Introduction
Moral Change in Philosophy and Anthropology

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In the winter of 2019, the appearance of the SARS CoV-2 virus, which led to the COVID-19 pandemic, changed a small part of the biological habitat for human life on Earth, resulting in numerous moral changes globally. Before COVID-19, coughing into the air or one's hands in public places was considered gross, yet fairly harmless, at least in most European and US settings. After the outbreak of the virus, in those very same locations, these forms of coughing were morally condemned as reckless and socially irresponsible behaviour. Previously, it was considered a family's moral obligation to visit sick and elderly family members during, for example, the Hindu Diwali festival, the Islamic Eid al-Adha and the Christian Christmas. During the pandemic, many families have been faced with a moral demand to refrain from doing so and find other ways of caring and connecting socially. These alterations in accepted and desirable behaviour are minor instances of moral change. Even if what in this case could be called the grounding values remain the same (e.g. care and not harming people in one's vicinity), new patterns of attention, consideration and concern are internalized, creating new possibilities for moral condemnation, along with new ways of exhibiting and conceptualizing virtue and moral responsibility. People's moral imaginaries have been set in motion in ways that may or may not have long-term implications for our acknowledged moral duties to others.[1]

When seeking to understand moral change, it is useful to note that it can unfold at various *levels* and with different *scopes*, for example, at the level of an individual's life, in the behaviour of groups, in practices and in cultures at large. There are also varying *degrees* of moral changes, ranging from minor moral changes, such as parents internalizing a norm of listening parenthood (for example, by not interrupting their children unnecessarily, letting children have their say), to major and radical moral changes, whereby the moral 'framework' itself undergoes transformation, such as those undergone by the Crow tribe during and after the colonization of their land (Lear 2008) or the Urapmin

people of Papua New Guinea after their conversion from their traditional religion to a form of Christianity in the 1970s (Robbins 2004). Furthermore, moral changes can advance at various *paces*. The minor moral changes resulting from COVID-19 happened fast, but the moral revolution in the social roles and understanding of women in Western societies has occurred slowly over hundreds of years. Finally, moral change can also happen due to a variety of different, at times interacting, *dynamics*, such as, for instance, a changed biological environment, legal interventions, grassroots activism, increases in scientific knowledge, religious and political pressures, technological inventions and cross-cultural interactions, to name just a few (see, e.g., Appiah 2010; Henrich 2020; Eriksen 2020). The trajectories of moral changes are often unpredictable and major moral alterations usually require several contributory and co-evolving factors that can only be traced in hindsight.

At all times and in all places, moral change has been a feature of human life. We can cope with such change in ways that either further or diminish our own and others' quality of life. Both Cheryl Mattingly (2014, 2019) and Jonathan Lear (2008) describe what struggling for a good life as individuals and as a group in unfamiliar moral territories can amount to. Successfully negotiated changes enhance the capacities of individuals and groups to create flourishing lives for themselves and future generations, while failures to ethically come to terms with new conditions and demands may destroy lives and tear communities apart. Further, humans not only 'suffer' moral change as something they encounter and must deal with. We also face ethical demands to actively initiate and create moral changes. Movements for women's rights, civil rights, LGBTQ+ rights and animal rights have altered Western patterns of moral reasoning, action and justification over the past century. Climate activist Greta Thunberg and others of her generation have lobbied to initiate a revolution with many moral implications, such as radical changes in how politicians, business leaders, public officials and citizens all over the world think, act and live with regard to matters that affect the environment. In this case, the movement claims that if we do not change, we risk not only the flourishing of humans and most living beings, but also our very survival.

Investigating and understanding the phenomenon of moral change, empirically as well as theoretically, is thus an important aspect of understanding human life and societies, and one with extensive practical implications. Yet, moral change as such has until very recently not been considered a central topic in either philosophy or anthropology.[2] In anthropology, it has usually been subsumed under social change. In philosophy, from Plato and onwards, moral change has generally been neglected in favour of a search for and foregrounding of that which is considered universal and unchanging in ethics (Parsons 1974; Eriksen 2020). In this process, moral change tends to dissolve both as a genuine phenomenon and as a topic of research. As Robert Baker aptly points out: 'Even philosophers who once acted as agents of moral change eschew the concept, preferring to view moral change as a process of reinterpreting the fundamental moral principles of our common morality' (2019: 1).

This situation is, however, beginning to change, with a growing number of authors in philosophy seeking to theoretically address the phenomena of changing morality (e.g. Lear 2008; Appiah 2010; Hämäläinen 2017; Pleasants 2018; Baker 2019; Eriksen 2020; Smyth 2020). Regardless of the minimal theoretical interest in moral change as such in contemporary anthropology (for exceptions, see Robbins 2007, 2014; Keane 2016), the field's plentiful descriptions of life in many different areas of the world offer an abundance of insights into moral transformations, how best to do research on them and the ethical, existential and political issues associated with moral changes.

This anthology addresses moral change by bringing together anthropologists and philosophers in a conversation about how to understand the moral transformations of, for example, norms, concepts, emotions, practices, world views, forms of personhood and life circumstances at individual and cultural levels. Most of the authors in this volume represent two strong currents in contemporary academia: on the one hand, the interest in thematizing morality and seeking inspiration from philosophy among anthropologists, and, on the other hand, the growing interest in contextuality, in thick descriptive and empirical approaches, and in local changes to moral conceptions among moral philosophers. By bringing these currents together, we hope to create an ideal environment for dialogue and thinking about moral change and thus potentially to open a space for future interdisciplinary collaborative work on the topic.

In order to provide the context for this cross-disciplinary conversation – to cast light on why it is happening now and why it is experienced as vibrant and inspiring – central differences and similarities in the intellectual orientations and backgrounds of, respectively, moral philosophy and moral anthropology need to be addressed. Four core topics are therefore sketched in the following sections, namely, 'the nature of the moral', 'freedom', 'normativity' and 'the ordinary'. Finally, we give a brief overview of the chapters.

The Nature of 'the Moral'

What is 'the moral'? This philosophical question is fundamental to investigations and discussions of moral changes. What kind of transformations are *moral* changes, as opposed to, say, economic, political or fashion changes? This is not a simple question to answer, first, because the nature of 'the moral', 'morality' or 'the ethical' is a hotly debated issue in both anthropology and philosophy (see, e.g., Heintz 2013: 3–5; Keane 2016: 16–27; Fink 2020) and, second, because moral issues in real life often are, for example, economic, social and political questions too. *What* we call an issue is significantly dependent on our reasons for and ways of engaging with it.

Anthropologists have always investigated and described their subjects' moralities (Laidlaw 2017) and anthropology used to be considered one of the so-called 'moral sciences', along with, for instance, economics and psychology. Yet, until fairly recently, anthropologists have focused on social change but have

not had a disciplinary orientation of thinking about change in terms of ethics or morality 'in its own right' (Zigon 2008: 2; Heintz 2013: 1–3; Lambek 2010b: 1). Another way of framing this is to say that anthropology has been characterized by a theoretical tradition of investigating and understanding morality as *reducible* to and indistinguishable from *social* norms and values. This orientation is often attributed to the strong influence and popularity of Émile Durkheim's thinking (see, e.g., Laidlaw 2002; Mattingly 2014; Fassin 2014: 3). In the first decade of the new millennium, however, a growing chorus of critical voices in the field of anthropology challenged this reductive view of 'the moral', picking up on critiques made earlier, for example, by May Edel and Abraham Edel in the late 1950s, but not broadly recognized in the field (Zigon 2008: 4–8; Laidlaw 2017). These anthropologists wanted to thematize morality 'in its own right' (Laidlaw 2014: 2–4, 15). One reason for doing so was that they identified, in their fieldwork, a distinction between moral norms and considerations and social norms and considerations operative in people's understandings of themselves, their situations and possibilities. People would regularly experience conflicts between what social norms and morality demanded of them, conflicts that could not properly be made sense of in a Durkheimian theoretical framework. Anthropologists therefore increasingly began to thematize morality in itself; they have since done so in different, at times opposing, ways.

Some anthropologists challenge the standard reductive view of morality by exploring the roles of the individual, freedom and ethical critique in moral life (see Laidlaw 2002: 315, 2016; Zigon 2007; Robbins 2004). One way of doing this is through the exploration of the intricacies of the phenomena of self-formation and self-cultivation (e.g. Faubion 2001, 2011). Others challenge the standard view by drawing a conceptual distinction between, on the one hand, 'morality', which is a society's system of rules and obligations towards others that govern our decisions about right and wrong acts, and, on the other hand, the more encompassing category of 'ethics', which relates to virtues, values and a conception of the good life. Here 'ethics' has the resources to challenge a society's morality system (e.g. Keane 2016: 16–21; for another version of this distnction, see Zigon 2008: 162–66). Still others have challenged the standard reductive view by conceptualizing 'the moral' as an immanent aspect of everyday lives, practices and societies that is, however, not fully reducible to these (Das 2007, 2015c, 2020; Lambek 2010a); it is not reducible to these because, among other things, 'the ordinary' is laced with ethical insecurities and indeterminacies, which can propel change (Das 2007: 1–18, 2015a: 1–3; Lambek 2010b: 1). These and other dissenting voices soon resulted in a multifaceted 'ethical turn', which swept through the field and consolidated 'moral anthropology' as an indispensable and popular part of contemporary anthropology (see Heintz 2009; Fassin and Lézé 2014; Fassin 2015b; Laidlaw and McKearney forthcoming).

Philosophers, on the other hand, can claim a more than 2,000-year-long tradition of discussing morality 'in its own right'. The Western academic tradition of reflecting on ethics originated in Ancient Greece and the nature of its subject matter was debated from the outset. No consensus has been reached on

how to conceptualize morality, draw its boundaries or articulate its central issues. Originally, the words 'ethical' and 'moral' were synonymous, derived from Greek and Latin respectively, but they have also been used to designate different things by different philosophers and philosophical communities (see Fink 2020 for an illuminating overview). Bernard Williams (1985) is one example of an influential thinker who uses the word 'ethics' to refer to broad questions of the good life and 'the morality system' to refer to specific questions of moral obligation. Often the answer to what 'the moral is', at least in Anglophone moral philosophy, falls under one of the three major moral philosophical traditions: virtue ethics, consequentialism or deontology (see, e.g., Driver 2007; Timmons 2013; Rachels and Rachels 2015; Wolff 2018). However, these major traditions have also been criticized and challenged in recent moral philosophy and today ethics of care, phenomenological ethics, feminist ethics and contextual ethics, among others, have broadened the range of ways in which the moral is conceptualized.

Because of its long and rich tradition of discussing morality in its own right, moral philosophy has attracted many contemporary anthropologist readers, who have found therein a wealth of ideas about how to formulate what 'the moral' is, if it is not fully reducible to a society's norms, rules and values. Thinkers from Aristotle and Immanuel Kant through Ludwig Wittgenstein, Martin Heidegger and Emmanuel Levinas to Michel Foucault and Hannah Arendt, and many others, have provided conceptual and theoretical inspiration for moral anthropologists (see, e.g., Das 1998, 2020; Throop 2010; Das et al. 2014; Liisberg, Pedersen and Dalsgaard 2015; Laidlaw 2017; Mattingly et al. 2017). The contrasts and conflicts within current moral anthropology are therefore, to a certain extent, reflections of related conflicts and demarcation issues between the traditional philosophical orientations that anthropologists make use of.

The tradition of moral philosophy has not, however, only served as a positive inspiration. It has also been found wanting in several important respects. To mention a few of its obvious shortcomings: although some parts of philosophy have undergone 'a postcolonial reformation', many have not. Thus, in modern moral philosophy, one still finds what for the anthropologist are, for example, overly naïve and often Eurocentric conceptions of who 'we' are and what 'an ethical agent', 'the universally human' and 'the good life' are (see, e.g., Widlok 2013; Keane 2016: 7–9, 14–15). Further, the complex cultural differences encountered in the field and the epistemic challenges of anthropological research place different demands on the conceptual apparatus to those encountered in the largely armchair activities of philosophers. For these and other reasons, moral anthropologists have rarely found it useful to simply copy the ideas, concepts and theories they have encountered in moral philosophy. Rather, they have had to use this inspiration to creatively forge new concepts and theoretical tools suitable for anthropological work. Thus, on the basis of the work of Aristotle, Charles Taylor and modern phenomenology, Cheryl Mattingly has developed her own version of virtue ethics, termed 'first

person virtue ethics', in order to better highlight the moral issues her infor-
mants struggle with (2014: xvi, 33–58, 2018). The anthropologist, spurred on
by the life she encounters in the field, refines moral philosophical concepts. In
some cases, the ethical issues encountered in the field call for a focus on new
topics, raise new questions or demand the development of new concepts and
moral ideals that are different to those moral philosophy has so far offered
(see, e.g., Zigon 2018b). In these and similar cases, moral anthropology can
serve as positive ethical, theoretical and methodological inspiration for con-
temporary moral philosophy.

That neither philosophy nor anthropology can settle on a universally
agreed-upon definition of 'the moral' is neither, we believe, a theoretical nor
moral problem. On the contrary, there are good reasons to treat any fixed
concept of the moral with caution (Eriksen 2020: 145–59). Historically, narrow
definitions have repeatedly distorted or neglected many phenomena that are
morally important. Further, delineations are necessary for a range of moral,
theoretical and practical purposes and they always express normative com-
mitments. Saying that a phenomenon (norm, virtue, value, concern) is a moral
one often means granting it a special importance. Anyone who is genuinely
concerned about ethics is likely to want to step back now and then to think
about whether the chosen delineation properly reflects the world we live in
and our own or other people's needs, commitments and orientations in it (see
Murdoch 1997: 76–77).

Freedom: Navigating Issues of the Individual, the Intersubjective and the Social

One of the challenges faced by researchers engaged in moral anthropology has
been to convince anthropologists more generally that a substantial notion of
freedom in the domain of the ethical is relevant in the study of societies.
Against a broadly Durkheimian background of attention to the habitual repro-
duction of ideas, virtues and practices, anthropologists such as James Laidlaw,
Joel Robbins and Jarrett Zigon have recently singled out the domain of 'moral-
ity' as a domain of freedom and choice, and argued for its heuristic importance
(Laidlaw 2002, 2014; Robbins 2007; Zigon 2008). Looking at people as, in some
senses, free agents will bring out important moral aspects of social life that are
easily lost to sight if only the habitual and socially conditioned are emphasized.
The anthropologist turning to philosophy may be searching for many things,
but one of these things has been confidence and conceptual complexity in
talking about freedom as a substantial and effective part of human lives stem-
ming from a long tradition of doing so.

Interestingly, many moral philosophers have travelled in what seems to be
the opposite direction. In early and mid-twentieth-century Anglophone moral
philosophy, the individual, freedom and choice were taken for granted as the
primary loci of morality, while insights into the moral significance of habit,

virtue, social mores and contextually specific ethical practices were hard won. This was perceptively criticized by Elizabeth Anscombe (1958) and Iris Murdoch (1997), among others. A moral philosophy focused solely on free action and choice fails to make sense of its own underpinnings: moral freedom is not acting and choosing in a void; rather, it is a complex interpretative endeavour of contextually embedded, linguistic, cultural, habitual and emotional creatures (Murdoch 1997). Today, thanks to the late twentieth-century expansion of virtue ethics, attention to character, habits and community is standard in moral philosophy. In addition, attention to the embodied aspects of moral experience has been increasingly theorized under the influence of phenomenology (see, e.g., Guenther 2013).

One of the most important trajectories of late twentieth-century Anglophone moral philosophy has thus been the broadening of ethical attention from individual free, voluntary action to the complex impediments of character, community, context and culture. Thus, when the moral philosopher turns to anthropology today, she is most likely looking not, or not only, for alternative theories of freedom of action, but for theoretical and practical insights into what it might mean to investigate and pay respect to the complex lived and often local backgrounds of human action and personhood (Lear 2008; Laugier 2015; Hämäläinen 2016).

Feminist and postcolonial anthropologists, among others, have made poignant critiques of individualist notions underlying liberal understandings of agency, freedom and the relationship between ethics and social norms, in ways that resonate with parallel critiques in philosophy. Saba Mahmood (2005) shows how female piety in Islamic moral reform movements challenges liberal feminist assumptions about the relationship between individualism and ethics. The pious bodily practices of her female informants – though embedded in religious and patriarchal structures – come forth as a kind of creative agency with transformative potential. Lila Abu-Lughod's work on the Islamic veil insists on looking at what different people and communities do with different kinds of veils, as a requisite for any conclusions about veils as instruments of oppression or freedom (2005). Her early work on Bedouin communities in Egypt also explores how morality is expressed in poetic form by men and women, pointing to the maintenance of moral communities through sentiments and poetry (cf. 1986, 1993).[3] Similarly, Veena Das's work describes moral agency as immersed in and carried by everyday tasks of maintaining a liveable world in fraught circumstances (Das 2007, 2020). Such work highlights how embeddedness, rather than only being able to function as an obstacle to freedom and moral action, is also always the prerequisite of any lived liberties and agencies.

As we see it, philosophy and anthropology have much to learn from each other as their different trajectories intersect, thus creating a unique opportunity for cross-disciplinary pollination and mutual collaboration in negotiating the roles of 'the individual', 'the intersubjective' and 'the social' when seeking to understand moral change.

Normativity: Moral Relativism, Moral Critique and Moral Progress

Another topic that is central to understanding moral change, where complicated patterns of differences and similarities between moral philosophy and moral anthropology show up, is 'normativity'.[4]

Even though moral change has not been a core theoretical issue in moral philosophy, it has generally, from Plato onwards, been considered a threatening theoretical and moral challenge to the discipline's investment in providing moral guidelines. Moral differences and fundamental changes in moral compasses have most often been found disquieting because they seem to pose a challenge to moral objectivity and the ethical reliability of any society's current morality. They thus seem to undermine our moral judgement and ability to act in morally justified ways (Stokes 2017; Eriksen 2020: 81–160). If what we formerly considered to be morally acceptable turned out to be bad and unjust (e.g. slavery and torture), how can we trust what we believe in today (e.g. equality between the sexes, the prohibition of incest)? By the same token, moral change also seems to undermine the possibility of genuine cross-cultural and cross-historical moral comparison, evaluation and critique.

A lot of moral philosophical work has been put into showing how, across history and between cultures, there are universal moral issues, values and principles that do not change and can serve as the foundation for cross-cultural and cross-historical moral comparison, evaluation and critique (see, e.g., Raz 1994; Moody-Adams 2002; Nussbaum 1993, 2007). Although there is much to appreciate in this work, moral change here tends to evaporate as a substantive or even real phenomenon. When that happens, something of vital importance to human lives slides out of view, as humans experience and at times must deal with sometimes radical moral changes in their personal lives, as well as on a societal level (Lear 2008). It is therefore important that we also keep the legacy of 'flux-thinkers', such as Heraclitus, Friedrich Nietzsche and Foucault, alive in discussions of moral change.

In anthropology, different forms of moral change are frequently discussed and described, but they have generally not been conceptualized as a challenging problem to be solved. This is, among other things, because modern anthropology was born of the ambition to inquire into other cultures in an objective, scientific, descriptive way in order to understand without passing moral and culturally biased judgement (Fassin 2015a).

Moral relativism, that is, versions of the idea that different individuals' or societies' moralities are incommensurable and only valid for members of the particular society in question, was, for a long time, the dominant meta-ethical stance of anthropologists (Laidlaw 2017). Fieldwork descriptions of how radically differently 'primitive tribes' thought and lived around the world also had a powerful impact on the public imagination, as well as on the philosophical community, in the early twentieth century. Moral relativism shaped the sensibilities of Anglophone moral philosophers, who were struggling to consolidate moral philosophy on a secular basis (Appiah 2015: 561–63). The early decades

of the twentieth century became the era of meta-ethics in philosophy; the study of 'moral language' gained increasing prominence and philosophers also saw themselves as representatives of a modern scientific approach to morality. It was argued that words like 'good' or 'just' did not denote facts of reality but only expressed, for example, subjective emotions. Moral relativism has to this day remained a widespread meta-ethical theoretical background for most anthropologists (Zigon 2008: 9–19; Laidlaw 2014: 23–32). Even though this understanding of anthropology has since been challenged and changed in several ways, not least as a result of the growing importance of socially engaged anthropology, the contemporary anthropologist's ethos is still based on accurately describing and interpreting actual, contingent forms of living, valuing and knowing.

The trajectory of Anglophone moral philosophy has again been quite different. Here we see a regained confidence in largely objectivist normative ethics from the mid-twentieth century and a relative marginalization of moral relativism in philosophical ethics (for exceptions, see Harman 1975; Wong 2009; Velleman 2015). Meta-ethical conversations, in which relativism features as a live option, have continued to the present day, but they are not broadly seen, by philosophers, as challenges to the possibility of offering objective ethical judgements. The latter half of the twentieth century saw an upsurge of new formulations of the classical normative ethical theories: utilitarian/consequentialist (e.g. Richard B. Brandt, Peter Singer, Peter Unger, John Broome), Kantian and contractualist theories (e.g. John Rawls, T.M. Scanlon, Christine Korsgaard, Onora O'Neill), and virtue-ethical theories (e.g. Philippa Foot, Alasdair MacIntyre, Rosalind Hursthouse, Julia Annas). The search for objectivity in moral philosophy is today largely, though not unanimously, seen as the search for universally valid principles for good action or personhood.

The regained confidence in largely objectivist normative ethics has also been evident from the 1980s onwards in the still ongoing revival of otherwise extinct discussions of moral progress (see Singer 1981; Moody-Adams 1999, 2017; Rorty 2007; Nussbaum 2007; Buchanan and Powell 2018; Kitcher 2011, 2021).[5] In contrast to the anthropological research community, most of these moral philosophers have used the need to attend to moral change as an incentive to reinforce a normative agenda and a normative professional identity. Morality is often strongly linked to normative universality (see, e.g., Moody-Adams 1999). The making of a philosophical contribution, again, is construed as tapping into that normative universality by offering criteria for evaluating what is truly morally good and bad. Changing moralities are thus subsumed under a universalist narrative of ethical truth and progress (or regress).

Although this normative angle on change is far from universally embraced by philosophers interested in the moral implications of societal change, it is currently shaping parts of the field in a way that risks increasing the distance between philosophers and researchers in other, more empirically or descriptively oriented fields, such as anthropology. For anthropologists, the philosophical discourses on progress can seem incomprehensible, parochial and

ignorant of the more complex implications of the very changes that they set out to evaluate as progress (or regress). From the perspective of moral philosophers, anthropologists' descriptions and analyses of changing worlds can be seen as merely dealing with changes of 'mores', with little deeper philosophical or indeed moral import, when the difficult normative issues associated with such changes are not dealt with.

However, the distinction between 'the descriptive anthropologists' and 'the normatively engaged philosophers' is, if taken to apply widely to contemporary anthropology and philosophy, an overgeneralization and an oversimplification. Firstly, there can be no practice of 'description' without normativity in the form of, for example, ideals of good description. Secondly, there are currently strong trends of empirically informed and descriptively oriented moral philosophy, for instance, in experimental philosophy, so-called x-phi, and in moral psychology (see, e.g., Appiah 2008; Greene 2013; Buchanan and Powell 2018). Anthropology contains a plurality of methodologies, including ethnography, multi-sited ethnography, auto-ethnography, history and archaeology, producing in different combinations a plethora of ways of delimiting and engaging what is to be described. Reading anthropology could further expand moral philosophers' descriptive toolkits in useful ways.

The relativist spirit of anthropology has also been revisited and revised many times over the past century: the idea of cultures as 'sealed spheres' has been deemed untenable and insights into cultural complexity, change and intercultural exchange have made the methodological prohibition against the ethical critique of other cultures seem less obvious. As anthropologists have increasingly directed their attention towards locations closer to home, they have also become more used to working with cultural landscapes in which they are personally involved and evaluatively implicated. Zigon, for one, has been engaged in criticizing 'the war on drugs' in the United States (Zigon 2018a, 2018b). Bracketing moral evaluation and judgement has thus, for several reasons, become increasingly ethically complicated and theoretically problematic in anthropology (Fassin 2014: 6–8, 2015a: 2–10; Zigon 2008: 10–11; Ortner 2019).

A Joint Focus on 'the Everyday'

One research trajectory relevant to the understanding of moral change that for some years now has engaged both moral anthropologists and moral philosophers is the focus on what is often loosely referred to as 'the everyday', 'the immanent' or 'the ordinary' (Laugier 2015).[6] One of the strong trends in moral anthropology in recent years, as mentioned above, has been that of 'ordinary ethics'. But even among those anthropologists who do not explicitly work under the label 'ordinary ethics' or who are even openly critical of it, we can identify a closely related underlining of everyday life as a crucial site of the moral (e.g. Zigon 2008: 3, 161; Keane 2016: 3, 10; Robbins 2007, 2016). In so far as anthropological work consists of fieldwork in various communities and descriptions of

observations made in these sites, the anthropological literature is generally rich in narrations of the actual life and transformations of individuals, practices and societies. As Veena Das remarks, like poems, '[a]n anthropological text, we know, is marked by a certain kind of excess or a certain surplus. Call it thick ethnography, call it fascination with detail' (Das 2020: 39).

In the philosophical context, 'ordinary' signals a shift from abstractions, (over)generalizations and theoretical system-building towards a focus on and descriptions of the complex and unruly lived realities that the theories are supposed to be about. A significant attraction for moral philosophers in the work of moral anthropologists is that the latter often produce texts radiant with an ethical sensibility, beauty and attention to the paradoxes of human life only rarely seen in the long tradition of moral philosophy. Here we witness what it means to incarnate 'the point of view from which we see and attend with warmth and sympathy to the complex reality of human life' (Diamond 1997: 246).

It seems to us that this complex reality, with its numerous moving and interacting parts, is precisely what we need to attend to in order to develop better theoretical, empirical and ethical understandings of the phenomenon of moral change.

Book Overview

We have ordered the contents of the book into two sections. The first consists of chapters in which case studies of various forms of change with ethical implications take centre stage. The second section contains more theoretical and philosophical discussions of changing morality. This ordering is dictated by a ground-up approach: we believe that theoretical discussion is more helpful when we have relevant cases and contexts fresh in our minds, and that 'the field' can alert us to things we ought to take into consideration, but which we can tend to overlook when reflecting and theorizing. The chapters of the latter section are therefore not best understood as theoretical elaborations of case studies, with the cases serving the role of 'illustrations' and 'examples' of theoretical insights; rather, they introduce philosophical conversations that, for instance, seek to complicate, deepen and expand the range of tools and topics at work in moral philosophy based on insights from 'the field'. They use case materials as moral laboratories, reminders, objects of comparison and starting points for readdressing or raising new moral philosophical questions about changing lives.

Marriage has always figured prominently in the anthropological imagination due to its central role in most communities as a union, often a legal and religious one, with implications for kinship, daily life, gender roles and the transfer of wealth and power through generations. In a lower-income neighbourhood of East Amman, women today try to navigate the challenges of marriage in *hay al-ayyam* (these days), a period experienced as a collective descent into amorality. Using Raymond Williams's notion of 'a structure of feeling' as a guide, Susan

MacDougall's chapter traces the transforming moralities of marriage in Jordan and shows how evolving economic and social circumstances create new ways for people to relate to themselves and new moral ideals for them to aspire to.

In the urban landscapes of Amman, business-as-usual morality also meets the vibrant ethics of queer living, resulting in the emergence of a novel space for shame, irony and moral change. In her chapter, Marie Rask Bjerre Odgaard traces the meanings of *'ayb* as the word used to shame those who stand out from the ordinary in morally corrupt ways, but also as a tool used to playfully tease and challenge normative gendered expressions among queer friends and in the queer community. With reference to phenomenological thinkers such as Lisa Guenther and Sara Ahmed, she demonstrates how subjectivity is shaped in the experience of *'ayb* as both a powerful cultural ideal and an ironic experience, pointing also to the potentiality and temporality of queering shame in the context of urban Amman.

Cheryl Mattingly's chapter likewise centres on the realm of ethical potentiality and ponders its recognition in fieldwork. How might the existential-philosophical question of human possibility be posed when focusing on how it is addressed by particular people in situations shaped by structural conditions and cultural norms? She draws upon long-term fieldwork among African American families in Los Angeles and engagement with Bernhard Waldenfels's phenomenological work to tune into experiences of ethical novelty. In the context of one family, she explores the indeterminate structures of ethical experience and the ways in which ordinary life serves as a crucial space where the possibility for moral change emerges.

Joel Robbins's chapter revisits the Urapmin of Papua New Guinea, who, at the time of his fieldwork with them in the 1990s, were living in the aftermath of a moral revolution, which, instead of doing away with the old, had left the people to negotiate the demands of two incompatible moral frameworks. A rapid conversion to a charismatic and eschatological form of Christianity by the whole population in 1977 had resulted in their ethical life being recentred around the urgent goal of saving as many people as possible, in the face of the imminent return of Jesus. But the dictates of individual salvation in their type of Christianity was at odds with the relational ethics of their previous form of life, in ways that had far-reaching implications for their moral psychology. Robbins uses the case to reflect both on the nature of moral revolutions and on the application of the idea of moral progress to them, in ways that resonate with current moral philosophical work on these themes.

The following two chapters deal with ongoing ethical renegotiation in institutional settings. Both chapters engage, in different ways, with the normative question of how changing ethical life within the discussed institutions should or could be contested or shaped.

Drawing on recent literature on the notion of 'moral injury', Elizabeth M. Bounds and Joseph Wiinikka-Lydon explore the differences in social recognition associated with two domains of ethically fraught labour in the United States: the military and the prisons. In recent years, several activists and

scholars have suggested that certain ills suffered by soldiers in their work should be understood in ethical rather than psychological terms: as injuries afflicting their moral personhood and character rather than merely their mental health. While correctional officers in prisons are often similarly forced to compromise ordinary ethical conduct in their use of state-sanctioned violence, the discussion of moral injury has not yet been applied to them, largely due to the different cultural valorization of the soldier, in contrast to the correctional officer. This difference opens a vista on an ongoing process of moral recognition and renegotiation.

As the populations of the West grow ever older, and with the rise and subsequent modulations of welfare states, institutional care of the elderly is an area where practices and their moral underpinnings are, in many places, under renegotiation. Meanwhile, growing scientific knowledge of psychology and human relations has contributed to challenging previous ideals and methodologies of care. In his chapter, Rasmus Dyring investigates the transformations of moral agency and relationality that occur in people with dementia, and explores the significance of the social-ontological underpinnings of approaches to institutional care. He relies on the 'non-substantive social ontology' found in the work of phenomenological thinkers such as Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Nancy, as well as observations from a dementia care centre in Denmark, to critically supplement the currently prevailing paradigms in institutional dementia care, namely, person- and relationship-centred care and neuro-normative discourses.

With the following six chapters, which form part two of the book, we move further into philosophical conversations about moral change.

Women in workplaces, gay marriage and equal rights for people of colour are some of the moral and social revolutions that have transformed American life over the last century. Moral revolutions change the lives of communities and individuals, so that what was once morally outrageous is rendered morally acceptable and what was once morally acceptable is deemed morally outrageous. Drawing on Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Robert Baker's chapter explores the idea that revolutionary changes in forms of life share a structure analogous to that of scientific revolutions.

When life changes in a major way, new moral territories open up that challenge our ordinary morality. In her chapter, Cecilie Eriksen investigates the ethical normativity of such liminal spaces by looking at the phenomenon of care in anthropological studies of homeless life, testimonies from the Second World War and the post-transformation life of Gregor Samsa in Franz Kafka's short story 'The Metamorphosis'. She does so in dialogue with Jarrett Zigon's concept of 'a moral breakdown', Lear's work on 'ironic experiences' and Anne O'Byrne's idea of 'an end of ethics'. This dialogue sheds light on some of the resources that can help people to recreate a moral world after radical changes to their form of life and concludes that in human life there are no ethical voids.

Picking up a thread of sensitivity to context and situatedness from philosophical discussions on ethics and narrative literature, as well as philosophers

such as Bernard Williams, Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor, Nora Hämäläinen explores why moral philosophers often render the phenomena of moral difference and change invisible or marginal to ethics. She does so by critically analysing Michele Moody-Adams's *Fieldwork in Familiar Places* and by suggesting that rather than an idea of truth, the activity of 'world-making' should be made central in moral philosophy to gain a clear view of moral change – along with an increased dialogue and collaborative work between anthropology and moral philosophy.

An important area of moral puzzlement, especially in secular contexts today, regards concerns that in a religious setting would be explicated in terms of impiety. New technologies for manipulating living organisms, for example, elicit the moral judgement that the suggested action would be impious or against nature, with the action therefore being ruled out. Yet, without a shared framework of religious belief, and in the realm of secular moral debate, such arguments lose a great deal of their explanatory and argumentative force and are easily relegated to the realm of personal sentiment. Cora Diamond's chapter explores the question of how to do justice to piety as a constitutive aspect of moral life in a complex and changing world, in which we know that our sense of absolute moral prohibition rarely is the final word.

Anne-Marie Søndergaard Christensen, taking her cue from a recent article by Cora Diamond, explores two different responses to moral disagreement: one whereby we experience difference and disagreement as potentially widening and enriching our understanding of moral possibility, and another whereby we consider the other's moral thinking unhinged, off the rails or miscarried. The latter kind of judgement seems to rely on the idea that a certain trajectory of moral development has an unavoidable momentum, as well as relying on a form of moral universalism. The modern slave-owner, for example, knowing what 'we' know about human beings, cannot from this perspective both claim that slavery is right and still make sense. The intuitions pertaining to this latter form of judgement, while widely shared among philosophers, give rise to a range of difficult questions relating to the nature of moral reasoning, cultural difference and moral change, which Christensen seeks to address.

The theme of trajectories of moral change is also picked up by Niklas Forsberg, who focuses on how conceptual change impinges on our first-person attempts to make ethical sense of our lives, duties and place in the world. Exploring modulations that the concept of a father has gone through in mainstream Western settings, he shows that some of our moral quandaries relate to a kind of pluri-temporality of our moral language and moral experience: how we, in Stanley Cavell's words, sometimes carry 'two historical periods in one human breast'.[7]

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Notes

1. In this introduction, we use the words 'morality', 'ethics', 'moral', 'ethical', etc., interchangeably.
2. At least in Western philosophy, which is the tradition we are familiar with and the one we focus on in this introduction. All references to 'philosophy' are thus to the Western academic tradition of philosophy.
3. We thank Marie Rask Bjerre Odgaard for adding her insights into feminist and postcolonial thinking in anthropology to this section.
4. 'The normative' is often explained in contrast to 'the descriptive' and though this is somewhat misleading (as all description can be said to presuppose normativity), it can serve as a heuristic starting point: the normative is about prescription, about ought, about evaluation – for instance, what ought to be or ought to be done or whether something is good or bad, right or wrong. An ideal of justice is thus normative in that it prescribes how, for example, the benefits in a society ought to be distributed, and a traffic rule is normative in that it prescribes how we ought to act in traffic. Neither describes how humans in fact do distribute benefits or act in traffic. Another way of characterizing normativity is to say that the normative makes a claim on us: it commands, obliges, recommends or guides.
5. For overviews of contemporary discussions of moral progress, consult Musschenga and Meynen (2017) and Sauer, Blunden, Eriksen and Rehren (2021).
6. The use of the term 'the immanent' here does not imply that attention to 'the ordinary' excludes attention to the place of divinity or religion in people's lives (for a fine example of how to make room for the role of 'the transcendent', see Orsi 2016). The stress on 'the ordinary' and 'the everyday' should also not be understood as excluding extraordinary events, unusual ethical challenges in people's lives or the need and possibility for radical critique or moral revolutions (see, e.g., Das 2007; Eriksen 2020: 123–36).
7. We would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers as well as the participants in the research group *Ethics After Individualism* at Aarhus University for feedback and useful critique on earlier versions of this introduction. Cecilie Eriksen's research was supported by Independent Research Fund Denmark – Humanities (grant n° 7013-00068B) and the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement n° 851043). Nora Hämäläinen's research was supported as part of the project of Operational Programme Research, Development and Education (OP VVV/OP RDE), Centre for Ethics as Study in Human Value, registration no. CZ.02.1.01/0.0/0.0/15_003/0000425, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund and the state budget of the Czech Republic. We would also like to warmly thank Joel Robbins and James Laidlaw for hosting us as visiting researchers at the Department of Social Anthropology at Cambridge University in spring 2019. Our stay provided nurturing soil for this book. This open-access library edition has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement n° 851043).

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