

MELE, Alfred. *Motivation and Agency*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. xiii + 264 pp. Cloth, \$49.95—Why do we do what we do? Alfred Mele attempts to answer this question and related ones by drawing from the fields of action theory, philosophy of mind, moral philosophy, and even empirical psychology. The result is a book that is clearly written, shows a command of the contemporary literature in a number of fields, and attempts to offer rigorous solutions that nonetheless take into account commonsense opinions about these topics. Moreover, Mele organizes the book well and helps the reader to keep in mind the whole project by recapitulating his arguments and drawing connections between discussions in various chapters.

Mele divides the book into four parts: motivation and action, motivation and normativity, strength and control, and decision, belief, and agency. A lot of the legwork is done in the first part. In the first chapter, for instance, Mele defines terms (motivation, desire, action-desire, and intention) and makes distinctions (occurrent vs. standing desires, extrinsic vs. intrinsic desires) that are used throughout the book and to which he often refers the reader. More immediately, these terms and distinctions allow Mele to provide a general sketch of his own views. As he puts it, he accepts “the familiar *causal* approach” to explaining human action, which he opposes to “anticausalist teleologism” (p. 38). Mele makes good use of the contemporary literature in rejecting the anticausalist view while clarifying what his causal approach entails. The anticausalist, says Mele, has a fundamental difficulty answering Davidson’s challenging question: “[I]n virtue of what is it true that a person acted in pursuit of a particular goal?” (p. 39). Unfortunately, Mele himself does not spell out the notion of cause at work in his causal approach. Given that his approach is opposed to anticausalist teleologism, it is safe to say that he is not including all four causes that, say, Aristotle would identify, but only something like efficient or agent causality. It would have been helpful, though, for Mele to be more explicit about this.

The effect of this limited notion of cause is clearer in the second part of the book, especially when Mele analyzes the roles of belief and desire in bringing about human action. In his analysis of motivation, Mele seems fundamentally committed to a type of Humean psychology, which means that he is not concerned with delineating capacities of the human soul and their objects but rather with looking at human agents as subjects having attitudes. In dealing with motivation from this perspective, a key move is to discover a human attitude that encompasses motivation, that is, an attitude that has the power to move one to a human action, and Mele argues that an action-desire is just such an attitude. By encompassing motivation within action-desire, Mele appears to place the weight of causality of action on the shoulders of desire. He argues persuasively that belief alone cannot shoulder the responsibility of bringing about human action, but in so doing he is unclear about the role that cognitive activity does play in human action. A more robust causal theory that includes formal and final causes among types of causes (and includes capacities within the human psyche) would perhaps have an easier time delineating the various causal roles of belief and desire in human action.

Moreover, crucial to Mele's analysis of motivation is an argument from listlessness, that is, a situation involving a depressed individual who believes he ought to do something but whose belief has no motivating force. To be sure, turning our attention to such an example does make clear how belief seems to lack motivational force. It seems, however, that Mele needs to make a better case that a depressed individual—that is, an individual that many would say is not a properly functioning moral agent—really meets the criteria of human agency. But this issue is clarified to some degree in chapter 10.

In the third part of the book, Mele covers two topics related to motivation, namely, motivational strength and self-control. He admits that his coverage of these topics is not complete. Despite this, however, Mele manifests an ability to focus on a particular question, to address key aspects of that question using the contemporary literature, and to make a case for his own solution. In particular, in this third part he shows that explaining human action is more nuanced than simply pointing to the strongest desire that a person has at the moment. Indeed, as he recognizes, his account of self-control brings him to the doorstep of a discussion of free will, for which he lacks space and time in this book. The distinctions made in chapters 7 and 8, however, may help to serve as a basis for such a discussion in the future.

The fourth part of the book deals with a variety of issues that stem from discussions in the previous parts of the book. Chapter 9, for example, deals with decisions. Mele asks what decisions are and shows that they take place, which is a bigger task than it may at first appear. Chapter 10 is an interesting discussion of "human agency par excellence" that helps to put the rest of the book in perspective. As mentioned above, it may have been helpful for Mele to address some of the questions raised in this chapter in the second part of the book, since not all his readers may agree that "the project of providing an account of human agency par excellence . . . is distinct from the project of providing an account of what it is to be a free and morally responsible agent" (p. 220). For Mele, the akratic agent is evidence that these projects differ. But what if an akratic agent can be understood fully only in light of an excellent agent? If so, then these two projects may not be so distinct.

For the sake of the reader's understanding of the book as a whole, however, Mele's discussion of human agency par excellence is helpful, for it shows the reader that the account of human action given in the earlier parts of the book is a sort of "least common denominator" account, that is, one that makes clear the fewest criteria that need to be met in order for an event to qualify as a human action (which may explain why Mele is comfortable making an argument from listlessness in the second part of the book). Although one may not expect Mele to provide a full-fledged defense of his methodology in a book of this sort, questions do remain concerning how one should study human action—indeed, questions that would perhaps entangle one in epistemological issues, from which Mele retreats early on (p. 7).

Chapter 11 concludes the book with another intriguing discussion, this time concerning motivated belief. How things look to someone because of how he would like them to look is not only a fascinating issue

in its own right, but it also causes me as a reviewer a certain amount of self-reflection concerning a possible difference between what Mele's positions in this book actually are and how they look to me. Hopefully my account gives a quick peek into what Mele's positions actually are, although one more sympathetic to his approach and presuppositions may see them rather differently.—Matthew Walz, *Thomas Aquinas College*.

MORRISON, Benjamin. *On Location: Aristotle's Concept of Place*. Oxford Aristotle Series. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. viii + 194 pp. Cloth, \$45.00—This book is a revised version of Morrison's doctoral thesis. Unlike many revised theses, however, this book is very readable and clearly presented. Against the common, predominately negative view of Aristotle's notion of place, this book takes a positive approach to place and has as its explicit aim to set out clearly Aristotle's account of place in *Physics* 4.1–5 in such a way as to revive it as a piece of genuinely important philosophy. The author's refreshingly positive approach to this much-maligned topic in Aristotle serves to sustain the reader's interest in the author's interpretation of the sometimes complex and perplexing texts of *Physics* 4.

It is the author's position that *Physics* 4.1–5 "tells us exactly what it is for bodies, causes, parts, etc. to be somewhere, and shows us that there is no paradox or absurdity which arises in the concept of motion in so far as it is understood as a change of place" (p. 10). According to the author, on his interpretation, Aristotle's account of the practice of locating things, common to natural scientists and ordinary people, "is elucidated, articulated and vindicated" (p.10).

Some of the highlights of Morrison's interpretation of locating things for Aristotle, which lead to and then include Aristotle's familiar but troublesome definition of place, are the following claims, for which the author argues rather convincingly. (1) Place is a philosophically complex and philosophically interesting and important topic in Aristotle's philosophy. (2) In the *Physics*, Aristotle provides the philosophical foundation for understanding what one means when he says that something (or, in fact, everything) exists somewhere (see p. 15 and following). (3) Proper places themselves are not in a place; that is, the question of, for example, where I am and more importantly where is the air that surrounds me "is a question of the position of a part in the whole, and not a question of the *place* of a part" (p. 102). (4) Although there are some affinities between the two accounts, Aristotle's account of proper place differs from the medieval concept of formal place.

In support of claim (1), Morrison points out the importance of motion and change and especially locomotion (see *Physics* 8) in Aristotle's philosophy in general. Clearly, if we are to understand locomotion as change of place, which Aristotle regards as the primary kind of motion, which alone can be continuous and the kind of change caused by the First Universal Mover, we must understand the notion of place itself. Thus, it seems Morrison rightly emphasizes the significance of place in

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