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Ethics and Reductionism

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Preliminary

Each of the two parts of the title, ethics and reductionism, has different facets. What will be focused on in this paper is goal seeking or purposive behaviour in the realm of personality psychology, looked at from a certain reductive metatheoretical view, that is cybematic metatheory, with an analysis of its ethical implications. Reductionism, generally speaking, is held whenever we deal with two distinct items, and it turns out that there is only one. Reductionism may be held in the case of both concepts and laws. That is to say, both concepts and laws of the reduced theory are characterised in terms of the reducing theory: concepts of the reduced theory are translated into those of the reducing theory, as well as laws of the reduced theory are derived from the reduced theory.

One possible way for dealing with purposive behaviour has been provided by Cybernetic or control theory. This view was first proposed by Weiner (1948). Cybernetic or control theory provides a reductive explanation, according to which goal-seeking behaviour could be accounted for in terms of mechanical explanation. Negative, rather than positive feedback is the basic

unit of cybernetics. This is because positive feedback is a source of instability, and if it is not checked could lead to the destruction of the whole system. A throat irritation leads to coughing, which provides more irritation, and this in turn leads to more coughing and so on. On the other hand, negative feedback is a source of stability and control which keeps the system intact by minimising deviations from a standard operating condition. This kind of feedback is primarily important for cybernetic on the ground that control is due to this type of feedback. Negative feedback itself has two types: homeostatic and heterotelic (Sayre, 1976). In the homeostatic kind, negative feedback is performed to maintain a certain condition within the system, while in heterotelic type of negative feedback, what is maintained is a certain relation between the system and the environment.

Heterotelic feedback is considered as a model which can provide an explanation of human purposive behaviour (Rosenbleuth and Wiener, 1950). A typical example of a heterotelic system is a torpedo. This device is guided by feedback signals which are sound waves coming from a moving target. Accordingly, while the behaviour of the torpedo is goal seeking, it is explained non-teleologically in a causal manner by appealing to laws of physics and chemistry. This is because the signals received by the torpedo are physical events which lead to the torpedo's navigational mechanism, and the torpedo's direction changes as a result of this mechanism. Some philosophers, however, have argued that purposive behaviour could not be explained by appealing to mechanisms as such. Richard Taylor (1966), for instance, argues: firstly purposive behaviour is not simply a process that culminates in a final state. Rather, it must be performed in order to meet the result. Secondly, two processes which are behaviourally and physically identical, may be performed toward quite different goals. He gives the example of a man who aims at a

bird, but hits a nearby tree and misses the bird, and the same man at another time who aims at a tree that a bird is flying past and hits the tree. Finally, Taylor says, the goal of purposive behaviour sometimes does not exist. That is to say, while a torpedo's movement is locked to an existing aim, a human being can have an abstract idea as his or her goal which might have no basis in reality. Sayre (1976) suggests that the kind of negative feedback held in heterotelic systems could not be considered as a model for human purposive behaviour. He distinguishes activities performed "for a purpose" which is the case in heterotelic systems, and behaviour performed "on purpose" which is a characteristic of human purposive behaviour. Mischel (1976), in a similar vein maintains that in the case of human purposive behaviour, unlike homing missiles, the goal need not be existent. Therefore, the explanation of human purposive behaviour is only possible from an intentional stance, by seeing the behaviour from the human actor's view. Through these kinds of criticisms, it is held that control theory has not been successful in providing a reductive account of purposive behaviour. This is because what is required in a successful reductive account is not merely the derivation of the reduced theory from the reducing theory. It is also necessary that the explanatory work at the reduced theory be matched at the reducing theory (Lennon, 1990). What is doubtful is that cybernetic accounts could have explanatory value for human purposive behaviour, provided that the derivation of laws is successful.

Powers (1978) points out that when cybernetics was initiated in the 1940 s, it was expected to provide a revolution in psychology. However, he says, this expected revolution has been delayed till now because of four mistakes: a) thinking of control theory as a machine analogy, b) focusing on objective consequences of behaviour of no importance to the behaving system itself, c) misidentifying reference signals as sensory inputs, and d) overlooking

purposive properties of human behaviour in man machine experiments. More recently, a more sophisticated conception of control theory has been advanced by Carver and Scheire (1977, 1982). They held their elaborated analysis of control theory to be applicable in personality-social, clinical, and Health psychology. In what follows, this model will be examined in order to see whether it has explanatory adequacy in the case of purposive behaviour. Further, ethical implications of this model as a reductive model will be examined.

A sophisticated control theory

Carver and Scheier consider negative feedback loop, the basic unit of cybernetic control, as the basis of their analysis of goal seeking behaviour. They think that there are two sources of influences that originate "outside" the loop, that is the "reference value" which provides the standard of comparison, and "disturbance" which is imposed on the system from the environment. The very tricky question here, as they call it, concerns the origin of the reference value itself, particularly with regard to the notion that they put it outside the feedback loop.

In order to provide an answer to this question, Carver and Scheire adopt a reformulation of feedback loop advanced by Powers (1973 a). According to Powers, the basis of self-regulation in living systems is a hierarchy of feedback loops. In this hierarchical organisation, every higher feedback system provides a reference value for the next lower feedback system. At the top of the organisation, there are very abstract guidelines, called "system concepts" such as the rule "Be a responsible person". System concepts, in turn, lead to some less abstract "principles" such as the principle that "follow through on commitments". Neither system concepts, nor principles are concrete enough to

be used in the self-regulation of behaviour. Nevertheless, principles controlled by system concepts are departure points from which "programs" are controlled. In fact, self-regulation is conducted at this level by programs which are practical instructions. For instance, a person under control of the principle "follow through on commitments" might decide to drive over and return his or her friend's notes to him or her. Likewise, this program controls the next lower subordinate goal which is, in this example, a particular relationship with the environment, that is drivingness, which itself controls a further subordinate goal, and so on till at the bottom of feedback loop muscle tensions occur, and a behaviour is conducted.

However, the question still remains of where the reference value of the top level in the hierarchy comes from. When there is no further higher level in the hierarchy, the question arises again at the first level as to where the reference value comes from. Carver and Scheire say: "The attempt to answer this question takes us from a general discussion of control theory and the Powers hierarchy to a more specific discussion of how such ideas may be applied to the domain of personality and social psychology" (117). What they provide as an applicable answer to the domain of personality and social psychology is this. They maintain that a) a subordinate goal could be functionally superordinate even for a long time, b) what makes a subordinate goal to be functionally superordinate is partially a person's focus of attention. This is, of course, more descriptive than explanatory. According to the authors, in the case of adults, attention is often fixed at the level of program control, and people perform self-regulation at this level without or with little reference to higher order goals. They admit that people sometimes, on occasion, show upward shift in control, and self-regulate at the higher levels of principles and system concepts. But nevertheless they maintain that most

human activities are performed on "nothing more complex than programs at work". So, they say:

We should also note that we assume the discrepancy-reduction process to be relatively automatic. We do not assume that the person necessarily thinks the matter through in verbal or near verbal terms. Nor do we assume that people will necessarily be able to recollect or reconstruct with a high degree of accuracy what they did or why ... We assume only that the reference value and the perception of present behaviour are temporarily focal and that the one is used to guide the other. (P. 120).

However, Carver and Scheire admit that it is an incontrovertible fact that people sometimes do consciously think about their behaviour and analyse their reasons for performing a behaviour, and notice that they are acting according to a principle. Referring to the relatively automatic behaviour mentioned above, and this type of conscious and principled behaviour, Carver and Scheire continue:

How to conceptualize the difference between these two conditions is a difficult question. Consciousness of use represents a kind of recursiveness of the process of attention, removing one from the self-regulation process per se and stepping outside it for a moment as if to examine it. This recursiveness is not necessary for self-regulation to occur. But it does happen, and it presumably has a function. It may be that this process is involved in the shaping and smoothing of the self-regulatory functions ... and represent a way in which reference values are encoded with sufficient redundancy for future automatic use. (P. 120).

Carver and Scheier appear to restrict the function of conscious

involvement with reference value to a preliminary and temporary activity for providing the self-regulatory functions. When self-regulatory functions are shaped well enough, conscious involvement of principles and system concepts are redundant, and self-regulation will be performed automatically. In other words, behaviour control will occur at the program level, rather than at the higher levels of system concepts and principles. The authors admit that sometimes upward shifts occur. According to them, the reason that why upward shifts occur, and why people use principles and system concepts at all is a built-in tendency toward an increase in psychological growth and organisation which makes it possible for the organism to adapt to the changing environment.

Carver and Scheire also have tried to account for "expectancy", an important element in personality psychology which as they assert has rarely been accounted for in terms of control theory. Expectancy is a point whose importance is widely emphasised by cognitive, and cognitive-behavioural psychology (e.g. Markus and Ruvolo, 1989; Bandura, 1977), while this point was neglected or considered as unimportant by behaviourally oriented personality theorists. Carver and Scheire maintain that expectancy-assessment is different from the discrepancy-reducing process on the grounds that it may occur before or during a discrepancy-reduction. Furthermore, expectancy - assessment involves information more complicated than that in discrepancy - reduction because in the former, one consider information concerning one's social and physical constraints as well as information of one's resources, whereas in discrepancy-reduction only the difference between the standard and the present state is relevant. Expectancy-assessment is accounted for in the above-mentioned control theory as a binary yes-or-no decision. That is to say, either the assessment shows that the outcome expectancy is compatible to

the standard, or not. Thus, the control is transferred either to "operate", or to "exit", to put it in terms of Miller et al.'s (1960) Test-Operate-Test-Exit (TOTE).

Carver and Scheire think that their model is sophisticated enough to be able to answer questions concerning the ability of a cybernetic model to account for goal seeking behaviour. In typical examples of cybernetic kinds of goal seeking systems such as missiles, the goal is a static point, whereas human goal seeking behaviour is dynamic since in this case the goal might change. Carver and Scheire hold that there are two fallacies concerning the real control processes in this argument. The first fallacy is in the erroneous view that control systems necessarily have an endpoint "state". According to them, there could be a hierarchy of feedback-loops in a control system, and, furthermore, the reference value or goal in each loop could be a quality of a behaviour rather than a definite behaviour. That is to say the goal is a "process goal".

The second fallacy referred to by Carver and Scheire is that it is assumed that in control processes, environmental conditions are static. They point out that disturbances are imposed on the system, and in effect, new reference values are produced. In addition, according to them, the outcomes of previous actions can also cause a person to take new reference values, as is the case when one does not consider the outcomes of one's previous actions to be suitable to continue to follow further superordinate goals, and decides instead to make the available outcomes more effective by synthesising new subordinate goals. Time-dependence of some goals is still a further source of goal change, according to the authors. That is to say, when the required time of attainment of a goal is passed, the goal is no longer a desired goal, and in effect, new reference values need to be adopted.

Explanatory adequacy of the control theory

Having summarised Carver and Scheire's elaborated model, I am going now to consider that whether this version of control theory can account for human purposive behaviour or not.

1. The first point is that it is doubtful whether this theory can be considered totally in the domain of control theory. Because as Carver and Scheire themselves admit, the reference value or the ultimate goal that controls the hierarchy of feedback loops is considered by them to be outside the feedback loop. This will amount to saying that control is derived from the environment, and is therefore somehow outside the cybernetic processes. If so, it then will follow that cybernetic mechanisms cannot, in principle account for the control involved in self-regulating systems. Somewhere Carver and Scheire (P. 118) talk of a built-in tendency of the organism which controls it toward an increase in organisation that makes it possible for the organism to shift to higher levels of control. But this begs the question because what is expected is that the theory should explain such controls (see Slife, 1987).

2. Carver and Scheire's model is, of course, a cognitivized model compared with the earlier cybernetic models, and with radical behaviourism. Nevertheless there is no crucial difference between them in that all are similar in being mechanical in the explanation of purposive behaviour. Carver and Scheire talk of self-regulation, self-directed attention, self-awareness, expectancy assessment and the like, and these are clearly cognitive in tone. But for all this internal activity and cognitive functioning, the mechanical view remains fully in place as the basis of the theorist's explanation. That is why the authors' emphasis is on so called relative automatic performances in purposive behaviour (mentioned above).

Furthermore, self-regulation in this model does not have a different

motivational system than that of radical reductive accounts such as radical behaviourism. The main determinants of behaviour are external rewards and punishments even though in an internalised way by using words and sentences instead of objects and events. Of course, Carver and Scheire (P. 124) point out that it is doubtful that rewards can be considered as the universal controls over behaviour. Instead, following Powers (1973 b), they suggest alternative reinforces such as informational feedback, that is the information concerning the outcomes of one's behaviour. However, in this suggestion, their reliance is still on environmental factors. This is clear in the authors' response to the question as to where standards come from. Their response (1982) is that they are acquired by previous associations:

We suggest further that how-to-behave information is stored in memory along with more perceptual or conceptual information, as a function of prior associations between behavior and categories of settings... this information then constitutes the functionally superordinate behavioral standard. (P. 117-118)

Having considered standards as provided by previous associations, it can be expected that the associations themselves will determine which standards are more important than others:

High intensity events (e.g., strong punishment for poor behavior with respect to a standard) would lead to a high priority tag or "importance"; low intensity events would lead to a tag of less priority. (Carver, 1979, P. 121).

In this way, associations provide organised knowledge about physical and social environments including standards and a hierarchy of their importance. A further question is what makes a standard salient. Carver (1979), explaining that a standard may have a positive or a negative valence, refers to this point.

A positive or a negative valence implies that a standard is taken as either a desired, or an undesired goal. In relation to the above-mentioned question he says:

It seems likely that given component valence can also vary in salience over time. Its salience is likely to depend on the salience of the environmental cues to which the valence is attached. (P. 1261).

That is to say the salience of standard over another is also rooted in association, and a salient environmental cue extracts a related component of a standard, whereby a person takes a desired goal, when the valence is positive, and an undesired goal, when the valence is negative. These remarks show that what is dominant in Carver and Scheire's model is essentially a mechanical explanation of purposive behaviour. And, hence, the same contingent relation inherent in a radical mechanical explanation such as that of Skinner, is also contained in this account. In the case of radical behaviourism, there is a contingent relation between a reinforced behaviour and its reinforcer. Similarly, in the control theory, the relation between an internalised standard and the behaviour controlled by it is a contingent one. This is because what is involved in self-regulation is the same external contingent relation becoming internalised in the wake of association. This is perhaps true in the case of most mechanically oriented theories. Wren (1991, P. 74), referring to Kanfer's self-control theory, says: "Insofar as these sanctions work as mental representations they are internal in the sense of being "within" the subject (the so-called organism), but they are external to the subject matter (the behaviour in question) in the important logical sense of remaining conceptually independent of the activities they reinforce. "That is to say the semantic content existing in this type of self-control is simply a reflection of

reward and punishment as is also the case in immoral behaviour.

3. Human purposive behaviour can not be explained satisfactorily on reductive accounts. Carver and Scheire have avoided taking the static goal-seeking behaviour of typical examples such as homing missiles as the only alternative to explaining purposive behaviour. They, instead, have tried to take into account the non-static characteristics of human goal-seeking behaviour by appealing to a hierarchy of goals and reference values that might themselves be changed under the influence of disturbances from the environment. Given that this account can explain goal changes, there is still an important feature of human goal-seeking behaviour that can not be accounted for in this model. This feature is that certain human goals might not in fact exist. A scientist's behaviour might be directed by a goal, say a hypothetical substance, that he or she is looking for, while this hypothetical substance may not exist (see, Mischel, 1976). Rather, one might look for an impossible goal.

A better account of human purposive behaviour could be provided in psychology, in general, and in personal psychology, in particular, by taking an intentional position. What matters in explaining human behaviours is to consider it as "action", having a certain content. Wittgenstein (1953) once asked the following question: in raising my arm, if the fact is subtracted that my arm went up, what would be left over? Some philosophers have answered this question by suggesting that there is an inner experience in action. That is to say, an action, in its full shape, contains apparent bodily movements plus an inner experience. To answer a further question as to what the nature of this inner experience is, Searle (1980) and Hamlyn (1990), among others, have argued that this inner experience consists of the intentional state involved in an action. According to them, for an action to be intentional, it needs to be done "knowingly". Knowingly, here, means that if the person is asked what she

is doing, then she could answer the question properly. However, in this view, this does not imply necessarily that the person engaging in reasoning about his or her action whenever he or she wants to make an action, or that he or she is in a full-fledged state of consciousness of what he or she is doing. On this account, the important feature of an action is in the **conceptual link** involved in it, which differs from a contingent relation. That is to say, a person in conducting an action considers a particular relation between a desired goal and the behaviour required by it, in a means-end relationship. This kind of relation is not held between two events with a contingent relation. I would like to emphasise and make explicit what is implicit in this suggestion. What is highly important in the nature of the inner experience involved in an action is the agent's point of view to the effect that one sees oneself as the initiator of the action. In the case of a bodily movement which is not an action, however, this kind of relation between the agent and the action is not involved. A good example of this inner experience is mentioned by Penfield (1975):

When I have caused a conscious patient to move his hand by applying an electrode to the motor cortex of one hemisphere I have often asked him about it. Invariably his response was: "I didn't do that. You did." When I caused him to vocalise, he said, "I didn't make that sound. You pulled it out of me." (P. 76) ⁽¹⁾

The difference between action and movement is clear in this case because the person not only is positively aware that he is **moving** his hand when he does so, but also negatively conscious that he is not the one who is **moving** his hand as the movement is caused by the electrode. In this inner experience, the person finds a particular relationship between him, and his action, in which he sees himself as the initiator of the action.

It is not easy to decide whether causal explanation in the case of purposive behaviour is compatible with an intentional explanation, due to the ambiguity of the concept, "cause". If, however, a Humeian account of cause is held, then it could be claimed that an intentional account of purposive behaviour is not causal. In the Humeian view, cause and effect are considered to be atomistically identifiable without reference to each other, while their relationship is of a contingent kind. There are, however, different accounts to the effect that in a causal relationship, a conceptual link is involved as well. According to one account, objects and events to which we refer are theory-laden so that without connecting A and B in the background of a theory, we cannot talk of a causal relationship between them (see, e.g. Hanson, 1958). In other words, there is no theory-free observational causal relationship, and that is why a given causal relationship between two observational objects is considered as a non-causal relation as causal. In effect, statements predicting the occurrence of given effects are deduced from premises including given theories, and statements of initial conditions which include alleged causes. It follows, the objection runs, that the cause and the effect are related in a conceptual link provided by the background theory concerned. In a similar objection, Davidson (1963) argues that the cause could be referred to by appealing to its effect, that is to say we can refer to the object or event A as the cause of effect B.

While these objections are sound and show some shortcomings of Humeian atomistic account of causation, a difference between causal and intentional relationships is still conceivable. This is because, given the theory-ladenness of observational statements, the two correlated objects or events are independently identifiable. But this is not the case where the relation between a purpose or intention, and the relevant behaviour or action

is concerned. That is an intentional action could not be referred to without taking into account its relevant intention or purpose, on the condition that the action concerned is preserved as "action", rather than as an event. So, the point is not whether cause and effect could be considered as conceptually linked, because even if this is possible, still cause and effect could be independently identifiable under a different description. A further point needs to be added here. As mentioned before, conceptual link is not the only thing involved in action. Another facet is the particular relationship that one sees between oneself and one's action, namely the initiation of the action. Accordingly, even if it turns out that there is a conceptual relation between the cause and the effect, an action is still different from a contingent relation between events in that there is an initiation role played in an action.

A less strong position in avoiding the reduction of intentional affairs to non-intentional is held by others on practical grounds (e.g. Dennett, 1978, Mischel, 1976). According to this view, we find it useful to explain human actions in terms of beliefs, desires, intentions, and the like. Mischel (1976) says in this regard: "psychology, like other disciplines, derives its identity from research problems, interests, and concerns that are grouped together for practical reasons, and these would not disappear even if the empirical reduction of the discipline to neurophysiology were carried through" (P. 193). Intentional stance, whether it is instrumentally and practically or realistically, has an important role to play in psychology, in general, and in personality psychology, in particular, when taking purposive behaviour into account. That is why many researchers are now turning to so called "middle-level" units of analysis in personality theory. While parsimony is always seen as highly important in scientific study, this turn to middle-level units of analysis is considered as "one sign of health and growth" in personality psychology

(Cantor and Zirkel, 1990, P. 141). A few examples are Markus' "possible selves" (Markus and Ruvolo, 1989), Emmon's (1989) "personal strivings", and McAdams' (1985) "self-narratives".

One might suppose that in Carver and Scheire's model a conceptual link is also involved on the ground that they talk of reference values that guide one's behaviour. Of course, they have provided a cognitivized model compared with behaviourism and old cybernetic models. In this, they refer to conceptual links where they talk of concepts like expectancy assessment. However, as explained above, they consider reference values and expectancies as something provided by associations, and also activated by cues present in the environment. In other words, the logic of association, that is of contingent relations, is in the place where the cognitive content of the person consists only in outer associations becoming internalised. That is to say, a network of conceptual links is provided within the person, but in accordance with and parallel to events occurring around the person and the situations in which he or she was present. There is no reason why this needs to lead to something more than the mere contingent relationships held in the associations, even though in a more cognitivized way. Neither, hence, does this model account for the relation of action initiation involved in an intentional action.

Ethical implications

So far, Carver and Scheire's model of purposive behaviour as a reductive account, has been presented and examined. In this part, I will deal with its ethical requirements. This model's general account of standards is intended to include social and ethical rules, whereby it is assumed by the authors that the explanation held for self-regulation, will account for human moral behaviour in general. In what follows, I will explain that self-regulation, in the sense

used in this theory, has no moral significance as such, and that it can not provide a full account of morality.

Two distinct kinds of morality can be referred to: choice-morality and character-morality (Kekes, 1990). There is another division concerning metaethical views that seems to be parallel with these two kinds of morality. The two metaethical views are "internalism" and "externalism" formulated by Frankena (1958), and refined by Thomas Nagel (1970) (see also Wren, 1991). According to internalism which is in parallel to choice-morality, in moral action "the necessary motivation is supplied by ethical principles and judgements themselves". On the other hand, externalism which is parallel to character-morality, holds that "an additional psychological sanction is required to motivate our compliance" (Nagel, P. 7).

Choice-morality, or the internalist view, is basically Kantian ⁽²⁾, even though not in all details. According to this view, the real basis of morality is the possibility of choice. The human being is viewed as capable of choosing to do a certain action. Hence, the central question in this view is what one ought to do. Duty is the pivotal point in this view, indicating that in the case of conflict between obligation and inclination, if the person acts in accordance with duty, then his or her action will be moral. Because choice is regarded to be the basis of morality, responsibility is taken to be both possible and essential in the field of morality.

On the other hand, in character-morality, or the externalist view, inspired by Aristotle, the basis is the person's character shaped by external sources of influence such as education. The central question in this view is what sort of people one ought to be. That is to say, character is viewed to be essential; a parameter that from which, desired actions will be produced if it is provided. On this account, tradition and education play the essential role in morality

because one's character is shaped in these contexts. Hence, desert, rather than responsibility, is considered at the centre of this view. That is to say, people deserve what is due to them, whether evil or good. Character-morality, concerned with social welfare, considers people deserving of praise or punishment according to their actions, even if they are out of habit and character (e.g. Kekes, P. 105).

Self-regulation in Carver and Scheire's model is a kind of character-morality in accordance with externalism. This is because as explained above, in this model standards are not merely viewed as being provided by associations, but they are also activated in the person by external and environmental cues. Carver and Scheire have also taken into account the person's expectancy of his or her outcome behaviour. In a discussion of Bandura's (1977, P. 193) terminology, Carver agrees with Bandura in defining "outcome expectancy" as "a person's estimate that a given behaviour will lead to certain outcomes". The difference between them is that Bandura puts his emphasis on "efficacy expectancy", that is a person's estimate of his or her being capable of performing an outcome behaviour of which he or she is aware. Carver's emphasis, however, is on outcome expectancy itself.

In the present model, therefore, outcome expectancy is the direct determinant of the person's subsequent behavior and affect ... Efficacy expectancy is merely one input into outcome expectancy, but one determining what cognitions are associated with affect, experienced as a function of that outcome expectancy. (1979, P. 1273).

While expectancy is taken into account, which makes it cognitive as compared with radical behaviourism, the model remains outcome oriented in the same way as radical behaviourism. Powers (1978), tracing back the factors

that delayed the cybernetic revolution in psychology, observes that one of these factors has been the consideration of behaviour in terms of its consequences. He says: "Cybernetics and especially engineering psychology simply took over this erroneous point of view from behaviorism". (P. 419) He calls this the observer's point of view, in contrast to the behaving system's point of view, that is reasons for the consequence to occur. A question worth raising is whether Carver and Scheire could have avoided this erroneous point of view by taking outcome expectancy into account.

So far as the ethical field is concerned, the answer to this question will be "No". This is because self-regulation in terms of outcome behaviour has no ethical significance in the first place. Mischel (1974, 1991) suggests that studies on delayed gratification behaviour in children show correlations to the effect that children who choose delayed outcomes, tend to be more future oriented and less uncontrolled impulsive, and more socially responsible. On the other hand, according to him, immediate gratification behaviour is more congruent with immature, selfish, and less responsible behaviour. However, delayed gratification is only a necessary but not a sufficient condition for a behaviour to have ethical significance, because delayed gratification is not incompatible with selfishness in the first place. Rather, delayed gratification could be delayed selfishness. Suppose, for instance, that a child avoids taking his chocolate immediately in order to arouse his sister's envy after she has taken her chocolate. The child has delayed the gratification of his desire but in a selfish manner (For a good analysis in the case of Mischel's thesis on delayed gratification see Wren, 1991).

Similarly, self-regulation as is referred to in Carver and Scheire's control theory has no ethical significance in itself. The mere point that one's behaviour is controlled in order that one's behaviour matches an expected

outcome does not render the behaviour ethical. Outcome oriented behaviour, be it real or expected, is a necessary but not sufficient condition ⁽³⁾ for a behaviour to be ethical. What is needed other than outcome, is the person's point of view, and how he or she sees the outcome. Put differently, one's interpretation and understanding of one's outcome behaviour needs to be considered for the behaviour to be ethical. Consider the following example mentioned by Winch (1972, P. 217). Suppose that three convicts, A, B, and C, have been sentenced to prison for committing a crime. Then suppose that A thinks that next time he must be careful not to be caught. B meanwhile thinks that the police are strong and he will not risk another prison sentence, and C thinks that he now understands what a bad life he was leading, and decides to live a better life. One may divide these three people into two parts; those who want to give up, that is B and C, on the one hand, and the one who wants to continue to commit crime, that is A, on the other. This is a division in accordance with the outcome behaviour as events. That is to say, B and C have given up after analysing the consequence of their actions, while A has not given up.

Looking at it from another angle, a different division will be made. In this division A and B are put in one class, and C in the other, on the grounds that there is no significant difference between A and B. Even though B has decided to give up, this is only because he thinks that the police are strong, and if he could be sure that he will not be caught, he would commit the crime again. On the other hand, C is significantly different from A and B because he has found a certain sort of understanding of the nature of his action as evil. Because of this understanding, C sees an **internal** relation between his action and its consequence, that is to say, that the action deserves this consequence. The word "deserves" has a particular meaning here. It is tantamount to saying

that "such an evil action **must** lead to such a punishment". On the other hand, A and B see the relationship between their actions and their consequences as an **external** relationship, that is to say a contingent relationship. In other words, A and B think that the consequences **could** not happen. For A and B, their actions and their consequences are independent events with a contingent relation, whereas for C, the consequence unravels the nature of his action, or put differently, the consequence and the action are the same thing, as an impetus and the product that grows out of it. These two ways of seeing consequence and its relationship to action are distinctly different, and only the internal kind of relationship makes the behaviour ethical. This is because only in this kind of relation, one sees oneself as an agent, and one's action as really one's own, and, hence, feels responsibility before it and its outcome. Therefore, self-regulation in terms of outcome behaviour has not necessarily any ethical significance. This is because the relation between behaviour and its outcome may be seen in an external manner that can not provide a basis for being responsible about one's action. What makes self-regulation in terms of outcome, be it real or expected, ethical is that one sees the outcome of one's behaviour in an internal manner. This is a relationship that it is hard to account for by a reductive view, like that of Carver and Scheire because of its inherent logic of contingent relation.

A further point concerns the role of principles played in ethical matters. The authors tend to underemphasize this role because of their tendency to consider goal-seeking behaviour as relatively automatic because they do not assume that people think about their goals "in verbal or near-verbal terms". As mentioned previously, they try to reconcile the incontrovertible fact, as they admit, of people's conscious involvement in goal-seeking behaviour with what they call relatively automatic behaviour. In this reconciliation, they

consider conscious involvement of principles in behaviour only as a preliminary and temporary function for encoding reference values. Accordingly, when reference values are encoded, involvement of principles in behaviour will be redundant. However, at least in the case of ethical behaviour this seems to be a bit too strong. This is because in ethical behaviour, usually one has to control one's strong desire and go beyond it. For this to be done, one would have to convince oneself to overlook satisfying one's strong desire. This may not be only a delay of gratification, rather it might be overlooking a desire altogether. In convincing oneself, one will need to deal with principles in a near-verbal terms. Suppose a person sees some property nearby which he or she can easily take away. For this desire to be regulated, the person needs to bring in mind an ethical principle to the effect that theft is prohibited. Self-regulation in this sense is far from being automatic.

It is hard to build an ethical theory on a reductive account of human purposive behaviour. Perhaps, the Skinnerian sort of treatment of ethics is the only method suited to reductionism. Skinner (1971) maintained all concepts such as responsibility and the like, must be replaced with concepts in terms of control of behaviour. This is not to say that choice-morality, in its full-fledged sense, can take human ethical behaviour into account. Rather, it seems fair to say that reductive explanations of human behaviour have been to some extent successful in showing that human behaviour, being under the influence of associations and the flow of information from the environment, is not produced by free will in its dramatic sense. Any attempt to identify the ethical realm in terms of this sense of free will is clearly doomed to failure on the ground that a person's abilities and, hence, his or her behaviour are restricted by limitations imposed on him or her from the environment. However, the

point is that without considering an original role being played by the person in his or her behaviour, we can not talk of responsibility, even though in a less ambitious sense, and without any kind of responsibility, we can not talk of ethical behaviour proper. To maintain that free will is not defensible is not tantamount to claiming that it is not possible to provide a less ambitious and more acceptable conception of freedom, responsibility, and morality. For instance, Frankfurt (1986) has argued that for the conception of responsibility to be taken into account, it is not necessary to consider freedom, according to the traditional view, as freedom of action meaning by that having "freedom to do otherwise". Rather, he suggests an alternative to define freedom as "acting freely". This conception is compatible with a condition in which "freedom to do otherwise" is not possible. In "acting freely", there is a particular sequence in an action which makes the action free. Suppose, for instance, that a mother has decided to coerce her child to do his homework. Let us suppose that if the child wants to avoid doing his homework, his mother has the power to make the child to do the homework. Further, let's suppose that the child, unaware of his mother's decision, begins to do the homework. In this example, while the child has no freedom to do otherwise, he does act freely, where a sequence is held in his action, from deciding to do the homework to doing it successfully. On this account, one may have not a freedom of the first kind, namely freedom to do otherwise, as is the case for some people most of the time. However, they can and do have freedom of the second type, namely acting freely. If so, then responsibility could be reserved even though the first kind of freedom is not available. So far as the ethical field is concerned, it is necessary to consider an original role to be played by the person. While it is not doubted that the person is exposed to information and influence from the environment, interpretation of the information and initiation of action are

things remaining for the person to do. This is because appealing to representations in the person is not a sufficient ground for the initiation of action to be taken into account. As Mascar (1987) maintains, representations are semantic matters, and semantic matters, like logical relations, can not initiate action.

Summary and conclusion

Human purposive behaviour has been explained by cybernetic theory long ago. Unlike the first attempts in control theory. Carver and Scheire have tried to take characteristics of human purposive behaviour into account. They have considered goals and reference values in a hierarchical system containing feedback loops in different levels. This may account for goal changes in human behaviour. However, a certain characteristic of goal-seeking behaviour can not be explained by this model; namely when a non-existent or impossible goal is concerned. This is relevant particularly because according to this model, standards or reference values are acquired by associations in the past. This notion raises a further question as to whether one can account for goal-seeking behaviour merely by appealing to contingent relations inherent in association. Goals may be more imaginative than a straightforward product of past associations. We need to take into account the agent's point of view more seriously. Looking at it from this angle, we can provide a better account of internal relationships in goal-seeking behaviour in terms of means-end. Furthermore, the relationship between actions and their consequences may be seen by someone in terms of an internal relationship, rather than in a mere contingent manner. By considering more original roles played by the person, taking an ethical view becomes more possible. This is because responsibility even in its less ambitious sense can not be taken into account without

considering this original role. A theorist with a reductive view, generally speaking, tends to underemphasise any original role played by the person. This, in turn, hardly leaves any room for ethical field.

Footnotes

- (1). This example is used by Searle in a different way to insist on the point that an action is done "knowingly". However, I will use this example emphasising another feature of an action, namely the agent's role in initiation of action.
- (2). The definition of moral field as the domain of deliberation and choice could be traced back to Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle (see Barden, 1990, ch. 2).
- (3). Winch (1972, P. 227) maintains that consequences of a behaviour may also be dropped, and the nature and significance of a behaviour as ethical, that is as evil or good, is taken into account only by reference to the agent's action. However, I think that by dropping consequence, we will lose action itself too. One can not think about one's action without considering its consequence, and contrary to Winch, consequence, here, is not merely a "vehicle" that carries the meaning of action through. Rather, consequence is a "baby" that grows out of the "impetus" of action, as will be explained below. However, I will explain that consequence as an external event is only a necessary but not sufficient condition for a behaviour to be ethical.

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Education in Japan: Quality and Equality A Comparative Discussion

Utilizing the exptriences of Japan to improve
the education system in Iran

Introduction

In the last decades of the 20th century, the importance of the role of education in the progress of nations has, more than ever, directed the attention of governments to this institution and has increased the supervision of it. All of this, along with the activities of international organizations, especially those of the International Bureau of Education, have lead countries to utilize the experiences of one another in dealing with their educational problems¹. Such universal problems are mainly: funding, technical training, lack of coordination between educational programmes and socio-economic needs, teacher training, methods of reforming organization and management, educational programmes and courses². Almost all countries are faced with these problems in one way or another and at most international

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