

Book Reviews

Robert H. Myers, *Self-Governance and Cooperation*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 179.

The ambition of a normative moral theory is to determine, explain, and justify the factors relevant to moral assessment. The goal of a theory of rationality is to outline and ground the factors that are relevant to the rationality (or irrationality) of an action or disposition. Theories of both sorts should have something to say about the connection they bear to each other.

In this ambitious book, Robert Myers aims to articulate the basic demands of and relations between morality and rationality. According to Myers, three factors are relevant to moral evaluation: the *impartial goodness* of outcomes, the pursuit of which is sometimes limited by *constraints* but not always obligatory because agents have certain *options* regarding whether or not to pursue the impartial good. He argues that the best way to capture the three morally relevant factors is by seeing morality as a cooperative endeavour that aims to promote impartial good under conditions that are fair to all those who are affected by the dictates of morality. Turning to the question of rationality, Myers argues for the existence of both agent-neutral and agent-relative reasons. Rationality requires *self-governance* with *integrity*, which requires that persons 'satisfy their own more personal concerns so far as that is possible without countenancing too much damage to the overall good' (p. 13).

After a brief introduction outlining the project, Myers turns to pointing out that even the most sophisticated forms of consequentialism and contractarianism cannot appropriately capture his formulation of the three morally relevant factors. Consequentialism cannot reliably accommodate constraints and options, while contractarianism cannot determinately accommodate the requirement to (sometimes) promote impartial good. The discussion of rivals is by no means exhaustive or comprehensive, and it leaves readers wanting much more by way of analysis and argument. His arguments contra various versions of direct consequentialism are clearly in need of supplement, since many of them rely on contestable (and undefended) empirical claims, e.g., 'that the record of human experience does not speak overwhelmingly in favour of prerogatives [options] and restrictions [constraints] but instead reveals their neglect to have good consequences' (p. 25).

His arguments against indirect consequentialism are not persuasive. Indirect consequentialists, starting with Henry Sidgwick, see consequentialism as offering both a decision-procedure and a criterion of rightness (something Myers does not appear to see clearly). They adopt some (corrected) variant of intuitive morality (which includes both options and constraints) to function as a decision-procedure in virtue of the fact that following it seems like the best way to promote their favoured goal, namely, maximization of impartial good, which is the sole criterion of rightness.

Against this view, Myers argues that it is unlikely that it can capture an intuitively plausible package including all three morally relevant factors.

Myers's chief worry about consequentialism is that it cannot 'acknowledge the special value that someone's *own* family and friends may have for her' (p. 13). Indirect consequentialism is not impugned by this claim once it makes the distinction between motivation and justification, for on this view acting with special concern for loved ones (and not the maximization of impartial good) is not inconsistent with promotion of good states of affairs; indeed, acknowledging and promoting the extent to which people have and act on this special concern may be required for the promotion of good outcomes. Of course, these special concerns are tempered by the demands to promote impartial goodness, but any theory (including Myers's) that includes a commitment to others faces similar difficulties. Acting on certain constraints is required even in specific cases where their violation seems to maximize impartial good, because acting in accord with them promotes impartial good over the long run. In this way, indirect consequentialism can reliably accommodate constraints. Contractarians may have similar kinds of complaints or responses to Myers's all too hasty rejection of their view.

Myers's own view is somewhat obscure. His central claim is that morality is a cooperative endeavour to promote impartial good on grounds that are fair to all affected by morality. The notion doing all the work here is that of fair cooperation. In the case of consequentialism the key notion appealed to is what is good (or maximizes well-being) from the impartial point of view. This notion functions as a foundation which tries to explain the relevance (or irrelevance) of various judgement-influencing factors (or intuitions). It has a clear independence from the factors it attempts to explain. Myers's notion of fairness, however, lacks the same kind of independence. His view tries to restate the various moral intuitions he thinks we have without explaining how this project is carried out, giving us no insight into how this notion works as a foundational or explanatory device. Further, it is unclear how his view avoids difficulties that are said to plague its rivals, e.g., indeterminacy. (Contractarianism is rejected on the ground that it is indeterminate as to whether or not it can incorporate a commitment to promoting impartial good.) We can imagine that there could be competing accounts of what constitutes fair cooperation, which Myers supplies us with no way of deciding between. Thus, we can complain that Myers's view fails to capture our intuitions reliably. Indeed, the indeterminacy in the notion of fair cooperation and what it entails may push us back to appealing to impartial good to explain our choice of one fair system of cooperation over another. Finally, Myers seems rather undesirably to deprive moral theory of any reformative or critical role.

When he takes up the question of the nature of the demands of reason, Myers argues that agents are rationally bound by both agent-neutral and agent-relative reasons. Relying on Davidson's notion of interpretation, Myers maintains that we share certain desires because there is 'a single set of values to which everyone's desires are originally answerable' (p. 132). The reasons that our desires are originally answerable to include both agent-relative and agent-neutral reasons, the substance of which are arrived at in Rawlsian reflective equilibrium. Myers equates rational action with self-governance with integrity, by which he means acting 'in ways that *fully* and *accurately* reflect ... [the agent's] *own* values and commitments' (p. 137). As he puts it:

'a self governed person is a person who satisfies her own relative values so far as that is possible without countenancing too much damage to the overall good' (p. 148). The third and fourth chapters of the book advance this subtle and sophisticated argument.

Myers adopts the view that sees morality as one set of demands and rationality or reason as another. He does not fully defend this starting point. A more plausible starting point is the question: 'What do I have most reason to do?' We then take what are commonly thought to be moral theories and theories of rationality as answers to this question. It is not clear what a moral theory is, if not a theory about what one has most reason practically to do.

This book addresses and raises a number of important questions that lie at the heart of debates in moral theory and practical reason. While in no way providing us with final answers to the questions it raises, *Self-Governance and Cooperation* pushes us in directions that it might well be profitable to pursue in greater detail.

ANTHONY SKELTON

University of Toronto

Logi Gunnarsson, *Making Moral Sense: Beyond Habermas and Gauthier*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. xi + 286.

People who keep track of such things have for a long time noticed some striking parallels between the work of Jürgen Habermas and David Gauthier. This is in many respects quite surprising, since the two of them could not come from more opposite philosophical traditions. Habermas was raised in the Frankfurt School tradition of critical social theory, according to which 'instrumental rationality' is held responsible for all the major evils of modern society, up to and including the Holocaust. Gauthier, on the other hand, is a freely confessed Hobbesian, one who blithely adopts an instrumentalist view on the grounds that such a theory is, he thinks, 'almost universally adopted and employed in the social sciences'.

Yet despite these differences in background, Habermas and Gauthier develop theories of practical rationality and moral deliberation that bear significant structural similarities to one another. Both wind up with typological theories of rational action, according to which agents sometimes act with a straightforwardly maximizing disposition, but also sometimes act in a way that exhibits deontic constraint. And they both argue that the content of these deontic constraints is pinned down through a process of deliberation in which agents assess the interests of all from an impartial standpoint. Gauthier characterizes this process as one of bargaining, whereas Habermas regards it as one of argumentation, but they share the view that the morally salient feature of the procedure is that it forces upon all participants a process of 'ideal role-taking'.

Given these tantalizing parallels, the appearance of a book that promises to take us 'beyond Habermas and Gauthier' has obvious appeal. However, the subtitle may be a tiny bit misleading. The book does not actually aim to

