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Dewey and Dancy and the Moral Authority of Rules

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Dewey's pragmatist regard for the place of rules in moral deliberation occupies a middle ground between the rejection of rules found in Jonathan Dancy's moral particularism and full scale subsumptivism of actions to rules. Concerning the authority rules should play in one's moral thinking, however, Dewey is closely aligned with the particularists: he rejects their authority over individual cases. This essay takes Dewey's naturalistic approach to the derivation of rules to argue that in some cases it is ultimately beneficial to allow rules to occupy a place of authority in moral thinking.

1. Introduction

The affinities between Deweyan Pragmatist Ethics and the doctrine of Moral Particularism recently enlivening moral philosophy and promoted most forcefully by Jonathan Dancy are sufficiently striking that for Pragmatists, it must be mildly insulting that Dewey is neither referenced nor given pride of place as a proto-Particularist in the discussion. Oh well; pragmatists are used to being disrespected. Yet they trudge on cheerfully, confident that someday Dewey will have his break-out moment and that pragmatic insights and conceptual tools will finally obtain the respect they merit in contemporary analytic philosophy. The purpose of this essay is to help hasten that moment.

Discussion of the affinities and differences between Dewey and Dancy could take any number of vectors: their moral epistemologies, naturalistic ontologies, focus on moral sensitivity vs. rectitude, what happens to consistency in judgment in their respective conceptions, and their attitudes toward intuition are just a few that come to mind. I will discuss just one issue that becomes a central subject in the ethics of both: the rightful role of rules in moral deliberation. I begin with a typically Deweyan move: I will establish a continuum of possible positions regarding the role that rules (principles, norms, maxims, codes, platitudes) should play in moral deliberation and then eventually focus the discussion still further on one of the many possible aspects – the concept of the moral authority of rules – that modulate those different positions. Ultimately, I hope to establish some considerations for furthering the discussion.

2. The Continuum

At one end of this continuum, the strongest possible role for rules in moral deliberation is denoted by the subsumptive approach; the idea that "if we are doing our moral thinking properly, we can approach a new case with a set of principles, and we look to see which of those principles the case falls under."[1] Rules gather and generalize all individual instances into one or more categories and therefore, the real work for any moral agent is to establish the rules or principles by which one should live. Once rules are established and accepted, the moral action in any given situation should present itself straightforwardly. The subsumptive approach becomes attractive where simplicity, consistency and rectitude are highly prized commodities. This might have been seen to be more urgent in the nineteenth century than now; it still receives some defense from Kantians and utilitarians who believe in final principles but otherwise has been largely left behind in analytic moral philosophy.

The opposite end of the scale is occupied by moral particularism; a doctrine holding that not only do principles *not* provide adequate guidance in moral situations, but that principles have *no place* in moral deliberation; that holding rules to be authoritative always entails severe logical difficulties and furthermore, they generally distract the agent from sensitive consideration of the situation and pervert his or her thinking. David McNaughton states it succinctly: "Moral particularism takes the view that moral principles are at best useless, and at worst a hindrance, in trying to find out which is the right action."[2] Were moral philosophers given to slogans, "Rules are for fools" would probably best characterize Dancy's position. Dancy believes he has shown that ALL moral reasons are context-dependent and that any given fact about a situation, such as that it gives the agent pleasure, can work for or against its moral evaluation depending on the context. Dancy calls this doctrine the holism of reasons.[3] The ultimate holism of reasons implies that the proper orientation of the moral agent is to attend to the individual situation: Leave the rules to fend for themselves.

We can identify several intermediate stopping points – more amenable to the role of principles in moral deliberation than is particularism but short of outright subsumptivism – between these mutually hostile camps. One of the most plausible alternatives to subsumptivism is the concept that rules play an important contributory role in moral thinking, but that any given principle may be overridden by other considerations. Perhaps the most widely discussed of the "contributory" views is Ross's concept of "prima facie" rules.[4] Those favoring the contributory approach think it captures several important features of morality when it is functioning well: that at least some rules can be devised that are still authoritative in one's deliberation, that these rules will always operate as considerations to be factored for or against taking a certain course of action, and that the existence of rules is an important element in establishing consistency in one's actions – itself an important element in moral behavior.[5]

Dewey and Tuft's *Ethics* mediates the space between the contributory

views and outright particularism. Having first established a firm distinction between rules (which discourage judgment) and principles (which are merely advisory) Dewey can encourage the moral agent to develop and consult with principles because they are solely tools for deliberation to help the agent make informed decisions. "A moral principle ... gives the agent a basis for looking at and examining a particular question that comes up."[6] "A principle is not a command to act or forbear acting in a given way: *it is a tool for analyzing a special situation*, the right or wrong being determined by the situation in its entirety, and not by the rule as such."[7] Your principles are what you have an internal conversation with when deliberating on an action. They act much like a beloved grandparent: wise but possibly out-of-touch with current situations and lacking any real authority over your actions. Were Dewey given to slogans, "Rules are but tools" would probably fit the bill.

While Dewey's endorsement of principles clearly places his ethics short of full-bodied particularism, I call attention to an important dividing line he has crossed that places him considerably closer to particularism than may be initially apparent. The dividing line concerns the authority that rules can be regarded as having in the thinking of the moral agent. How Dewey comes to this side of the divide is through his naturalistic theory of how rules and principles arise.

> "If different situations were wholly unlike one another, nothing could be learned from one which would be of any avail in any other. But having like points, experience carries over from one to another, and experience is intellectually cumulative. Out of resembling experiences general ideas develop; through language, instruction, and tradition this gathering together of experiences of value into generalized points of view is extended to take in a whole people and a race. Through inter-communication the experience of the entire human race is to some extent pooled and crystallized in general ideas. These ideas constitute *principles*. We bring them with us to deliberation on particular situations."[8]

This naturalistic derivation for the individual conscience he extends to the anthropological; where morality is seen as evolving out of group norms – out of the necessary foundation of developing intelligence, by which one becomes capable of reflection on one's morals, and achieving a degree of social cooperation.[9] In this, he presages Kohlberg's research into stages of moral development. Dewey emphasizes that moral development grows out of antagonism with the conservative elements of the status quo and with tradition. He speaks of two "collisions;" that between the group and the rising self-awareness of the individual, and that between order and progress.[10] As customs became increasingly seen as inadequate guides to morality, reason stepped in to fill the void. But, reason in the form of giving oneself rules (norms, maxims, principles etc.) that feel somehow imposed rather than made up on the spot is nothing more than itself a make-shift, a placeholder, to fill the void left by tradition, custom,

the authority of the clan. That is to say, those rules derived from reason have no real command authority. All well and good, but (and here Dewey would be an excellent hard-line particularist) eventually the utility of principles all too often falls prey to the rule-makers. "Their origin in experience is forgotten and so is their proper use in further experience." "Instead of being treated as aids and instruments in judging values as the latter actually arise, they are made superior to them." A generalist might ask, then, if we not deliberating according to what principles to apply, what then? Dewey's answer is that the proper office of moral deliberation is not adherence to principle, but "imaginative rehearsal of various courses of conduct."[11]

The important dividing line Dewey has crossed with his naturalistic derivation of principles that places him closer to the particularist camp than the Rossian camp is the sense of authority one may allow a rule to have over one's deliberations. While the contributory theorists retain the possibility of rules acting in an authoritative manner over the agent, for Dewey, the recognition that they are bootstrapped from experience means that they are, as he said, merely useful. Their independent existence is nothing the agent must contend with. He drains off all sense of external command. While particularists would welcome this pragmatist approach to moral principles, they would maintain that he doesn't take it far enough. Particularists strike at rules with two different punches. First they move the generalist rule-supporters to a place on the continuum much like Dewey's by arguing epistemologically that no non-circular means exists to interpret rules with command authority without resorting to an equally difficult "black box" intuitionism. Then they seek to finish the job all the way down to out-and-out particularism by arguing from practicality: that rules are pernicious as much as helpful, that they are ineffective because situations are too variable for rules to do the job they are supposed to do (the holism of reasons argument), and that the danger to consistency that the adherence to rules offer to ameliorate is highly overrated. We could say then, that Dewey is on board with the particularists' arguments from epistemology, but that he would not be as impressed with their arguments from practicality to move all the way down to hard-line particularism.

Robert Brandom's neo-pragmatist approach seeks to inch back up the scale toward the generalists just enough to capture at least some of the sense of authority that principles lose under Dewey's conception, but without resorting to black-box intuition. To do so, Brandom advances the idea of entitled inferences. Brandom substitutes the concepts of commitment and entitlement for "the traditional deontic primitives of obligation and permission ... because of the stigmata they contain betraying their origin in a picture of norms as resulting exclusively from the commands or edicts of a superior, who lays an obligation on one or offers permission to a subordinate." [12] This substitution is necessary to make it clear that entitlement is not conferred from above, as it were, but rather is assembled from the ground-up via assertions which are themselves "fundamentally fodder for inferences"[13] which can, in turn, support entitlements and

commitments. From a foundation of good premises, for example, an agent may *commit* to a course of helping end world hunger, or a different agent may be *entitled* to seek the punishment of wrongdoers. If this strategy works, then it certainly bestows upon certain generalized inferences the authoritative role Dewey dismissed; but it is no longer mysterious how that authority comes about. A generalization from instance to principle is "valid or sound if entitlement to the premises generates entitlement to the conclusion."[14] Thus, one generates for oneself *permission* to regard a generalization (principle) as binding, but not the *requirement* to do so. In this way, the authoritative sense of principle can be regained, at least on occasion. Recognition of the validity of the premises to which one comes to subscribe allows the agent to move to the conclusion that the principle should be regarded as binding and applicable to all similar situations. The authority and the principle weren't always there (waiting to be understood) as they seem to be for Ross; instead, the agent funds the principle with authority by recognition of its entitlement through inference from good, strong premises.

Dancy, however, is not impressed with the prospects for this strategy to work. He points to the problem of inferences being sound in first-person deliberation but which fail when applied to others. He points out that "Its raining: so I will stay in" is sound, but "Its raining: so he'll stay in" is unwarranted.[15] If, however, it could be demonstrated that everyone shares the same premises, such as a strong belief in the social efficacy of democracy or the free-enterprise system, then we all might well agree to subscribe to such principles operating authoritatively over our lives; funding such principles not only with acquiescence, but also with approval and commitment. Of course, at this point, what was originally a rather lean principle has become considerably saddled by the need for outside corroboration. Even if entitlements could be demonstrated to elicit something like objective approval, Dancy argues that entitlements are just as susceptible to becoming mired in countervailing reasons as are Ross's *prima facie* reasons. In the face of countervailing reasons, what good does it do to both give oneself permission and not give oneself permission?

Another point on the continuum remains: a less-than hardline particularism; something that mediates between Dewey and Dancy. Margaret Little thinks that particularists can indeed befriend the idea that rules have their place in moral deliberation in what we might call "reformed" particularism. She, like Dancy, argues this both from logic as well as from practicality. Logically, particularists have no basis for making a rule out of rejecting the role of rules. "Ironically, particularism must eschew *pro tanto* for *prima facie* claims,"[16] to avoid contradiction. Therefore, they must leave the door open for rules. One can accept Dancy's thesis of the holism of reasons, but not have to commit oneself to rejecting the idea that most of the time, situations will have more rather than fewer commonalities making them susceptible to the utility of constructing general inferences about them. She writes:

> Once we are truly at ease with the idea of irreducible context-dependency, then, we can reintroduce into particularism a role for explanatory generalities beyond those invoked in pedagogy and heuristics. For while explanation has everything to do with generality, it need have nothing to do with codified generality. It is simply a false contrast to think that we must either talk about single cases or about codified generalities: the interesting, post-positivist terrain all lies between.[17]

Little thinks it would be a mistake to forebear seeking explanations for one's moral intuitions. Taken seriously, this attitude leads to the "moral exemplar of a thoroughly radical particularist is, in essence, a moral idiot savant – someone with an exquisite ability to see moral properties directly in the elements at hand, but at a loss when we ask him to make inferences or to explain why something is cruel rather than kind."[18] Having opened the door to generalities, can she keep codification out roaming the streets? Dewey certainly thought it possible, but in the next section, I suggest some reasons why for particularists it would be contradictory to do so, and perhaps undesirable to boot.

Here is a rank-ordered spectrum of statements that represent the possible attitudes toward moral rules from strongest to weakest:

STRONGER

Morality discovers principles or rules with absolute value. (Kantian or utilitarian subsumptive generalism)

Rationality requires that rules exist which always provide reasons for or against a certain action. But it may take a considerable amount of reflection to determine whether a given situation is or is not an example covered by a given rule. (Rossian contributivism)

Rules may be granted to exist and have moral force but that force is derived ultimately out of the accumulation of individual situations. (Brandom's neo-pragmatism)

LINE OF AUTHORITY

Rules are mere heuristic devices; generalities entirely dependent on individual moral judgments, but useful in forming judgments. (Dewey's pragmatic particularism)

Reasons are entirely context-dependent. However, generalizing may be useful and particularists cannot forbid generalizing without themselves falling prey to rule-making. (Little's reformed particularism)

Holism of reasons is correct. Moral rules more often than not serve only to distort and attenuate sensitivity to the individual situation by creating pseudo-authoritative abstractions. (Dancy's hard-line particularism)

WEAKER

3. Reconsidering the Authority of Rules

Part of the problem for a particularist insistence that rules are context-dependent is that this entails the assumption that the context in any given situation is self-evident. While we may conclude as a practical matter that a child's falling into a river is all the context we need to know about the situation, this is only a practical decision. Thankfully, most of our ethical decisions occur at a more leisurely clip than the child-in-the-river example and context reveals itself as a normative concept. It's the part of the situation you determine should not be considered malleable. Some of the most interesting ethical and political disagreements are over what should be considered context and not so much what to do about it. Think, for example, of the struggle to establish a comprehensive environmental ethics and how the relevant context continues to be enlarged and embellished from other humans, to all sentient beings, to all of life, and even to geologic features. To draw from a world in which I am intimately familiar; an architect might be asked to design a garage addition for a growing family needing an extra car. Who is to say that the best solution to this problem isn't a rapid transit local bond issue or even a comprehensive national transportation policy? Is the family's immediate need all the context we need to know? In all but the most urgent situations, it is likely that we by necessity erect defacto stopping rules in deciding how far to expand the relevant context. The business of deciding how much of all the possible context to consider is normative through and through.

This observation regarding the normativity of context introduces an even thornier question for both Dancy and Dewey: Who is to say that in a given context, adherence to rules isn't the best course of action? While I too am impressed by the insights and orientation of the particularist argument, like Little, I find myself drawn to suggest that the particularists have left themselves no right to insist that rules are always inappropriate. It seems that, to be consistent, they have to remain agnostic on this matter. Indeed, I would propose that one can be a particularist and acknowledge that acceptance of a strong normative "command authority" of rules, may, on occasion, be the best route to responding to a moral context. Allow me to again take a characteristically Deweyan strategy by substantiating this philosophic point with a naturalistic derivation. To do so, I will describe a context of moral import with which I am well acquainted; the interpretation of and adherence to the building code by architects and engineers, and seek to generalize from there.

Building codes exemplify all that both Dancy and Dewey would find obnoxious in rules: they are authoritative, blatantly arbitrary at times, they discourage individual judgment in favor of adherence, and are maximally legalistic. Despite these features, their role in developed societies is crucial to the well-being of the public, and it would be difficult to imagine a different, more particularist, sort of mechanism that would fill this role. While no one would claim that the building code is a moral command of the likes of the

golden rule, certainly, what one chooses to do with it is of utmost moral gravity. While unquestioned adherence to the requirements for, say, sizing the exit pathways out of buildings, or meeting earthquake performance criteria may well be onerous in individual situations, or may not even deliver the level of safety the designer would feel most comfortable with in a given structural design, nevertheless, the gap between the moment when a designer is specifying the means of emergency egress or the means by which a building is to resist the lateral forces generated by earthquakes on the one hand, and the eventuality of the emergency in which the structure had better perform on the other can easily be decades, in which case it is unlikely to actually improve building safety for the architect or engineer to design to his individual consideration of the concrete situation. Safety is unlikely to be improved because no one will know how to take advantage of the unconventional design. They (inhabitants, emergency response teams, later designers) need the conventions provided by the rule book, in this case the building code. The case of under-design is an easy one to say no to, but the dis-value of over-design perhaps deserves more explanation. Under-design of exits and of structural connections clearly places the public in harm's way, but what would be wrong with over-design? In general, while over-design (making a building's connections extra strong, or enlarging exits beyond the code minimums) is unlikely to do any actual harm, it is a waste of scarce resources that COULD and should be put elsewhere. It wastes resources because no mechanisms are in place to allow later users to understand and therefore exploit the additional safety measures.

Building codes (the rules) become something with authority in their own right; something with which the designer must contend. The significant moral issue of public safety is best served by designers submitting their particular concerns in any isolated situation to the authority of the code for the benefit of the larger context. They should elect to depart from code-mandated norms only under the most extreme circumstances. The designer doesn't get to say, in effect "code-schmode, I am only concerned with the details of the problem at hand," without becoming deeply morally suspect. And so in this sense, society has reason to value a designer who respects the rules because "those are the rules" over one who constantly questions and feels little compunction about subverting them in different ways. Conventions (such as building codes) are crucial elements for the advancement of complex and specialized societies such as ours. The designer can (and should) recognize that, being conventions, they could be otherwise and still feel strongly that "those are the rules." No need to think of building codes as anything more than the products of trial and error for them to retain this authority over agents' actions. Cultivating this attitude of respect for the authority of the rules is exactly what most benefits society in such situations.

What is the relevant context in this situation? Is it the isolated building design, or is it society's need for building performance of a certain caliber? If it's the latter, which clearly makes the most sense, then in this particular situation the best hope for good outcomes is served by designers' respecting the

rules as embodying authority over their design decisions. No need to challenge Dancy's thesis on the context-dependency of rules to recognize that determining the relevant context often requires as much moral work as deciding what to do about it. What I am suggesting is that we take up Little's observation that particularism itself cannot without contradiction proscribe rules ("Ignore rules" itself sounding much like a rule) and allow that in certain situations, the most socially, morally, efficacious thing to do is stick to the rules and regard them as authoritative over our actions. This suggestion is similar to Brandom's but goes a step further by giving a detailed explanation for how rules may acquire authority over others. While Dewey's suspicion of principles becoming mindless rules is well-founded, his dismissal of them is all too easy.

This observation on the technical matter of building code interpretation could, I think, be generalized into consideration of many situations in anthropologically complex societies in which a certain amount of predictability is crucial for societal advancement. That some rules might operate with authority over society, an authority that takes on a life of its own, may well be to the net benefit in the overall, even though they almost certainly will result in sub-optimal outcomes in isolated situations. A norm may not lead to the most efficient or optimal solution on every occasion, but overall it works because it gives everyone something to count on. And indeed, we may encounter situations where we judge the norm to be sub-optimal, but that recognition is not enough to cause us to discard or otherwise ignore or subvert the norm because in the overall it is best if everyone can count on its adherence. This recognition of the authority of norms is still based on outcomes; ultimately, the accumulation of individual outcomes which Dewey cites as the naturalistic derivation of principles. Acceptance of the efficacy of the authority of certain rules beyond what Dewey would allow them nevertheless seems to me entirely pragmatic. No appeal beyond a sense of the greater social good served by strong rules is needed nor sought. Ignore them at one's moral peril.

Having constructed a continuum for attitudes regarding the authority of rules, I am not at all sure how the attitude toward rules suggested by my example would actually fit. Indeed, I seem to have messed up my own chart. I am not making any blanket assertions regarding the appropriateness or inappropriateness of rule-based deliberation, only asserting that some of the time, we can give good reasons why rules *should* operate with subsumptive authority over individual decisions, but that at other times (especially when that poor child has fallen into the river yet again), Dancy's hard-line against them may be just the ticket. Rules are not always necessary and desirable, but neither are they never necessary either. Some rules might be regarded as wise grandparents, while others legitimately act as stern taskmasters. By posing serious challenges to the subsumptive approach, Both Dewey and Dancy have, it seems to me, allowed the question of the role of rules to be opened for whatever approach (and here surely Dewey is smiling) works.

NOTES

1. Jonathan Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), p. 3.

2. David McNaughton, *Moral Vision: An Introduction to Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p. 190. Others say much the same thing. Dancy doesn't give principles much wriggle room: "A particularist conception is one which sees little if any role for moral principles." (Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, p. 1). Robin Celikates says, "Particularism ultimately rests on an argument about the role of principles in moral life and about the codifiability of morality." "Review of Jonathan Dancy's *Ethics Without Principles*," *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 3 (2006): 120. Martha Nussbaum's analysis of Aristotle summarizes the particularist's hostility to rules as a practical impediment to the exercise of good judgment: "...excellent choice cannot be captured in general rules, because it is a matter of fitting one's choices to the complex requirements of a concrete situation, taking all of its contextual features into account. A rule, like a manual of humor, would both do too little and too much: too little, because most of what really counts is in the response to the concrete; and this would be omitted. Too much, because the rule would imply that it was itself normative for response (as a joke manual would ask you to tailor your wit to the formulae it contains), and this would impinge too much on the flexibility of good practice." Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 71–72. Jay Garfield boils it down to this: "What divides particularists and universalists is not a thesis about moral ontology, but about moral epistemology," nor we might add, not even about what the right answers are, but how you go about arriving at them. Garfield emphasizes the descriptive and prescriptive function of rules. Garfield, "Particularity and Principle: The Structure of Moral Knowledge" in *Moral Particularism*, ed. Brad Hooker and Margaret Little (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 193, footnote.

3. See especially Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, pp. 73–78.

4. W. D. Ross, *The Right and the Good* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930). For a thorough discussion on the differences between absolutist and prima facie conceptions of moral rules, see Russ Shafer-Landau, "Moral Rules," *Ethics* 107 (1997): 586–588.

5. The importance of consistency is a favorite theme of those who distrust particularism. Mark Shelton, for example, observes: We make countless judgments "all the time in particular situations and cases. Even if we make these judgments based on good reasons, we may find that our judgments seem haphazard, inconsistent, or incoherent. To put it loosely, they may strike us as just not hanging together. To put it more positively, we can seek to integrate our judgments into a system, and more strongly we can demand of ourselves that we do this. The point of having principles, I suggest, is to honour this demand: we articulate principles to guide our judgment-making so that it becomes and remains systematic. At a minimum, we recognize that our many far-flung judgments can easily degenerate into being haphazard, inconsistent, and incoherent, and we put ourselves on our guard against this by articulating and employing principles." "The Point of Principle," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 14 (2006): 123. But, as Joseph Raz counters, "Outside the domain of morality the temptation to think of intention or action as guided by principles almost disappears. Where the issue is essentially instrumental, that is, about the way to achieve a set goal, it seems that principles are out of place (though rules of thumb may be a great help)." "The Truth in Particularism," in *Moral Particularism*, ed. Brad Hooker and Margaret Little (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 56. Simon Blackburn points out that while the

universalist may worry over the inconsistency of the particularist's judgments, consistency would largely follow from the recognition of moral truths. "Once we happily categorize certain moral judgments as true, we will conform to our general usage of the word 'reason' if we classify dispositions which tend to their acceptance as reasonable." Thus the debate may turn more on what the universalist vs the particularist considers to be adequate evidence of truth. As Blackburn argues, once truth is decided "reason looks after itself." "Reply: Rule-Following and Moral Realism," in *Wittgenstein: To Follow a Rule*, ed. Steven Holtzman and Christopher Leich (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 181.

6. John Dewey and James H. Tufts, *Ethics*, rev. edn. (New York: Henry Holt), p. 309.

7. *Ibid*.

8. *Ibid*., p. 304. Bo Mou summarizes Dewey's position on rules this way: for Dewey "a general moral rule is neither conceptually nor empirically prior to particular and concrete situations." "Moral Rules and Moral Experience: A Comparative Analysis of Dewey and Laozi on Morality," *Asian Philosophy* 11 (2001): 163.

9. Dewey and Tufts, *Ethics*, p. 34.

10. *Ibid*., p. 67.

11. *Ibid*., p. 303.

12. Robert Brandom, *Making it Explicit* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 160.

13. *Ibid*., p. 168.

14. Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, p. 61.

15. *Ibid*., p. 61–62.

16. Margaret Little, "Moral Generalities Revisited" in *Moral Particularism*, ed. Brad Hooker and Margaret Little (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 303. Rebecca Lynn Stangl characterizes Little's view in this way: "Little's version of particularism holds that there are no true substantive principles which identify non-moral features of the world having invariant moral valence. Unlike Dancy, however, she does not extend this thesis to the so-called 'thick' ethical properties. Thus, she does not deny that properties such as kindness, generosity, and courage might always be good-making." "Particularism and the Point of Moral Principles," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 9 (2006): 220.

17. Little, "Moral Generalities Revisited," p. 302.

18. *Ibid*., p. 304.

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