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Doing ethics, and the possible

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journals.sagepub.com/home/pst**Samantha Copeland**

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Abstract

This paper begins with the paradox of teaching ethics, that we teach ethical theory in the form of general rules whereas the practice of ethics occurs in dynamic and uncertain contexts. I argue, utilizing literature that highlights the role of anticipation and relationships in ethical practice, that the goal of ethics is not consensus or agreement about what rule to follow, in a particular situation nor in general. That is, doing ethics is not about rule-making or decision-making; rather, this paper provides arguments from philosophical ethics as well as ethics education for understanding ethical practice as exploring the possible together. Drawing from these diverse perspectives, the paper contributes to discussions about the nature of ethics itself and how we should theorize about it. Finally, conclusions related to how an ethics of the possible could be taught and why it should be are offered.

Keywords

Education, ethics, experiential ethics, Kierkegaard, Levinas, meta-ethics, Serendipity

Teaching ethics entails a fundamental paradox. When teaching ethics, it is typical to begin with a set of principles or basic values that set the scene, at least, to give an idea of what ethics is about. Mirroring this, students in ethics courses hope to learn a code or set of rules that they can follow, should dilemmas and difficult decisions arise in the career they are training for. However, it is also the case that these top-down approaches are generally poor preparation for learning how to be ethical people. Seldom are we faced with a situation in “the real world” that calls for an ethical response captured perfectly in a code or principle we learned in the classroom or read in a set of guidelines or rules, with no additional interpretation necessary. While in institutional settings specific rules ensure that mis-steps are avoided, these do not offer a full account of the appropriate attitude to take to conducting research and working with others in practice. How to be ethical, that is, cannot be learned by rote.

Bottom-up approaches to ethics-learning, however, also encounter difficulties. Without education or direction, deliberations among people about what to do can miss key points or can suffer from a lack of terminology and concepts to describe the ethical issues at hand. That is, there is a need for some way to tell, at least, when a decision or action is ethical or not. For this, agreements must be made and guidelines or standards decided upon to solidify and communicate what has been agreed upon. But, if the goal of bottom-up efforts is just to come to an agreement about what rules should guide our action, it will paradoxically result in a framework meant to be imposed top-down.

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I suggest that ethics does *not* have as its goal consensus or agreement about what ought to be done, in a particular situation nor in general. That is, the efforts involved in doing ethics are not directed primarily toward rule-making or decision-making; rather, in this paper I argue that doing ethics is about exploring possibilities together, which includes evaluating rules and frameworks. A similar point is made by pragmatists, and particularists, who take ethics as being what happens in the moment and in practice and therefore unsusceptible to generalizations into rules. However, by focusing on the role of the possible in ethics—both theory and practice—I show the additional importance of creativity, imagination and the unexpected to ethics learning. By attending closely to these aspects I draw out in this paper how and why both the teaching and the doing of ethics should be understood as exploring and deliberating about the possible.

Introduction

It could be argued that ethics itself entails the possible¹: our very capacity to imagine our world differently and to consider how we might change it—that is, as a different, yet possible world—grounds the desire to improve upon the world in the first place, and thus to theorize about values and ideals. Current practices already incorporate the possible into teaching and theorizing about ethics, in fact.

For instance, consider how case studies are used for teaching. These are generally treated as “dilemmas” when used for exploring the kinds of trade-offs or compromises that may be required to come to an agreement about what is the ethical thing to do in such situations as described. Dilemmas are situations in which a difficult decision is called for, when there is no obviously correct solution, and so deliberation is required to come up with a possible solution or outcomes that (hopefully) everyone can accept. Case studies are often presented as dilemmas, in order to encourage deliberation and learning about how to make such choices

when they do arise. However, the format of a dilemma begins with the assumption that there is a particular problem to be solved and a specific decision or set of decisions to be made about how to go forward. Compromise and consensus are the aims of such an exercise, when a decision is meant to be reached. Such discrete and detached circumstances are artificial of course: ethics is seldom practiced in a series of distinct steps, but rather such decisions are embedded in past and future situations as well as within the relationships that pertain amongst decision-making groups and those affected by the decisions. While empirical research may be done to surmise what all the stakeholders may value or condone, ethics occurs within the relationships between stakeholders as much as within each stakeholder or group.

Similarly, ethical frameworks for practice, such as responsible innovation approaches, incorporate anticipation. Anticipation requires the use of imagination, while at the same time recognizing that the knowledge upon which imagined scenarios are based is limited. Thus, following the work of van Grunsven et al. (2023), anticipation is “an act of reflexive problem framing grounded in epistemic humility” (p. 2). In ethics of technology, a well-known problem is the Collingridge dilemma, or the control problem: when new technologies are being introduced to society, we have little knowledge about what consequences they will bring (think of the dominance of the automobile in urban planning, the ubiquity of the smart phone or the widespread use and then avoidance of asbestos in buildings). It is early in this stage, however, that society has the most control over those consequences, when the design can still be changed or the technology not introduced at all. Once the development process is well underway, however, big changes are more difficult to make; once we know what consequences its introduction to society actually has, we can no longer prevent them and often cannot even influence their trajectory. This problem is illustrated perhaps most clearly

in the concerns expressed by Einstein and Szilard in their 1939 letter to Roosevelt, about the potential impact on the world of research into nuclear energy, a consequence of his own theoretical discoveries and a trajectory they felt could not be stopped now it had begun. Later, the regret of Oppenheimer over his role in the Manhattan Project spoke to Einstein's prescience. Hypothetical futures and imagination are important in creative as well as engineering practices, insofar as there is a need to bridge that gap between the ethical rules followed within a research institution and the ethical know-how that will be required to make "judgment calls" in the professional creative world (Bolt et al., n.d.).

However, in addition to anticipating possible futures, resolving or avoiding dilemmas and teaching ethics both require an understanding of what it is like to be within relationships and with each other, whether as colleagues, fellow humans, or friends. Psychotherapist Birrell (2006), for example, points out that relationships are the sites of ethical behavior, and so ought to be the focus of approaches to teaching ethics in her field. Whereas contractual relationships may be framed by rules and codes, these are inadequate for capturing the way that relationships are built, a process which includes ambiguity and has no real endpoint (Birrell, 2006, p. 106). When using such approaches in contexts such as psychotherapy, Birrell (2006) points out, "we run the risk of conflating ethics with risk management, mistaking rules for relationships, and damaging those very people whom we so desperately want to help" (p. 95). Birrell ultimately calls for the use of more vignettes in education, so that deliberations about what to do can attend to those aspects of the relationships within and not just the facts about the cases. In what follows I will show how the possible is an essential characteristic of those relationships as well as the more cognitive aspects of ethics, particularly in the context of ethics learning. That is, in ethics education as well as in real life, how ethical rules play out in living relationships and dynamic contexts is as,

or more, important than learning the rules themselves.

Ethics in real life

The limitations of rule- and principle-based approaches to teaching ethics in the classroom, or codifying ethics in institutions such as businesses or in medicine, have already been explored. The iDARE project in Australia (MacNeill et al., 2021), for example, was a response to a growing awareness that research ethics education during their time at universities was not sufficiently preparing creative professionals for the kinds of ethical decision-making they would encounter in their career. In the university, structures exist, such as research ethics boards, that incorporate ethics as steps in the process of completing research within that context. This same ubiquity of ethics within structured processes does not naturally exist outside of the university, however, and so they may come to understand ethics as a purely institutional formality, rather than as a practice meant to be applied in any setting² (MacNeill et al., 2021, p. 75).

Similarly, Fatien Diochon et al. (2018) present a case for an "ethics of serendipity" to replace the top-down approaches common in ethics development programs in organizations. The business community, that is, has failed to prevent unethical behavior amongst its ranks, and compliance-based, top-down ethics programs may be at fault, suggest the authors (Fatien Diochon et al., 2018, p. 2). Such approaches cannot easily deliver "ethical know-how," a concept they draw from Varela (1999).³ Bolt et al. (n.d.) similarly draw from Valera in another paper by the same group: "[ethical know-how] does not centre itself on rational judgments or reasoning. Rather, it is situated, improvisational and spontaneous—being grounded in immediacy...[it] involve[s] behaving with sensitivity to the particularities of the situation where there is not a reliance on a set of rules." In epistemology, knowing-how is correlated with tacit knowledge or ability, like

riding a bike: something we know how to do, but cannot easily write down as a set of rules or explain, without showing or doing it ourselves. In other words, ethical knowledge is contextual knowledge rather than knowledge in the form of universal propositions, and if we are to teach ethics that is useful beyond the context of the classroom and the university, we need to teach students how to do ethics in novel, unexpected situations. The ethics of serendipity the authors propose has at its core the creation of a “place” in which people can exist alongside one another, in a situation of mutual responsibility (Fatien Diochon et al., 2018, p. 3). Within such a place, ethics can emerge as a way of interacting with each other, something that must be enacted rather than captured in pamphlets and codes.

Further, the importance of *experiencing* an ethical situation in order to learn ethics is reinforced by the influence that, for instance, chance encounters can have on the moral progress of individuals. Meaningful moments, that is, tend to carry more ethical weight, in the sense that they make strong impressions on people, as “lessons” they remember for longer and refer back to more easily than, say, most of the content remembered in order to write an exam or learned for the purpose of filling out a form (e.g. Roeser 2012). Cross and Reinhardt (2017) observe the impact of ethical encounters and the role of chance in an editorial for a special issue of *The Counseling Psychologist*, reflecting on articles that trace the moral development of psychology students in educational contexts and beyond. White students, the collection of papers shows, frequently traced their realizations about their own racism and the impact of racism on others to a chance event or meeting:

...awareness and activism are linked to these chance encounters: the luck of being in the right place at the right time, the unforeseen benefits of a particular mentor, an otherwise positive aftermath of being raised by a racist parent, one’s personal reaction to reading a particular text, awareness gained through an analysis of society’s treatment linked to one’s invisible status (e.g., sexual orientation, mental illness, disability),

enrollment in a particular course, or the aftermath of fortuitous activism...the evidence presented here shows that the nature of the all-important trigger, also described as an *encounter*, is all over the map in its randomness. (p. 698)

And finally, when individuals are directly involved in determining how a process will go, their tendency to see themselves as responsible actors in that process is understandably greater. In other words, if ethics is *given* to people as a set of rules they ought to accept, they are less likely to understand and internalize it than if they have played a role in crafting the rules they will follow. Consider that, because of its institutionalized nature, “Currently, ‘ethics’ is seen as one of those boundaries that art should cross” (Bolt et al., n.d.). That is, institutionalized, codified ethics is frequently seen as steps one needs to take to (merely) legitimize one’s work or actions—hence its inspiring rebellion through potentially “unethical” art. Similarly, there is a common thread within the sciences that ethics, meaning the rules that must be followed under research integrity agreements, conflicts with spontaneous and curiosity-driven science (in many cases accompanied by a lament about some earlier, pre-regulatory time’s many great discoveries [see, e.g. Klein, 2008]). As well, “those who are active participants in creating the transformation have a higher likelihood of influencing the trajectory” (Moran, 2014, p. 289). Inclusivity, in sum, is more than addressing the needs of all stakeholders in a well-formulated rule, but is also about individual investment in the processes of doing ethics.

In sum, ethics beyond the institutional context in which it is regulated and applied via forms and committee, is of equal importance. Particularly beyond the institution, novel situations are expected, and so ethics education must enable its students to act appropriately in cases they have not yet been exposed to in the courses meant to prepare them. Therefore, ethics education should include the building of skills such as anticipation, and should emphasize that relationships are where ethical learning takes place.⁴ In the following sections, I look to work

already done toward theorizing the relationship between ethics and the possible—these not only share the criteria just suggested, but highlight how serendipity and creativity can more explicitly play a role in ethics learning.

Ethics and the possible

Psychologist and creativity theorist Moran (2014) delineates her own “ethics of possibility” in a chapter, beginning with the idea that creativity interacts directly with ethics. That is, creativity introduces novelty in a way that challenges and sometimes transforms our sense of what is “good” in the world (p. 281, 290). This is similar to the observations Cross and Reinhardt (2017) make about the impact of the unexpected on racism: “inevitably counternarratives find their way to the surface through accidental, unplanned scenarios” (p. 699). In other words, novelty can disrupt normal perceptions of what is good and ethical in a way that enlarges awareness and recognition of the needs and perspectives of others, enriching one’s own. An ethics of possibility, says Moran, requires that we both introduce novelty through creativity (creating possibilities) while also attending to its potential consequences (what those possibilities might entail or reveal) (p. 293).

Moran (2014) seeks to introduce creativity proactively into ethics to “extend the scope of ethics” (pp. 284–285); by deliberating in response to dilemmas explicitly about what possibilities arise, rather than debating already-known alternatives, creative exploration rather than decision-making becomes the work to be done. This approach, for Moran, offers “an ethics built not on rules but on opportunities” (p. 286). The creation of diverse possibilities results in thinking of dilemmas as opportunities for a creative response to disruption, that is, rather than a situation that calls for the application of known and agreed-upon rules. Indeed, disruptions in expectations are what allow dilemmas to be seen as such in the first place—when we have to justify the decisions we would make, or recognize the need to make amendments to a code or agreement (Moran, 2014, p. 281, 290, 283).

Note that it is equally problematic if the point of having more possibilities at hand is just to have a greater probability of finding the *best* possible outcome; this results in a degenerative, rather than a generative, approach to ethics. This idea is best illustrated by the idea of a utopia, as an ideal endpoint toward which we ought to strive precisely because it represents the best of all possible worlds. This is a degenerative ethics because all choices, then, ought to lead to one specific outcome; decision-making then is a converging process, diminishing possibilities as we go until only one possible world remains. In contrast, an ethics of the possible as I have described so far requires a generative approach to the possible, allowing new possibilities to arise from deliberations about how to change the world for the better.

Adopting a generative approach, in turn, requires an attitude marked by humility. It is possible, that is, that decisions will be made by groups who generate less than “good” possibilities for deliberation, that they will generate possibilities that make the world worse for others or even for themselves, or that they may be ignorant of the likely impact of their decisions. That is, so long as we resist demarcating ethical from unethical outcomes while generating possibilities, the probability that both good and bad possibilities will be generated by such deliberations must be taken seriously.

The possible and the good

Consideration of the possible, that is, does not necessarily lead to the good. Ahmed (2010) makes clear the point that the possibility of joy comes with the possibility of terror: it follows that any exploration of the possible per se will return results that may be “evil” as well as those that are “good.” Moran (2014) also notes that creativity is only presumed, not proven to have a positive effect; disruption and change can lead to “upheaval” as easily as it can lead to positive change (pp. 283–284). The introduction of new possibilities does not in itself provide a “good”

guide for action, even when it makes old ways of being and doing less desirable.

As with anticipation, ethics then must be practiced with humility, with the understanding that it is equally probable that deliberations will produce problematic situations as that they will result in better human relations and a better world. An ethics of the possible thus offers no a priori way to sort the unethical from the ethical possibilities. I argue, however, that because this is a feature of ethics itself it should be accommodated rather than avoided.

To reinforce this last point, consider the problem of moral luck in philosophical ethics, formulated by Williams. The problem is, shortly, that what results from a decision can change the categorization of the decision-maker as moral or not. If a person decides to run a red light, that “unethical” decision can result in two outcomes—no one may notice the bad behavior, or just as probably, someone may run into the road at that moment so that the decision results in a terrible tragedy. In the latter case, the morality of the decision-maker becomes known and results in judgments from others that the decision was unethical. In the former case, what was a questionable decision avoids being categorized as unethical because no bad consequences arose as a result of its being made. Luck, then, seems a determinant in whether our decisions are ethical or unethical, and thus our moral responsibility for making such decisions is called into question.⁵ Taking moral luck seriously would lead to inertia, if ethical decision-making is about “getting it right.” That is, if morality is tied to the outcomes of anticipations or predictions about the future, and thus to the correctness of choices in terms of making the world a better place, then the matter or whether one has made the right or moral choice seems to be out of one’s hands.

Kierkegaard’s ethics also take the role of the possible as central, and directly addresses the problem of choice. Ethics, in his work, is about knowing what is possible for oneself and deciding or acting in one way or another. For Kierkegaard, authenticity is the voluntary

choosing between possibilities—if the choice is not actively made, then it remains a mere “either/or,” the title of arguably his most well-known work (see Stack, 1972 for a review of the relevant theory). Notably, however, the possibilities themselves do not offer a way of choosing—insofar as they are equally possible, they are equally choices one can make. To be ethical, one must consider why one possibility is better than the other—ethical principles, values, and ideals are what we use to make these choices meaningful, rather than merely aesthetic. An ethical attitude leads to action and authenticity; an aesthetic attitude leads ultimately to inertia.

The possible and action

Two features of the relationship between ethics and the possible can lead to inertia, then—the lack of criteria by which to decide between them, and the inability to anticipate fully what each possibility entails. One way to reconcile this is to turn again to the consideration of ethics as an iterative and ongoing process that takes place in the dynamic context of relationships.

First, by turning to process over outcome—that is, when ethics is seen as happening during the process of generating and evaluating possibilities, rather than at the point of determining the “right” outcome or rule to follow—failure is incorporated into that process. Given that one cannot fully anticipate the end of a possible action, for instance, the process of evaluating that action does not end at the point of deciding to perform that action. For one, failure in anticipation is another possible outcome that should be part of ethical deliberations. As well, new possibilities emerge from the situation created by making a decision, and thus decisions as well as failures mark steps in rather than the end to a deliberative process.

In turn, a focus on ethics as an ongoing process can preclude inertia in the form of the aesthetic attitude or hopelessness. To explain, a utopia presents an ideal world that is distant from the current world; possibilities that are

more distant are more difficult to anticipate or evaluate. When the focus of ethics is on the iterative process itself, however, then the possibilities generated do not have to project an ideal end to that process, but can rather focus on the next steps. Rather than equally distant and ideal possibilities, that is, focus is justifiably (and commonly, in practice) also on the near future and, as Peirce suggests, on pragmatic ends. Notably, this also makes “being likely to generate more rather than less possibilities for the future” a valuable property for a possibility to have.

Second, the vulnerability of those who are deliberating to generate potentially both good and bad possibilities for action must be accommodated, and can be, so long as the role of relationships in generating ethical possibilities in the first place is considered. That the relations between people are key units of ethics has been rooted in the work of Levinas: Birrell (2006) appeals to Levinas to explain how ethics should work in a clinical setting; the human resource development group frame their serendipity-cultivating approach in Levinasian relations (Fatian Biochon et al., 2018). These authors draw on Levinas because he prioritizes, above all, our relations with one another.⁶ For Fatian Biochon et al. (2018), specific discourses constitute the “ethical speak” of their organization, which they frame as Levinasian categories: “Being I,” for example, encompasses the (selfish) drive to persist within each of us; this attitude leads us to follow rules and to see ethical behavior as a means to success and acceptance (p. 7ff).

In contrast, “Being with another” and “Being called” discourses disrupt that selfish perspective by introducing conflict, reciprocity, and responsibility (pp. 9–11). More importantly, Levinas suggests that new possibilities can arise when we create an empty space for these relations to occur; “making place” for one another is the selfless act of allowing others to exist creatively, and this requires that we carry a mutual responsibility for one another in order to exist alongside: “In effect, *creativity* and *responsibility for the other* are inherently

correlated” (Fatian Biochon et al., 2018, p. 16). That is, one of our responsibilities toward one another is exactly to offer space (or, to make a place) where creativity can occur. Kierkegaard takes a similar approach to the self in ethics: we first must understand what is possible for ourselves, and only thereby we can live an ethical life. The possible offers a way to transform ourselves, that is, and opening space for the possible is opening a space for ethical encounters.

In sum, an ethics rooted in the exploration of possibilities together must also be an ethics rooted in relationships that offer individuals safety and trust, within which to explore creatively together and to honestly deliberate about what possibilities are better and worse and why.

In conclusion, teaching an ethics of the possible

The previous sections have shown that creativity and novelty do not automatically lead to progress. And calling for creativity is not easy, when involvement in ethical situations can be emotional and difficult: as Moran (2014) notes, in relation to putting ourselves and our values at risk, “These nearly instantaneous, intuitive, emotional triggers tied to our morals can enhance or diminish our capacity for creativity in our ethical thinking” (p. 286). Indeed, the generation of possibilities, insofar as they admit to a critical questioning of the status quo and previous assumptions, can itself be a cause for anxiety (Moran, 2014, p. 287). Thus, the generation of possibilities, like the development of relationships that allow each other to express ourselves creatively, requires trust and emotional safety in a way that ethics education (and practice) must even further embrace than it currently does. While we cannot guarantee that no bad or unethical possibilities will be generated, experts in ethics do have something to offer by way of guidance in how to make the space for exploring together safe, as well as offering tools for evaluating the possibilities there generated.

For example, while ethics might happen in the real world, the classroom setting does offer

an opportunity to cultivate the right skills, enabling students to also become more ethical people. The importance of trust is not unique to ethics learning, and cultivating a culture of trust and exchange is a key part of most teaching. The fact that this kind of culture may be more easily created among students than in the real world is an additional reason for ethics education to take up the relationship-based approach suggested here—rare are such opportunities to explore together. The above examples also show that imagination is a key ethical skill, and considering what is possible develops both imagination and anticipation. Finally, starting with the possible, rather than with the rules, principles and theory, would do further work by offering a description of ethics more attuned to the dynamic nature of ethics in the world. Framing the lessons with structured lists and forms, in contrast, suggest erroneously that ethics will always take such a shape. Thus there are practical reasons for adopting a possibility-based approach to teaching ethics.

Experiencing failure as part of the deliberation process is also an important lesson for students of ethics, as the previous discussion discloses. Rather than something to avoid or be feared, failing to anticipate should be expected and made part of deliberations from the beginning. Further, and as noted in the examples above, serendipity and the unexpected are important aspects of ethics learning, offering opportunities to internalize lessons as well as make discoveries about oneself, each other and the world. Thus, ethics teaching that incorporates experiences of failure and the unexpected purposefully and within a psychologically safe environment will also better teach how to practice ethics.

And finally, there are theoretical reasons to further investigate how an ethics of the possible can be both taught and practiced. Offering principles derived from utopian ideals or universal rules that determine right from wrong actions do not do justice to ethics itself. A static depiction of an ideal and thereby ethical world, that is, will fail to depict an actual, ethical world: a world in which ethics is needed or practiced. As noted in this

paper, relationships are not only sites for ethical or unethical action, but cultivate the spaces within which we can do ethics well, through exploration and deliberation about what is possible. Such relationships develop over time, they are built and not static, and to be maintained they need to absorb failure and uncertainty along the way. The work being done to agree on criteria by which to evaluate the possibilities thereby generated is, I would argue, the real work of ethics; if this is the case, then developing an ethics of the possible would entail a theoretical exploration of what those criteria could and should be. Because the principles and theories of ethics provide guidance on how to decide between possibilities, evaluating those principles is thus also a key part of teaching and theorizing an ethics of the possible. This evaluation, however, becomes part of the process of doing ethics, rather than an end to or of that process.

In sum, teaching an ethics of the possible would mean forefronting the making of space between each other for creative exploration. It would entail framing ethics as a dynamic and ongoing practice in the world, and ethical theory as potential guidance in evaluating the possibilities that the world offers us for action. Equally important in this evaluation, however, are the skills of anticipation and imagination, as well as the ability to learn from failure and the unexpected, and so these are key skills for an ethics of the possible. I and others have argued above that they are skills for the practice of ethics in general, and thus that there is good reason to further investigate how an ethics of the possible would, in turn, shape our theories of ethics.

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Notes

1. Note that I do not offer here a full account of what philosophy has to say about the relationship between possibility and morality. See Copeland (2022) for a brief, but more thorough, account.
2. MacNeil et al. (2021, iDARE group) point to the disjunct (shown by survey results) between the research ethics in the institutional context where ethics is taught and the real-world context of art and journalism in Australia, where their codes of ethics recognize the need to push boundaries and act in unregulated ways (p. 82).
3. Note that for the purposes of this paper, I am avoiding a discussion of know-how and phronesis in ethics, which is a topic that could bear further exploration in light of what I say here. I leave that topic for another paper, however, and follow the meaning in the literature here mentioned, for now.
4. These criteria can be seen in various ethical theory: Aristotle's virtue ethics, for one, are grounded in phronesis, or practical wisdom, the moral skill of knowing the right thing to do in a specific situation. They are similar to the criteria of pragmatic, relational or particularist approaches to ethics and morality—such approaches also start from the idea that ethical theory must accommodate the dynamic and the everyday contexts in which people actually act and decide. For Peirce, the ideals toward which we strive are not universal nor set in stone, but insofar as they are ethical they are deliberately and pragmatically chosen (Serra, 2010, p. 4). Pragmatic approaches additionally emphasize the importance of imagination—for Dewey, deliberation is not a logical process but an emotional and situational one, requiring that we imagine how we would really react to a possible outcome (Serra, 2010, p. 5).
5. That is, we cannot be blamed for the consequences of our decisions, if they are determined ultimately by luck, rather than our choices.
6. I do not here pretend to offer a nuanced or expert account of Levinas' work, but rather cower (for my purposes here) within the interpretations offered in the articles I describe.

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