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The Question of ‘Moral Engines’ Introducing a Philosophical Anthropological Dialogue

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In the last two decades there has been a virtual explosion of anthropological literature arguing that ethics or morality (we use the terms interchangeably)¹ should be considered a central dimension of human practice. Much important and genre-defining work has already been done on the topic of ethics, including a number of original and complex analyses of ethical life and its predicaments. However, one question that has not always been made explicit is this: what actually commits and drives us to understand our lives in ethical terms? This question is both ethnographically underexplored and theoretically underdeveloped. In other words, what remains to be adequately thematized is why, and on what grounds, human beings qualify certain experiences and registers of life as ethically important ones. With the trope of ‘moral engines’ as an analytical lodestar, this volume sets out to pose the fundamental question of the ethical drives in human life.

The attraction of approaching this question via a metaphor is that it highlights its mysterious character – an ethical drive may move us but where it comes from or why it carries such potency and force often eludes neat definition. Throughout this volume, this riddle is explored from various points of departure steeped in different vocabularies, including philosophical phenomenology and vocabularies rooted in the experiences of anthropologists’ diverse interlocutors. As anthropologists have frequently contended, attending to a range of voices, practices and experiences across a wide spectrum of societies may teach us something as fundamental about the human condition as the western philosophical tradition offers.

This introduction is devoted to the task of qualifying what is entailed in the proposed exploration of ‘moral engines’. This task will be approached as

follows. Section One makes the case for why a consideration of ethical drives seems to demand a borderland inquiry that crosses anthropology and philosophy. Section Two situates the question of ethical drives within a brief overview of how ethics and morality have been explored in anthropology and makes the case for why, despite a wealth of current scholarship, this question still needs to be asked. It also identifies certain organizing themes that have emerged in the current theoretical debates in anthropology that are especially pertinent to addressing it.

Section Three broadly outlines a framework consisting of three quite different approaches that can be taken in considering what might constitute moral engines. We return to these approaches later in the chapter but briefly introduce them here. One approach, to put it a bit crudely, stresses ‘moral facts’. While opposing reductionist and social deterministic understandings of ‘moral facts’ in order to clear a space for undetermined ethical action, this approach foregrounds some notion of sociocultural dynamics and structures as important catalysts of the ethical drive. A second approach emphasizes ‘moral experience’ and finds in the first-person perspective certain irreducible ethical dynamics. This approach tends to stress the excessiveness of experience, the way that ethical experience can elude attempts to capture it through a society’s normative structures, dynamics or concepts. A third approach argues that an inquiry into the drives or impulses that prompt ethical life needs to be connected to an ontological inquiry into the existential roots of the ethical and into the human condition as such. Relying widely on existential phenomenology and the German tradition of philosophical anthropology, this latter approach insists that the question of moral engines must be posed as a radical anthropological question. The chapters in this volume variously elaborate each of these approaches, sometimes combining more than one. Like any schematic, our tripartite division is necessarily simplified and intended for heuristic purposes. Notably, these approaches are not mutually exclusive. In fact, we will argue that there is an essential complementarity among the three foci and that this complementarity offers a powerful analytic lens through which to explore ethical drives.

Section One: Moral Engines as a Borderland Inquiry

This volume is the result of the editors’ insistence on the need for a close interdisciplinary collaboration between anthropology and philosophy when exploring the domain of ethics. This is not a new position, especially on the part of anthropologists. However strained this disciplinary relationship might at times be, many of the protagonists in the burgeoning anthropology of ethics have pointed out that the anthropological investigation of the ethical requires a special dialogue with the philosophical tradition, if not a heightened philosophical sensitivity (notably Laidlaw 2014, Lambek 2010a, Mattingly 2014,

Zigon 2009). Some of the authors contributing to this volume even stress this interdisciplinary affinity to the extent that the anthropology of ethics and morality is only truly possible as a new kind of philosophical anthropology.²

The philosophical incitement at the heart of the anthropological turn to ethics shows itself most obviously when core terms like 'ethics' or 'morality' are put into play because these invariably invoke a plethora of related concepts. That is, core concepts not only serve central as analytical 'tools' for the anthropologist but, put in the terminology of hermeneutics, they establish conceptual horizons that include other central concepts and analytical frameworks. These conceptual horizons point toward an ontological level of inquiry, though this is not always made explicit. To briefly illustrate, we call on four of these 'grounding' conceptual connections to suggest the ontological profundity of the problematics inherent in the question of moral engines: virtue, possibility, the ordinary (or immanence) and freedom. All of these are frequently invoked in the current anthropological literature or have been forcefully put forward as central to anthropology's investigations of ethical life.

The notion of virtue, which plays a central role in the anthropologies of morality taking their cues from virtue ethics (be they Aristotelian or Foucauldian in orientation), implies, on the one hand, some notion of selfhood (a *psychē* or subjectivity) as the seat of ethical character and the agentive locus of ethical orientation, and, on the other hand, some understanding of the place and status of the human self in relation to the (sociocultural) world. What is important in the present context is to acknowledge that once the question of 'moral engines' is thematized, this basic relationship between selfhood and world quickly shows itself to be highly charged theoretically. In other words, the understanding, and the allocation, of ethical drive, of ethical teleology if you will, is brought to bear on how the ontological relationship between self and world is construed.

From an ancient Aristotelian perspective, ethical teleology is part and parcel of a cosmological teleology, which means that the individual human being, as a *zoon logon echon* that has its place within a 'logically' ordered cosmos, is naturally endowed with a drive toward a higher degree of completion and in this sense a natural drive toward the good and a catalogue of virtues in and through which human excellence is actualized.³ Beyond the ancient world such a 'metaphysical biology', as MacIntyre argues in *After Virtue*, becomes untenable⁴ (MacIntyre 1985: 162). Both in MacIntyre's neo-Aristotelian account of virtue ethics and in Foucault's account of ethics, which is not exactly a moral philosophical doctrine, but conceived rather in terms of a history of ethical thought, the self is expressly cleared of an innate teleology. For the former, ethical selfhood is narratively constructed and infused with ethical orientation by the reigning historical traditions. For the latter, the ethical subject 'is not a substance. It is a form...' (1997: 290), which means that the concrete ethical subject emerges from a generative relationship with the ethical norms and rules that are imposed on the subject 'by his culture, his society, and his social group' (Foucault 1997: 290–91, cf. 1992: 26–27).

Emptying the individual human self of a naturally constituted ethical drive thus entails that the original impetus of the ethical, the ‘moral engine’, must now be located elsewhere; in the world, in social dynamics or structures, in a tradition or in a culture that impress on the individual self a certain type of ethical teleology. But where the impetus of the ethical is located immediately has profound consequences for the understanding of the range and limits of ethical possibility and for the understanding of the relationship of such modal categories as possibility, reality and necessity. If it is indeed tradition, as MacIntyre holds (in *After Virtue*), or culture, as Foucault holds, that harbors ethical teleology, will ethical possibility be fundamentally constrained by a given moral reality? Or is ethical striving, despite its origin within a given historical context, nonetheless capable of striving beyond, i.e. transcending, a given moral reality?

Such questions have prompted contemporary anthropologists writing about ethics to explore possibility at individual, interpersonal and societal levels. These questions also immediately bear upon the question of the immanence of ethics to human agency – on ordinary ethics. This has proved a lively topic in continuing anthropological discussions as anthropologists have wrestled with questions like: is there something transcendent about ethics or is it fully embedded in the everyday? If it is fully embedded, does this doom it to being reducible to a particular society’s normative structures and practices? (Because this issue has been so crucial in anthropological debates, we return to it in more detail in Section Two.)

This line of thinking leads to another vexed concept and domain of inquiry: freedom. Although many anthropologists have eschewed this term in their formulations (with notable exceptions), most do insist that there is an indeterminacy to ethical life and that the ethical cannot be subsumed unproblematically within an already demarcated social structure in the manner of a straightforward socialization process. But this advocacy of indeterminacy does raise the question of ethical freedom. Put most strongly, the very notion of ethics itself, some would argue, presupposes freedom, or at least a kindred notion of non-determined potentiality, not merely as impetus but as its condition of possibility. As James Faubion writes – without, however, pursuing this lead – there seems to be a mutual implication between ethics and freedom from which he sees ‘no escape’ (2011: 37–38; for an extensive exploration of this mutual implication, see Dyring, chapter 6 in this volume and Dyring, under review). This implication is perhaps most pointedly stressed by James Laidlaw, when he famously proclaimed that ‘an anthropology of ethics will only be possible – will only be prevented from constantly collapsing into general questions of social regularity and social control – if we take seriously, as something requiring ethnographic description, the possibilities of human freedom’ (Laidlaw 2002: 315). This raises the methodological and epistemological question: how is ethnographic description of ‘the possibilities of human freedom’ possible? But given the contested ontological status and the highly

elusive – perhaps even illusive – character of 'human freedom', this question is impossible to separate from the equally fundamental question: what is human freedom? In other words, the methodological and epistemological question seems to be inseparably tied in with an ontological question. Hence, taking seriously 'the possibilities of human freedom' would seem to require also taking seriously the implicated philosophical problematics.

This exceedingly brief discussion of four recurring concepts in the anthropology of ethics is intended to illustrate that once the question of moral engines is thematized, it registers an accompanying conceptual horizon that, as it unfurls, goes beyond what can be addressed epistemologically or methodologically. It presses inquiry into very basic ontological considerations about the human condition as such. This might seem merely to suggest that anthropologists need to rely upon philosophers (as professional experts in ontology) to guide them in their inquiry into the ethical. But this is not our point. Rather, we are suggesting the necessity of a more mutually interdependent sphere of inquiry at the level of ontology – a borderland inquiry.

Destabilizing the Terrain

But what do we mean by a borderland inquiry? And what don't we mean? Certainly, we are resisting a disciplinary role delineation in which the anthropologists' task in the conversation is to provide thick descriptions and/or strange 'facts' to philosophy. Historically, this role division has marked one predominant way in which the dialogue between the two disciplines has unfolded. Each discipline uses the other, in rather eclectic fashion, to establish more authority (Clifford 1988). Anthropology has turned to philosophy in order to be able to say something more authoritatively about the human condition, and philosophy has turned to anthropology in the search of empirical authority. This mutual borrowing and authority building (however useful at times) falls short of a proper dialogue that destabilizes knowledge.

It is certainly true that few contemporary philosophers engage seriously with the wealth of ethnographic descriptions and theoretical explications to discover the potential they harbour for a more complex, but also more subversive and critical conceptual development. Despite this philosophical reluctance, there are some notable instances in the history of western philosophy, where it is exactly the insistence on taking seriously alterity and cultural diversity that brings about new philosophical orientations. In some respects this was already the impetus of Herder's objection to the philosophical obsession with reason as a universal, transcendental faculty and his turn toward the historical, cultural, linguistic development of the human being (Herder 2004). In early twentieth-century philosophy, Wittgenstein's preoccupation with Frazer's *Golden Bough* is worth mentioning and along the same lines also Winch and MacIntyre's debates on the status of rationality vis-à-vis, for

instance, magical practices (Winch 1964; Wittgenstein 1993). Bernard Williams has written of the 'ethnographic stance' and the possibilities of intercultural understanding (1986: 203) and most recently Jonathan Lear (2006) has founded an exploration of possibilities of ethics in times of cultural devastation on anthropological accounts of the traditional Crow way of life.

By calling on these examples, we might seem to suggest something more modest than we intend. These cases most clearly illustrate how a borderland conversation may occur when philosophers take up anthropological depictions of exotic alterities, including alternative forms of epistemology or ontology, not simply to bolster empirical authority but to challenge or expand philosophical positions. Without discounting the value of this, we are suggesting something even more radical: a combined effort to bring our disciplinary resources to bear so that we can pursue, empirically as well as theoretically, a decentring kind of dialogue.

We aim to contribute to a more genuine dialogue that promotes this creative, destabilizing potential. This borderland inquiry urges us, in varying degrees, to take up 'roles' generally associated with the other discipline, challenging the usual idea that there are some people who are anthropologists and can provide the ethnography and other people who are philosophers and can do the ontological analysis. Our excursion into 'moral engines' propels us into a position in which not only human indeterminacy but also non-essentialism in general is recognized. We, each in our own discipline, are pushed to break with the disciplinary essentialisms that all too often become an obstacle in our interdisciplinary discussions; the disciplinary essentialisms that urge us to assume the roles of gatekeepers whenever someone from another discipline dares step onto our turf.

This role reversing, or role expanding, border inquiry is very much a work in progress and may not always be apparent in the chapters that follow. Readers will find that the anthropological chapters contained here are, by and large, steeped in culturally specific particulars and anthropology's trademark thick description. The philosophical contributions, by and large, are not. Because anthropological contributors draw so heavily upon the vocabularies and traditions of philosophy in doing so, the interdisciplinary nature of thought may be more apparent in their chapters than in the philosophical ones. These philosophically infused contributions reflect a precedent in the discipline, especially as anthropologists try to explore cultural and personal possibility as ontological matters.

Several authors in anthropology have already noted the necessity of venturing into this borderland with philosophy in questions pertaining to possibility and the practical transcendence of prevailing social structures. Michael Jackson, for example, describes his project of existential anthropology as an endeavour toward an ethnographically grounded philosophical anthropology, that 'abandon[s] the substantive idea of the universal' (*in casu* a human substance with a fixed essence) and 'focus[es] on the universalizing impulse that

inspires us to transgress parochial boundaries, push ourselves to the limit, and open ourselves up to new horizons through strategies that take us beyond ourselves' (2013: 20, see also Jackson and Piette 2015). Vincent Crapanzano, to offer another example, sees an impetus for his project of a literary-philosophical anthropology in the 'problem of cultural creativity' and the fact that socio-cultural anthropological research has tended to ignore individual 'imaginative processes' – in fact, '[t]he individual has always been something of an embarrassment in anthropology' (2004: 1). Criticizing the social sciences for sacrificing the singular to the general and for an 'implicit if not explicit emphasis on determinism', Crapanzano's philosophical anthropology is intended instead to address 'human creativity, transgressive possibility, and imaginative play', and ultimately 'to address the question of human freedom, however delusional that freedom may be' (2004: 6; for another important, literarily and philosophically inspired defence of singularity and anti-determinism from an anthropological perspective, see also Rapport 1997).

The edited book *Anthropology and Philosophy: Dialogues on Trust and Hope* (Lisberg et al. 2015) offers a recent example of creative acts of dialogue and even co-writing between philosophers and anthropologists.⁵ And there are also a few earlier examples of this kind of collaborative effort. Despite these creative forays, what anthropology might offer philosophy in a destabilizing kind of way is far less well articulated. In the context of this volume, one kind of answer arises: because we emphasize what might be called the sources or conditions for morality (rather than simply morality's cultural content or practice), anthropological contributions reveal how concrete instantiations of ethical life speak to ontological matters. Generally speaking, from an anthropological perspective, ontology and ethics are not to be addressed merely abstractly or only via consultation with the western philosophical canon. Approaching ethical drives empirically opens up the whole conceptual horizon of inquiry because it illuminates the diversity of human responses that can serve as answers or responses to the call of the ethical. As Karen Sykes put it, cultural phenomena can be understood as answers to questions we might think of as philosophical – for her, the 'big questions' are ontological, that is, 'What is life?' questions. She argues that anthropologists ought to see their studies of culture as 'answers' or 'responses' to such ontological questions (2010: 169, see also Leistle 2016 for further elaboration of this line of thinking). Mattingly (under review) argues that in an analogous way the anthropological contribution to ethical matters, when put in conversation with phenomenological philosophy, reveals how culturally shaped 'moral facts' and 'moral experiences' are socially situated responses to existential or ontological ethical questions.

Anthropological approaches that highlight the 'experiential excesses' of ethical life are especially suitable for exposing the ontological indeterminacy of the ethical domain. Many anthropologists would claim that investigations into the 'actual' or empirical are also investigations into the possible. This

claim can be contrasted with the distinction between anthropology and philosophy that, for example, Lear makes in his beautiful book, *Radical Hope* (2006; see also Dyring in this volume). In this well-known work, Lear distinguishes his inquiry into possibility from anthropological considerations of what actually happened – in his case to the Crow peoples when the buffalo (and their traditional way of life) disappeared. However, for anthropologists, at least after the hermeneutical turn, there has been a profound doubt about our ability to get at ‘what really happened’ which stems exactly from the experiential excesses of the anthropological encounter: the direct and disturbing experience of the limits of our familiar concepts.

These excesses arise not only in the confrontation with radically different worlds and ontologies, but also, and more importantly, in the confrontation with situations in which interlocutors themselves find that their own words and familiar concepts fail to adequately capture their experiences. Or, put more positively, there is a richness of ethical experience that seems to speak to what cannot be said, what might or might not have happened, what might or might not happen, in ways that simply exceed and elude structures of meaning. While we claim that this excessiveness at the empirical level is a gift for philosophy, it must be acknowledged that it has rarely been received as such. It is perhaps just these elusive disturbances, these ‘alien moons of reason’ (cf. Därmann 2005) that ethnography introduces that have so often sidelined it from philosophy. How is all this alterity and excess to be accounted for conceptually, even formally?

But the challenge of conceptual disturbance afflicts anthropology as well. Anthropology, as already noted, continues to lean heavily upon western scholarly traditions, including philosophy.⁶ Anthropologists cannot be congratulated for being, somehow, more conceptually imaginative than philosophers. Both disciplines suffer from difficulty in getting past received assumptions. Despite the discipline’s longstanding insistence on contesting western styles of thought, anthropologists still find themselves confronted with the problem of how to listen. How can one attend to the voices and world views of interlocutors so that these voices press insistently enough to disrupt one’s own received ways of thinking? How can one’s field experiences, styles of representation and theory building prompt a reconsideration of ‘our’ (philosophy’s or anthropology’s) most basic assumptions and starting points? Certainly, these are not new questions or troubles for anthropology.

Our ambition here, which can by no means be fully realized, is to use this borderland inquiry to aid in creative destabilization. A conversation between the two is mutually beneficial when it can address this inevitable limitation. A useful recent example is anthropologist Veena Das’ discussion of Wittgenstein’s interpretation of Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*:

Wittgenstein’s great insight into Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* was that Frazer is unable to see that the feeling of dread that he attributes to the past dark crimes committed by savages is related to his own constricted imagination of the life of the other ... Wittgenstein’s remarks of Frazer ... are oriented to make us consider

existence as always being capable of being more, or other, than its present realizations. (2015: 79–80)

Here we have an anthropologist (Das) drawing upon a philosopher (Wittgenstein) to contest the imaginative failure of an earlier anthropologist (Frazer). Das finds that it is the philosopher who is able to see potentiality in the lives of Frazer's 'savages' in ways that Frazer, himself, is apparently blind to.

One example from the philosophy side, especially pertinent for this volume, is the way that Heidegger's phenomenological terminology might be reconsidered in light of ethnographic accounts of the everyday across a wide diversity of cultural contexts. Ethnography has the potential to provide thick descriptions (interpretations of other people's interpretations, as Geertz [1973] formulated it)⁷ that render the concrete, ontic scene of the phenomenological, ontological investigation infinitely more profound than the conflated, average everydayness described in *Being and Time*. For phenomenology, an ethnographic vantage point that emphasizes the excessiveness of ordinary lived life entails an originary decentring of philosophical analysis. Ethnographic analysis may further disturb long-standing distinctions between reflection and everyday practical immersion or the 'natural attitude' by exploring how reflection can occur precisely through immersion in practical life (Mattingly [under review]; Mattingly and Jensen 2015; Mattingly 2014). Broadly speaking, ethnographic analysis reveals the inability of philosophical analysis to grasp everything in clear and distinct concepts and thus dethrones logical analysis as a 'first science.'

While Heidegger's critique of the western metaphysical tradition to a large extent remains a movement internal to this tradition, notably as an exploration of its origins and the estranged resources of these origins, later continental philosophers – such as Levinas, Foucault, Derrida, Nancy – while not exactly drawing on ethnography, would be more open to the importance of instances of radical alterity that are irreducible to any intellectual tradition, yet constitutively at work at the core of human life (see Raffoul in this volume). In contemporary phenomenology, however, Bernhard Waldenfels seems to be the most open to the importance of engaging directly with the anthropological tradition in order to get a deeper understanding of the role of unassumable alterity or alienness in the very constitution of homely and familiar orders and in the very constitution of the ethical subject (Waldenfels 1999). We will return to Waldenfels's responsive phenomenology of the alien later in this introduction.

Section Two: Moral Engines and Anthropology's Ethical Turn – A Brief History of Core Themes and Debates

Around the turn of the millennium, several prominent anthropologists, quite independently of each other, started criticizing the discipline for having been reluctant to deal with morality and ethics other than as epiphenomena which

should be explained by reference to something else and presumably something more profound (e.g. social structure or economic and political interests) or, alternatively, as norms and values which dictate peoples' behaviour, and called for situating moral experience, practice, reasoning and judgment at the centre of what anthropology should be concerned with and for refining our theoretical tools for doing so (Faubion 2001; Heintz 2009; Howell 1997; Kleinman 1999; Lambek 2008, 2010a; Sykes 2009; Zigon 2007, 2008). Furthermore, a number of anthropological monographs were published which had morality and ethics as their central theme (see for example Basso 1996; Hirschkind 2006; Mahmood 2005; Rasanayagam 2011; Robbins 2007; Rogers 2009).

An early landmark was James Laidlaw's Malinowski Memorial Lecture in 2001 (Laidlaw 2002), which programmatically called for an anthropology of ethics and freedom. As touched upon above, Laidlaw argued that in order for anthropology to develop a more informed theoretical reflection on the nature of ethics, it would be necessary to break with the Durkheimian understanding of morality which had so thoroughly permeated anthropological thought on the issue, leading anthropologists to equate the moral and the social, and find a way to describe the possibilities of human freedom. Most anthropologists who have since contributed to the anthropology of ethics and morality have agreed to some extent with this idea that we need to move beyond the Durkheimian legacy and similar theories of morality with strongly collectivist underpinnings (Lambek 2010a, 2010b, this volume; Zigon 2007, 2008; Mattingly 2012, 2014; for a notable exception, see Yan 2011). However, there has been less agreement about what this movement beyond the Durkheimian 'moral facts' would imply and which alternative concepts of ethics and morality should inform it.

While the body of literature is growing rapidly, which makes it a somewhat difficult task to give a clear outline of the field and distinguish unequivocally the various trends within it, there are certain themes and positions that have played central and structuring roles since the beginning of the ethical turn. One central theoretical influence is Foucault, whose thinking has been enormously influential on anthropology's ethical turn. Foucauldian inspired approaches have been at the forefront of its theoretical development from the very beginning (notably Faubion 2001, 2011; Laidlaw 2002, 2014, this volume; Mahmood 2005).

At the same time, a second inspiration has been an orientation toward Aristotelian ethical thought, both in dialogue with and, sometimes, in clear opposition to the aforementioned Foucauldian take on ethics (for an influential example of the latter, see Mattingly 2012). Philosophy of language has provided a third major theoretical source of inspiration, especially among the proponents of the influential 'ordinary ethics' approach. Here Wittgenstein's and Austin's thoughts on the self-structuring capacity of language have played an important role, not least in dialogue with Cavell's interpretations and further developments of these ideas (notably Das 2007, 2012; Lambek 2010a,

2010b, this volume). A fourth recurring source of inspiration has been phenomenological and hermeneutic philosophy (Mattingly 2010, this volume; Throop 2010, 2012, 2014, this volume; Zigon 2007, this volume).

In addition to this plethora of sources of inspiration, some key debates have begun to crystallize. Laidlaw (this volume: 175) suggests that the current debate in the anthropology of ethics should be seen as organized along the 'fault lines' emerging around a number of questions frequently recurring in the literature: who (or what) acts as an ethical subject? Is ethics immanent or not? Is freedom a necessary component of ethical life, and if so, what kind of freedom? The question of immanence that Laidlaw points to has been an especially contentious one, and Laidlaw's aforementioned chapter usefully reviews some of the crucial claims that have been made on various sides of this. On the ordinary side are those who argue for the pervasiveness of ethical life because 'human action is always subject to criteria of evaluation', and is part of practical reasoning, as Lambek contends (Laidlaw this volume: 182) or because it runs through the 'un-dramatic actions' of 'apparently unremarkable people in modest circumstances' and is largely tacit, as Das argues (*ibid.*). For others, ethics proper cannot be linked to the habitual or everyday but should be reserved for moments of disturbance, or even societal level break-down, when norms can no longer be unproblematically followed, provoking conscious, and reflective consideration of those norms. Zigon's (2007) early work is a notable example of this position. A third position, in which Laidlaw places his own work, sees the ethical as a kind of range, a gradation that moves between the tacitness of in-the-midst action and relatively more explicit moments, often characterized by a 'standing back' from action posture. According to Laidlaw, this variation can also be extended to collective entities, including an entire society's ethical life. He argues that 'ethical reflection is more concerted in some settings and institutions ... and is subject at times to intensification' (*ibid.*: 184).

A related point of contention concerns whether or not ethics needs to be distinguished from morality. For example, in their highly influential work, Keane (2016) and Laidlaw (2014, this volume) both invoke Bernard Williams' distinction between the ethical (involving the question 'how should one live') and morality, which refers 'to a subset of answers to that general ethical question' that have been developed in particular historical times and places. These scholars find this distinction extremely useful in supporting a comparative analysis of different historically produced moral systems. Ethics may be an existential matter but how it is shaped – through morality systems – is a historical and even classically anthropology matter. For other reasons, a number of scholars have resisted this division. Lambek, for instance, finds this vocabulary problematic because those advocating it tend to remove ethics from everyday life. He calls upon Aristotle's claim that 'wise judgment entails reflection and feeling', 'can occur before, during, and after the act' (this volume: 141) and is thoroughly ordinary. It does not make sense, from Lambek's perspective, to make a strong demarcation between habitual convention (glossed as 'morality')

and a stepping out of action kind of evaluation (glossed as ‘ethics’). Along different lines, Mattingly has identified the most notable division in the difference between authors who proceed from a poststructuralist or Foucauldian analytical framework, focusing on how moral selves are shaped within particular discursive regimes, and authors who, like herself, proceed from a first-person perspective, emphasizing moral life in more experiential and interpersonal terms as a struggle often characterized by doubt and ambiguity (Mattingly 2012 and 2014).

Section Three: The Question of ‘Moral Engines’ as a Radical Anthropological Project – Three Approaches to ‘Moral Engines’

Although the sources of inspiration and thematic debates within anthropology are readily visible in the anthropological contributions to the book, our particular point of departure, and the borderland nature of our inquiry, leads us to identify some rather different ‘fault lines’ than those Laidlaw (this volume) considers. By asking the authors to engage the question of what the moral drives in human life are, where they are located and how they present themselves to us, we have asked them to make explicit the most basic dimensions of their respective approaches to the ethical.

As noted earlier, we have identified three categories or kinds of answers to the question of what constitutes an ethical drive: 1) some authors focus primarily on the concrete instantiation and social shape of the moral in such phenomena as values, criteria and standards; 2) some authors stress the features of moral experience and the experiential dimensions of being ethically committed or confronted by an ethical demand; and 3) finally, some authors explore the existential roots of morality as a way to investigate what it is to be human. In distinguishing these three analytic strategies, one of our objectives is to help to clarify certain theoretical and ontological assumptions about the ethical that often remain unthematized in current anthropological debates. A related aim is to examine how apparently diverging approaches to the most foundational registers of ethical life may reveal complementary, and thus ontologically enmeshed, aspects of the same phenomena.

As can easily be recognized, each of these strategies addresses the question of ethical drives from a somewhat different angle. Naturally, this entails a prioritization of the aspects of the phenomenon under consideration, and perhaps even certain analytical blind spots. Hence, a cautionary point to stress is that none of the approaches can stand alone in providing an exhaustive account of the ‘moral engines’ in practical life. Rather, a sufficiently rich exploration of something as complex and multifarious as moral life, and the impulses and drives that charge it, demands multiple viewpoints, however uneasily they may sometimes sit with one another. Bringing multiple frameworks to bear, as we do here, is intended to allow those aspects of ethical life

naturally foregrounded within one given framework to complement and even cross-pollinate with the others. Indeed, such complementarity and cross-pollination can be seen in several of the individual chapters. Each of them, even when largely showcasing one approach, is intent on rendering the moral scene in complex ways and thus none of them fall exclusively and without residue within one of the three categories. Despite this overlap, we have, for reasons of theoretical clarity, chosen to group the chapters under the heading of that general approach which an individual chapter most illuminates.

We describe them below in an order that begins with the most well-known anthropological approach (emphasizing what we have called 'moral fact') because this is the one most obviously situated in the discipline's long history of concern with the structures of social communities. However, we should note that this is not the order of the chapters in the volume itself. Here, we open with the chapters that contribute most directly to a 'moral experience' approach. These speak most obviously to the kind of borderland inquiry that this book, as a whole, takes up, which is situated between phenomenological philosophy and anthropology.

First Approach: Moral Engines and 'Moral Facts'

One way of approaching the question of moral engines, very familiar to anthropologists, considers the concrete instantiations of the moral or ethical in such phenomena as values, criteria and ethical standards. Despite the aforementioned break with the Durkheimian understanding of morality that in many respects inaugurated the anthropology of ethics and morality, this first approach retains some degree of affinity with the Durkheimian focus inasmuch as it seeks to preserve some version of the category of 'moral facts', of cultural, historical, discursive schematics that grant certain practical possibilities. At the same time, it infuses this focus with a sensitivity to the ethical and practical dynamics that participate in establishing obligations and commitments, establishing certain forms of subjectivity and in preventing or furthering cultural change. Hence, we should not, as Joel Robbins warns us, 'throw out the Durkheimian baby with the bathwater of too rigid models of cultural reproduction' (Robbins 2007: 295). Rather, as Michael Lambek points out in one of the already 'canonical' texts in the anthropology of ethics, once the emphasis in the investigation of social phenomena is shifted from a focus on rules and regulations in the classical, positivist Durkheimian sense to an Aristotelian focus on action and practical judgment, there is 'no great methodological danger in dissolving the ethical into the social...' (Lambek 2010a: 28).

Three chapters foreground such overall approaches to the question of moral engines. Lambek's chapter focuses on the performative constitution of ethical criteria as that which sets up the standards whence practical, moral obligation arises and according to which concrete acts and, moreover,

practical life on the whole can be judged. In arguing for ethics as immanent, he recognizes an affinity with Durkheim, but with important differences. 'Where Durkheim saw morality as a function of rules or structure', Lambek proposes seeing it as a matter of 'action and criteria', believing that this offers a 'less static, less determined, and less mechanical' picture than the one so often associated with Durkheim (this volume: 139). Lambek calls upon Aristotle to propose what he calls a 'middle path' between a view of ethics that treats it as correct rule following and another view that treats it as a courageous willingness to 'ignore, subvert, or transcend rules' (ibid.). He finds in Aristotle's theory of practice judgment a 'middle path' that recognizes that circumstances demand judgments about what actions to take where the correctness of judgments cannot be ascertained in any straightforward sense but are open to debate and challenge. As Aristotle points out, 'the good or right thing to do in a given set of circumstances, or how to do it, is not always obvious' (ibid.: 140). He finds Aristotle's notion of 'balance' useful in considering what is demanded by good judgment; one must find the right balance (among various claims to our attention, desire, interests, etc.) to fit the circumstances.

Robbins undertakes an exploration of cultural values and, more specifically, of where in our practical everyday worlds they can be said to reside. Robbins finds Durkheim a useful thinker for exploring the role of values, recalling Durkheim's suggestion that moral facts are 'ones that awaken in people a combined sense of both duty and desire' (Robbins this volume: 155). He notes that anthropologists have often relied on Durkheim's emphasis on the moral as a generator of duty and obligation but he suggests that we might take up a less explored Durkheimian-inspired path by investigating the connection of the moral to desire – 'the desire we have to do what is good' (ibid.). Thus Robbins aims to offer us a rough sketch of moral social psychology.

Both Lambek and Robbins address the question of 'moral engines' by focusing on how the concrete instantiations of the moral or the ethical can be said to harbour some kind of binding and hence obligatory force; i.e. how criteria come to commit, how values make their claim. Laidlaw's work can also be seen as retaining some of the concerns addressed by Durkheim, although strongly disputing the sociologist's neglect of the role of freedom in morality. Laidlaw wants to be able to continue to carry out some version of the comparative ethnographic project that was inspired by Durkheim's social vision while avoiding social determinism. Laidlaw's invocation of Williams' distinction between ethics and morality allows him to preserve a place for continued and deepened comparative exploration of the social contours of moral life. Laidlaw also calls upon recent work by Jonathan Lear to shore up this comparative ambition in a way that moves beyond the traditional Durkheimian project, proposing a research programme in comparative analysis that foregrounds not merely morality systems but ethical capacities (treated as conscious evaluative reflection). Laidlaw poses the following question: 'When – under what social and political conditions – might people's capacity for reflection be encouraged

and when might it be discouraged?' He suggests an ethnographic inquiry that would consider 'the forms, constraints, and possibilities of ethical life under diverse political regimes and circumstances ... the possibilities of ethical life they respectively promote and inhibit' (Laidlaw this volume: 190).

Webb Keane's recent and already influential work, *Ethical Life* (2016), addresses at least part of Laidlaw's proposed agenda for comparative inquiry into the constraints and possibilities of ethical reflection under various social and political conditions. Although Keane is not a contributor to this collection, he is worth some discussion because he offers a significant articulation of how such a comparative project might be carried out. His ethical framework bears some important resemblances to Laidlaw's; it also highlights the capacity for ethical evaluation, or as he puts it 'accountability'. He argues that ethical reflexivity, in the form of evaluation and accountability, is pervasive. He focuses on the minute social exchanges that comprise everyday life to reveal this. The central reflexive property of social interaction he examines is the ability to take an outsider (or third-person) perspective on oneself. Such perspective taking, he contends, is ubiquitous in ordinary social interaction and it is essential to ethics, it is part of the very ordinary call to be accountable for ourselves and our actions. He explores the kinds of social conditions that 'induce reflexivity' (2016: 25) by introducing the felicitous concept of ethical affordance.

The very term 'affordance' draws attention to the way that social situations and cultural semiotics need not be thought of as deterministic but rather as offering a set of potentialities embedded in everyday action ('A chair may invite you to sit but it does not determine that you will sit' [2016: 28]). Ethical affordances, according to Keane, are 'the opportunities that any experiences might offer as people evaluate themselves, other persons, and their circumstances' (2016: 31). For example, he notes the presence of multiple ethical worlds that characterize many (if not all) people's lives, whatever the community. He argues that the co-existence and clashes of 'historically constituted ethical worlds' provide 'crucial stimuli to moral reflection' (2016: 124). In proposing his notion of ethical affordances, Keane takes up the 'Durkheim problem' by treating 'moral facts' not as straightforward causes of ethical behaviour but rather as resources that are, in different times and places, socially available.

Second Approach: Moral Engines and Human Experience

A second way to approach the question of 'moral engines' is to focus on the very experience of being the sort of creatures for whom not only biological and economic necessity, but also the practical necessity of ethical demands, make claims. The main analytical unit of this kind of approach is thus what is often called moral experience (see Kleinman 1999, 2006; Zigon and Throop

2014). In this approach the ethical is investigated by examining closely the experiential and often affective registers of ethical praxis. As Zigon and Throop have recently put it,

[a] focus on experience foregrounds the fact that our existence as humans is framed by our particular perspectives, vantage points, and embodied emplacements within a given social world. The aspectual, partial, perspectival, situated, horizon-defined, and horizon-defining modes of being that characterize our existence as humans, as well as the particular forms of revealing and concealing associated with them, is thus necessarily implicated in a turn to examine the experience of morality. (Zigon and Throop 2014: 6)

Whereas the first approach to the question of moral engines sketched above engages critically with the 'moral facts' of ethical standards, criteria and values and the dynamics in which they are established, this second, experiential approach to the ethical is to a greater extent directed towards what in phenomenology has been termed the facticity of human existence; that is, towards the very 'fact' that we are always already, as Zigon and Throop describe it above, thrown into a world, and towards the ethical ramifications of the burdensome or boring, anxious or joyous, or regrettable, despairing or perhaps disappointed experience of this, the 'thrownness' of our being.

One important characteristic of the ethicality of human life foregrounded in this perspective is a poignant sense of being committed ethically; a sense of commitment that oftentimes is neither easily accounted for nor necessarily transparent and meaningful to those undergoing it, nor easily answered, let alone, satisfied, however viscerally one feels one ought to adhere to it. In all such cases it becomes manifest that it is experience itself, as Kleinman puts it, that is moral because experience here 'is the medium of engagement in everyday life in which things are at stake and in which ordinary people are deeply engaged stake-holders who have important things to lose, to gain, and to preserve' (Kleinman 1999: 8).

This experiential approach provides another register for exploring how the ethical infiltrates everyday life, one that also takes us some distance from unconscious rule-following. Throop's chapter, for example, concerns regret as a 'mooded' response to our life situations and to our past. Like many other contributors, he depicts the ethical in relation to some kind of striving toward the 'best possible' life, in other words, some orientation to the good. This is a matter of 'thinking well of oneself' (or striving to) but it should not be treated as a kind of thinking so much as a form of affectivity. He introduces 'regret' as a way to consider this. In offering regret as a mood that is also a form of attunement to the worlds we inhabit, he suggests that the ethical is a pervasive aspect of everyday life. However, in drawing upon Husserl and Heidegger's phenomenology, Throop introduces a quite different vocabulary and perspective for thinking about the ordinariness of ethical life than we find among some of the other anthropological contributors in this volume. (See Lambek, in this volume,

for an illuminating contrast.) If moods like regret represent something dispositional, even immanent, the immanence they reveal has a highly subjunctive quality. Regret, Troop argues, is linked to a desire for a different world (Troop this volume: 68). If a mood tells us about dominant, socially shared, modes of practical life, it does so through an indirect path because it foregrounds how people situate themselves in relation to possible lives – ones that they did not live and perhaps even ones that are no longer culturally available. In the vocabulary of Wentzer (in this volume), it speaks of an 'immanent transcendence'.

Louw's chapter also suggests this quality of 'immanent transcendence' that belongs to everyday life, offering an extended meditation on the complexity of moral emotions among Uzbek Sufis. She paints a deeply, even tragically, paradoxical ethical scene in which the Uzbeks have come to try to re-embrace their Muslim religious heritage after seventy years of Soviet rule and its suppression. For them, the embracing also reveals the depth of loss in which they no longer know how to be 'real Sufis'. Louw insists from the beginning that in speaking about their religious experience, she is not locating it in some transcendent realm beyond ordinary life but in terms of a this worldly virtue ethics. She asks such questions as: how is religion lived in ordinary life? How is it interlaced with other ethical concerns and commitments? How does it help to shape moral emotions? For the Uzbeks she has come to know, the ethical shows up in everyday life through paradoxes.

Remorse, as the visceral emotional presence of paths not taken and lives not lived, is the central theme of Louw's chapter. She takes up Derrida's concept of the ghostly presence of something that has disappeared and yet still haunts the present: 'Haunting describes the seething presence of what appears not to be there, the ghost or apparition being a form through which something barely visible or lost makes itself known' (Louw this volume: 90). Louw draws from this to develop the notion of a haunted ethics: 'the moral choices one did not make, but could have made; the moral acts one did not engage in, but could have engaged in; and the moral person one did not become but could have become – in short, by the moral potential in all that which is discarded in the search for moral perfection' (ibid.). Her investigation into ethical remorse underscores that the status of everyday ethics is precarious because the moral foundations are shaky (ibid.: 84).

Meinert offers yet another portrait of an everyday ethics that is neither mundane nor unconsciously habitual. Rather, in her ethnographic case, ordinary activities become the vehicle for extraordinary moral acts. Meinert takes us to postwar Northern Uganda, where the everyday serves as a moral and cultural resource for this task of creating a space for living; crucially, in her account, this demands acts of forgiveness. She argues that forgiveness has become an essential task for Northern Ugandans as they try to resettle into their old social communities. The everydayness of these actions, and the mundane cultural resources that they rely upon, reveal the everyday as a precarious venture and as posing a certain relentless ethical demand: it is an Every

Day (Meinert this volume: 100). While in this postwar period there have been highly public and extraordinary measures aimed at forgiveness, most notably extensive rituals and criminal trials which have been highly publicized by the media, these are not practices that people seem to trust very much to achieve anything. Rather, it is through more humble, less visible acts that the rebuilding of community relies. Meinert insists that in this ethnographic situation, morality is not a taken for granted matter, some kind of 'unconscious cultural compulsion' (ibid.: 101). She finds it more useful to adopt Robbins' discussion of the ethical as a field of values which may attract but certainly do not compel people to act in light of them. She also argues that in this situation, these Ugandans have a heightened awareness of the morality of every single action that is taken. This situation of heightened attention also creates potentiality; new possibilities for community making arise.

Some proponents of neo-Aristotian ethical approaches who foreground moral experience bring in narratological theory to examine the emplotment of moral experience and the particular temporal organization that ethical teleology grants human experience. This has been much more common in philosophy than anthropology. In her chapter, Mattingly argues that in promoting a narrative version of the self, virtue ethics philosophers have tended to offer an overly coherent picture of self-becoming. In taking up this narrative self, Mattingly sets out to confront the limitations of its usual formulation. Drawing upon an ethnographic of one mother facing the death of her young child, she argues that if we are to attend to the excessiveness of the ethical demand, as phenomenologists insist, and if we call upon narrative to consider this, then narrative must be able to offer something more complex and more ambiguous than self as sameness over time or as mere linear progression (in a novice to expert fashion). The narrative self that Mattingly proposes is more like an experimental self, someone who, in response to ethical demands, engages in narrative experiments, actively living out 'imaginative variations that destabilize narrative identity' (Ricoeur 1988: 249).

Because the chapters in this section give prominence to an experiential approach to the question of moral engines, they also emphasize (ethnographically and philosophically) a first-person perspective. A conceptual figure that recurs in several of them, where the authors attempt to capture the practical experience of being drawn into moral matters or ethical quandaries, is the figure of responsiveness. Accordingly, ethical phenomena might be described in terms of acts and stories or moods, even dreams and hauntings, that are performed, told or that arise in response to some ethical demand that encroaches in all registers of existence to make its claim. Bernhard Waldenfels, the German phenomenologist who more than any other philosopher has pursued the dynamics of human responsiveness, writes of the logic of such responsive phenomena, that when struck by an ethical or existential demand, 'I cannot not respond ... even so, it is still I who engage with or evade it' (Waldenfels 2006: 109, our translation).

This responsive logic entails several important aspects. First, such demands in a sense single out their addressees, strike them in their singularity; the ethical situation arises here and now and demands of exactly me or us that we engage with or evade it. Secondly, they institute a sphere of practical necessity; whether I attempt to meet the demand or evade it, I still respond to it. Thirdly, such demands can never be mastered and assimilated to one's own being or practical agenda, and hence they can never be adequately satisfied and ultimately quenched. Any response can at best be an approximating attempt to meet the demand. Several chapters in this volume point to instances of moral experience in which ethical demands faced by informants exceed the latter's capacities or the practical acts that may be taken to respond to them. Not surprisingly, such moral experiences are often heavily laden with pathos and manifest in affects like nostalgia and regret, as examined by Jason Throop (2014 and this volume), in the disappointment with or despair in the face of improbable or failed moral experiments, as found in Cheryl Mattingly's work (2014, this volume), in the precarious experience of a call for forgiveness that makes a relentless demand but never really fulfils its promise of restoring trust, as explored in Lotte Meinert's chapter (this volume), or in the spectral experience of ethical inadequacy which Maria Louw explores in her chapter on the hauntology of discarded ethical possibilities (this volume).

Finally, as a fourth aspect of the responsive logic we find responsive freedom, which is explicitly addressed in Rasmus Dyring's chapter (this volume). The idea here is that although I cannot 'not' respond when struck by ethical or existential demands, it is nonetheless 'I' who have to respond in my own name. As Waldenfels points out, this procedure of finding a proper answer is always, potentially at least, *erfinderisch*; that is to say, a creative, experimental, inventive process that supersedes the limits of the given order of things and opens new horizons (Waldenfels 2006: 118). With originary creativity lodged in the responsive dynamic, a notion of freedom enters into the exploration of moral experience, which, contrary to highly contested Enlightenment notions of freedom as pure, unaffected, willing, of independent, autonomous individuality, is a kind of freedom that is found to begin elsewhere than in the individual, a freedom that inheres in the very process of responding to something beyond one's command and power.

Dyring addresses responsive freedom by calling attention to the role of possibility and its relation to the ethical in both philosophy and anthropology. He sees some convergences but also some differences. He identifies four ways in which freedom and underdetermined possibility, whether explicitly invoked or implicitly presumed, play a role in the anthropology of ethics: (1) as an exercise or practice rather than an a priori fact of nature or transcendental reason; (2) as an activity that 'takes place within a range of culturally granted possibilities'; (3) as an aspect of character formation; and (4) as something that entails a degree of reflectivity and consciousness (Dyring this volume: 120). While agreeing with the anthropology of ethics in this emphasis on possibility, Dyring

argues that it should be supplemented with more radical considerations of the ontological relationship between such modal categories as the real and the possible and the existential conditions of possibility of the concrete ethical possibilities that afford themselves in a given situation. Dyring has to proceed carefully here. He does not want to appear to align with a notion of conditions of possibility in the Kantian sense – that is, the ‘a priori conditions that make possible empirical experience’ – conditions unavailable to experience. Rather, as a phenomenologist, Dyring argues that the conditions of possibility are experientially available.

He calls upon both Jonathan Lear and Kierkegaard to make his case. He notes that possibility in Lear’s well-known case of the Crows is not directed to ‘intentional, deliberative action’ but to another register characterized by a ‘pathos of anxiety’ and a ‘posture of hope’ (ibid.: 122). This register is better explored in a Kierkegaardian sense in which freedom becomes actual in anxiety. Anxiety is a special term here that does important analytic work. Unlike fear, which is about something, freedom – made actual in anxiety – ‘has no object, it is an experience that experiences no definite thing ... and as such it harbours an experiential disclosure of possibility as such’ (ibid.: 123). Focusing on an unsettling experience prompted by a peculiar artwork, Dyring explores this anxiety and its relation to the dynamics of responsive freedom. (For further discussion of the notion of responsive freedom, but as related to the ethical concept of responsibility, see Raffoul in this volume.)

The notion of ethical responsiveness that comes to the fore between the various authors who, with more or less theoretical explication, describe the ethical as procedures of responding has a wider span than is captured by an ethics that focuses only on reflective and intentional responses. Ethical responsiveness in this experiential sense resonates immediately with all registers of human existence. This is why pathos, sentiments, moods also play such prominent roles in this perspective. The frequent use of the idiom of responsiveness, hence, explicitly or implicitly, holds a potential for the development of notions of freedom that emphasize other experiential dimensions than the more intellectualist dimensions of reflectivity.

Third Approach: Moral Engines and the Human Condition

A third approach to the question of moral engines emerges when exploring the relationship between ethics – and the ethical broadly speaking – and what is held to be the specifically human. The strategy here is to explore whether, and if so, how, ethical drive and the urgency of ethical demands can be traced to the very conditions of human existence as such. This third path has a strong affinity with the second in the sense that it builds upon the exploration of ethical phenomena through experience-near ethnographic and phenomenological means, but posing it as a distinctive third strategy suggests another way

that anthropology and philosophy can be in fruitful conversation. It is not surprising that the ethical turn in anthropology has also been a turn (and sometimes a return) to philosophy. This volume highlights anthropological engagements with ordinary language philosophy, philosophy of action, virtue ethics, political philosophy, and existential and phenomenological traditions. But what becomes clear in putting anthropological considerations of the ethical alongside philosophical ones is how much this recent anthropological work has the potential to reinvigorate the radical philosophical anthropological questions: what is the human being? What characterizes human existence as such?

Not surprisingly, the three contributing phenomenological philosophers (Wentzer, Raffoul and Dyring) are most concerned to articulate what is at stake in this ambition to address the question of the human from the perspective of responsive phenomenology. However, the anthropological contributors to this volume who highlight the importance of experience for ethical life also draw inspiration from the existential phenomenological tradition. They illustrate the phenomenological point that the being-committed that arises with the factual experience of the lived human life is established neither on the collective level as a collection of facts, rules and regulations, nor in a causal sequence as the necessary consequence of a given cause. Rather, this being-committed channels, at its core, an irreducible demand that emanates from finite, singular human existence as such. This radical existential dimension that resides just below the surface of the experiential focus indicates strongly what these anthropological investigations might fruitfully contribute to a philosophical anthropology of the human condition.

Zigon's chapter is an anthropological contribution that explicitly connects this experiential focus to claims about the human condition, and as such raises questions addressed most thoroughly by the two philosophical chapters in Section Three. Though grounded within his ethnographic material, Zigon directly argues the importance of considering the question of 'the human' in relation to any project to articulate ethics. However, he expresses this ambition in a particularly cautionary way and as a challenge to any version of metaphysical humanism that might creep into a consideration of ethical life. He contrasts 'an ethical imperative for human existence' with the 'metaphysical humanism' that he believes characterizes not only much of moral philosophy but also, increasingly, anthropology's studies of ethics. He recognizes that both the notion of dwelling and the vocabulary of dignity 'make claims about the essential "nature" of being human' (Zigon this volume: 203) but the status of these claims is very different, he argues. Metaphysical humanists assert the notion of a 'predefined human with very specific characteristics and capacities' while the sort of ethical imperative he proposes does not do so. He proposes 'dwelling' as a useful way to understand human life because it involves a simpler and less normatively freighted 'claim that to be human is to be intimately intertwined with a world for which one is concerned and which is

concerned, in turn, for it' (ibid.: 204). Zigon's concern is to create or borrow from vocabularies that help us to see human existence as a space of possibility, including in ways that do not tie us to moral vocabularies that seem to presuppose too much about what it means to be human or to be an ethical being.

Wentzer's chapter is particularly useful as an entry into a philosophical discussion of a responsive ethics that directly addresses the question of what it means to be human. He takes on the task of noting points of convergence but also some crucial differences between his responsive approach and some dominant positions within anthropology. He outlines three primary claims that characterize a responsive approach: 1) that life is characterized by an essential human indeterminacy; 2) that the ethical claims we face exceed our ability to respond or even to account for them through our normative categories; and 3) most centrally that exploring the ethical demands a first-person phenomenology in order to illuminate these first two conditions, namely 'being in a state of ontological indeterminacy and ethical overload' (Wentzer this volume: 215).

As he explores these three claims, Wentzer comes to some important conclusions that distinguish his phenomenological approach from some of the frameworks taken up within the anthropology of ethics, and can be seen in some of the other chapters in this volume. While he recognizes that the notion of the human as undetermined developed in German philosophical anthropology does entail some 'elements about human agency and freedom' (ibid.: 218), the issue of freedom as connected to 'reason, consciousness or language' are not presupposed in it. Rather, human freedom is linked to this existential condition of indeterminacy as an ontological condition coupled with the burden of action – 'we have to lead a life instead of just living it' (ibid.: 219). Humans are 'world-open creatures that are not bound to an environment but released to the world' (ibid.: 218). This release carries with it the burden that responsiveness entails. 'Responsiveness is the name for a way to cope with one's fragile and finite existence that captures our being called upon to act anyway' (ibid.: 222).

There are certainly some key differences between the way that many anthropologists have been considering matters like the role of freedom and normativity in ethical life and what Wentzer proposes here. However, as he develops his thesis, Wentzer does not emphasize difference so much as points of convergence or resonance. He finds the ethnographic insistence of anthropology, especially when it is taken up as a kind of 'existential anthropology', particularly important. As he puts it: 'Maybe one may say that existential anthropology actually indicates the intersection between philosophical anthropology and ethnography, approachable from both ends, with the first-person-perspective and a sensitivity for the universal relevance of lived experience with its ethical quandaries as its vantage point' (ibid.: 219).

Francois Raffoul's chapter sharpens our understanding of what a phenomenological portrait of ethics can contribute to an investigation of what it means to be human as a responsive being. Among all the chapters, his is most

explicit in setting up a contrast between the kind of philosophical anthropology that builds upon an existential picture of human life and one that draws upon Kant's seminal formulations. Raffoul contrasts two notions of responsibility (as a foundational ethical concept) and the distinct ethical scenes that surround them. Both treat responsibility as the heart of ethics but in very different, perhaps even irreconcilable, ways. The traditional version links responsibility to accountability. It is credited primarily to Kant, though with a reach that goes back to Aristotle and Plato. The other, which Raffoul favours, arises from post-Nietzschean phenomenological philosophy. Here, responsibility is linked to responsiveness: the 'motif of the call'.

Several motifs characterize the phenomenological picture of responsibility that Raffoul draws. Notably, all of these portray responsibility in terms of the experience of responding, as befits a phenomenological approach. First, it is, in the first instance, passive. We are responsible not because we are able to begin something but because of a prior something that initiates – we are exposed 'to an event that does not come from us and yet calls us' (Raffoul this volume: 236). Second, responsibility is not, primarily (or at all), directed to the self. It certainly cannot be characterized by an effort of self-mastery of some sovereign subject. Rather, it involves a response to an other, an alterity that makes its demands. Third, the demands made upon us exceed our capacity. Responding – or responding adequately – is, in an important sense, impossible. Thus the call for care is also a burden that exposes our own finitude (ibid.: 236). If we are free, Sartre tells us, we are 'condemned to be free' (ibid.: 238). Our vulnerability to our own finitude, in the face of impossible or excessive demands, reveals why the whole notion of responsibility as accountability is utterly flawed. It does not make sense to presume that we can use our reason to respond adequately in ways that could be justified after the fact. This picture simply fails to understand the deeper, ontological nature of how responsibility engages us. Finally, we are responsible for a future – for what is to come – but this future has an openness we can never fully envision or control. Rather, it is characterized by an unforeseeability; it is unapproachable even as we approach it (ibid.: 240). We can think about the future in an immediate eventful sense, the way we are 'respondents, not absolute beginners' in any situation, or we can consider this in a more long-term sense as when we consider the future of our children and the next generations, or the fate of the planet. Whatever the horizon, our vulnerability and finitude is exposed.

Conclusion

To sum up and state things in their boldest terms, the trope of moral engines suggests that inquiry into the ethical has its natural home neither in anthropology nor philosophy alone but in a borderland between them. The point of entering this borderland is not to provide a general overview of philosophical

and anthropological theories of morality and ethics. Rather, by exploring the question of what drives or propels ethical life, this volume aims to generate scholarly, interdisciplinary debate on a topic that has not yet been given the theoretical attention that its importance warrants.

Our suggestion has been that a preliminary way of addressing the question of moral engines opens if we follow the intuition that this inquiry into the 'engine' in ethical and moral matters is an inquiry into their drives or impulses, including the ontological or existential roots of the ethical as such. Hence, this kind of inquiry entails an effort to shed light on the urgency, the imperative quality or the practical necessity with which such matters present themselves to us, and to place analytical emphasis on the questions of the constitution of this urgency, of the status of such imperative qualities, of whence comes this practical necessity or commitment so poignantly felt in ethical dilemmas.

This kind of inquiry provides a vantage point for critically questioning the most commonly deployed ethical concepts. In fact, there is a thread of critique about received ethical concepts running through many of the contributing chapters. For anthropologists, this is often spurred on by the experiential excesses of the ethnographic encounter itself. Implicitly or explicitly, authors ask: do dominant vocabularies of morality do justice to the particular ethical demands people face? Are these vocabularies capable of grasping the properly ethical drive unfolding in human practice? The commitment to experience-nearness, so central to anthropological research, is thus not abandoned with the turn toward the fundamental question of moral engines and the venture into the borderlands between anthropology and philosophy. Even the more philosophical contributions in this volume remain true to this commitment by stressing phenomenological analysis as opposed to logical deductions and simplistic thought experiments. Hence, contributors – both anthropologists and philosophers – draw upon complicating ethnographic or aesthetic cases, suggesting potential paths for a conceptual development that might be better equipped to address the ethical dimensions and moral engines of human life.

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Notes

1. In this introductory chapter, while we do not distinguish 'morality' from 'ethics' as concepts, we recognize that several of the contributing authors, for various theoretical reasons, do make such a distinction. We briefly discuss some of these reasons in a later section of the introduction.
2. Several of the authors contributing to this volume will feature in the special issue 'The Human Condition: Reinventing Philosophical Anthropology' (edited by Cheryl Mattingly and Thomas S. Wentzer), forthcoming in *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*.
3. Aristotle's doctrine of ethical teleology is not mechanistic. Ethical striving is natural, but excellence does not happen merely by nature (*physei*) or by chance for that matter. Ethical virtue requires continuous habituation and cultivation of a disposition of the soul (*hexis proairetikē*) that enables the virtuous person to conceive rightly a given moment of action and choose the act appropriate to it.
4. Notably, in his later work *Dependent Rational Animals* (1999), MacIntyre revises his position, reverting to one closer to Aristotle's original thinking, by founding his ethics in the animal condition of the human being. It is worth pointing this out because it shows how MacIntyre's reconsideration speaks to the whole question of what constitutes an ethical drive. Acknowledging that tradition and social roles can only provide ethical orientation, but not an ethical drive as such, MacIntyre now looks to nature and natural vulnerability for an account of what we are here calling a moral engine of ethical cultivation and comportment. He admits that 'no account of the goods, rules and virtues that are definitive of our moral life can be adequate that does not explain ... how that form of life is possible for beings who are biologically constituted as we are' (1999: x).
5. It is notable that two of the editors of *Moral Engines*, Mattingly and Wentzer, have chapters in the *Anthropology and Philosophy* collection. In one sense, it provided inspiration for this edited collection despite the difference in topic and tone. (See the prologue for further discussion of this.)
6. Here we leave aside the longer history of the philosophical roots of the discipline of anthropology, cf. Adams 1998.
7. Of course, it should not be forgotten that Geertz' articulation of ethnography as thick description is deeply indebted to philosopher Gilbert Ryle, exemplifying yet again the dizzying interpenetration of philosophy and anthropology.

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