



Moral self-determination: The nature, existence, and formation of moral motivation

Randall Curren & Richard M. Ryan

To cite this article: Randall Curren & Richard M. Ryan (2020) Moral self-determination: The nature, existence, and formation of moral motivation, *Journal of Moral Education*, 49:3, 295-315, DOI: [10.1080/03057240.2020.1793744](https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2020.1793744)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2020.1793744>



Published online: 10 Aug 2020.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 448



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

ARTICLE



Moral self-determination: The nature, existence, and formation of moral motivation

Randall Curren^a and Richard M. Ryan^b

^aDepartment of Philosophy, University of Rochester, Rochester, NY, USA; ^bInstitute for Positive Psychology and Education, Australian Catholic University, Brisbane, Australia



ABSTRACT

This paper addresses three basic questions about moral motivation. Concerning the nature of moral motivation, it argues that it involves responsiveness to both reasons of morality and the value of persons and everything else of value. Moral motivation is thus identified as reason-responsive appropriate valuing. Regarding whether it is possible for people to be morally motivated, the paper relies on Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to show how moral motivation is a likely product of education that is need-supportive in modeling appropriate valuing and engaging students in the kinds of reasoning that are essential to moral motivation. Virtuous motivation that inclines people to engage in morally motivated acts is equated with being morally self-determining or achieving the right kind of integrated motivation. SDT shows how people come to be morally motivated, and the paper concludes that an identified aspiration to be virtuous may play a significant role.

KEYWORDS

Moral motivation; virtue; self-determination theory; internalization

Philosophers conceive of moral psychology very broadly as investigations of psychological aspects of morality (Tiberius, 2015, p. 3). This includes not only the psychology of moral development but also the examination of psychological assumptions underlying morality and moral theories, and investigations of constructs that straddle moral theory and psychology. One such construct is moral motivation. The most fundamental question of moral psychology is whether human beings can be moved—*motivated*—by moral considerations or *reasons* as such. In simple terms, reasons are considerations that people can contemplate and offer one another as (partially or fully) justifying or requiring beliefs or actions, and from a moral point of view *moral reasons* are considerations of these kinds that have a unique primacy and authority with regard to guiding and judging conduct, persons, and institutions (Nielsen, 2001). ‘Moralities are systems of principles whose acceptance by everyone as overruling the dictates of self-interest is in the interest of everyone alike, though following the rules of morality is not identical with following self-interest’ (Baier, 1958, p. 314). The moral point of view that affirms the primacy and authority of reasons of morality can be justified to us collectively as something it is in our interest to endorse and defend, in other words, but reasons of morality and reasons of self-interest are distinct. Inquiry concerning the development and limits of human

CONTACT Randall Curren  randall.curren@rochester.edu  Department of Philosophy, University of Rochester., Rochester, NY 14627, USA

rational agency is important to understanding the extent to which people are responsive to *any* kinds of reasons (see Baumeister, 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2006), but moral psychology begins by asking more specifically whether people can feel the weight of *moral* considerations and be moved by those very considerations to act accordingly. If so, *how* can people come to be moved by moral principles or by related aspects of situations that qualify as moral reasons to act?

Whether one speaks of *morality* as systems of principles or of (*common*) *morality* (Gert, 2007) as a system of principles that is or would be *justifiably* common to all societies, the concern of moral theory is to understand the logic of a socially transacted system of action-guiding principles and judgments. The give and take of moral reasons requires verbal communication and reasoning predicated on concepts and understanding that must be acquired, and from a deep anthropological or evolutionary perspective it is hard to imagine social and agentic practices of this kind emerging in a species that was not already biologically and psychologically well equipped for cooperation (see, e.g., Ryan & Hawley, 2016; Tomasello, 2019). The capacity of individuals to respond in justifiable ways to principles of morality that circulate in a society is something that must not only build on capabilities within human nature but also develop over time in ways supported by social and cultural circumstances.

Morality is not just a system of action-guiding principles, however. It involves ideals for how people should be, and the goal in nurturing moral development is for children to develop into morally admirable or *virtuous* adults. This is easily overlooked, in part because Lawrence Kohlberg was famously dismissive of virtue and in part because contemporary virtue ethics has presented itself as a uniquely virtue-focused alternative to competing theories of morality. Yet, Kantian moral theory—the inspiration for Kohlberg’s theory and a foil for virtue ethics—was itself concerned with the development of virtue or good character, as all moral theories before Kant’s were (Herman, 2007; Hill & Cureton, 2018; Korsgaard, 1996; Munzel, 1999). Even if there were moral theories that had nothing to say about virtue, moral development and education would still be inescapably concerned with the formation of people distinguished by their moral character or virtue, even if the goodness of character is conceived as nothing more than the goodness of will or commitment and inclination to conduct oneself in morally justifiable ways.

There is more to the moral motivation associated with good character than responsiveness to moral reasons.¹ Responsiveness to *persons*—or valuing of *persons* and their well-being—is also essential. Michael Stocker initiated an ongoing debate about virtuous motivation with the following thought experiment, first published in 1976:

Suppose you are in a hospital, recovering from a long illness. . . . when Smith comes in once again . . . [T]he more you two speak, the more clear it becomes that . . . it is not essentially because of you that he came to see you, not because you are friends, but because he thought it his duty . . . Surely there is something lacking here—and lacking in moral merit . . . the wrong sort of thing is said to be the proper motive (Stocker, 1997, pp. 74–75).

What seems to be missing is the valuing of a friend, and by extension the valuing of persons and their well-being generally. ‘What is lacking in [modern moral] theories is . . . the person. For, love, friendship, affection, fellow feeling, and community all require that the other person be an essential part of what is *valued*,’ Stocker writes (p. 71, italics

added), while acknowledging that ‘there are many unclarities and difficulties in the notion of valuing a person’ (p. 72).

Stocker deploys this case in a critique of modern moral theories, characterized as holding that ‘a morally good intention is an intention to do an act for the sake of its goodness or rightness’ (p. 74), but critics have noted that if ancient moral theories call for choosing acts because they are virtuous, then they are no less vulnerable to Stocker’s critique (Keller, 2007; Pettigrove, 2011; Swanton, 1997). Stocker suggests that modern moral theories reflect a concern with legislation, which is concerned only with what is done, not why it is done (Stocker, 1997, p. 77), but one could insist in response that laws requiring people to respect the lives, liberties, and property of others do not fully succeed unless they induce not only compliance but actual respect for others’ lives, liberties, and property. Legislation can be conceived as an instructional enterprise with a habituating or virtue-formative function, in other words, and there is evidence that Plato, Aristotle, and Kant all conceived of moral law in exactly this way (Curren, 2015, 2019; Korsgaard, 1996). Virtue would similarly reflect an acceptance and integration of moral demands with what is personally valued and willingly enacted.

Stocker is also on shaky ground when he suggests that concern to do what one is morally required to do is ‘the wrong sort of thing ... to be the proper motive’ (p. 74). While he is surely right to emphasize the place of valuing in moral motivation, valuing that is insensitive to what is morally required or appropriate to the circumstances is not ideal. Determining what is appropriate to the circumstances all-things-considered is often a matter of forming a judgment on the basis of the relevant moral considerations, so responsiveness to moral reasons and concern for the well-being of those whose interests are at stake should evidently be conceived as related aspects of moral motivation (Korsgaard, 1996; Meyer, 2016; Stohr, 2018). There is more to say about the nature of moral motivation, however, so the questions for moral theorists, psychologists, and educators pertain to *what* moral motivation is, whether people *can* be morally motivated, and if so *how* people come to be morally motivated—the *nature*, *existence*, and *formation* of moral motivation. These are the questions we aim to address.

There is accumulating evidence that children have some understanding of the distinctness of moral reasons and exhibit moral concern for others from an early age (Killen & Smetana, 2015; Smetana et al., 2014; Turiel, 1983), and 25 years of theory and research has been devoted to moral identity as a developmental and motivational construct (Blasi, 2013, 2014; Krettenauer & Hertz, 2015; Krettenauer & Victor, 2017; Lapsley, 2008; Walker, 2004, 2014). By comparison, there has been relatively little attention devoted to the basic question of whether moral motivation is a coherent and scientifically viable construct.

Self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2017) is the most systematic and widely researched theory of motivation available at present, and a premise of this paper is that it offers valuable resources for addressing moral psychology’s most basic questions about moral motivation. SDT argues both that there is evidence for intrinsic propensities to act in ways that care for others, and thus support morality, and further that development of moral character requires internalization of the concerns, sensibilities, and reasons needed to be responsible in situations calling for moral response. SDT also argues that support for basic psychological needs plays a key role in

fostering sensibilities undergirding morality, and in the internalization of reasons for congruently acting on them.

Building on the preceding introductory remarks, we will address the nature, existence, and formation of moral motivation and argue that it is substantially through the need-supportive processes detailed by SDT that the internalization and self-integration of responsiveness to what is morally valuable develops. We will begin by addressing the nature of moral motivation and the relationship between having a virtuous state of character and being morally motivated. We will then address the existence and formation of such motivation, focusing on both an intrinsic interest in acting benevolently, and specific ways in which a capacity to internalize and to integrate moral considerations into one's responsiveness to the world is nurtured within social contexts. Skepticism about the possibility of moral motivation often begins in a presumption that human beings are fundamentally self-interested, and this presumption invites a counterproductive reliance on regimes of behavioral control (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 646). In contrast, a fundamental contribution of SDT is its emphasis on intrinsic sources of positive human development and actualization. SDT suggests that human propensities toward both social connection and morality are inherent, and rather than being products of controlling socialization, are refined within nurturing environments that support autonomy and basic psychological needs. Empirical findings connecting supports for autonomy with prosocial and moral actions, and controlling contexts with less moral action, compassion, and volition for doing what is moral have supported the theory (e.g., see Donald et al., 2020). In this SDT view, education that is autonomy-respecting in its methods and content fosters *moral self-determination* that is reason-responsive and affirms the value of fellow human beings and everything else we have reason to value. The content of moral education is only autonomy-respecting if it affirms the inherent value of persons as self-determining beings and promotes moral self-reflection and reasoning.

What is moral motivation?

Our introductory observations about moral motivation suggest that it is a *reason-responsive appropriate valuing of*, or *responsiveness to*, everything of moral value, beginning with persons, their well-being, and what is important to their well-being. Virtues are moral motivational states of persons in the sense that they prepare and dispose their possessors to perceive, think, feel, and act in morally appropriate ways in specific situations (see Adams, 2006; Brandt, 1988; Kamtekar, 2004; Slote, 2001). A state of character that disposes a person to be morally motivated in acting in diverse contexts would necessarily involve both *valuing* what is valuable and *judgment* grounded in awareness of and responsiveness to diverse moral considerations. We have argued that the formation of good character is the essential aim of moral education, yet many philosophers have doubted that a coherent account of moral motivation is even possible within a virtue ethical framework. The basis of this doubt is that moral motivation involves responsiveness to demands of moral reason, such as rules or principles that give rise to duties, while orthodox virtue ethics denies the existence of any such rules or principles. This warrants some discussion, in the interest of getting clearer on the nature of moral motivation and the internal condition a person must be in to be capable of morally motivated acts.

Rosalind Hursthouse has offered a sustained response to the charge that virtue ethics cannot give an account of ‘moral motivation’—that is of acting from a (sense of) duty, on or from (moral) principle, because you think you (morally) ought to, or are (morally) required to, or because you think it’s (morally) right—taking all these different phrases to be equivalent for present purposes (Hursthouse, 1999, p. 121). Her response, in a nutshell, is that the thoughts about duty, principles, and rightness that may accompany an action are neither necessary nor sufficient for moral motivation; ascriptions of moral motivation are claims about ‘what sort of person the agent is’—‘the agent’s character overall’—so what is essential to an act being morally motivated is ‘that it is done from a state of character that adequately resembles the state of character from which the perfectly virtuous agent acts’ (p. 160).

An attractive aspect of this kind of *character holism* is that it escapes an obvious objection to the idea that acts flowing from specific virtues, such as compassion or loyalty, are necessarily well motivated. Because there are cases and circumstances in which such acts are inappropriate or worse—from acts of misguided compassion to atrocities motivated by loyalty—we *should only regard the motivation involved as morally creditworthy if it is responsive to the full range of moral considerations that may be relevant* (cf., Korsgaard, 1996; Meyer, 2016; Stohr, 2018). Such all-things-considered responsiveness to moral considerations or reasons is implicit in being motivated to do one’s duty, what one ought, what is morally required, or what is right. Hursthouse says, in effect, that whether or not a person of virtue is motivated to do what is virtuous—let alone, what is right or one’s duty—there is an all-things-considered responsiveness to moral considerations built into having a state of character that approximates a perfectly virtuous character. Responsiveness to diverse contexts and considerations is built in, if the specific virtues constituting a perfectly virtuous state of character are attuned to the various considerations that may be relevant, and if they collectively yield good all-things-considered judgments (which would require that intellectual virtues play integral roles in good character). This is more or less Aristotle’s view, except that he insists that a virtuous person acts for the sake of the *kalon* (translated as admirable, appropriate, fine, or noble), having brought together in deliberation a well-rounded discernment of the ‘particulars’ of a situation and the ‘universals’ of moral knowledge (*hê politikê epistêmê*) (NE VI.8 1142a13-15 [Barnes, 1984, p. 1803]).² Practical wisdom (*phronesis*) or ‘right reason’ (*orthos logos*) is in this way present in true virtue, he says (VII.13 1144b16-17 [p. 1808]). Whether Hursthouse is correct in thinking that moral motivation need not involve any such target as doing what is admirable, appropriate, right, or morally required may depend upon whether moral ideals must sometimes enter deliberations as goals, as they seem to when people aspire to be good people living good lives.

With this caveat, we take it as given that virtue ethics is no worse than deontological and consequentialist approaches in conceptualizing the moral reason-responsiveness aspect of moral motivation. There is nevertheless something odd and unsatisfying about this holistic view of moral motivation, namely the apparent absence of valuing that Stocker perceived in modern moral theories. Hursthouse could say in response that valuing what is valuable is an aspect of individual virtues, and a perfectly virtuous state of character responds to the value of everything at stake in a balanced and appropriate (*kalon*) manner. A virtuously compassionate act would thus be one that responds to the value of a person and her well-being in a way that is appropriate in circumstances in

which other things of value may also be at stake. The valuing of the person to whom compassion is directed would be no less a valuing of her for herself, if it is contextually sensitive in this way.

Respect for reason and proper valuing are deeply intertwined in ancient Greek ethics, and they underlie Aristotle's civic ideal of partnership in living well. This should be kept in mind in probing Aristotle's conception of acting for the sake of what is admirable (*tou kalou beneka*). He says that the courageous person stands his ground in battle, 'according to the merits of the case and in whatever way reason directs,' because it is admirable (*kalon*) and for the sake of what is admirable (*tou kalou beneka*) (III.7 1115b13 and 20 [p. 1761]). He contrasts this with a range of motivations that do not count as virtuous: compulsion by a superior; avoidance of reproach, shame, pain, death, or penalties; desire for honors; anger or desire for revenge; ignorance of the danger at hand or false confidence in one's ability to triumph over it (III.8 [pp. 1762–1764]). Something that these morally defective forms of motivation seem to have in common is that they do not pertain to the *goods* at stake in acts of courage and do not involve the agent acting *for the sake of those goods or in recognition of their value*. It is not unreasonable to suppose that when Aristotle says the good soldier acts 'according to the merits of the case,' he means not simply that he weighs relevant considerations but that he acts with regard or concern for what is at stake—his comrades in arms, the city he protects, a state of civic affairs that enables his compatriots to live well, and everything else of value.³ He can be dedicated both to acting as reason directs and to the goods at stake that he properly values. As Susan Sauvé Meyer observes, 'We may suppose that the generous person, who is acting for the sake of the *kalon* when he shares with his friend, is also aiming at helping his friend. However, it is crucial to insist that he is also aiming at the *kalon*, not just helping, because being helpful is not always *kalon*: that is why the virtue of generosity involves giving only when one ought, to whom one ought, and so on' (Meyer, 2016, p. 53).⁴ Apart from the immediate interpretive and moral plausibility of this suggestion, it accords well with the general sweep of Aristotle's theories of value and justice, which are grounded in an ethic of respect for, or valuing of, reason and rational beings and occupied with human flourishing and cooperation to secure the necessary conditions for such flourishing (Curren, 2000, 2013, 2019, 2021).

Paula Gottlieb has rightly called attention to Aristotle's remark that true friends promote their friends' good *for the sake of* their friends (Gottlieb, 2009, p. 149; citing *NE VIII 3 1156b9-10* [Barnes, 1984, p. 1827]), a familiar and important aspect of friendship quality (Demir et al., 2011). The best or truest friendships involve acting for the sake of the other's good and they are said to be based on mutual appreciation of the other's good character, which Aristotle equates with valuing a person as such. Friendship (*philia*) of this kind affirms a person's goodness and facilitates her flourishing, and friendship not based on valuing and willing the good of the person as such is motivationally deficient, by Aristotle's lights. A basic Aristotelian commitment, traceable to elements of Socratic ethics articulated in the *Apology* and *Crito* (Curren, 2000, 2021), is that even the most fleeting human transactions should similarly exhibit mutual friendliness or *goodwill* (to *philein*) motivated by respect for, or valuing of, persons as—or because they are—rational beings. Just law *requires* displays of such goodwill, but according to Aristotle, its primary function is to communicate moral truths and cultivate

virtue (*NE* V.2 1130b22-27 [Barnes, 1984, p. 1784]) through a kind of habituation that would ideally yield goodwill that *embodies* genuine valuing.⁵

Aristotle's identification of virtuous acts as performed because they are appropriate (*hoti kalon*) or for the sake of the admirable (*kalou beneka*) is compatible with moral motivation that is both properly responsive to moral considerations (*orthos logos*) and involves appropriate valuing or responsiveness to what is valuable. Aristotle understands these elements of virtuous action in terms of good judgment or practical wisdom (*phronesis*) and the value of rational beings, their flourishing, and what is conducive to their flourishing. Broadening this conception of what is valuable to include *everything we have reason to value* provides a sufficient basis for addressing questions about the existence and formation of moral motivation conceived as *reason-responsive valuing* of what is valuable.

Can people be motivated by moral reasons and valuing?

Contrary . . . to a popular view of human nature as inherently selfish, aggressive, and wholly instrumentally oriented in relation to others, we suggest that both evolutionary and cultural developments have, instead, prepared individuals to be rationally engaged, norm assimilating, rule following, and generally benevolent. (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 617)

We have now established that moral motivation involves not just appropriate valuing but reason-responsiveness, entailing thoughtful engagement with moral reason-giving in (and potentially beyond) one's society. It would seem obvious that socialization that is genuinely moral and favorable to virtue must not only model appropriate valuing but also involve and model the very kinds of reasoning or giving and weighing of moral considerations that are essential to moral motivation and judgment.⁶ To be virtuous is, if nothing else, to be *self-determining in reason-responsive valuing of what is valuable*. If virtue and moral motivation in this sense are possible, it would be largely through socialization and the related internal psychological processes of *internalization* without which socialization is not effective. What is at issue psychologically is whether people *can become autonomous* in moral valuing, reasoning, and conduct, and by what means socializing agents could facilitate this (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 180). These are the questions concerning moral motivation that we will address in this section and the next.

Relying on Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET), Basic Psychological Needs Theory (BPNT), and Organismic Integration Theory (OIT), three of the component mini-theories that make up SDT, we will show how moral motivation, understood as self-determination in reason-responsive valuing of what is valuable, can develop through socially supported integrative processes. If human beings were fundamentally selfish in their motivational makeup, as economic conceptions of calculated pursuit of self-interest suggest, then moral motivation would be impossible. No one could respond to moral considerations as such. Rather, any appearance of being moved by moral considerations would be explained by calculated self-interest that happened to align with what would be morally reasonable. However, this is not a scientifically supportable view of human motivation. As we will explain in this section, it is inaccurate to regard *intrinsic* human motivation as essentially self-interested. Furthermore, while it is obvious (as we just said) that moral socialization must model appropriate valuing and involve and model the very

kinds of reasoning that are essential to moral motivation, the evidence is clear that when socialization of this kind supports the satisfaction of individuals' basic psychological needs for relatedness, competence, and autonomy it promotes internalization that yields autonomous moral valuing, sensibilities, decision-making, and behavior. Beyond fostering the development of proper sensibilities and capacities (such as empathy, self-awareness, and executive functions), need-supportive contexts are conducive to the internalization of values and action-guiding ideals and principles, such that they become willingly embraced and conduct is internally regulated in ways that are entirely consistent with altruism and autonomous moral motivation.

In explaining this, we will argue that the philosophical construct *reason-responsive moral valuing* can be identified with the psychological construct *morally self-determining*, which is shorthand for being *self-determining in reason-responsive valuing of what is valuable*. To be morally self-determining is to have achieved a psychological state of integrated (thus, autonomous) motivation incorporating morally appropriate valuing and responsiveness to moral considerations that yields appropriate all-things-considered judgments and actions. This is what a virtuous state of character yielding moral motivation amounts to.

As an organismic theory of motivation, development, and wellness, SDT conceives of human beings as having inherent propensities and potentials whose positive expression and fulfillment is the key to psychological wellness, happiness, and flourishing (Ryan et al., 2013, 2008). These propensities of human beings are to act, explore, learn, form relationships, and *self-integrate* or organize themselves as psychically integrated selves who act from coherent sets of values and goals they accept as their own. From an SDT perspective, the self is not just cognitive but 'a set of *motivational* processes with a variety of assimilatory and regulatory functions' (Deci & Ryan, 1991, p. 238). Internalization of values, behaviors and regulations that are initially external to the self is an active, reflective, and transformative process of integration that progresses only to the extent that embracing the external elements yields congruence, coherence, or integrity of self (see Ryan & Deci, 2017, pp. 188–189).

From a philosophical standpoint, this conception of a reflective process of integration provides an empirically supported model of reasoning playing a role in how people are motivated. Reflection requires mindful self-awareness, non-defensiveness, and acceptance of responsibility for how one is constituted (Weinstein et al., 2013), and the self-reflection involved is reasoned and informed by the rationales that may be offered in defense of behaviors, regulations, and beliefs. Moral reasons are no different from any other kinds of reasons as far as this goes, and if moral values, behaviors, regulations, and their rationales are considered and found to be holistically compatible with antecedent commitments and needs, they can become motivational elements of the self.⁷

The antecedent self that anchors holistic compatibility assessment originates in the same propensities to act, explore, learn, form relationships, and self-integrate. These activities are *intrinsically* motivated in the sense that people do not need to be externally motivated or internalize motivation to engage in them. They engage in these activities spontaneously, suffer frustration if they are prevented from engaging in them, and experience more vitality, enjoyment, and meaning in their lives when they do engage in them. Engagement in them is sustained by enjoyment, interest, or other 'inherently satisfying internal conditions' that accompany the activity (Deci & Ryan, 2012, p. 88), but

this does not make the activities—or the intrinsic nature of human motivation—self-interested or selfish.

Many studies have shown that spontaneous socializing by toddlers includes helping behaviors that qualify as altruistic (see Eisenberg, 2000, for an overview). Widely cited studies by Warneken and Tomasello (2008, 2013) have shed light on the motivational character of these behaviors, finding (1) a very high frequency of spontaneous helping in 20-month olds reflecting an intrinsic motivation; (2) that extrinsically rewarding helping behaviors significantly *reduced* their frequency; and (3) that parental encouragement to engage in the behaviors did not increase their frequency. In line with CET, studies have found that the introduction of extrinsic rewards tends to displace intrinsic motivation, diminish the inherent satisfaction that people experience in performing benevolent acts, and diminish the frequency of those acts (see Ryan & Deci, 2017, pp. 625–630 for an overview). Several studies have also shown that the substantial well-being satisfactions of engaging in beneficence are mediated by satisfaction of basic psychological needs for relatedness, competence, and autonomy (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010). Yet there is also evidence that *beneficence satisfaction*—the ‘warm glow’ experienced in acts of kindness—may be an independent and significant predictor of well-being (Martela & Ryan, 2016), bespeaking its intrinsic character (see Prentice et al., 2019, for similar findings concerning moral satisfaction). In short, benevolence and morality appear to satisfy basic psychological needs, as well as to yield direct, unmediated, satisfaction.

Acts of voluntary benevolence are satisfying and well-being enhancing for the actor when they are simply acts of benevolence, and less so when they are exchange-focused. When non-autonomously engaged, acts of helping others, for example, are accompanied by less positive affect and need satisfaction. This suggests that willing, authentic benevolence or *goodwill* is an intrinsic aspect of human motivation, associated from an early age with empathy and sensibilities that would be indicative of caring about or valuing other people. It is fair to say that ‘moral motivations emerge early in development’ (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 627; see also, Thompson, 2012), and there is much truth in the claim that ‘self and morality are well integrated at the onset of the development’ of a moral self (Krettenauer, 2013, p. 217). Our analysis of the nature of moral motivation suggests, however, that these early elements of moral motivation do not constitute moral motivation or virtuous motivation as such, at least insofar as moral motivation is defined as involving reason-responsiveness of a kind that takes time and favorable circumstances to develop. Nonetheless, sensibilities such as sympathy, benevolence, and experiencing pleasure in benevolence are essential to virtuous motivation, and from the standpoint of SDT, their intrinsic presence predisposes the self toward the integration of compatible—which is to say, genuinely moral—values, behaviors, and regulations.

Basic psychological needs for relatedness, competence, and autonomy have a regulative function in integration, such that socialization is less successful in promoting internalization and integration of values, behaviors, and regulations if it is not need-supportive or favorable to the satisfaction of all three needs in its manner and content. In fact, SDT suggests that controlling socialization leads to less internalization of moral reasons, not only interfering with their virtuous enactment but also making acts motivated by moral reasons less frequent. Need-supportive environments play a role in predisposing integrative processes toward moral self-determination, suggesting that any genuinely moral system of social regulation would necessarily be need-supportive.

To understand this and the path of development toward virtuous motivation, we need to address some further aspects of BPNT and OIT.

Basic Psychological Needs Theory (BPNT) posits the existence of three universal psychological needs defined as *nutrients that are essential for growth, integrity, and well-being* (see Ryan & Deci, 2017, pp. 10–12, 80–101). It thereby distinguishes them from motivational concepts such as wants, preferences, desires, or hierarchically arranged goal structures, while providing empirically specifiable criteria for what constitute basic psychological needs. Frustration of these needs leads to observable and serious psychological and somatic harms related to impairment of growth, integrity, thriving, and fulfillment of potential. From a philosophical perspective, these needs are linked to the fulfillment of potential and constitute ‘Aristotelian necessities’ for living well or flourishing (Curren, 2013; Ryan et al., 2013). From this perspective, states of need frustration and satisfaction are *natural signs* of what is good and bad for human beings, which individuals experience but may not grasp or identify as need-related. The needs are for *relatedness* (a supportive social climate and affirming relationships), *autonomy* (self-directedness congruent with personal values and sense of self), and *competence* (experiencing oneself as capable); and the related potentialities can be broadly categorized as social, intellectual, and creative or productive (Curren, 2013; Curren & Metzger, 2017). An important finding, which is well established cross-culturally, is that the satisfaction of all three of these basic psychological needs through the fulfillment of related potentialities is essential to psychological well-being (Chirkov et al., 2011; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryan et al., 2008).

It can be argued that the ethical prerequisites for fulfilling social potential in ways that satisfy relational needs imply that human beings are not able to experience well-being or live happy and flourishing lives unless they care about other people, exhibit basic social virtues, and are thus virtuously motivated (Curren, 2013; Curren & Metzger, 2017, pp. 80–84; see also Besser-Jones, 2014, pp. 33–48). The classical ideal of eudaimonia assumes a natural dependency of happiness on virtue, or that a flourishing or eudaimonic life is oriented to activities that are at the same time both admirable and experienced as pleasant and satisfying (Charles, 2015; Curren, 2019), and SDT research goes a long way toward empirically confirming that assumption. The associations between need frustration and harm, and need satisfaction and living well, also constitute moral considerations of fundamental importance for theories of morality and justice. An obvious fact about common morality and virtues is that they revolve around mutual affirmations of value and entitlements to self-determination that are essential to the satisfaction of relational and autonomy needs, and foundational to the satisfaction of competence needs. Moral prohibitions against coercion, assault, fraud, and deception protect people’s interest in rational and informed self-determination, for instance, while virtues of kindness and compassion and duties of benevolence affirm people’s inherent value, satisfy their relatedness need, and may contribute instrumentally to the satisfaction of all three basic psychological needs. To the extent that a person is a victim of fraud or deceit and acts on the basis of fraudulent or deceptive claims, their act will not align with their own values and goals. What is experienced as autonomous in the midst of acting is likely to be experienced as externally controlled after the fact.

The fact that socialization is less successful in promoting internalization and integration of values, behaviors, and regulations if it is not need-supportive in its manner and

content is thus a natural barrier to the transmission of social norms that are inconsistent with what is genuinely moral. The regulative function of basic psychological needs in integrative processes is similarly a factor in predisposing integrative processes toward moral self-determination, as we suggested above. To the extent that individuals are mindful and self-aware in grasping what is naturally good and bad for them, their reflective work of self-integration would be an articulated exercise in judging what values, behaviors, and regulative principles they can endorse and make their own (Donald et al., 2019). Its internal logic would emanate from a propensity to self-integrate and a need—the need for autonomy—to act in ways that make sense to ourselves as cohering with a reasonably coherent set of values and regulative principles. Its logic would be similar to the logic by which a system of morality could be justified interpersonally as a manifestation of a desire or social need to justify what we do to one another (Scanlon, 1998).⁸

What bears emphasizing is that while SDT hypothesizes that socialization does not lead to full internalization of values, behaviors, and action-guiding principles if it is not need-supportive in its manner and content, there is also an important role for socialization into practices of moral reason-giving and reflection. The basic norms of common morality or treating each other well may be fairly self-evident, but morally nuanced and reason-responsive self-determination (i.e., a virtuous state of character), is less easily achieved. Cultural repositories of moral reflection and reasoning are helpful to achieving a nuanced responsiveness to moral considerations and good judgment in self-determination, and initiation into practices of reasoning and reflection is helpful to self-integration and essential to the good judgment and reason-responsive valuing of everything of value that are part of virtue.

Having considered the significance of intrinsic motivation, basic psychological needs, and some aspects of integration for moral motivation, we need to consider the continuum of internalization posited by Organismic Integration Theory (see Ryan & Deci, 2017, pp. 179–215). OIT distinguishes four grades of internalization or adoption of values, behaviors, and regulations or action-guiding principles. The grades of internalization are markedly different in the qualities of actions they engender, independently of differences in ‘quantity’ of motivation, and the continuum is along a spectrum from least to most autonomous: *externally controlled*, *introjected*, *identified*, and *integrated*. The relationships between these types of motivation and moral motivation associated with good character can be illustrated through examples of motivation to provide medical care in a pandemic emergency.

Action owing to *controlled* motivation is stimulated by an external force, such as a superior’s direct orders, threat of punishment, or offer of a reward. People induced to act by such external impositions are paradigmatic of non-autonomous actors. The impositions that control them typically frustrate their need for autonomy, undermine their well-being, and make them less happy in what they do, even when they were antecedently intrinsically motivated. Impositions that induce them to act in ways contrary to their values (e.g., to arbitrarily exclude people from a game) are especially likely to be stressful and unpleasant, and to be followed by compensatory stress-relieving actions when the controlling imposition is removed (e.g., by voluntarily giving those who were excluded extra turns) (Legate et al., 2015). It is through such findings that we can perhaps make the best sense of Aristotle’s claim that the pleasure and pain that

accompany acts are markers of character. Being pained by treating people well is not a sign of goodness, while being pained by treating them badly is—it being assumed in both cases that the actions are induced.

Someone who pursues a career in medicine for the money and status and faces the dangers of providing care in a pandemic emergency only because his employer requires it, would exhibit externally controlled motivation that is inconsistent with moral motivation. He may resent being forced to provide patient care at some risk to himself, and his actions in doing so would not qualify as courageous. By contrast, pleasure in voluntarily treating people well, because one has identified with the value of doing so, would be a sign of good character, though there is no reason to expect that all of the virtuous acts of virtuous people would be pleasant on the whole.⁹ Even the most courageous and well-motivated hospital workers who provide care in a pandemic emergency are likely to find it emotionally exhausting, though it would pain them more to *not* persist in doing what they can for their patients and communities.

Motivation is *introjected* when, rather than external controls, it is internal threats of shame, guilt, or concern with self-esteem, that drive one's behavior. In SDT introjection is recognized as an internal and yet non-autonomous form of motivation, present in the agent's psyche as an alien (heteronomous) intrusion. It is not only extrinsic to whatever inherent rewards the actions themselves might have, but psychically unrelated to whatever goods might be at stake in acting. The emergency responder who has been trained to feel shame at the thought of failure and acts from this internalized threat avoidance is not acting *for the sake of* patients in need or what is right, appropriate, or virtuous. They are likely to be in a motivationally aroused state but less likely to perform well than someone who is autonomously motivated.

Action arising from *identified* motivation is attributable to values or regulative principles one identifies with or has freely accepted or embraced as one's own (Deci et al., 1994). SDT classifies this as a form of autonomous motivation, or motivation that yields self-determined action, and this idea of self-determination involves the idea of a self endorsing or adopting the values, behaviors, or regulative principles as its own. Moral principles would in this sense be *self-imposed*, much as Kant took them to be. Health workers who provide care in hazardous emergency conditions owing to *identified* motivation would thus act from values and regulative principles that they consider their own. If the values and action-guiding principles and ideals are moral ones, then the actions would be to some extent morally motivated. However, such actions might still not display the all-things-considered reason-responsive valuing that is associated with true virtue. Identifications can themselves be inconsistent with one another or not fully assimilated, and responsiveness to the various moral considerations and things of value in a situation could thus be fragmented. The category of identified motivation brings us closer to the motivational state of a virtuous person but is not yet that of an ideally virtuous person.

Virtue involves the most autonomous form of internalized motivation in SDT, namely *integrated* motivation, which results when integrative processes yield a motivationally coherent self. Progress in achieving coherence reduces the tensions and potential conflict between various identified values, behaviors, and regulative principles that may be experienced in situations presenting constellations of constraints and demands the individual may not have negotiated in the past. The work of integration requires self-

examination and self-regulatory striving, and greater integration implies that this work results in holistic motivational coherence, whereby the individual's ownership of values, behaviors, and regulative principles would be more seamlessly deployed in response to the complex particulars of situations. Virtue theorists often take a holistic and effortless attunement and response to diverse ethical considerations to be a hallmark of mature virtue, while allowing that reasoned deliberation may be essential in some cases. This would require a motivational state that is at least very close in its structure to *integrated* motivation as it is conceived in OIT.¹⁰ To qualify as virtuous, a motivationally integrated self must incorporate genuinely moral valuing and action-guiding principles, and it must be attuned and responsive to diverse moral considerations, which implies not just motivational readiness to value what is valuable and act from justifiable principles, but attunement and responsiveness to relevant features of the environment in which the individual acts. This is what we have referred to as being *self-determining in reason-responsive valuing of what is valuable* or being *morally self-determining*.

The question for a psychological realist guided by SDT, then, is whether and how it is possible for human beings to be morally self-determining. The evidence amassed by SDT researchers suggests that moral self-determination, or virtuous motivation, is not only possible but a predictable outcome for people nurtured in a needs-supportive social environment that models the valuing of persons and their flourishing, practices it by providing sufficient opportunity for the satisfaction of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs, and engages children in honest moral reflection and reasoning.

How do people come to be morally motivated?

In arguing that people *can* be morally motivated we have also explained some fundamental aspects of *how* they come to be morally motivated. A fuller answer to this *how* question could be elaborated on the basis of further details of SDT and related research studies whose significance for the role of parenting, schools, peer relationships, religious organizations, and other institutions in moral development and functioning has not been fully explored.¹¹ In broad terms, the thrust of these studies has been to show both developmentally and situationally that more need-supportive environments conduce to more capacities for reflective choice and for greater prosocial sensibilities, and are associated with virtuous and benevolent behavior (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Regarding moral or character education specifically, the view presented here holds that education that is autonomy-respecting in its methods and content fosters *moral self-determination* that is reason-responsive and affirms the value of fellow human beings and everything else we have reason to value. This is beautifully illustrated by a growing body of SDT work on bullying. Reasoning that more autonomy-supportive schools would lead to students being more considerate toward each other, through their greater identification with (i.e., autonomous internalization of) the value of being considerate, Roth et al. (2011) found support for these hypotheses in a large sample of junior high-school students across Israel. Teachers being more autonomy-supportive played a significant role in decreasing the incidence of bullying and promoting more civil behavior. An autonomy-supportive 'I-Thou' intervention project in Israel, involving school-based dialogue (Kaplan & Assor, 2012), produced similar results. Researchers helped teachers create a more autonomy-supportive and nurturing climate in schools, and the result was

that negative emotion, violence, and bullying decreased. Further studies in Chile (López et al., 2010), Estonia (Hein et al., 2015), and Cyprus (Fousiani et al., 2016) found similarly that teachers' and parents' controlling behaviors were associated with greater student anger, bullying, and compensatory attempts to control peers, whereas autonomy support was related to more empathic concern, respect, and internalization of positive values toward others (Dillon, 2015).

We have argued that moral education must be need-supportive not only in its manner but in its content, which must embody moral valuing and principles of action that we can justify to one another and to ourselves in the context of self-integrative processes. We have also argued that moral education must support integrative processes and the development of reason-responsiveness and judgment through the promotion of moral reflection and reasoning. There are many vehicles for the promotion of moral reflection, reasoning, and judgment, including fictional and biographical studies in character, but there is an underappreciated role for autonomy-supportive coaching of young people in thinking through decisions. The formation of judgment and virtue requires practice in considering, weighing, and acting on moral considerations, and practice is most productive when it is externally supported but autonomously motivated by aspiration.

Recall Hursthouse's character holism and the role that *aspiration* to be a good or virtuous person might play in the integrative process and development of moral competence characteristic of virtue. Understood within the framework of SDT, this aspiration would be a form of identified motivation that might be developmentally essential to achieving a state of integrated motivation characteristic of a virtuous person. Following Annas (2011), one could assume that a key to the progress of incremental steps toward social competence and attunement to relevant moral considerations is an individual's *aspiration* or internalization of the goal of getting better in these respects. Coaching by peers (Walker et al., 2016) and adults would only assist an individual in such progress if it is need-supportive and reasoned, nurturing the acquisition of the necessary cognitive tools and drawing the individual's attention to relevant moral considerations, while understanding that the integrative process is essentially internal and self-directed. Because it is essentially internal and self-directed, the desire of peers and adults to support progress toward a virtuous state of character and moral motivation could not play the decisive role. It is a plausible hypothesis that only internalized moral aspiration could play that role.¹² Modeling of moral thoughtfulness, autonomy-supportive articulation of reasons in moral coaching, and competence-enhancing engagement in reasoned give-and-take, might create conditions favorable to an autonomous, identified embrace of the goal of being virtuous. A virtuous state of character might be understood to require and largely originate in such identified motivation and efforts to *integrate* identified moral valuing, principles, and ideals into a coherent whole in which tensions have been minimized. We picture this integration as ideally progressing in a way that is linked to the activities of a life that exhibits the admirable and satisfying fulfillment of human potential we call flourishing.

Conclusion

We set out to answer some fundamental questions of moral psychology concerning the nature, existence, and formation of moral motivation. We have examined an ongoing

debate concerning the nature of moral motivation, concluding that it should be regarded as involving both an autonomous responsiveness to reasons of morality as reasonable and a responsiveness to fellow human beings as worthy of respect and consideration. We have argued, specifically, that moral motivation is a *reason-responsive appropriate valuing of everything of moral value*. Turning to the question of whether it is *possible* for people to be morally motivated or moved by moral reasons as such, we have shown how moral motivation is not only possible but a likely product of practices of socialization that are need-supportive and model appropriate valuing and the kinds of reasoning that are essential to moral motivation. In explaining this, we argued that the character of intrinsic motivation and role of basic psychological needs in processes of internalization are favorable to the internalization of moral valuing and principles and ideals of conduct. We also argued that from an SDT perspective, to be morally motivated amounts to being *morally self-determining* or *self-determining in reason-responsive valuing of what is valuable*. In our concluding remarks on *how* people come to be morally motivated, we emphasized that education that is autonomy-respecting in its methods and content fosters *moral self-determination*. We argued that moral education must support integrative processes and the development of reason-responsiveness and judgment through the promotion of moral reflection and reasoning. We noted the value of autonomy-supportive coaching in promoting moral reflection and judgments, and revisited the question of whether an intention or aspiration to be moral, virtuous, or do what is right, may play a formative role in the emergence of moral virtue and motivation. We offered the hypothesis that while those who attempt to socialize or aid in the socialization of individuals may have such aspirations for them, internalization is an internal process and an identified aspiration of this kind may play a significant role.

Notes

1. Virtuous motivation can be understood to include appropriate valuing of non-moral goods, but we will use the term *virtuous motivation* in this paper to refer to the motivational characteristics of a virtuous state of character that prepares and inclines a person to act in ways that are morally well motivated or exhibit *moral motivation*.
2. Aristotle's theory of virtue thereby deviates from orthodox virtue ethics. (See Curren, 2015, 2019, 2021).
3. It is important to note that the soldier's defense of his own compatriots and city cannot be morally appropriate all-things-considered, unless everything else of value is duly weighed 'according to the merits of the case and in whatever way reason directs.' All of the conditions necessary to acts of war being just would need to be met. If there are no conditions in which any acts of war can be just, then courage is not a virtue that can be displayed in acts of war.
4. This is consistent with Karen Stohr's suggestion that a virtuously generous person 'is motivated by her recognition that people are in need, but ... she must also know that helping is the virtuous thing to do here, and it must be true of her that she would refrain from acting if it weren't' (Stohr, 2018, p. 465).
5. Cf., Korsgaard (1996, p. 222), on Kant's conception of compliance with a duty of beneficence yielding genuine love of mankind through a process of habituation.
6. This is obvious because it is a consequence of the defining conditions for moral motivation we have identified, and those defining conditions rely on a conception of the giving and weighing of considerations that are genuinely moral or admissible in a system of norms that is itself genuinely moral, as moralities were defined at the beginning of this paper (Baier, 1958) or in a way that is relevantly similar with respect to requiring fairness,

impartiality, or justifiability to one other. All such conceptions of morality are more or less explicit in limiting the scope of relevant principles to ones that require mutual respect, manifest sympathy, protect vital interests, facilitate human flourishing, or something of the sort.

7. For an overview of research on the neurological dimensions of the integrative processing through which reasoned reflection alters motivation, see Ryan & Deci (2017, p. 627). See also Di Domenico et al. (2013, 2016).
8. Tim Scanlon assumed in *What We Owe to Each Other* that people are motivated by self-interest, but he grounded his theory of morality in the claim that people are also motivated by a desire to justify themselves to one another. He argued that genuinely moral principles are ones that we can justify to each other, and our desire to be able to justify ourselves to each other gives us a reason to honor those principles (Scanlon, 1998). Given what is known about the role of basic psychological needs in well-being, one could argue, as we essentially have, that what we could justify to each other and what we could justify to ourselves would coincide. Further, if what we can justify to ourselves and what we can justify to others coincide and entail moral justifiability, then one could argue that the need for autonomy—to act in ways we can endorse as consistent with a coherent set of values and regulative principles we identify as our own—entails a derived need *to be moral*. The latter need is only satisfied when the former need is satisfied. Evidence shows that the satisfaction and benefits of ‘doing good’ obtain primarily only when acting with autonomy (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010). Being pressured to do good does not yield basic need satisfactions.
9. Lorraine Besser-Jones rightly contests Julia Annas’s attempt to vindicate this Aristotelian idea by arguing that virtuous activity, being comparable to the exercise of skills, is intrinsically pleasant in the way that experiences of ‘flow’ are (Annas, 2008, 2011; Besser-Jones, 2012, 2014, pp. 128–135). Virtuous acts often do not have the structure of activities whose intrinsic rewards are enough to sustain the activity, and Besser-Jones (2014) is clearly right in arguing that ‘intrinsic motivation cannot be the defining characteristic of the virtuous person’ (p. 135).
10. Besser-Jones (2014) comes to very much the same conclusion, writing that, integrated motivation ‘nicely captures this image of the virtuous person [as someone who understands the goals of morality and the reasons why it is important for her to act well, and acts from values and goals integral to a state of character she values in herself]’ (pp. 136–137). The argument by which she reaches this conclusion is very different from our own, however, because it is grounded in her conception of virtue as instrumental to acting well, in the sense of acting in a way that reliably advances the agent’s own well-being. The crux of her argument is that, ‘studies consistently find those autonomously motivated are more successful in obtaining their goals than those who experience controlled motivation’ and securing one’s own well-being requires treating other people well (pp. 136–137). We agree that the studies show this, but our focus here is on virtue that involves the kind of moral motivation we have identified.
11. Publications that do directly address the significance of these various settings for moral development and functioning include (Arvanitis, 2017; Assor, 2011; Brambilla et al., 2015; Curren, 2014, 2017, 2020a, 2020b; Kasser et al., 2012; Legault et al., 2011; Moller & Deci, 2010; Ryan et al., 1993; Walker et al., 2016; Yu et al., 2015).
12. There are reasons detailed in Curren (2014), for why a general aspiration to be virtuous is most consistent with actually becoming virtuous.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

Randall Curren is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Rochester, and an Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues at the University of Birmingham (UK). He was the Ginny and Robert Loughlin Founders' Circle Member at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, for 2012-2013, and held concurrent research professorships at the Jubilee Centre and the Royal Institute of Philosophy (London) in 2013-2015.

Richard M. Ryan is a clinical psychologist, Research Professor at the Institute for Positive Psychology and Education at Australian Catholic University, and was for many years Professor of Clinical and Social Sciences in Psychology at the University of Rochester. Dr. Ryan's many honors include distinguished career awards from the International Society for Self and Identity and the International Network on Personal Meaning, and a Shavelson Distinguished Researcher Award.

References

- Adams, R. M. (2006). *A theory of virtue: Excellence in being for the good*. Clarendon Press.
- Annas, J. (2008). The phenomenology of virtue. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 7(1), 21–34. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-007-9068-9>
- Annas, J. (2011). *Intelligent virtue*. Oxford University Press.
- Arvanitis, A. (2017). Autonomy and morality: A self-determination theory discussion of ethics. *New Ideas in Psychology*, 47, 57–61. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.newideapsych.2017.06.001>
- Assor, A. (2011). Autonomous moral motivation: Consequences, socializing antecedents and the unique role of integrated moral principles. In M. Mikuliner & P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *Social psychology of morality: Exploring the causes of good and evil* (pp. 239–255). American Psychological Association.
- Baier, K. (1958). *The moral point of view*. Cornell University Press.
- Barnes, J. (Ed.). (1984). *The complete works of Aristotle* (Vol. 2). Princeton University Press.
- Baumeister, R. (2014). Constructing a scientific theory of free will. In W. Sinnott-Armstrong (Ed.), *Moral psychology: Vol. 4. Free will and responsibility* (pp. 235–255). MIT Press.
- Besser-Jones, L. (2012). The motivational state of the virtuous agent. *Philosophical Psychology*, 25(1), 93–108. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09515089.2011.569914>
- Besser-Jones, L. (2014). *Eudaimonic ethics: The philosophy and psychology of living well*. Routledge.
- Blasi, A. (2013). Moral cognition and moral action: A theoretical perspective. *Developmental Review*, 3(2), 178–210. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0273-2297\(83\)90029-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/0273-2297(83)90029-1)
- Blasi, A. (2014). Moral identity: Its role in moral functioning. In W. M. Kurtines & J. L. Geweritz (Eds.), *Morality, moral behavior, and moral development* (pp. 128–139). Wiley.
- Brambilla, M., Assor, A., Manzi, C., & Regalia, C. (2015). Autonomous versus controlled religiosity: Family and group antecedents. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 25(3), 193–210. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10508619.2014.888902>
- Brandt, R. B. (1988). The structure of virtue. In P. A. French, T. E. Uehling, & H. K. Wettstein (Eds.), *Midwest studies in philosophy volume XIII ethical theory: Character and virtue* (pp. 64–82). University of Notre Dame Press.
- Charles, D. (2015). Aristotle on theoretical and practical knowledge. In D. Henry & K. M. Nielsen (Eds.), *Bridging the gap between Aristotle's science and ethics* (pp. 71–93). Cambridge University Press.
- Chirkov, V. I., Ryan, R. M., & Sheldon, K. M. (Eds.). (2011). *Human autonomy in cross-cultural context: Perspectives on the psychology of agency, freedom, and well-being*. Springer.
- Curren, E. (2021). Socratic piety and the universality of virtue. In C. Darnell & K. Kristjánsson (Eds.), *Virtues in theory and practice: Local or universal?* Routledge.
- Curren, R. (2000). *Aristotle on the necessity of public education*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Curren, R. (2013). Aristotelian necessities. *The Good Society*, 22(2), 247–263. <https://doi.org/10.1353/gso.2013.0015>

- Curren, R. (2014). Motivational aspects of moral learning and progress. *Journal of Moral Education*, 43(4), 484–499. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2014.935306>
- Curren, R. (2015). Virtue ethics and moral education. In L. Besser-Jones & M. Slote (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to virtue ethics* (pp. 459–470). Routledge.
- Curren, R. (2017). *Why character education? Impact Series*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Curren, R. (2019). Wisdom and the origins of moral knowledge. In E. Grimi (Ed.), *Virtue ethics: Retrospect and prospect* (pp. 67–80). Springer.
- Curren, R. (2020a). Punishment and motivation in a just school community. *Theory and Research in Education*, 18(1), 117–133. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477878520916089>
- Curren, R. (2020b). Transformative valuing. *Educational Theory*, 70(4).
- Curren, R., & Metzger, E. (2017). *Living well now and in the future: Why sustainability matters*. MIT Press.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1991). A motivational approach to the self: Integration in personality. In R. A. Dienstbier (Ed.), *Current theory and research in motivation: Vol. 38. Nebraska Symposium on motivation, 1990: Perspectives on motivation* (pp. 237–288). University of Nebraska Press.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2012). Motivation, personality, and development within embedded social contexts: An overview of self-determination theory. In R. Ryan (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of human motivation* (pp. 85–107). Oxford University Press.
- Deci, E. L., Eghari, H., Patrick, B. C., & Leone, D. R. (1994). Facilitating internalization: The self-determination theory perspective. *Journal of Personality*, 62(1), 119–142. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.1994.tb00797.x>
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The ‘what’ and ‘why’ of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227–268. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01
- Demir, M., Özen, A., Doğan, A., Bilyk, N. A., & Tyrell, F. A. (2011). I matter to my friend, therefore I am happy: Friendship, mattering, and happiness. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 12(6), 983–1005. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-010-9240-8>
- Di Domenico, S. I., Fournier, M. A., Ayaz, H., & Ruocco, A. C. (2013). In search of integrative processes: Basic psychological need satisfaction predicts medial prefrontal activation during decisional conflict. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 142(3), 967–978. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0030257>
- Di Domenico, S. I., Le, A., Liu, Y., Ayaz, H., & Fournier, M. A. (2016). Basic psychological needs and neurophysiological responsiveness to decisional conflict: An event-related-potential study of integrative self processes. *Cognitive, Affective and Behavioral Neuroscience*, 16(5), 848–865. <https://doi.org/10.3758/s13415-016-0436-1>
- Dillon, J. (2015). *Reframing bullying prevention to build stronger school communities*. Corwin Press.
- Donald, J. N., Bradshaw, E. L., Conigrave, J. H., Byatt, L., Noetel, M., Parker, P. D., & Ryan, R. M. (2020). Paths to the light and the dark sides of human nature: A meta-analysis of the prosocial benefits of autonomy-support and the antisocial costs of control. Under review.
- Donald, J. N., Bradshaw, E. L., Ryan, R. M., Basarkod, G., Ciarrochi, J., Duineveld, J. J., Guo, J., & Sahdra, B. K. (2019). Mindfulness and its association with varied types of motivation: A systematic review and meta-analysis using self-determination theory. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 46(7), 1121–1138. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167219896136>
- Eisenberg, N. (2000). Emotion, regulation, and moral development. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 51(1), 665–697. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.51.1.665>
- Fousiani, K., Dimitropoulou, P., Michaelides, M. P., & Van Petegem, S. (2016). Perceived parenting and adolescent cyber-bullying: Examining the intervening role of autonomy and relatedness need satisfaction, empathic concern and recognition of humanness. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 25(7), 2120–2129. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-016-0401-1>
- Gert, B. (2007). *Common morality: Deciding what to do*. Oxford University Press.
- Gottlieb, P. (2009). *The virtue of Aristotle's ethics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hein, V., Koka, A., & Hagger, M. S. (2015). Relationships between perceived teachers' controlling behaviour, psychological need thwarting, anger and bullying behaviour in high-school students. *Journal of Adolescence*, 42, 103–114. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2015.04.003>

- Herman, B. (2007). *Moral literacy*. Harvard University Press.
- Hill, T. E., & Cureton, A. (2018). Kant on virtue: Seeking the ideal in human conditions. In N. Snow (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of virtue* (pp. 263–280). Oxford University Press.
- Hursthouse, R. (1999). *On virtue ethics*. Oxford University Press.
- Kamtekar, R. (2004). Situationism and virtue ethics on the content of our character. *Ethics*, 114(3), 458–491. <https://doi.org/10.1086/381696>
- Kaplan, H., & Assor, A. (2012). Enhancing autonomy-supportive I-Thou dialogue in schools: Conceptualization and socio-emotional effects of an intervention program. *Social Psychology of Education*, 15(2), 251–269. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-012-9178-2>
- Kasser, T., Cohn, S., Kanner, A. D., & Ryan, R. M. (2012). Some costs of American corporate capitalism: A psychological exploration of value and goal conflicts. *Psychological Inquiry*, 18(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10478400701386579>
- Keller, S. (2007). Virtue ethics is self-effacing. *Australian Journal of Philosophy*, 85(2), 221–237. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00048400701343010>
- Killen, M., & Smetana, J. G. (2015). Origins and development of morality. In M. E. Lamb (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology and developmental science* (Vol. 3, 7th ed., pp. 701–749). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Korsgaard, C. (1996). From duty and for the sake of the noble: Kant and Aristotle on morally good action. In S. Engstrom & J. Whiting (Eds.), *Aristotle, Kant, and the stoics* (pp. 203–236). Cambridge University Press.
- Krettenauer, T. (2013). Moral motivation, responsibility, and the development of the moral self. In K. Heinrichs, F. Oser, & T. Lovat (Eds.), *Handbook of moral motivation* (pp. 215–228). Sense Publishers.
- Krettenauer, T., & Hertz, S. (2015). What develops in moral identities? A critical review. *Human Development*, 58(3), 137–153. <https://doi.org/10.1159/000433502>
- Krettenauer, T., & Victor, R. (2017). Why be moral? Moral identity motivation and age. *Developmental Psychology*, 53(8), 1589–1596. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0000353>
- Lapsley, D. K. (2008). Moral self-identity as the aim of education. In L. Nucci & D. Narvaez (Eds.), *Handbook of moral and character education* (pp. 30–52). Routledge.
- Legate, N., DeHaan, C., & Ryan, R. (2015). Righting the wrong: Reparative coping after going along with ostracism. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 155(5), 471–482. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.2015.1062352>
- Legault, L., Gutsell, J. N., & Inzlicht, M. (2011). Ironic effects of antiprejudice messages: How motivational interventions can reduce (but also increase) prejudice. *Psychological Science*, 22(12), 1472–1477. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797611427918>
- López, V., Bilbao, M. D. L. A., & Rodriguez, J. I. (2010). La sala de clases sí importa: incidencia del clima de aula sobre la percepción de intimidación y victimización entre escolares [The classroom does matter: Incidence of classroom climate on the perception of bullying and victimization among schoolchildren]. *Universitas Psychologica*, 11(1), 91–101. <https://doi.org/10.11144/Javeriana.upsy11-1.scii>
- Martela, F., & Ryan, R. M. (2016). The benefits of benevolence: Basic psychological needs, beneficence, and the enhancement of well-being. *Journal of Personality*, 84(6), 750–764. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopy.12215>
- Meyer, S. S. (2016). Aristotle on moral motivation. In I. Vasilou (Ed.), *Moral motivation: A history* (pp. 44–64). Oxford University Press.
- Moller, A. C., & Deci, E. L. (2010). Interpersonal control, dehumanization, and violence: A self-determination theory perspective. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, 13(1), 41–53. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430209350318>
- Munzel, G. F. (1999). *Kant's conception of moral character*. University of Chicago Press.
- Nielsen, K. (2001). Moral point of view. In L. C. Becker & C. B. Becker (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of ethics* (Vol. II, 2nd ed., pp. 1141–1145). Routledge.
- Pettigrove, G. (2011). Is virtue ethics self-effacing? *Journal of Ethics*, 15(3), 191–207. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10892-010-9089-4>

- Prentice, M., Jayawickreme, E., Hawkins, A., Hartley, A., Furr, R. M., & Fleeson, W. (2019). Morality as a basic psychological need. *Social Psychology and Personality Science*, 10(4), 449–460. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550618772011>
- Roth, G., Kanat-Maymon, Y., & Bibi, U. (2011). Prevention of school bullying: The important role of autonomy-supportive teaching and internalization of pro-social values. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 81(4), 654–666. <https://doi.org/10.1348/2044-8279.002003>
- Ryan, R., Huta, V., & Deci, E. (2008). Living well: A self-determination theory perspective on eudaimonia. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 9(1), 139–170. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-006-9023-4>
- Ryan, R. M., Curren, R., & Deci, E. L. (2013). What humans need: Flourishing in Aristotelian philosophy and self-determination theory. In A. S. Waterman (Ed.), *The best within us: Positive psychology perspectives on eudaimonia* (pp. 57–75). American Psychological Association.
- Ryan, R. M., & Hawley, P. (2016). Naturally good? Basic psychological needs and the proximal and evolutionary bases of human benevolence. In K. W. Brown & M. Leary (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of hypo-egoic phenomena* (pp. 205–222). Oxford University Press.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. (2006). Self-regulation and the problem of human autonomy: Does psychology need choice, self-determination, and will? *Journal of Personality*, 74(6), 1557–1586. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2006.00420.x>
- Ryan, R. M. & Deci, E. L. (2001) On happiness and human potentials: A review of research on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52, 141–166. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.141>
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*. Guilford Press.
- Ryan, R. M., Rigby, C. S., & King, K. (1993). Two types of religious internalization and their relations to religious orientations and mental health. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 65(3), 586–596. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.65.3.586>
- Scanlon, T. M. (1998). *What we owe each other*. Belknap Press.
- Slote, M. (2001). *Morals from motives*. Oxford University Press.
- Smetana, J. G., Jambon, M., & Ball, C. (2014). The social domain approach to children’s moral and social judgments. In M. Killen & J. G. Smetana (Eds.), *Handbook of moral development* (pp. 23–45). Psychology Press.
- Stocker, M. (1997). The schizophrenia of modern ethical theories. Reprinted in R. Crisp & M. Slote (Eds.), *Virtue ethics* (pp. 66–78). Oxford University Press.
- Stohr, K. (2018). Virtuous motivation. In N. Snow (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of virtue* (pp. 453–469). Oxford University Press.
- Swanton, C. (1997). Virtue ethics and the problem of indirection. *Utilitas*, 9(2), 167–181. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0953820800005264>
- Thompson, R. (2012). Whither the pre-conventional child? Toward a life-span moral development theory. *Child Development Perspectives*, 6(4), 423–429. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-8606.2012.00245.x>
- Tiberius, V. (2015). *Moral psychology: A contemporary introduction*. Routledge.
- Tomasello, M. (2019). *Becoming human: A theory of ontogeny*. Harvard University Press.
- Turiel, E. (1983). *The development of social knowledge: Morality and convention*. Cambridge University Press.
- Walker, D., Curren, R., & Jones, C. (2016). Good friendships among children: A theoretical and empirical investigation. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 46(3), 286–309. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jtsb.12100>
- Walker, L. J. (2004). Gus the gap: Bridging the judgment-action gap in moral functioning. In D. K. Lapsley & D. Narvaez (Eds.), *Moral development, self, and identity* (pp. 1–20). Erlbaum.
- Walker, L. J. (2014). Moral personality, motivation, and identity. In M. Killen & J. G. Smetana (Eds.), *Handbook of moral development* (pp. 497–519). Psychology Press.
- Warneken, F., & Tomasello, M. (2008). Extrinsic rewards undermine altruistic tendencies in 20-month olds. *Developmental Psychology*, 44(6), 1785–1788. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0013860>

- Warneken, F., & Tomasello, M. (2013). Parental presence and encouragement do not influence helping in young children. *Infancy*, 18(3), 345–368. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1532-7078.2012.00120.x>
- Weinstein, N., Przybylski, A. K., & Ryan, R. M. (2013). The integrative process: New research and future directions. *Psychological Science*, 22(1), 69–74. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0963721412468001>
- Weinstein, N. & Ryan, R. M. (2010) When helping helps: Autonomous motivation for prosocial behavior and its influence on well-being for the helper and recipient. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 98(2), 222-244. doi:doi.10.1037/a0016984
- Yu, S., Assor, A., & Liu, X. (2015). Perception of parents as demonstrating the inherent merit of their values: Relations with self-congruence and subjective well-being. *International Journal of Psychology*, 50(1), 70–74. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ijop.12074>