear that insofar as dual process theorists have failed to posit intrinsically motivating awareness of rational/moral requirements, it’s not because the model leaves no room for them. Rather, it’s because the theorists have yet to see either a descriptive or an explanatory need for them. The idea that representing the world is one thing, caring about it another, and that the two are always in principle separable, has a long history. Correct or not, it is popular quite independently of the dual process theory.

1. Philip Gerrans and Jeanette Kennett, “Neurosentimentalism and Moral Agency,” *Mind* 119 (2010): 585-614. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. We say more about MTT in section one. For helpful recent discussions of MTT and related capacities see Kurt Stocker, “The Time Machine in Our Mind,” *Cognitive Science* 36, 3 (2012): 385-420; Thomas Suddendorf and Michael Corballis, “The Evolution of Foresight: What is Mental Time Travel, and is it Unique to Humans?” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 30 (2007): 299-351 (with commentaries); Colin Klein, “The Dual Track Theory of Moral Decision-Making: A Critique of Neuroimaging Evidence,” *Neuroethics* 4 (2011): 143-162; and Stan Klein and Shaun Nichols, “Memory and the Sense of Personal Identity,” *Mind* 121 (2012): 677-702. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Mark Wheeler, Donald Stuss, and Endel Tulving, “Toward a Theory of Episodic Memory: The Frontal Lobes and Autonoetic Consciousness,” *Psychological Bulletin* 121, 3 (1997): 331-354, 331. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Gerrans and Kennett, “Neurosentimentalism,” 601-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The most famous judgment internalist thesis is that genuinely judging that one morally ought to A entails being motivated to A, at least to some extent. But on a broader construal, judgment internalism is the idea that there are *some* (supranomically) necessary pro/con-attitudinal conditions on moral judgment. On this broader construal, the diachronicity constraint is actually a form of internalism, as MTT is motivated activity (see the first of the features of MTT discussed in section one). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Note that our terminology isn’t quite theirs. First, they speak of *neuro*sentimentalism, by which they mean sentimentalist views defended by appeals to neuroscience. Since their criticism isn’t actually limited to views thus supported, we drop the “neuro” modifier. Second, they speak of “rationalist externalism” rather than simply “externalism.” But it is evidently the latter that they have in mind. Indeed, of the two references to “rationalist externalist” views they give, one is to Philippa Foot’s “Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives,” *Philosophical Review 81* (1972): 305-315 – one of the most prominent *challenges* to rationalism in modern moral philosophy. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Gerrans and Kennett, “Neurosentmentalism,” 589. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Jonathan Haidt, “The Emotional Dog and its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment,” *Philosophical Review* 114 (2001): 814-834. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The Foot paper they have in mind is “Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives.” They also cite Adina Roskies, “Are Ethical Judgments Intrinsically Motivational? Lessons from ‘Acquired Sociopathy,” *Philosophical Psychology*, 16 (2003): 51–66 and “Internalism and the Evidence from Pathology” in *Moral Psychology*, *Volume 3: The Neuroscience of Morality*, ed. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007): 191– 206. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See, e.g., Richard Boyd, “How to Be a Moral Realist,” in *Essays on Moral Realism*, ed. Geoffrey Sayre-McCord (Cornell University Press, 1988), 181–228, especially section 4.7; and David Brink, *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), especially Ch. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. G&K sometimes obscure this point by speaking of MTT as the capacity “to conceive of [one]self as temporally extended,” Gerrans and Kennett, “Neurosentimentalism,” 589; Cf. 588, 601, 602, 603 and the abstract. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The meaning of “mental time travel” isn’t perfectly uniform in the literature; we here follow G&K. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. The third might as well, though we are less sure of this. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Jonathan Haidt and Fredrik Bjorklund “Social Intuitionists Reason, in Conversation” in *Moral Psychology, Volume 2: The Cognitive Science of Morality: Intuitions and Diversity*, ed. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 241-254, 250-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Jonathan Haidt and Selin Kesebir, “Morality” in *Handbook of Social Psychology, 5th Edition*, eds. Susan Fiske et al. (Hobeken, NJ: Wiley, 2010), 797-832, 800. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Western Educated Industrialized Rich Democratic; See Joseph Henrich, Steven J. Heine, and Ara Norenzayan, “The Weirdest People in the World,” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 33, 2-3 (2010): 61-83. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. See Haidt and Kesebir, “Morality” & Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Pantheon, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Functionalism is an account of what it is to be moral: relevantly, that it involves relations to “sentiments” (pro/con-attitudes). Since the attitudes must exist for the relations to hold, the attitudes must exist for anything to be moral. It follows from functionalism, then, that there are supranomically necessary pro/con-attitudinal conditions on moral judgment. And that is internalism, at least broadly construed (see note 5). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Jesse Prinz, *Gut Reactions: A Perceptual Theory of Emotion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 191-196. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Prinz, *The Emotional Construction*, 95-96. (italics ours) [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. It is natural to associate dispositions with cross-temporal existence, so we wish to clarify why the mere fact that on Prinz’s view dispositions are necessary for a capacity for moral judgment isn’t enough to make him a diachronic theorist. First, even if a disposition’s *manifesting* requires that it exist over time – e.g., because it must exist both when activated and during the subsequent manifestation – it doesn’t follow that dispositions must exist over time in principle. Perhaps, unmanifested dispositions can exist at an instant. Second, and more importantly, even if it is true that either dispositions in general or the sorts of sentimental dispositions Prinz deems necessary for moral judgment must exist over time, it doesn’t follow that Prinz is a diachronic theorist in the current sense. For to be a diachronic theorist, one must take MTT in particular – and not just having dispositions that exist over time – as necessary for moral judgment. In order to probe the issue further and determine whether Prinz is committed to the view that MTT is necessary for moral judgment, we must look more closely at what’s involved in the manifestation of the sentimental dispositions he takes as necessary for moral judgment. The question is: is an exercise of an MTT capacity necessary for the manifestation of a sentimental disposition and thus, for moral judgment, according to Prinz? If the answer is “yes,” then the capacity for MTT itself will be necessary (since you can only exercise a capacity you possess). However, the answer is “no”: Prinz did not treat the exercise of a capacity for MTT as necessary for the manifestation of a sentimental disposition. We thus conclude that he is a synchronic theorist. We thank an anonymous referee for pressing us on this point. We also note that even if we are wrong about this and Prinz is not a synchronicist, all that would follow is that Gerrans and Kennett have wrongly taken Prinz as a target. Since we argue that their criticism of synchronic theories fails, it does not matter whether the criticism is also misguided when applied to one of the target theories because that theory isn’t really synchronic. (If there are *no* synchronic theories, then the whole issue would be moot, but externalism is clearly synchronic.) [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Prinz, *The Emotional Construction*, 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Gerrans and Kennett, “Neurosentmentalism,” 605. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Following G&K, we use “third-personal” to include judgments about action-types with unspecified agents (e.g., “killing is wrong”). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Paul Eslinger and Antonio Damasio, “Severe Disturbance of Higher Cognition After Bilateral Frontal Lobe Ablation: Patient E.V.R.,” *Neurology* 35 (1985): 1731-1741 call the judgments “social” rather than “moral,” but the examples they give, as the reader can see, are examples of moral judgments. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Eslinger and Damasio, “Patient E.V.R.,” 1733. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Eslinger and Damasio, “Patient E.V.R.”; Donald Stuss, “‘No Longer Gage’: Frontal Lobe Dysfunction and Emotional Changes,” *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 60 (1992): 349-359; Antonio Damasio, *Descartes’ Error* (New York, Putnam, 1994); Robert Blair and Lisa Cipolotti, “Impaired Social Response Reversal: A Case of ‘Acquired Sociopathy,’” *Brain* 123 (2000): 1122-11tt41. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Gerrans and Kennett, “Neurosentimentalism,” 605, quoting Jeffrey Saver and Antonio Damasio, “Preserved Access and Processing of Social Knowledge in a Patient with Acquired Sociopathy Due to Ventromedial Frontal Damage,” *Neuropsychologia* 29 (1991): 1241-1249, 1246. There is an extensive discussion in the literature on E.V.R.’s capacity for moral judgment. See, e.g., Roskies’s “Acquired Sociopathy” and “Internalism”; Michael Cholbi, “Moral Belief Attribution: A Reply to Roskies,” *Philosophical Psychology* 19 (2006): 629:638; and Jeanette Kennett and Cordelia Fine, “Internalism and the Evidence from Psychopaths and Acquired Psychopaths” in *Moral Psychology, Volume 3: The Neuroscience of Moralty*, ed. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 173-190. The main issue in this literature is whether vmPFC patients such as E.V.R. constitute counterexamples to motivational internalism. Two questions are thus discussed: whether they display an incapacity to make moral judgments, and whether they truly lack moral motivation. We think the latter is where the main action is, so far as implications for internalism go, but the former is what’s currently relevant. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Moreover, Saver and Damasio report that when presented with the famous Heinz dilemma (involving a man who faces a choice between stealing an overpriced drug or letting his wife die of cancer), E.V.R. was “reluctant to choose [for Heinz] and needed to be pressed to do so” (Saver and Damasio, “Preserved Access,” 1246), suggesting again that his difficulties may not be distinctively first-personal. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Elisa Ciaramelli et al., “Selective Deficit in Personal Moral Judgment Following Damage to the Ventromedial Prefrontal Cortex,” *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* 2 (2007): 84-92. Ciaramelli at al. report having administered the developed by Greene battery of tests. The complete battery developed by Greene at al. can be viewed at: http://www.sciencemag.org/content/293/5537/2105/suppl/DC1. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Gerrans and Kennett, “Neurosentimentalism,” 604. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Gerrans and Kennett, “Neurosentimentalism,” 605. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Donald Stuss, “Self, Awareness and Frontal Lobes: A Neuropsychological Perspective” in *The Self: A Neuropsychological Perspective*, eds. Jaine Strauss and George Goethals (New York: Springer Verlag, 1991), 255-278, 272. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Stuss, “Self, Awareness, and Frontal Lobes,” 272. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Endel Tulving, “Memory and Consciousness,” *Canadian Psychologist* 26 (1985): 1-12. Gerrans and Kennett discuss the case of M.L. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. On the side, his damage has to do *not* with the ventromedial prefrontal cortex but with the hippocampus. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Suzanne Corkin, “What’s New with the Amnesiac Patient H.M.?” *Nature Reviews: Neuroscience* 3 (2002): 158. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. We are grateful to an anonymous referee for pointing out the relevance of this sort of reply and of Boyd’s account in particular. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Boyd, “How to Be,” 215-216. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. First-personal moral judgments are judgments about the moral status of one’s own actions, actual or possible. The category to which MTT might be distinctively relevant in the ways described in the text would actually be broader, that of judgments about actions involving the self, not only as agent, but also merely as affected (e.g., as victim of another’s action). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Or the outcomes of others’ actions for us, in cases of self-involving but not first-personal moral judgments. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Or in whom, at least, it is severely impaired. The film *Memento* provides a vivid illustration of the exercise of moral agency in an anterograde amnesiac (remember, “moral agent” doesn’t mean “morally good agent”). Sallie Baxendale singles out *Memento* as “an honourable exception” to the misportrayal of amnesia in films, saying it “accurately describes the problems faced by someone with severe anterograde amnesia,” “Memories Aren’t Made of This: Amnesia at the Movies,” *British Medical Journal* 329 (2004): 1480-1483, accessed January 3, 2015, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC535990/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Gerrans and Kennett, “Neurosentimentalism,” 586. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Russ Shafer-Landau, *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, 3rd edition (Oxford University Press, 2014), G-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Korsgaard presents the most developed version of normative rationalism; see, e.g., *Self-Constitution: Agency, Identity, and Integrity* (Oxford University Press, 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Unfortunately G&K’s case for (2) is vague and sketchy. Our interpretation is what seems to us both most likely and most charitable; see, especially, pp. 595-596 for MR, and pp. 601-602 for NR. We can think of no plausible interpretation on which they turn out not to rely on controversial, undefended assumptions. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. 7 Gerrans and Kennett, “Neurosentimentalism, 601-2 (our bolding and bracketed letters). [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. We take [b] to be or presuppose an identity claim: that for demands to be normative for a person *is* for that person to have reasons of the sort mentioned. This claim would yield an entailment: necessarily, demands are normative for S only if S has those reasons. Nevertheless, [b] may not strictly entail NR, as it speaks of normative demands in particular and not normative things in general; e.g., it doesn’t mention normative judgments. But it’s clear that G&K think the account of normativity generalizes. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. For these see, respectively, Derek Parfit, *On What Matters, Vol. 2* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 308 and Stephen Finlay, “Recent Work on Normativity,” *Analysis* 70, 2 (2010): 332. To see why these facts wouldn’t count as normative in these ways consider Parfit: “Facts are normative in the rule-implying sense when these facts are about *what is correct or incorrect, or allowed or disallowed*, by some rule or requirement in some practice or institution” (308; italics ours). What would be normative in the rule-implying sense would thus be facts such as “standing 2-4 feet apart is correct according to the rules of American socializing.” But we’re suggesting that “normative” is sometimes used in an even weaker sense, whereby standing 2-4 feet apart in socializing would *itself* count as “normative for Americans”. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. He adopts an attitudinal account of moral normativity: “moral rules [are] binding only relative to current response dispositions”, and so “get their normative force … contingent on current dispositions of the population,” *Emotional Construction*,162. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. In “Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives,” which they cite (see note 6). [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. See, e.g., Stephen Finlay, *Confusion of Tongues: A Theory of Normative Language* (Oxford University Press, 2014); David Copp, “Toward a Pluralist and Teleological Theory of Normativity,” *Philosophical Issues* 19, 1 (2009): 21-37; and Judith Jarvis Thomson, *Normativity* (Open Court, 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Jeanette Kennett, “What’s Required for Motivation by Principle?” in Motivational Internalism, ed. Gunnar Björnsson et al. (Oxford University Press, 2015), 108-130. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. For views along these lines, see Uriah Kriegel, “Moral Motivation, Moral Phenomenology, and the Alief/Belief Distinction,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 90, 3 (2012): 1-18; and Antti Kauppinen, “Intuition and Belief in Moral Motivation,” in *Motivational Internalism*, ed. Björnsson et al., 237-259. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)