Book Proposal: The Architecture of Evaluation

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Manuscript Specifications

Approximately 45,000 words. No figures, illustrations, or tables. None of this material has been published.

Brief Description

What does it mean to evaluate well once correspondence to mind-independent reality can no longer serve as the governing standard? The Architecture of Evaluation answers that question. Drawing on the pragmatist tradition, post-representationalist philosophy, and contemporary metaethics, it proposes that evaluation requires three irreducible and co-required dimensions: coherence as the formal condition, utility as the first normative domain, and morality as the second. The framework, called Dual-Domain Neopragmatism, reconstitutes what evaluative adequacy means after the collapse of foundationalism, positioning morality not as a supplement to rigorous evaluation but as constitutive of what evaluation is whenever practices affect persons. The book situates this argument within the pragmatist tradition, demonstrates its practical implications across education, public policy, and deliberative practice, and presents itself as the constructive philosophical architecture that anti-foundationalism requires but has not supplied.

Full Description

Twentieth-century philosophy achieved something remarkable and left something unfinished. The representationalist picture of knowledge, the idea that the mind mirrors nature and that evaluation consists in checking the accuracy of that reflection, was dismantled with precision and rigor. Philosophers from Wittgenstein and Quine through Davidson and Rorty showed that justification is internal to practices, that there is no Archimedean standpoint outside all frameworks from which to assess their accuracy, and that the correspondence theory of truth cannot bear the philosophical weight it has been asked to carry.

What was not supplied was the evaluative architecture needed after that dismantling. Once correspondence theory is abandoned, what standards remain for judging beliefs, practices,

institutions, and policies? Rorty's answer, solidarity as the moral achievement of a culture that has enlarged its sympathies, is illuminating as a description of moral maturity but insufficient as an account of what evaluation structurally requires. The collapse of correspondence theory does not leave evaluation impossible. It leaves philosophy with a constructive task: reconstructing what evaluative adequacy means under post-representationalist conditions.

The Architecture of Evaluation undertakes that task. It proposes that adequate evaluation requires three irreducible and co-required dimensions. Coherence is the formal condition: the requirement that elements hold together, integrate without irresolvable tension, and connect on principled rather than merely additive grounds. Utility is the first normative domain: a family of practical values including effectiveness, applicability, generativity, and proportionality, organized around what the pragmatist tradition calls practical wisdom. Morality is the second normative domain and the book's central philosophical innovation: the constitutive requirement that evaluation be accountable to the persons it affects, understood not as a procedural condition governing discourse but as a dimension of what evaluation is whenever practices affect persons.

The central innovation of the morality thesis is supported by what the book calls the redesign-response pattern. Certain evaluative failures are experienced not as incorrect applications of an existing framework but as evidence that the framework itself was missing something structurally necessary. A policy evaluation may be coherent and instrumentally effective while still being criticized because it ignores accountability to affected communities. In such cases, evaluators do not say the framework was misapplied; they demand that the framework be redesigned to include what it was missing. The book interprets these redesign responses as evidence that morality is constitutively operative within evaluation rather than supplementary to it. This argument is reconstructive and abductive: it does not claim access to mind-independent moral truths but argues that the best explanation of stable patterns in evaluative practice is that accountability to persons is structurally presupposed whenever evaluation is directed at relational practices affecting human beings.

The philosophical position developed throughout the book is described as postrealism. Postrealism accepts that a world exists independently of human descriptions while rejecting representational correspondence as the governing standard of evaluation. This allows the framework to position itself against both relativism, which concludes that evaluative standards are arbitrary social constructions, and foundationalism, which derives evaluative standards from

metaphysical claims about reality. Coherence, utility, and morality are presented as reconstructively necessary dimensions of evaluative adequacy, recoverable from within evaluative practice rather than derived from a prior theory of what reality is like.

The framework describes itself as radical Rortyism. Rorty correctly dissolved the representationalist picture and relocated justification inside practices, but remained committed to a therapeutic rather than constructive conception of philosophy's task. DDN argues that this commitment was not required by anti-foundationalism: the question of what evaluation positively requires when foundationalist scaffolding is removed is a philosophical question, not a demand to reinstall foundations. DDN answers that question by reconstructing the evaluative architecture that evaluative practice already presupposes, making explicit what the practice has always been doing when it functions well.

The book has broad practical implications. In education, it challenges the dominance of correspondence-based assessment and argues that evaluative frameworks lacking the morality dimension are structurally incomplete rather than merely inadequate. In public policy, it provides the vocabulary for distinguishing evaluative incompleteness from defectiveness and contestability, a distinction with direct implications for institutional reform. In deliberative practice, it offers a structural account of why procedurally adequate discourse can still produce evaluatively incomplete outcomes, sharpening the distinction between DDN's approach and Habermasian discourse ethics. More broadly, it presents the framework as an alternative to the evaluative nihilism associated with post-truth culture: a rigorous account of what evaluation requires that does not depend on the correspondence framework that post-truth discourse corrupts.

Proposed Chapter Outline

The book is organized in three parts: the problem, the architecture, and the implications.

Part One: The Problem

Chapter 1 The Evaluative Gap

The opening chapter establishes the problem the book addresses. The correspondence framework, which organizes evaluation around the relationship between claims and mind-

independent reality, does not fit most of what human beings actually need to evaluate. The chapter demonstrates this through five domains: education, policy, ethics, science, and personal judgment. In each, the correspondence question is either unanswerable, irrelevant, or so insufficient that asking it consistently produces structurally incomplete evaluations. The chapter introduces the distinction between evaluative insufficiency, where a framework captures something genuine but requires supplementation, and evaluative misorientation, where the framework is organized around a question the evaluative situation does not pose. The correspondence framework is misoriented in this sense. The chapter concludes by previewing the alternative developed in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2 What Rorty Got Right

This chapter reconstructs Rorty's dissolution of representationalism, tracing the argument through Sellars's attack on the Myth of the Given, Quine's dissolution of the analytic-synthetic distinction, and Davidson's rejection of the scheme-content distinction. The chapter argues that Rorty's deflationary account of truth and his relocation of justification inside social practices are philosophically correct and are accepted as the starting point of DDN. It then identifies precisely where the account runs out: not where it is wrong, but where it leaves evaluation without structural resources. Solidarity, the book argues, cannot explain why certain evaluative failures generate redesign demands rather than correction demands or disagreement recognitions, and it cannot produce the morality dimension as a structural requirement rather than a cultural aspiration. The chapter ends by identifying the gap DDN is designed to fill.

Chapter 3 Why Constraint-Pragmatism Is Not Enough

This chapter examines the tradition of adding normative constraints to pragmatist inquiry: Peirce's ideal of the long run, Dewey's conception of growth, Sellars's space of reasons, and Habermas's ideal speech situation. It argues that each represents a sophisticated attempt to preserve normative force within a post-foundationalist framework, and that each falls short in the same way: adding constraints to pragmatism is not the same as reconstituting what evaluation means. The chapter develops a precise account of the distinction between regulating inquiry morally, which is what constraint-pragmatism achieves, and constituting it morally, which is

what DDN requires. This distinction becomes the fulcrum on which DDN's advance over the existing tradition turns.

Part Two The Architecture

Chapter 4 Postrealism: The Ontological Stance

This chapter develops the ontological stance that underlies the framework. Postrealism is distinguished from both realism and anti-realism: it accepts the existence of a mind-independent world while rejecting representational correspondence as the governing standard of evaluation. The chapter argues that this is a methodological commitment rather than a metaphysical one, recoverable from within evaluative practice rather than derived from a prior theory of what reality is like. It addresses the Fesmire objection, which holds that any account of evaluative standards requires a realist grounding, and shows how postrealism navigates between the foundationalist demand for external grounding and the relativist conclusion that evaluative standards are arbitrary. The chapter establishes postrealism as the philosophical stance that makes DDN's constructive project possible.

Chapter 5 Coherence: The Formal Condition

This chapter develops coherence as the formal condition of evaluation. Coherence is distinguished from mere logical consistency and from coherentism as a theory of justification. It is the requirement that elements integrate without irresolvable tension, connect on principled rather than merely additive grounds, and form a structure capable of generating evaluative guidance. The chapter positions coherence in relation to Rawlsian reflective equilibrium, which it extends beyond a single normative domain, and to Sellarsian inferentialism, which it extends beyond the logical and semantic norms governing what follows from what. Coherence is presented as the backbone of the architecture: without it, the two normative domains cannot do their work, and evaluation loses intelligibility.

Chapter 6: Utility: The First Normative Domain

This chapter develops the utility domain. Utility is presented as a family of practical values rather than a single master criterion: effectiveness, applicability, generativity, and

proportionality. The chapter argues that DDN inherits from the pragmatist tradition its insistence on consequences and its refusal to evaluate practices in abstraction from their practical results, while refusing the utilitarian reduction of that insistence to preference satisfaction or aggregate welfare. It distinguishes DDN's utility domain from classical utilitarianism, decision-theoretic accounts of rational choice, and Dewey's instrumentalism. Utility is the dimension that connects evaluation to practical wisdom in its classical sense: the capacity to accomplish what one sets out to accomplish with means proportionate to ends.

Chapter 7 Morality The Second Normative Domain

This chapter develops the morality domain and the book's central philosophical argument. The family of values organized by this domain, care, perspectival responsiveness, fairness, and relational accountability, is derived through an irreducibility argument: each captures a dimension of relational accountability that the others do not exhaust. The chapter distinguishes DDN's morality domain from five alternatives: morality as procedural condition (Habermas), morality as cultural achievement (Rorty), morality as virtue (MacIntyre), morality as care ethics (Noddings), and morality as constraint on inquiry (Bernstein). It argues that morality is constitutive of evaluation rather than regulative of it, supported by the redesign-response pattern: the best available explanation of why certain evaluative failures generate demands for framework redesign rather than correction is that accountability to affected persons is structurally presupposed by evaluation of practices affecting persons. The chapter also develops the distinction between evaluative incompleteness, defectiveness, and contestability, and shows why incompleteness is a categorically different and more serious evaluative failure than the other two.

Chapter 8 The Architecture as a Whole

This chapter integrates the three dimensions into a unified account of what evaluation is. It argues that the dimensions are co-required rather than lexically ordered, that none substitutes for the others, and that evaluation conducted along any two dimensions while omitting the third produces structural incompleteness rather than partial adequacy. The chapter develops the constraint satisfaction model: all three dimensions apply simultaneously to the same evaluative object, each generating its own adequacy conditions, and evaluative completeness is the conjunction of those conditions being met. It addresses the practical wisdom required to navigate

tensions among the dimensions, arguing that DDN provides the structure within which judgment is possible rather than an algorithm that makes judgment unnecessary. The chapter also addresses the claim that coherence carries more architectural weight than the other two dimensions and explains why this is a feature of the argument's emphasis rather than a hierarchical claim about the architecture.

Part Three: Implications and Situating the Framework

Chapter 9 DDN and the Pragmatist Tradition: A Full Reckoning

This chapter situates DDN within the pragmatist tradition through sustained engagement with its most significant philosophical competitors. It develops the object-individuation argument, which anchors the morality thesis in the constitutive relational structure of evaluative objects rather than in a prior moral ontology. It engages Bernstein's engaged fallibilistic pluralism as the closest existing position to DDN, identifies the precise fault line, and argues that regulating inquiry morally is not the same as constituting it morally. It addresses the Rortyan objection that DDN's constructive move reintroduces the foundationalism it claims to avoid, and defends the presupposition/assertion distinction as the philosophical move that keeps DDN within the anti-foundationalist tradition while going beyond Rorty's therapeutic conclusion.

Chapter 10 Applications: Education, Policy, and Deliberative Practice

This chapter demonstrates DDN in three domains. In education, it argues that assessment systems lacking the morality dimension are structurally incomplete, that the evaluative failures this produces are diagnosable as incompleteness rather than defectiveness, and that the appropriate institutional response is framework redesign rather than improved application. In public policy, it develops the pretrial risk-assessment algorithm as a sustained case study: a system that satisfies coherence and utility criteria while generating redesign demands because the morality dimension is absent. In deliberative practice, it develops the divergence from Habermasian discourse ethics with precision: where Habermas builds morality into the procedural conditions of discourse, DDN builds it into what the evaluation itself must attend to, and a deliberative process meeting all Habermasian conditions can still produce an evaluatively incomplete outcome.

Chapter 11 Radical Rortyism: The Case for DDN as an Advanced Pragmatism

The concluding chapter states the book's argument in its strongest form. It defends the claim that DDN is advanced pragmatism rather than post-pragmatism: it accepts the anti-foundationalist and anti-representationalist core of the pragmatist tradition while reconstructing the evaluative architecture those commitments require rather than abandoning the architectural task. It develops the modal status of DDN's claims, distinguishing abductive best explanation, reconstructive necessity, pragmatic indispensability, and non-transcendental necessity as distinct licenses with distinct scopes. It addresses the redesign-response argument's vulnerability to the historicization objection and the utility-reduction objection, deploying Darwall's account of the second-person standpoint as the positive argument for the description/address distinction's logical irreducibility. The chapter closes by naming the debate precisely: whether the reconstruction ultimately persuades depends on whether the redesign-response argument, the object-individuation argument, and the Darwall-grounded irreducibility of address succeed together.

About the Author

Michael A. Surkes holds a PhD in Educational Technology from Concordia University (Montreal), where his dissertation examined pedagogical frameworks for facilitating higher-order thinking. His interdisciplinary training spans physiological psychology (McGill University, First Class Honours) and neurobiological research (Caltech, MS), providing the cognitive science foundation that informs his philosophical work. He completed undergraduate honours studies in philosophy at Concordia, graduating with Great Distinction and receiving the W. R. Fraser Medal for Philosophy.

Surkes spent a decade as a Research Assistant and Postdoctoral Fellow at Concordia's Centre for the Study of Learning and Performance, contributing to meta-analyses of research on critical thinking instruction published in Review of Educational Research, Computers & Education, and Evidence and Policy. His doctoral thesis examines how people develop highly coherent sets of ideas about deeply complex subjects.

His evaluative framework was first published at the University of Chicago's Center for Practical Wisdom as 'Applying Coherence, Morality, and Utility Toward Developing Practical Wisdom.' His book Developing Practical Wisdom was published by Austin Macauley in 2025 and was runner-up at the San Francisco Book Festival. He maintains a public presence on this

work at www.michaelasurkes.com and www.developingpracticalwisdom.com. He is based in Rawdon, Quebec, Canada.

Intended Audience

The primary audience is academic philosophers working in epistemology, metaethics, philosophy of language, and the pragmatist tradition. The book engages directly with Rorty, Bernstein, Habermas, Davidson, Sellars, Rawls, and Darwall, and makes original contributions to debates about the status of normative claims after anti-foundationalism, the relationship between pragmatism and moral philosophy, and the logical irreducibility of second-personal address.

The secondary audience includes philosophers of education and educational theorists seeking a rigorous account of what evaluation requires beyond correspondence and technical measurement. The book's sustained application chapters address education, public policy, and deliberative practice in terms accessible to scholars in those fields.

The book is suitable for graduate seminars in epistemology, metaethics, philosophy of education, and political philosophy. Its engagement with post-truth discourse and democratic deliberation will interest scholars in political theory and communication studies. Its demonstration that the morality dimension is constitutive rather than supplementary will be of particular interest to applied ethicists and institutional designers.

Comparison with Existing Works

No previous work has reconstructed the evaluative architecture required after the collapse of representationalism by integrating coherence, utility, and morality as co-required dimensions in a unified philosophical framework.

Richard Rorty's Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature (Princeton, 1979), Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity (Cambridge, 1989), and Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth (Cambridge, 1991) provide the philosophical clearing that this book builds on. Rorty dissolves the representationalist picture and relocates justification inside practices. What he does not supply is the constructive account of what evaluation positively requires after that dissolution. The present work provides that account, describing its project as radical Rortyism: Rorty's anti-foundationalist commitments followed to their constructive conclusion.

Richard Bernstein's Beyond Objectivism and Relativism (Pennsylvania, 1983) and The Pragmatic Turn (Polity, 2010) represent the most sophisticated existing attempt to preserve normative force within anti-foundationalist pragmatism. Bernstein's engaged fallibilistic pluralism adds moral constraints to the conditions of justificatory practice. The present work argues that this move, while valuable, falls short of reconstituting what evaluation means: regulating inquiry morally is not the same as constituting it morally.

Jurgen Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action (Beacon, 1984) and Between Facts and Norms (MIT, 1996) develop the most systematic attempt in contemporary philosophy to give morality a structural role in rational practice through the procedural conditions of discourse. The present work argues that this procedural placement cannot reach evaluative contexts that are not discursive in Habermas's sense, and that an evaluation meeting every Habermasian condition can still be structurally incomplete on DDN's account.

Stephen Darwall's The Second-Person Standpoint (Harvard, 2006) provides the positive argument for the logical irreducibility of second-personal address that DDN's morality thesis requires. Darwall establishes that second-personal reasons are authority-regarding rather than outcome-regarding and that no accumulation of utility terms generates an authority relation. The present work deploys this independently established result to ground the description/address distinction that is central to DDN's irreducibility argument.

Nel Noddings's Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education (California, 1984, 2013) is the closest philosophical precedent for DDN's morality domain in its positive content. The present work integrates the care orientation Noddings develops with the formal condition of coherence and the practical domain of utility within a unified evaluative architecture, converting an ethics of care into a constitutive dimension of evaluative adequacy.

John Rawls's A Theory of Justice (Harvard, 1971) and Political Liberalism (Columbia, 1993) establish reflective equilibrium as the method by which competing principles are brought into coherent relationship. The present work treats reflective equilibrium as the operational mechanism through which the coherence dimension governs the integration of utility and morality, extending it beyond the normative domain in which Rawls developed it.

Additional Materials

Author's C.V.

Mission

My objective is to produce educational materials and events about theories and practices associated with developing practical wisdom (deeply coherent thinking and moral discernment). My message is that information about the basic processes involved in cognitive development should be disseminated throughout our educational institutions.

Education

Doctor of Philosophy, Educational Technology Concordia University, Montreal Dissertation on *Facilitating Higher-Order Thinking: Synthesizing Pedagogical Frameworks for the Development of Complex and Coherent Conceptual Systems.* http://spectrum.library.concordia.ca/976283/1/NR63449.pdf	2009
Bachelor of Arts, Great Distinction, Honours in Philosophy Concordia University, Montreal.	2003
Master of Science, Biology California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, California Research in electrical stimulation of the central nervous system in mammals and psychophysics of the human visual system.	1977
Bachelor of Science, First Class Honours, Physiological Psychology. McGill University, Montreal	1974

Academic Awards

Concordia University Graduate Fellowship	2003-2006
Fonds de Recherche sur la Société et la Culture (Québec) Graduate Fellowship for Studies in Philosophy	2003 (declined)
W. R. Fraser Medal for Philosophy	2003

Concordia Arts and Science Scholarship 2002

Ada Israel Memorial Scholarship 2002

Hansen Fellowship 1974-1977

Spencer Fellowship 1974-1977

J.W. McConnell Scholarship 1972, 1973

Employment History

Research Assistant and Postdoctoral Fellow 2003-2013

Centre for the Study of Learning and Performance, Concordia University, Montreal. Research Projects: Meta-analysis of studies of effectiveness of distance education; development of a questionnaire designed to predict the success of distance education students; meta-analysis of studies of the effects of educational interventions on the development of critical thinking skills; review of E-learning for the Canadian Council on Learning.

Part-Time Faculty, Concordia University 2010-2011

Instructor for SCOL270 (Historical, Philosophical, and Social Aspects of Science) at the Science College.

Teaching Assistant 2005-2006

Fundamental Methods of Inquiry, Department of Education, Concordia University, Montreal. Graduate level course. Responsible for designing, delivering, and assessing six online assignments in reflective writing and action planning.

Information Systems Consultant 1985-2000

Clients included Arrow Canada, Alcan, Squibb Canada.

Systems Analyst and Developer 1982-1985

Arrow Canada, Montreal. Developed and installed accounting and production systems on IBM System/38 and System/400.

Programmer/Analyst and Training Manager 1980-1982

Syntax Systems, Montreal. Developed and implemented a training program for 10 junior programmers and supervised their production; as senior analyst and project leader designed, developed and installed payroll, order entry, billing and sales analysis systems on IBM System/34.

Languages

Excellent English, good French.

Publications

Article

Surkes, Michael A. (2025, July 7). Applying Coherence, Morality, and Utility Toward Developing Practical Wisdom. University of Chicago Center for Practical Wisdom newsletter. https://wisdomcenter.uchicago.edu/news/discussions/applying-coherence-morality-and-utility-toward-developing-practical-wisdom

Books

Surkes, Michael A. (2025). *Developing Practical Wisdom.* Austin Macauley Publishers.

Surkes, Michael A. (in preparation). *Operationalizing Practical Wisdom.* (Under consideration at Princeton University Press.)

Surkes, Michael A. (in preparation). *Commitment and Self-Determinism.*

Workshop

Critical Thinking in Action: Making Value-Based Decisions. June 10, 2017; Montreal.

Presentations

Surkes, M. A. (2009, May). Higher-Order Thinking: An Interdisciplinary Pedagogical Framework. Presented at the Provoking Curriculum Conference, Ottawa.

Surkes, M. A. (2009, April). Facilitating Higher-Order Thinking: A Pedagogical Framework for the Development of Complex and Coherent Conceptual Systems. Presented at the Annual Meeting of The American Educational Research Association, San Diego.

Schmid, R. F., Borokhovski, E., Tamim, R., Bernard, R., Abrami, P.C., Wade, A., Surkes, M. A., Lowerison, G., Lysenko, L., and Galofre, C. (2009, April). Effect of Computer-Based Technology Use in Post-Secondary Education: Preliminary Findings of a Meta-Analysis. Presented at the Annual Meeting of The American Educational Research Association, San Diego.

Surkes, M. A. (2007, May). Teaching and Learning Higher-Order Thinking: An Integrative Pedagogical Strategy for Facilitating the Development of Complex Cognitive Processes. Presented at the McGraw-Hill Ryerson Teaching, Learning and Technology Conference, Montreal.

Surkes, M. A., and Lysenko, L. (2006, May). Effective Uses of Asynchronous Computer-Mediated Communication for Graduate Education. Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Association for Distance Education, Montreal.

Surkes, M. A. (2006, April). Teaching Teachers to Teach Thinking: Understanding Metacognitive Processes. Presented at the Annual Meeting of The American Educational Research Association, San Francisco.

Surkes, M. A., and Guloy, S. (2006, April). Metacognitive Self-Regulation and Achievement by Undergraduate Students. Presented at the Annual Meeting of The American Educational Research Association, San Francisco.

Co-Authored Publications

Schmid, R. F., Bernard, R.M., Borokhovski, E., Tamim, R., Abrami, P.C., Surkes, M.A., Wade, A., & Woods, J. (2014). The effects of technology use in postsecondary education: A meta-analysis of classroom applications. *Computers & Education, 72,* 371-391.

Abrami, P.C., Borokhovski, E., Bernard, R.M., Wade, C.A., Tamim, R., Persson, T., Bethel, E.C., Hanz, K. and Surkes, M.A. (2010). Issues in Conducting and Disseminating Brief Reviews of Evidence. *Evidence and Policy*, *6(3)*, 371-389.

Bernard, R.M., Abrami, P.C., Wade, A., Borokhovski, E., Tamim, R., Surkes, M.A., & Bethel, E.C. (2009). A meta-analysis of three interaction treatments in distance education. *Review of Educational Research, 79*(3), 1243-1289.

Abrami, P.C., Bernard, R.M., Borokhovski, E., Wade, A., Surkes, M. A., Tamim, R., & Zhang, D. A. (2008). Instructional interventions affecting critical thinking skills and dispositions: A stage one meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research, 78*(4), 1102-1134.

Bernard, R. M., Zhang, D., Abrami, P. C., Sicoly, F., Borokhovski, E., & Surkes, M. A. (2008). Exploring the structure of the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal: One scale or many subscales? *Thinking Skills and Creativity, 3*(1), 15-22.

Abrami, P. C., Bernard, R. M., Schmid, R. F., Borokhovski, E., Tamim, R., Surkes, M. A., Wade, A., Lowerison, G., Zhang, D., Nicolaidou, I., Newman, S., Wozney, L., and Peretiatkowicz, A. (2006). A Review of e-Learning in Canada: A Rough Sketch of the Evidence, Gaps and Promising Directions. *Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology, 32*(3), 1-70.

Bernard, R. M., Brauer, A., Abrami, P. C. and Surkes, M. A. (2004). The development of a questionnaire for predicting online learning achievement. *Distance Education*, *25*(1), 31-47.

Chapter 7

Morality: The Second Normative Domain

The Domain and Its Stakes

The morality domain is the philosophical center of the book's argument. It is the dimension of the framework that is most original, most contested, and most consequential for what DDN claims to be. The utility domain, developed in the previous chapter, is a genuine philosophical contribution, but it has recognizable predecessors: the pragmatist insistence on consequences, the multi-criteria approaches of contemporary decision theory, the Deweyan account of means-end revision. The morality domain has no comparable precedent in the evaluative frameworks DDN engages. The claim it makes, that morality is constitutive of evaluation rather than a constraint on it or a consequence of it, is a claim that the pragmatist tradition has not made in this form, and one that requires independent argument.

DDN is a theory of human practical evaluation: of the evaluative activity human beings engage in when assessing claims, practices, and institutions that bear on how we live and act together. It does not purport to specify necessary conditions for evaluation in every conceivable logical or formal sense. The constitutive thesis, that morality is a co-required dimension of evaluation, holds within this domain. That scoping is not a limitation; it is a clarification that makes the thesis considerably more precise and considerably more defensible than a universally quantified version would be. The argument that follows applies to human practical evaluation specifically: to the assessment of practices in contexts where what is decided affects persons who may not be party to the deciding. It does not apply to purely formal or closed-system activities where no such consequences are distributed.

That the architecture bears on institutional ethics, professional evaluation, policy assessment, and democratic deliberation simultaneously is a consequence of its domain: human practical evaluation is the activity those fields share, and a theory of that activity will cut across disciplinary boundaries that are administrative rather than philosophical. The chapter develops the morality domain as a dimension of that shared evaluative activity, not as a contribution to any one of those fields in particular.

The argument proceeds in several stages. The first establishes the constitutive necessity of the morality domain by distinguishing it from five competing accounts of why morality

matters in evaluation, and then develops the positive case for the constitutive claim from within the structure of evaluation itself. The second develops the family of values that organizes the domain, deriving those values from within the practice of evaluation itself rather than importing them from prior moral theory. The third addresses the internal structure of the domain, its tensions, and what principled resolution requires within it. The fourth examines how moral accountability is identified in practice. The remaining sections situate the domain in relation to the philosophical traditions closest to it: Noddings's ethics of care, Rorty's solidarity, and Habermas's discourse ethics. A closing section addresses the convergences and departures in relation to MacIntyre.

A note on rhetorical emphasis. The morality domain receives more sustained attention in this chapter than coherence or utility, and that asymmetry reflects the book's argumentative situation rather than a claim about architectural hierarchy. Morality is the novel contribution; coherence and utility have recognizable predecessors and require less independent argument. The architectural claim remains symmetrical: any dimension can generate evaluative failure independently of the others, none outranks the others when they conflict, and the rhetorical emphasis on morality is a consequence of what needed arguing, not a signal of lexical priority.

One clarification is necessary at the outset. The morality domain, like the utility domain, operates within the co-required architecture of DDN. Its values are genuine normative values with their own internal structure and their own demands. They are not reducible to utility, and they are not derivable from coherence. But they do not operate independently of the other two dimensions. What the morality domain identifies as evaluatively required is always assessed within the co-required framework: an evaluation that satisfies morality while generating incoherence has not evaluated well, and an evaluation that satisfies morality while ignoring utility has not evaluated fully. The chapter develops the morality domain as a distinct dimension; Chapter 8 addresses how the three dimensions function jointly.

Against Five Alternatives: The Constitutive Necessity Argument

The claim that morality is constitutive of evaluation is a strong claim, and it will be resisted. The resistance takes a predictable form: morality matters to evaluation, obviously, but there are weaker and more defensible accounts of how it matters that do not require the strong constitutive thesis. This section examines five such accounts, shows what each gets right, and identifies the precise point at which each relocates morality outside the evaluative activity rather than inside it.

It then develops the positive case for the constitutive claim from within the structure of evaluation itself.

Before the argument proceeds, two clarifications are needed. The first is terminological. 'Constitutive' in what follows does not mean transcendentally constitutive in the Kantian sense: DDN is not claiming that morality is a necessary condition of any possible evaluative activity derivable by analysis alone. The claim is reconstructive and practice-internal: given what human practical evaluation is for, given the contexts in which it operates, and given the failures that result when moral accountability is absent, morality is constitutive in the sense that no adequate reconstruction of evaluation in those contexts can omit it. That is a reconstructive indispensability claim, not an ontological definition. Where formulations in this chapter read as definitions of what evaluation is rather than reconstructions of what adequate evaluation requires, the reconstructive reading should be understood.

The second clarification concerns method. The five alternatives examined below are treated at different levels of philosophical elaboration, reflecting their different positions in the existing literature rather than differential evaluative standards. Habermas's procedural account receives the most extended treatment because it is the most technically developed and comes closest to the constitutive placement DDN defends. The others are treated more briefly because their relocation of morality outside evaluation is more quickly visible. The evaluative standard applied to all five is the same: does the account locate morality as a dimension of what adequate evaluation requires, or does it locate morality as something evaluation encounters, depends on, or is governed by from outside?

The first alternative is instrumental necessity: the view that morality is required because morally accountable evaluation produces better outcomes in the long run. Evaluation that attends to the interests of all affected parties is more reliable, more generalizable, and more capable of sustaining the social conditions that make further evaluation possible. Morality pays: it improves the instrument.

This account is not wrong about its empirical claim. Morally attentive evaluation does tend to produce better outcomes. But the instrumental account makes morality contingent on that tendency. When moral accountability is instrumentally costly, when attending to the interests of those who bear the costs of a practice reduces its measured effectiveness, the instrumental account provides no structural grounds for requiring it. A practice that ignores morality when

doing so produces better utility outcomes has not violated an instrumental requirement; it has simply made an instrumental trade-off. That is not constitutive necessity. It is conditional prudence.

The second alternative is procedural necessity: the view that morality specifies conditions under which evaluation must be conducted. A valid evaluation must be conducted with honesty, with openness to counterevidence, with genuine responsiveness to the perspectives of affected parties. These are moral conditions on the process, and without them the evaluation is compromised

The procedural account is the closest alternative to the constitutive account, and it is the form that morality takes in Habermas's framework. It captures something real: evaluation conducted in bad faith, with deliberate suppression of relevant evidence or systematic exclusion of those affected, is worse than evaluation conducted with integrity. But procedural necessity governs how evaluation is done, not what evaluation is. A practice that violates procedural conditions has conducted evaluation badly; it has not failed to evaluate. The evaluative activity is intact; the moral conditions are requirements placed on its conduct from the side. That is a different claim from the constitutive one, and the difference is not terminological.

The third alternative is social indispensability: the view that morality is what holds evaluative communities together, that the norms of care, fairness, and accountability are the social glue without which sustained inquiry would collapse. Evaluation requires a community, the community requires trust, and trust requires moral accountability. Morality is therefore indispensable to the social infrastructure of evaluation.

This account has genuine sociological insight. But social indispensability is a contingent empirical claim. A community that manages to sustain evaluation through mechanisms other than moral accountability, through coercion, shared self-interest, or institutional enforcement, has not, on this account, produced a practice that lacks a constitutive dimension. It has merely found an unusual way to sustain the social conditions of inquiry. Constitutive necessity cannot be contingent in this way. If morality is constitutive of what evaluation requires, it is required by the structure of the evaluative activity, not by the social conditions that happen to make that activity stable.

The fourth alternative is political unavoidability: the view that morality enters evaluation because those affected by evaluative practices eventually demand accountability. Political pressure from those who bear the costs of evaluation produces moral responsiveness. Over time, practices that ignore the interests of those they affect become politically unsustainable, and evaluation must adapt.

This account treats morality as a pressure on evaluation from outside, not a dimension of it from within. When the political pressure is absent, when those bearing the costs have no voice or no access to the processes that evaluate the practices affecting them, the morality requirement disappears on this account. The history of evaluative practices is full of cases where that pressure was absent for extended periods. The political unavoidability account cannot say that those practices were evaluatively deficient in a structural sense. It can only say that they were lucky enough, or powerful enough, to avoid the pressure. That is not the claim DDN makes.

The fifth alternative is psychological inseparability: the view that morality is so deeply embedded in how human beings evaluate that it cannot, in practice, be separated from the evaluative activity. Humans are moral animals. Their evaluations are shot through with moral concern. It is psychologically impossible to evaluate without some moral orientation coming into play.

This account is the weakest of the five because it is purely descriptive. Psychological inseparability is a claim about how humans happen to evaluate, not a claim about what evaluation requires. If it turned out that some evaluators were psychologically capable of fully separating moral concerns from their evaluative activity, they would not, on this account, have failed evaluatively. They would merely have achieved something psychologically unusual. Constitutive necessity requires a normative claim, not a psychological one.

What all five alternatives share, despite their differences, is the structural feature that defines the contrast with the constitutive account: they all treat morality as something evaluation encounters, must answer to, depends on, or is shaped by. None of them treats morality as part of what adequate evaluation requires from the inside. The reconstructive claim DDN makes is this: human practical evaluation is inherently answerability-guided. It is the assessment of practices in contexts where what is decided affects persons who may not be party to the deciding, and any reconstruction of what evaluation requires in those contexts that omits accountability to those

persons fails to capture what makes the evaluative activity evaluative rather than merely technical.

The positive case for this claim goes deeper than the elimination of alternatives. It rests on what evaluation, as a practice, already commits us to. Evaluation is not mere ranking, prediction, or preference-ordering. It is a practice of assessive judgment that is in principle justifiable under conditions of relevant challenge: evaluation is the kind of activity that can be asked to give reasons, that can be pressed with a legitimate 'why?', and that is answerable to that demand. This is not a moral claim; it is a structural description of what distinguishes evaluation from mere calculation or expression.

In human practical contexts, the space of legitimate challenge is not confined to logical consistency or instrumental adequacy. It includes those who are affected by the outcome of the evaluation. When a practice is evaluated and a conclusion reached, the persons affected by that practice have standing to ask: why was this the conclusion, and does it adequately account for what the practice does to us? That question is not an external moral constraint added to an otherwise complete evaluation. It is a 'why?' question that the evaluative activity itself generates, because evaluation in human practical contexts is conducted about practices that affect persons, and those persons are therefore part of the justificatory space within which the evaluation must be answerable.

The morality domain is the formalization of this already-implicit constraint. Care, perspectival responsiveness, fairness, and relational accountability specify what being answerable to affected persons requires in practice. They do not import a moral theory from outside the evaluative activity; they articulate what the evaluative activity is already committed to by virtue of being the kind of practice that issues assessive judgments about practices affecting persons. Morality is not added to evaluation at this point: it is made explicit. The authority of affectedness is not a moral principle standing above evaluation but a structural feature of what evaluation, conducted in human practical contexts, already consists of.

The Family of Values: A Derivation

The morality domain organizes a family of values: care, perspectival responsiveness, fairness, and relational accountability. The choice of these values rather than others requires explicit justification. Critics will ask why autonomy, rights, dignity, capability, reciprocity, freedom, or

anti-domination are not included. The answer is architectural, and it is important enough to state carefully.

DDN's morality domain is not derived from prior moral theory. It is derived from within the practice of evaluation itself, from what accountability to affected persons requires when practices are assessed in human contexts. The values included in the domain are those that constitute that accountability from the inside. The values excluded are not unimportant; many of them are genuine and significant moral values. But they are derived from prior theoretical commitments, Kantian dignity, liberal rights theory, the capability approach, republican freedom, that DDN's postrealist stance does not import. Including them would not enrich the morality domain; it would anchor it to frameworks that DDN has explicitly set aside.

The normative ground of this derivation requires explicit statement. It is not moral realism, not foundationalism, and not a claim about the metaphysical status of values. It is a reconstructive claim: human practical evaluation, as it operates across the range of contexts this framework addresses, already implicitly requires accountability to affected persons, and DDN makes that implicit requirement explicit and architecturally precise. The derivation is answerable to the practice, not to a theory standing outside it.

The four values derive from the following analysis of what moral accountability in evaluation requires. When a practice is evaluated in DDN's sense, the evaluator is required to ask what the practice does to the people it affects. That question has four dimensions, and the four values correspond to those dimensions. It is worth noting at the outset that these dimensions involve different modes of necessity: care is an epistemic precondition, perspectival responsiveness is a requirement of evaluative thoroughness, fairness is a normative requirement of honest accounting, and relational accountability is a structural feature of what evaluation in human contexts consists of. These modes are distinct but compatible; they are not competing claims but different aspects of what accountability to affected persons requires when examined from different angles.

The first dimension is attentiveness: the requirement to actually attend to the circumstances and needs of those affected, rather than addressing their formal interests or abstract welfare. This is care in Noddings's sense: not sentiment but the disciplined orientation of attention toward the particular other. Care is the foundational value of the morality domain because without it the other three have no object. An evaluation that is formally committed to

fairness and accountability but has not attended carefully to what the practice actually does to actual people has not satisfied the morality domain. Care is an epistemic precondition of moral accountability: you cannot be accountable to those you have not attended to.

The second dimension is perspectival responsiveness: the requirement to assess consequences from the standpoint of those who bear them, not only from the standpoint of those who produce or direct the practice. Perspectival responsiveness is not sympathy or emotional identification. It is a form of disciplined inquiry: the active effort to understand how a practice appears to those it affects, conducted as a condition of evaluating it adequately rather than as a supplement to evaluation already complete. The value is named perspectival responsiveness rather than empathy to mark its epistemic character: it is a requirement of evaluative thoroughness, not a demand for emotional attunement. Empathy is partial, manipulable, and biased toward vivid cases; perspectival responsiveness is a structural requirement that the evaluation attend to how the practice appears from the position of those it affects, regardless of whether that attendance is accompanied by feeling.

The third dimension is distributive accountability: the requirement that the distribution of costs and benefits across affected persons be examined and that asymmetries in that distribution be defensible rather than arbitrary. This is fairness, understood not as a prior principle of equal treatment but as a normative requirement that the accounting of consequences be complete and honest, that the evaluation not quietly absorb the costs borne by some into aggregate measures that obscure them. Fairness in DDN's sense is not derived from a theory of justice. It is derived from the requirement that evaluation attend to who gains and who bears costs, and that differential treatment be principled rather than merely convenient.

The fourth dimension is relational accountability: the requirement that the practice acknowledge and maintain the relationships it affects, that it treat those affected not as passive recipients of outcomes but as parties to whom the practice is answerable. Relational accountability is a structural feature of what evaluation consists of in human contexts: because the purpose of evaluation is to guide practices that affect persons, treating those persons as objects of administration rather than as parties to a relationship fails to satisfy the evaluative purpose that motivates the activity.

Why not autonomy, rights, dignity, capability, reciprocity, freedom, or anti-domination? Each of these is a genuine moral value, and each may be relevant in specific evaluative contexts

as an elaboration or specification of one or more of the four core values. Autonomy and dignity are dimensions of relational accountability in contexts where practices affect the capacity of persons to direct their own lives. Rights are specifications of fairness in contexts where formal entitlements structure the distribution of costs and benefits. Capability is a specification of care in contexts where what persons need to flourish can be precisely characterized. Reciprocity is a dimension of relational accountability in contexts of ongoing mutual engagement. Freedom and anti-domination are specifications of fairness and relational accountability in contexts where power asymmetries are the central evaluative concern.

These connections show that the excluded values are not absent from DDN's morality domain. They are present as context-specific elaborations of the core values, available when the evaluative situation calls for them. What they are not is organizing principles of the domain, because organizing the domain around them would import the prior theoretical commitments from which they derive. DDN's morality domain is organized by what accountability to affected persons requires in evaluation, not by what moral theory stipulates persons are owed in the abstract.

Internal Structure and Tensions

The four values of the morality domain are not a checklist. They constitute a structure: each depends on the others, and each can generate tensions with the others that require principled resolution. Understanding that structure is necessary for understanding how the domain functions within DDN's architecture.

Care is foundational in the sense that it makes the other values possible: without attentiveness to those affected, perspectival responsiveness has no object, fairness has no one to be fair to, and relational accountability has no relationship to maintain. But care can generate tension with fairness when caring attentively for particular others leads to differential treatment that cannot be generalized. A curriculum designed with deep attentiveness to the specific needs of one population may be less fair to another population whose needs are different. The tension is not between care and fairness as abstract principles; it is between the particular orientation of care and the distributive scope of fairness.

Perspectival responsiveness can generate tension with fairness when the standpoint of those whose situation is most accessible crowds out the standpoint of those whose situation is less visible but no less significant. Perspectival responsiveness is not neutral in its reach; some

standpoints are more available than others, and an evaluation that satisfies perspectival responsiveness without checking its results against distributive fairness may systematically underweight the interests of those whose circumstances are harder to inhabit imaginatively.

Relational accountability can generate tension with both care and fairness when maintaining a relationship requires attending to a particular other in ways that are not distributively fair, or when distributive fairness requires treating persons in ways that damage the relational fabric that makes accountability possible. These are not abstract difficulties. They arise in education when teachers are required to treat students identically in ways that ignore individual circumstances, and in policy when uniform application of rules damages the specific relationships through which accountability is actually exercised

What principled resolution requires within the morality domain parallels what it requires within the utility domain: transparency about the tension, proportionality of response to what is actually at stake in the specific case, and stability under perspective shift. A resolution that can be defended to those who bear its costs, including those who bear the costs of the tension being resolved in one direction rather than another, has a stronger claim to being principled than one that looks defensible only from inside the evaluative practice.

The morality domain also has an open-ended character analogous to that of the utility domain. The four core values do not exhaust what moral accountability can require in specific contexts. In contexts where power asymmetries are severe, anti-domination may be an additional relevant value. In contexts where ongoing mutual engagement is central, reciprocity may need explicit attention. In contexts where the capacity for self-direction is at stake, autonomy may require specific treatment. These are context-sensitive elaborations, not structural additions to the domain. They operate as extensions of the core values in specific evaluative situations, governed by the same requirement that their application be principled rather than imported from prior theory.

Moral Accountability in Practice

The claim that morality is constitutive of adequate evaluation raises an immediate practical question: how is moral accountability identified in actual evaluative practice? If the morality domain required algorithmic precision to apply, it would be practically inert: the evaluative situations in which it matters most are precisely those in which the consequences for affected persons are complex, contested, and resistant to precise measurement. The answer is that moral

accountability is identified through intersubjectively stable indicators: features of evaluative situations that are recognizable across perspectives and that provide the basis for principled rather than arbitrary assessment.

Four indicators are central. The first is the distribution of harm and benefit across persons: who gains from the practice and who bears its costs, and whether that distribution is acknowledged and defensible. The second is the reversibility of outcomes: whether those who bear the costs of a practice have recourse, and whether the evaluative process remains open to revision when consequences become clear. Irreversibility amplifies moral accountability demands: when the consequences of a practice cannot be undone, the obligation to attend carefully to those consequences before they are imposed is correspondingly greater. The third is asymmetries in who bears costs and who receives gains: whether gains are systematically concentrated in one group while costs are systematically distributed to another. Asymmetric distribution is not automatically unjust, but it requires explicit justification, and the absence of that justification is itself an evaluative failure. The fourth is robustness under perspective shift: whether the evaluation looks the same when assessed from the perspective of those bearing its costs as it does from the perspective of those directing or benefiting from it.

These four indicators are not an algorithm. They do not produce a verdict automatically. They provide the basis for a principled assessment: they specify what the evaluator must attend to, what questions must be answered, and what kinds of responses are and are not adequate. An evaluation that addresses them explicitly has satisfied the practical demands of the morality domain. An evaluation that ignores them has not.

Noddings: The Closest Precedent

Nel Noddings's ethics of care is the philosophical framework closest to DDN's morality domain, and the relationship deserves careful treatment. Noddings's central insight, developed in Caring and its successors, is that the fundamental moral relationship is not between abstract rational agents governed by universal principles but between particular persons in specific relationships of care and response. The one-caring attends to the cared-for; the cared-for receives and responds to that care; and the relationship between them constitutes the basic moral unit. Morality is not derived from principle and applied to relationships. It is developed within relationships and cannot be adequately theorized from outside them.

DDN inherits from Noddings the priority of the particular relationship over the abstract principle, the insistence on attentiveness as the foundational moral orientation, and the critique of moral frameworks that treat persons as interchangeable instances of a general category. Care, as the foundational value of DDN's morality domain, is Noddings's concept, extended from interpersonal relationships to the evaluation of practices.

The departure from Noddings is on two connected points. The first is scope. Noddings's ethics of care is developed primarily for interpersonal relationships and for educational contexts understood as networks of such relationships. DDN extends care to the evaluation of practices that affect large numbers of people who are not in direct relationships with those conducting the evaluation. The attentiveness that care requires must be operationalized differently at the scale of policy evaluation, institutional assessment, or scientific practice than it is at the scale of the teacher-student relationship. DDN's care value retains Noddings's insistence on attending to the particular other while extending that insistence to contexts where the others are not immediately present and where the evaluator must actively construct the perspective that attentiveness requires.

The second departure is architectural. Noddings develops care as the foundation of a moral theory. DDN develops care as one value within the morality domain of an evaluative framework. DDN does not derive a moral theory from care; it incorporates care as one of the values that constitute moral accountability in evaluation. The other three values, perspectival responsiveness, fairness, and relational accountability, are not derivable from care in Noddings's sense. They are co-required dimensions of what moral accountability in evaluation consists of, not specifications of a single master value.

Rorty: The Position Superseded

The relationship between DDN's morality domain and Rorty's solidarity requires fuller treatment here, because solidarity is the position that the constitutive placement of morality most directly supersedes.

Rorty's account of solidarity treats moral progress as the expansion of imaginative sympathy: the process by which a culture enlarges the range of those whose suffering it acknowledges and responds to. Solidarity is the highest moral achievement of a culture, cultivated through narrative and imagination rather than derived from philosophical argument. The present framework accepts the importance of narrative and imagination in moral

development, and accepts that solidarity is a genuine and important achievement. What it rejects is the structural placement of solidarity as the answer to the question of how evaluation can be conducted after the correspondence framework has been abandoned.

Solidarity is a cultural achievement, contingent on the imaginative responsiveness of those inside a practice. This means that a practice can be internally rigorous, practically effective, and morally indifferent, and Rorty's account has no structural resources for identifying this as an evaluative failure. DDN's reconstructive placement makes the same failure an evaluative one. A practice that is internally rigorous and practically effective but morally indifferent to those it affects has not evaluated adequately: it has omitted a dimension that any reconstruction of evaluation adequate to its purposes in human practical life cannot omit. Solidarity cannot supply that requirement because solidarity is what evaluation is supposed to produce or sustain, not what adequate evaluation is reconstructively required to include. The difference marks the gap between Rorty's deflationary neopragmatism and DDN's reconstructive one.

Habermas: Procedural Versus Evaluative Constitution

The most technically demanding challenge to DDN's constitutive placement of morality comes from Habermas's discourse ethics. Habermas builds moral conditions into the structure of rational discourse itself through the ideal speech situation: validity claims are oriented toward the possibility of rational agreement under conditions of free and equal participation, and a claim achieves validity not merely by surviving logical scrutiny but by being defensible to all those it affects under conditions of genuine equality and reciprocity.

This is the closest the constraint-pragmatist tradition comes to the constitutive placement DDN defends, and it requires careful distinction. Habermas does not merely add moral sensitivity as a cultural achievement, and his account is not morally thin. He builds substantive moral conditions into the structure of rational discourse itself: the requirement of free and equal participation encodes a commitment to the equal moral standing of participants, and the discourse principle cannot be met without prior recognition of the claims of those affected. Communicative rationality already carries normative weight that is more than procedural in the thin sense.

The distinction DDN presses is therefore not that Habermas's procedural morality is absent or thin. It is that procedural constitution is insufficient for evaluative constitution.

Procedural conditions govern who may participate in discourse and on what terms; they do not govern what the evaluation conducted within that discourse must attend to. A deliberative process whose participants all enjoy equal standing, whose discourse meets every condition of communicative rationality, can still produce an evaluation that treats the interests of affected third parties as variables in a calculation rather than as claims requiring direct accountability. The moral thickness Habermas builds into the conditions of discourse does not automatically transfer to the content of what the discourse evaluates. That transfer requires the additional architectural move DDN makes: building accountability to affected persons into the evaluative activity itself, not only into the conditions under which it takes place.

The evaluative constitution DDN claims is therefore a supplement to Habermas's procedural constitution, not a rejection of it. A deliberative process that meets Habermas's conditions and uses an evaluative framework organized by DDN's three dimensions has more evaluative resources than either provides alone. But a process that meets only the procedural conditions, however rigorously, leaves the morality dimension of the evaluative activity itself unaddressed. That is the gap DDN closes, and closing it requires reconstituting what the evaluative activity requires, not only improving the conditions under which it is conducted.

MacIntyre: Convergence and Departure

Readers familiar with Alasdair MacIntyre's work will notice convergences between DDN's morality domain and MacIntyre's account of practice-based rationality. MacIntyre argues that moral reasoning is intelligible only within the context of specific practices and the traditions that sustain them, that virtues are the dispositions required to participate excellently in those practices, and that the goods internal to practices can only be assessed from within the forms of life that make those practices possible.

The convergences are real. DDN shares with MacIntyre the insistence that evaluation is practice-embedded, that the standards of good evaluation are developed within practices rather than imposed on them from outside, and that the relationship between a practice and those affected by it is morally significant in ways that abstract principle cannot fully capture.

The departures are equally real. MacIntyre's account is embedded in a neo-Aristotelian teleology: practices have internal goods defined by the ends constitutive of the practices themselves, and the virtues are the dispositions required to achieve those ends. This teleological structure is not available to DDN. The postrealist stance explicitly sets aside the question of

whether practices are oriented toward ends given by a structure of reality independent of human practice. DDN's morality domain is not derived from the internal goods of practices but from what accountability to affected persons requires in evaluation.

MacIntyre also develops his account in explicit opposition to the Enlightenment liberal tradition and to the emotivism he sees as its consequence. DDN does not share this critical orientation. It is a post-Rortian framework that accepts the dissolution of foundationalism and attempts to develop positive evaluative resources in its aftermath. MacIntyre's project and DDN's project start from different diagnoses and proceed in different directions, even when they sometimes arrive at similar conclusions about the importance of practice-embedded moral accountability.

The departure from MacIntyre clarifies something about DDN's morality domain that the other comparison sections do not. For MacIntyre, normative adequacy is practice-internal in the sense of being answerable to the teleological structure the practice embodies: internal goods are what they are because of the ends constitutive of the practice, not because of any cross-practice standard of accountability. DDN's reconstructive normative adequacy is different in kind: the four values of the morality domain are derived from what accountability to affected persons requires in evaluation across practices, not from the internal goods of any particular practice or tradition. The exact line between teleological internalism and reconstructive normative adequacy is the line between a framework whose moral standards are practice-constituted and one whose moral standards are practice-responsive without being practice-bound. That distinction is what allows DDN to evaluate practices across traditions and at the boundaries between them, precisely where MacIntyre's account is structurally limited.

Morality and the Evaluative Whole

The morality domain, as developed in the preceding sections, is the most demanding dimension of DDN's architecture. Its demands are not algorithmic and cannot be fully specified in advance. What it requires varies with context, with the specific configuration of affected persons, with the reversibility of outcomes, with the distribution of costs and benefits in the particular situation being evaluated. This variability is not a weakness. It is a feature of what accountability to particular persons in particular contexts requires, and it is what distinguishes DDN's constitutive morality from the procedural accounts that attempt to reduce moral accountability to a specifiable set of conditions.

The morality domain is also the dimension that most clearly marks the difference between DDN and the frameworks it departs from. The correspondence framework has no morality domain; it asks only whether evaluation tracks reality. The constraint-pragmatist tradition has moral constraints but not a morality domain; morality is added to evaluation from outside rather than built into what adequate evaluation requires. Rorty's neopragmatism has solidarity but not constitutive morality; the moral dimension is a cultural achievement rather than a reconstructive requirement. DDN holds that none of these placements is adequate to what evaluation requires in the human practical contexts where it matters most. The tradition has not consistently denied morality a role in evaluation; it has consistently denied morality this particular structural placement: a co-required evaluative dimension, co-equal with coherence and utility inside a unified architecture, irreducible to procedural constraint, cultural achievement, or downstream consequence of good inquiry.

The co-required structure that makes morality constitutive also makes it demanding in a specific way. Because morality is co-required with coherence and utility, satisfying the morality domain is not sufficient for full evaluation: a practice can be morally accountable while failing on utility, or while generating incoherence that prevents the moral and utility assessments from functioning as dimensions of a single evaluative activity. Morality is necessary but not sufficient, which is precisely what co-requirement means. The next chapter develops how the three dimensions function jointly, how tensions between them are navigated, and what the architecture as a whole requires of practices that are evaluated within it.