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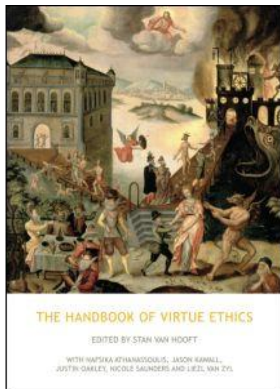

The Handbook of Virtue Ethics

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Situationism and character: new directions

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Situationism and character: new directions

Nancy Snow

THE SITUATIONIST CRITIQUE OF CHARACTER IN BRIEF

Virtue ethics has developed as a type of theoretical alternative to deontology and consequentialism (e.g. Hursthouse 1999; Swanton 2003; Adams 2006; Russell 2009; Annas 2011). It takes virtue to be the primary concept of ethical concern, as opposed to rules (deontology) and consequences (consequentialism). Traditionally, virtue is thought to be a type of global or robust trait implicated in producing regular behaviour across many different types of situations. Thus, according to virtue ethicists, if someone possesses the virtue of courage, she can be expected to be courageous in many different kinds of situations – on the battlefield, when facing serious illness, in standing up against prejudice, in blowing the whistle on corruption, and so on. Good character, for virtue ethicists, is a constellation of coherently organized virtues, which are thought to be deeply entrenched in the fabric of personality. In a person of good character, the virtues work together harmoniously, and, in some versions of virtue ethics (e.g. Hursthouse 1999; Annas 2011), are necessary for happiness or flourishing.

Harman (1999, 2000), Doris (1998, 2002, 2005) and Merritt (2000) use social psychological studies to critique virtue ethics and the conception of character central to it.[1] Known as "situationism", their critique takes several forms, but all include the claim that empirical psychology provides overwhelming reason to think that situations, and not global or robust traits, are the main factors that influence behaviour. Harman (1999: 316; 2000: 223) has been the most radical critic, arguing that empirical psychology gives us no reason to believe that global traits exist, and consequently, no reason to think there are such things as virtues or character as traditionally conceived of by philosophers. Doris (2002: 6) acknowledges that the results of social psychological experiments are consistent with small numbers of people possessing global traits, yet maintains that most of the evidence shows that such traits have little to do with producing behaviour. Social psychology, he argues, shows that traits are local, or narrowly indexed to the objective

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features of situations (*ibid.*: 62). Thus, we may speak of battlefield courage, or office-party sociability, but not of courage or sociability *tout court*. In all, Doris (*ibid.*: 22) maintains that personality is too fragmented to support globalist conceptions of character, which he attributes to virtue ethicists.[2] Merritt (2000), too, endorses situationist interpretations of social psychological studies, and offers a conception of virtue as socially sustained. Doris has recently come closer to Harman's (1999) position on the empirical impossibility of virtues and character, contending that the burden of proof lies with virtue ethicists to show that traditional philosophical conceptions of virtue and character are, in fact, empirically possible (Doris & Stich 2005: 121).

Many philosophers have resisted the situationist critique of global traits (e.g. Sreenivasan 2002; Kamtekar 2004; Sabini & Silver 2005). Some have sought to develop empirical psychological underpinnings for the kinds of global traits of interest to virtue ethics (C. Miller 2003; Russell 2009; Snow 2010).[3] These philosophers, especially Russell (2009) and Snow (2010), take up the situationist challenge of showing that empirical evidence can support a traditional philosophical view of virtue and character. No doubt this work will continue.

Not content with their criticisms of global traits, situationists have extended their critique of character in new directions, at times eliciting responses from defenders of virtue ethics. For example, Doris (2002: 7, 105–6; 2005: 673–4) adduces psychological studies of East Asians to support his version of situationism, thereby raising questions of character in cross-cultural perspective. Merritt (2009), Doris (2009) and Merritt *et al.* (2010) draw on empirical psychology to argue that scepticism about character can be grounded in the fragmentation of cognition. Finally, philosophers such as Slingerland (2011) and Annas (2011) have drawn on Confucianism and ancient philosophy, respectively, for insights into the cultivation of virtue, maintaining that developmental conceptions of virtue evade the situationist critique. Here I sketch the contours of emerging debates in each area.

CHARACTER IN CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Doris (2002: 7, 105–6; 2005: 673–4) cites studies of the psychology of East Asians, especially Nisbett (2003), to attack what he views as the "Western" conception of character and to support his situationist alternative. Nisbett (*ibid.*) musters empirical evidence to show that East Asian research subjects (mainly Chinese, Japanese and Koreans) perceive the world, make causal attributions, organize knowledge, display patterns of reasoning, and have conceptions of the self and of character that are very different from those of westerners. Group orientations, interrelationships and interdependencies predominate in Eastern habits of minds and conceptions of the self and character, whereas westerners focus more on the primacy of the individual, autonomy and independence. Doris (2002: 7, 105–6; 2005: 673–4) argues that (a) differences between Eastern and Western conceptions of character show that the latter are parochial; (b) this parochialness should cause us to rethink our commitment to the Western conception; and (c) his arguments against the Western conception show that situationism is the default position. Doris allows that the Western conception could be of local, though not universal, import, sufficing for westerners, but not for all of humankind. Yet he challenges virtue ethicists to argue for the local indispensability of the Western conception, claiming that this argument "is a burden,

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especially given the ideological ebbs and flows in and between contemporary cultures, that will not be an easy one to meet" (2005: 674).

Doris's argument fails for several reasons. The first, which also shows why the Western conception of character is indispensable for Western cultures (and the Eastern, for Eastern cultures), is that researchers of East Asian psychology argue that conceptions of the self and of traits – both Eastern and Western – are deeply culturally embedded. To explain differences between easterners and westerners, Nisbett (2003) advances the social origins theory of mind, according to which habits of mind are deeply influenced by social structures and practices, which are, in turn, shaped by social ecologies and geography. Markus and Kitayama (1991: 224) reinforce this general line of argument, arguing that conceptions of the self are shaped by cultures, and tied to the normative tasks prescribed by cultures. What are these normative tasks, and do they really differ that much from East to West? Markus and Kitayama (1991) do not elaborate on normative tasks, but we can reasonably conjecture that such tasks are either identified with, or required by, the life goals in which we routinely engage – becoming an adult, committing to long-term relationships, starting and maintaining a family, assuming civic responsibilities and so on. Thinly described, life goals and normative tasks seem unproblematically to span cultures. Thicker, more richly interpretative descriptions highlight important differences. Markus and Kitayama (*ibid.*: 224) offer a telling example of how a normative life task – a mother trying to get a child to eat his dinner – is shaped by cultural values. A Western mother, they note, likely tells the child to think of less fortunate children in a distant, underdeveloped country. She thereby invokes privilege, waste, guilt, and his difference from the less fortunate. An Eastern mother tells the child that if he does not eat his rice, the farmer who worked hard to grow it will be hurt by his refusal. Notions of interconnectedness and the obligation to respect the farmer's work are thereby elicited. If these arguments are correct, we cannot easily "rethink our commitment" to the Western conception, at least with any real practical effect, for we would also have to re-evaluate our commitment to Western culture, history, traditions, and an impressive array of social practices and normative expectations with which the Western conception of character is intertwined.

What about the notion that empirically documented differences in the psychologies of easterners and westerners push us in the direction of Doris's version of situationism? Here his argument seems to be that psychological studies of easterners document their tendencies to attribute behaviour to situational factors, such as the influence of context and group membership, and thus support his version of situationism. Studies of westerners, such as those documenting the fundamental attribution error, show that westerners mistakenly attribute behaviour to global traits and character when, in fact, other experiments, such as those Doris cites (e.g. Darley & Batson 1973; Milgram 1977), reveal that situational factors are more influential.

This idea, too, is flawed, because experiments on easterners and westerners reveal important differences in how situations influence subjects' behaviour. According to situationist readings of social psychological studies on Western subjects, trivial situational factors, such as finding change in a phone booth, smelling a pleasant fragrance, or being told we are late to give a talk – often operating below the level of conscious awareness – have effects on behaviour that are at odds with the values expressed in Western virtues. Either during or after experiments, subjects often express anxiety and regret at actions that violate the values they profess to hold (Milgram 1977: 44, 119; Darley & Batson 1973:

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107–8). By contrast, situational factors that influence the behaviour of easterners are not deemed trivial, but are thought important enough to be integrated with traits to produce behaviour. For example, East Asians cultivate the traits of courtesy and deference – traits the expression of which is heavily dependent on context. Different forms of courtesy and levels of deference are expected in social interactions with people of different ages and social statuses. Nisbett (2003: 52–3) writes that it would be highly discourteous of a Korean student to invite a professor to dinner using certain forms of the words "dinner" and "you". Variability in the expression of traits called for by situational differences reflects the values of East Asians, and is integrated into how traits are taught and character is cultivated. A similar point about the integration of traits with situations in the development of character is made by philosophers discussing Confucian conceptions of character (Slingerland 2011). This is a far cry from the way in which situations affect behaviour in the social psychological studies situationists cite. Given the differences in awareness and valuation of situational factors by Western as opposed to Eastern research subjects, it is unclear why psychological studies of East Asians should push us in the direction of Doris's version of situationism. Situationism on his view leads to such normative advice as to be aware of circumstance and "avoid the near occasion of sin", that is, avoid situations in which you think you cannot trust yourself to behave well (Doris 2002: 147–8). Nowhere does he advise people to go the Confucian route and integrate trait expression with situational differences so as to develop character in nuanced ways that reflect our deepest values.

A final point on Doris. There could be more similarity between Eastern and Western conceptions of character than either Doris or Nisbett is willing to admit. First, it is unclear just what is meant by the "Western conception of character", and second, psychological studies of East Asians do not converge on a single, uncontested conception of character. Doris (2005: 674) refers to "our" conception as the "various more or less global conceptions of character that have been so prominent in . . . Western Philosophy". The conception he has in mind apparently has two components. The first is a set of traits that gives the Western conception its distinctive content, such as self-reliance, individuality and independence (Nisbett 2003: 47–8). Doris means more than a set of traits, however; he means a conception that satisfies three formal conditions outlining what he calls the "globalist" conception of character (Doris 2002: 22). The conditions are: (a) consistency – the reliable manifestation of traits in behaviour that spans a variety of situation types; (b) stability – the reliable manifestation of traits in similar situations; and (c) evaluative integration – the clustering of similarly valenced traits in a coherent personality. For example, a person with positive traits such as generosity will tend to have other positive traits, such as kindness or compassion; the same is true of negative traits.

Elsewhere I argue, but here can only suggest, that Eastern traits can satisfy these three conditions (Snow forthcoming [a]). Consider, for example, the Eastern trait of courtesy and the criterion of cross-situational consistency. Courtesy is highly context dependent, but also highly valued in Eastern cultures. It is only to be expected that forms of courtesy vary with context and are called for across many types of situations. Consider, too, stability. Why think that East Asians could not have stable traits? Finally, why should the ideal of evaluative integration apply only to westerners, but not to easterners? *Prima facie*, traits valued in Eastern cultures, such as loyalty to one's group, courtesy and the desire for harmony, could cluster together into an evaluatively integrated personality as well as self-reliance, independence and individuality. If these suggestions are correct, the Eastern

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conception of character, like the Western, satisfies Doris's three criteria for a globalist conception of character. Someone might respond that the nub of the issue is context-independent traits. The Western, but not the Eastern, conception incorporates such traits. My point is that context-independent traits are not needed to satisfy Doris's three conditions; the context-dependent traits of easterners can satisfy them.[4] But if so, then Doris needs to restate the features that distinguish the Eastern from the Western conceptions.

A possible distinguishing feature of the Western conception, and the basis of a potential objection to the argument sketched here, is that the formal conditions of the globalist conception apparently presuppose the Western conception of the self – a stable, highly individuated self that is at odds with the fluid, interdependent conception of the self that emerges from psychological studies of East Asians. It is unclear, without further argumentation, that the global conception indeed presupposes a strongly individuated sense of self. That said, the objection leads to my second main point about conceptions of character: although fluid conceptions of the self apparently predominate, the Eastern conception of self and traits is not firmly fixed in the psychological literature. For example, Nisbett (2003: 122) refers to the work of psychologist Fanny Cheung and colleagues, who have constructed a "Chinese Personality Assessment Inventory". Findings indicate traits that correspond roughly to three of the "Big Five", extraversion, neuroticism and conscientiousness, as well as a fourth, the "Chinese tradition factor", which relates to the maintenance of interpersonal and inner harmony.[5] If this work is correct, the traits and conceptions of self of easterners and westerners might not be as different in structure and function as psychologists have believed. Other recent work suggests that conceptions of traits and of the self are far from settled (e.g. Heine *et al.* 2001; English & Chen 2007). Clearly, cross-cultural aspects of the situationism/character debate are in their infancy.

IS COGNITION FRAGMENTED?

Some philosophers insist that character is not as fragmented as situationists contend. This is because practical reason enables us to be aware of the situational forces that affect us, to deliberate about their value and to make intentional choices about how to act (Kamtekar 2004; Annas 2011). Merritt *et al.* (2010: 360) attack the claim that practical reason can satisfy this integrative function, contending: "The empirical research suggests that reason is no less situationally susceptible than overt behaviour; the suggestion we must consider is that notions of rationality operative in traditional understandings of character are themselves empirically inadequate."

They make their case by contrasting two pictures of the role of reason in moral life: that of virtue ethicists, according to which behaviour is guided by rational deliberation, and that of cognitive science. To explain the latter, they invoke "dual process" theories of cognition, according to which we have two modes of cognition – controlled and automatic. Controlled cognition is conscious and deliberate; we are aware of it. I use controlled cognition as I deliberately choose these words. By contrast, automatic cognition operates below the level of conscious awareness. As I type these words, I do not deliberate about whether to place my finger on the "a" key, then the "b" key, and so on, but do it automatically, as a matter of routine. Automatized action sequences have become routinized parts of my behaviour that I perform without conscious deliberation, though I can interrupt these

routines at any time and bring my attention to bear on the activities at hand. The authors (*ibid.*: 372) rightly warn that it is misleading to think of automatic and controlled processes as two mutually exclusive categories; most actions are complex mixes of the two sorts of process. In the cognitive science picture of cognition, the authors emphasize the ubiquity of cognitive processes operating below the level of conscious awareness. In contrast to the virtue ethicist's picture of deliberative rationality guiding us to perform intentional actions, the authors paint a picture of human behaviour as often responding to stimuli of which we are unaware and, consequently, do not and cannot control.

They motivate their account of the cognitive science picture as an attempt to explain the behaviour of some subjects in situationist experiments. They note that some subjects experience a phenomenon they call "moral dissociation" (*ibid.*: 363): subjects engage in behaviour that contravenes norms they seem to endorse. The authors maintain that this behaviour is caused by "depersonalized response tendencies": tendencies to respond to situational factors that operate below the level of conscious awareness (*ibid.*: 370–71). A particular form of moral dissociation is "incongruency".[6] Incongruency occurs when behaviour is produced by nonconscious processes that the subject would not endorse as reasons for action that accord with his or her normative commitments (*ibid.*: 375). Were the person consciously aware that the behaviour was produced by the nonconscious processes, she would condemn it. Incongruency "unsettles notions of well-integrated deliberation" (*ibid.*).

The authors illustrate the workings of the nonconscious mind, and thus, in their view, the disruption of practical reason, with a plethora of social psychological studies. Primed behaviours, for example, result from depersonalized response tendencies. Subjects primed with words such as "elderly" and "bingo" in scrambled sentences have been observed to walk more slowly towards an elevator than subjects in a neutral control group (*ibid.*: 374). Priming and other studies show that behaviour is often influenced by factors operating below the level of conscious awareness. Assuming that slow walking does not contravene one's moral commitments, however, priming studies such as that noted here also show that depersonalized response tendencies need not result in moral dissociation or incongruency. Other studies have more immediate moral significance. The authors report that some research subjects, such as those of Latané and Darley (1970: 124), denied that the presence of others inhibited their helping behaviour, even after being confronted with empirical evidence of inhibition (2010: 373). Literature on social stereotypes, too, provides morally important examples of nonsconcious influences on behaviour, attesting to the occurrence of negative reactions based on race, gender and other factors which subjects would likely condemn if they knew of them (*ibid.*: 375). An additional element completes the situationists' argument: nonconscious influences derail other-directed attention in ways that fall foul of the dictates of rational, moral deliberation. The troubling fact is that nonconscious influences misdirect our moral attention, causing us to focus on morally irrelevant or minor features of situations, thereby missing occasions on which other-regarding moral actions, such as preventing harm or offering help, are expected.

As a partial explanation of subjects' behaviour in social psychological experiments, this is not unreasonable.[7] However, the authors throw down the gauntlet: "To the extent that automaticity is pervasive, it renders the virtue-ethical model of practical rationality problematic" (*ibid.*). Their explanatory claim about the behaviour of research subjects could well be true, but their attack on the integration of cognition and the role of practical

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rationality in moral life goes too far. Not all nonconscious influences need disrupt morally appropriate other-directed attention; some enhance our moral attention and other moral capacities. These aspects of automaticity afford a more integrated picture of conscious and nonconscious cognition that is, contrary to the situationist account, hospitable to the virtue-ethical view of the roles and primacy of practical reason in our moral lives.

Several lines of psychological research temper the situationist approach. Lapsley and Hill (2008) develop a social-cognitive approach to moral personality that gives pride of place to moral schemas. Schemas are "general knowledge structures that organize information, expectations and experience" (*ibid.*: 322). On their view, moral personality is unified and explained by the chronic accessibility of a person's moral schemas. In other words, general knowledge structures, operating within the individual's psychological economy, afford epistemic receptivity for the processing of certain kinds of information. An individual with the appropriate moral schemas will, for example, be more disposed to notice and respond to a person in distress than someone who lacks them. Repeated processing of certain kinds of information reinforces the strength and salience of the relevant moral schemas. The internalization or lack of appropriate moral schemas could explain some of the behavioural variations in situationist experiments, such as Darley and Batson's (1973) famous Samaritan experiment, in which some subjects, hurrying to give a talk, passed by a confederate of the experimenters slumped over and seemingly in need of help. Those in possession of moral schemas for seeing the needy as deserving of help might have noticed and reacted to the confederate in ways different from those possessing the schema of "drunken nuisance". In this kind of case, the cognitive processes that mediate moral action are influenced by moral-cognitive structures; the internalization of these structures is a stable part of personality that operates below the level of conscious awareness to direct moral attention in appropriate ways and thereby to facilitate moral action.

Goal-dependent automaticity is another case in which a cognitive process that mediates moral action results from internalizing a knowledge structure – this time, a goal (see Snow 2010: 43–5). In this kind of nonconscious processing, environmental stimuli activate representations of a person's enduring goals. Upon encountering relevant situational features, the representation of the goal is activated, and sets in motion behaviour directed to goal attainment. These behaviours are intelligent, flexible responses to environmental stimuli with some of the same qualities as consciously chosen actions. Repeated activations of situation-stimuli links can result in behaviour that eventually becomes habituated. Virtue-relevant goals, such as the goal of being kind or compassionate, are likely to be enduring and thus among the goals that can be nonconsciously activated, as well as pursued in different types of situations. Interestingly, temptations have been shown to activate overriding goal pursuits (Fishbach *et al.* 2003). This important finding distinguishes automatic goal activation from situational control, suggesting that automatic goal activation, such as the activation of the goal to be compassionate, can counteract situational stimuli, such as being told that one is late to give an important talk, and promote the personal control of actions, such as helping an individual in need, that accord with the agent's values.

Research into situational priming, stereotype activation, moral schemas and goal-dependent automaticity are aspects of a lively and extensive psychological literature into the workings of the nonconscious mind (Hassin *et al.* 2005; Bargh 2007). Although some of this research supports the arguments of Merritt *et al.* (2010) about the fragmentation of cognition, large troves of it present a more unified picture, according to which

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nonconscious and conscious processing operate together to serve the adaptive functioning of the organism. The mind's workings are unified to enable human organisms to function in a complex environment without being overwhelmed by the need to continually and consciously process incoming stimuli. On this view, deliberative rationality can be viewed as the tip of a rather large iceberg in which nonconscious mental functioning typically, but not always, supports what we choose to do. The fact that nonconscious functioning is sometimes at odds with our normative commitments does not detract from the potential uses of practical reason. The power of practical rationality lies largely, although not solely, in its potential to shape nonconscious mental processing in ways that enhance our ability to learn, retain, use and expand what we know. A fascinating line of response to situationist critiques of traits and cognition incorporates these ideas, and is found in the writings of virtue ethicists and psychologists on virtue development.

VIRTUE DEVELOPMENT

Two philosophers have recently done important work on virtue development: Slingerland (2011) discusses early Confucian theories of virtue cultivation, and Annas (2011) presents an account of the acquisition of virtue modelled on intelligent skill. Psychologists Narvaez and Lapsley (2005) offer a developmental account of moral education that provides empirical support for aspects of these philosophical perspectives.

Slingerland (2011) argues that early Confucian virtue ethics evades much of the sting of the situationist critique. He argues that the development and modification of virtues suggested by the early Confucian philosopher Mencius is similar to the outline of virtue cultivation offered in Snow (2010), according to which virtues can be deliberately developed in accordance with the agent's values. Slingerland (2011) adds the idea that Confucian virtue cultivation occurred under the guidance of an experienced teacher – an idea also found in Annas (2011). Slingerland (2011: 404ff.) describes the use of situations themselves to cultivate virtues, noting that training in ritual and other forms of behaviour modification, such as immersion in various cultural activities, was essential for virtue acquisition. He refers to the study of Confucian texts, which contained descriptions of sages to be emulated, as a "form of ever-present conceptual priming" (*ibid.*: 412). Finally, in terms reminiscent of moral schemas and goal-dependent automaticity, he suggests that a way of looking at Confucian virtue ethics is as a "kind of 'time-delayed' cognitive control that functioned by embedding higher-level desires and goals in lower-level emotional and sensory-motor systems" (*ibid.*: 416).

Annas (2011), too, stresses virtue acquisition. Two key concepts have prominence in her account: the notions that a virtue is like a practical skill, and that it is essentially dynamic, that is, is in a continual state of being developed (the latter is also true of Confucian virtue ethics; see Slingerland 2011: 404, 413–14). Taking inspiration from ancient philosophy in the Western tradition, she argues that we should look to how practical skills are developed for insights into how virtue should be developed. Virtues, like practical skills, should be deliberately cultivated. This cultivation requires two motivations from the learner: the need to learn and the drive to aspire (Annas 2011: 16ff.). A serious learner strives to understand what her teacher is doing, and does not settle for simply copying or mimicking, but wants to know and do more for herself. Both forms of motivation clearly incorporate

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cognition and practical reasoning. Practical reasoning plays other roles in Annas's (2011) account. For example, articulacy is required to both teach and learn the virtues (*ibid.*: 19). Just as an expert in a practical skill must be able to explain to a novice what she is doing and why, so a teacher of virtue must be able to explain to a learner what it is to be brave or generous and why being that way is important. Learners, too, must be able to use practical reasoning in a variety of sophisticated and highly personalized ways. I cannot develop my own abilities in a practical skill or a virtue without thinking about how *I* should do it, how *I* can be genuinely kind or compassionate, for example: what that would mean for *me*, with my personality and in my circumstances, and what it would mean for the recipients of my intended kindness and compassion. Important for Annas's (2011) account is that we learn by doing in a specific kind of way. Though we might repeat skilled or virtuous actions in order to learn them well, virtuous responses are educated and intelligent, not rote (*ibid.*: 28–9). Virtuous dispositions, like practical skills, are acquired and cultivated through habituation that is intelligent and flexible, not mindless routine.

Aspects of these philosophical accounts of virtue acquisition are given empirical support in the work of Narvaez and Lapsley (2005). A first point is that their account allows roles for the dominance of tacit or nonconscious information processing in learning, including roles for various kinds of automaticity that develop after deliberate instruction has occurred. For example, they write that:

> Intended goal-dependent automaticity is evident as a consequence of skilled or expert performance. . . . Well-learned situational scripts or highly routinized action sequences typically operate autonomously, with little need of conscious control or significant attentional resources. Skilled behaviours fall within this category of automaticity, as well as procedural knowledge that has become autonomous of conscious control as a result of frequent practice or application (e.g., driving a car). (*Ibid.*: 145)[8]

This meshes well with Slingerland's (2011) sketch of early Confucian accounts of the acquisition of virtue through ritual, and with Annas's (2011: 29–30) recognition that the performance of skilled actions eventually proceeds independently of the conscious consideration of reasons for action as expertise develops.

Post-conscious automaticity, which "operates after a recent conscious experience or recent deployment of attentional resources" (Narvaez & Lapsley 2005: 144), also functions in the process of learning virtue. The idea here is that once virtue-constructs have been "built into" someone's mind, they become available for information processing, and can be accessed nonconsciously, either chronically or through situational priming (Narvaez & Lapsley 2005: 146–7). Situationists invoke the notion of situational priming, such as walking slowly towards the elevator after encountering certain words in a scrambled sentence, to illustrate that we have less awareness of the factors that affect us and less conscious control over our behaviour than we think. Narvaez and Lapsley (2005) discuss priming as a tool that enables us to teach and learn virtue. As we teach virtue to children, we repeatedly expose them to virtue concepts and their meanings and applications in various social settings, with the hope that they will internalize the scripts that show how to be virtuous. Situational priming is one temporary manifestation of post-conscious automaticity. More interesting is the notion that children's learning of virtue through repeated exposure to

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scripts can result in chronic or enduring manifestations of virtue, so that children, internalizing guidance for how to act virtuously, will begin acting virtuously over time, and eventually develop virtuous dispositions as parts of their emerging characters. Chronic priming resembles the study of exemplars in Confucian texts, which, Slingerland (2011: 412) notes, was a form of constant conceptual priming, as well as Annas's (2011: 28–30) description of virtuous responses as intelligent or educated.

Narvaez and Lapsley (2005: 148) write, "[M]ost of what we learn and know is tacit". They offer a theory of moral learning as expertise development that builds on tacit knowledge and coheres with Annas's (2011) account. Expertise in virtue is not just a matter of developing virtues in the context of automatically pursuing goals or following internalized scripts, but requires deliberate thought and the ability to explain actions in terms of reasons. Practical rationality is the key to expertise development. Through conscious thought and reasoning, we integrate the knowledge and develop the skills that we accumulate nonconsciously. Far from disrupting our efforts to be virtuous, nonconscious processes can be used for virtue development under the tutelage of practical reason. This approach has been implemented in Minnesota public schools (Narvaez & Lapsley 2005: 160–61, n. 4), attesting that virtue cultivation is empirically alive and well.

NOTES

1. For more extensive discussion, see C. Miller, this volume, Chapter 37. The first two sections in this chapter draw on Snow (forthcoming [a]); the third on Snow (forthcoming [b]) and the final section on Snow (2012).
2. Doris's globalist conception of character is discussed in the following section.
3. C. Miller (2009) alters C. Miller (2003) on the possibility of crafting a viable empirical psychology for virtue ethics.
4. The context-dependent traits of Merritt (2000) also satisfy Doris's conditions.
5. Psychological studies identify five central personality traits, called the "Big Five": openness, conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion and neuroticism. See Snow (2010: 11–12).
6. I am grateful to John M. Doris (personal e-mail 2 January 2012) for clarifying the relation between moral dissociation and incongruency.
7. The authors do not attempt a complete explanation (Merritt *et al.* 2010: 371).
8. Scripts are descriptions of action sequences that we use to guide our behaviour in various situations. For example, a "cafeteria" script describes an action sequence in which we select or are served food while going through a line, pay, and take a seat. By contrast, a "restaurant" script might involve waiting to be seated, ordering from a menu, being served at a table, and receiving a bill from, and paying, our server. Scripts can be important for learning how to act virtuously; for example, children learn how to share and be generous through scripts, as well as when and how to help others.