

Amoralism and the Role of Other-Directed Judgments¹

Andrei G. Zavaliy
American University of Kuwait

Abstract

An amoralist is often invoked in philosophical discussions as a character whose existence might lend empirical support to various views in moral psychology, such as theories of moral motivation. Yet the notion of an amoralist requires greater elucidation if it is to do any philosophical work. In view of the inadequacies of several classical and contemporary approaches to the phenomenon of amoralism, I propose to conceive of an amoralist in terms of his unwillingness to pass a moral judgment on others. The moral point of view first manifests itself when a person makes a normative value judgment about the behaviour of another person in circumstances where the second person's actions bear no foreseeable effects on the well-being of the first person. It is argued that the propensity to evaluate the behaviour of others from a disinterested moral standpoint is (in part) what it means to 'have' morality. On the other hand, the refusal to evaluate another's actions, when such refusal is not explained by the fear to judge hastily, is indicative of the amoral condition of an individual. The latter thesis is defended against the objection that our tendency to judge others using moral categories is merely an outgrowth of a self-interested evolutionary mechanism.

Key Words: Amoralism, moral judgments, moral psychology, non-judgmentalism, value judgments, psychopath.

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The amoral condition, i.e., a condition of a person who in some sense lacks morality, deserves much closer attention than it has hitherto received for at least two practical reasons. First, casual references to amoralists can frequently be found in philosophical literature where this type is usually invoked to supply the 'empirical' evidence to moral arguments, and yet, it is by no means obvious what lacking morality involves and which criteria we

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should use when identifying the amoral condition. If this important notion can be employed to do any theoretical work in moral philosophy that goes beyond its emotive meaning, we need to look for some reliable independent 'standard of amorality'. Secondly, the conceptual analysis and empirical study of amoral condition can reveal something essential about the nature of moral agency in general, such as the emotive and cognitive conditions underlying moral perception, moral motivation and moral reasoning. The empirical part of this task, however, would only be possible after the notion of amoralism has been sufficiently elucidated. We cannot begin studying amoralists unless we first know who they are, how to identify them and where exactly to look for these characters. This paper will mainly concentrate on the first, 'theoretical' part of this problem.

The term 'amoralist', on traditional understanding, refers to a person with persistent indifference towards moral values, i.e., to a person who systematically fails to be motivated by moral consideration, and thus in some sense is *without* morality. The term, furthermore, connotes evil, wicked, psychopathic and antisocial personality.¹ In ordinary and professional parlance the qualification 'amoral' may be attached not only to individual agents but also to cultures, traditions, practices or even countries or cities.² Arguably though, the alleged amorality of these more abstract entities can be analyzed in terms of behaviour or beliefs of particular agents practicing the tradition or being part of the 'amoral' community.³ I shall limit my discussion then mainly to cases of individual amorality.

A moment of reflection would show that what initially seemed like a simple question, namely, "what does it mean to lack morality?", in fact admits of a variety of approaches with no straightforward indication which one of them captures the essence of amorality most fully. One may attempt to define the amoral state of an individual in terms of what a person believes or fails to believe about the ontological status of moral properties (e.g., Garner 1994); in terms of his underlying motives or maxims that determine his actions (e.g., Kant 1793/1998), or else, in terms of explicit behaviour and emotive reactions (e.g., DSM IV). Without denying the value of *multidimensional* approach to amorality, I want explore an approach that identifies amoral condition by reference to *failure of evaluation*; more specifically, failure to evaluate the behaviour of *others* from the moral point of view in the circumstances where a moral judgment should be made – an attitude that is referred to by Robert Fullinwider (2005) as "promiscuous nonjudgmentalism." I suggest further that unwillingness to make an *external* (other-directed) evaluative pronouncement is a direct consequence of the reluctance to evaluate one's own conduct from the moral point of view, i.e., making an internal or self-directed judgment.

I want to look closer at a certain kind of moral failure which might shed light on one aspect essential to moral attitude: a repeating failure on the part of an individual to make other-directed moral judgments in *morally demanding* situations where a ‘morally demanding’ situation is initially understood as any situation requiring a specific moral posture.

An average morally concerned person does a lot of things *qua* moral agent. He tends to evaluate his own actions from point of view of moral rules; he puts restrictions on the kind of goals he may legitimately pursue depending on whether these goals are compatible with core moral values; he voices his moral approval or disapproval of others. The last feature is one of the most conspicuous marks of a morally concerned person, since judging others in many cases is a public action. It is also the crucial feature that determines one’s relation toward the world of morality. This by no means implies that explicit willingness and capacity on the part of some agent to judge others is a sure sign that the agent is ‘within morality’. Willingness to pronounce a moral judgment is at best a necessary condition for being a morally concerned agent, but not a sufficient one. Ronald Milo (1984, p. 178), for example, rightly observes that we must distinguish between saying, from the moral point of view, “X is wrong,” and saying, “X is wrong from the moral point of view.”⁴ There seems to be nothing contradictory in a scenario where someone reliably identifies the morally praiseworthy or blameworthy actions, and makes a number of genuinely moral judgments about others, without yet *adopting* the moral point of view himself. Thus, Milo writes:

Even the so called ‘amoralist’ – i.e., the person who is himself indifferent to matters of moral right and wrong – can make genuinely evaluative judgments about what is right or wrong. Indeed, if the ‘amoralist’ is a very subtle thinker, he might be called upon by those who are morally concerned to advise them about the moral propriety or impropriety of such things as abortion or ‘reverse discrimination.’ And if the ‘amoralist’ understands the criteria that define the moral point of view and understands the feelings and attitudes that make others concerned about whether their behaviour conforms to these criteria, then he may choose (perhaps for a fee) to advise them and hence engage in the process of moral evaluation.⁵

Milo’s description suggests, and the common sense confirms, that the mastery of moral terminology and moral rules is not yet enough for being a moral agent. Yet, it will be argued, the principal refusal to assume an evaluative attitude toward others (with qualifications discussed below) is a definitive mark of amorality.

In Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) a character named Lord Henry Wotton, an otherwise exemplary gentleman, exhibits a peculiar attitude toward other people, an attitude that conspicuously lacks in moral dimension. On one occasion he expresses the viewpoint that guides his judgments and actions throughout the novel, in the following way:

I never approve, or disapprove, of anything now. It is an absurd attitude to take toward life. We are not sent into the world to air our moral prejudices. I never interfere with what charming people do. If a personality fascinates me, whatever mode of expression that personality selects is absolutely delightful to me.⁶

How should we understand such an attitude? Admittedly, one's flagrant refusal to apply moral categories while judging the actions of others can be attributed to two very different mindsets. First, it may be the case that Lord Wotton simply wants to avoid the reputation of a moralist in the pejorative application of this word, as referring to a person unduly concerned with the morals of others. In this case, his refusal to judge may be taken, among other things, as evidence of a praiseworthy scrupulousness when it comes to pronouncing a final judgment on a certain person, since we are rarely in a position to know all the details of the relevant circumstances and have only an indirect access to the motives underlying another's behaviour. Clear recognition of one's own epistemic deficiencies entails that we hardly ever have a sound basis for judgment, which, combined with the (moral) desire to avoid an unjust, hasty verdict, may effectively block one's natural tendency to publicly evaluate the behaviour of others from the moral point of view.

Yet, there is another, less charitable interpretation of Lord Wotton's nonjudgmental attitude, and the one which is perhaps more in line with Oscar Wilde's intentions. On this other reading, his neutral posture with respect to the moral status of other individuals that appear in the novel and their questionable actions is not a sign of a commendable open-mindedness, but should rather be attributed to a serious flaw in his own character. It is plainly, wrong, one might argue, no matter how tolerant one may be, to remain nonjudgmental, for example, with regards to Dorian Gray's irresponsible behaviour which eventually drove a young girl Sibyl Vane to suicide. Robert Fullinwider nicely summarizes the intuitive problem with this kind of attitude when he writes:

Nonjudgmentalism can reflect a thorough-going critical flabbiness. The nonjudgmentalist is unwilling or unable to apply any categories of assessment to the conduct of others. Such a promiscuous nonjudgmentalism that makes no distinction among people, or such an indiscriminate tolerance

that makes no objection to anything, isn't humility and generosity in action; it is mindlessness.⁷

Lord Wotton, then, clearly suffers from a "promiscuous nonjudgmentalism" in the sense described above. Fullinwider is quite right when he condemns this posture and yet he conflates the two explanatory options of this attitude which should be kept separately. A nonjudgmentalist who is *unwilling* to apply the categories of assessment to the conduct of others belongs to a different class and should be treated differently than a person who is *unable* to do so. In the latter scenario we have a case of moral *incompetence* (e.g., young children; mentally retarded persons), which in most contexts calls for the appropriate moral instruction rather than moral condemnation. If the term 'mindlessness' can nonetheless be applied to such cases, it should first be detached from any negative emotive connotations that it is laden with in the ordinary speech.

On the other hand, the unwillingness to pronounce a moral judgment, when the capacity is present and the reluctance in question is not explained by the fear to judge hastily and thus unjustly, is indicative of a serious flaw of character rather than some cognitive inadequacy. There are times when the outspoken moral judgment is not optional, but is called for by the very features of the situation. Failure to judge in such circumstances, then, is a moral failure, and, furthermore, the systematic re-occurrence of this failure shows a motivational structure and a value system of the individual, which can be conveniently captured by the term 'amoral.' We may safely assume then that Lord Wotton's nonjudgmentalism is not the result of moral incompetence at the level of moral concepts, or his ignorance of the appropriate moral rules. It must then be attributed to his conscious unwillingness to look at the world from the moral point of view, and, consequently, not just to his 'mindlessness' but to his *amorality*.

The emphasis on the willingness (or unwillingness) to make other-directed moral judgments needs to be further explained and justified. But a clarification is in order. I understand by the 'other-directed moral judgment' a normative judgment made from the moral point of view directed at persons other than oneself. The other-directed judgment is contrasted here with the self-directed evaluation - a normative judgment directed at one's own actions, intentions or stable dispositions. The distinction between these two types of judgments or beliefs is of some importance and does capture a real difference. This difference can be spelled out in the following way. First, we are typically better situated to access our own motives and intentions, as well as all the relevant circumstances of the action, and thus *a priori* are in a better position to properly evaluate our own behaviour from the point of view of morality as compared with our attempts to evaluate behaviour of others. Secondly, when the critical evaluation concerns one's own actions or overall lifestyle, there are better chances that the appropriate judgment will have

behavioural consequences for the person who is both the subject and the object of the moral judgment. To be sure, our critical remarks or moral admonitions aimed at other people may sometimes trigger a behavioural change as well, but in the cases of successful moral criticism the efficaciousness of a judgment is not entirely under our control.⁸ Finally, and most importantly, making a sincere moral judgment about oneself (especially a negative one: e.g., “It was wrong for me to do X”) requires a certain mental posture – it requires a degree of alienation from one’s own interests, desires and preferences, and a capacity to look at oneself from a disinterested, objective perspective. This is never the case when the object of moral criticism is another person. The other person’s desires and preferences are not *ours*; hence there is no comparable difficulty in morally condemning the actions stemming from those desires and preferences.

It appears then that while self-directed moral judgments might be potentially more accurate and efficient, they are in some sense *harder to make*. A stable disposition to judge one’s own choices from the moral point of view signifies a level of moral and intellectual development that goes beyond the mere capacity to voice a moral disapproval about what other people do or fail to do. This common observation prompted a number of scholars to conclude that the other-directed moral judgments are primary from the evolutionary and developmental standpoints, and appear historically prior to the sincere moral appraisals directed at oneself. Edward Westermarck, for example, argued that self-directed moral evaluations are circuitously reached only “through a prior critique upon our fellow-men.”⁹ On his analysis, moral self-criticism is essentially a *reflected* capacity – it appears as a further derivation from our natural disposition to pass judgments on others.

If our account is correct, the capacity for other-directed evaluative judgment may exist without the capacity for self-directed moral judgment (e.g., in a child), but not vice versa. Thus a person capable of evaluating his own actions from the point of view of morality is always also capable of making similar judgments about the actions of others, even if he is perhaps more likely to be mistaken (due to ignorance of intentions, circumstances, etc.) in his estimation of the moral status of other people’s choices.

I want to suggest further that having a capacity and willingness to make a self-directed moral judgment is at the core of having *morality*.¹⁰ Since a capacity for self-directed judgment implies the capacity for other-directed moral judgment as well, it must follow that a morally concerned person, on occasion, would evaluate the behaviour of others from the moral point of view, voicing either condemnation or approval of their actions. By contraposition, the conspicuous lack of disposition on the part of a mature individual to judge others is indicative of the corresponding lack with regard

to the self-directed judgments, and, by extension, signifies the amoral status of that person.

The special importance of self-directed moral judgments for the moral realm has been noted both by philosophers and social scientists. Early on Darwin considered the moral sense to be primarily a faculty of *self*-regarding moral appraisal (i.e., the moral conscience) and claimed that it is “of all the differences between man and the lower animals ... by far the most important.”¹¹ The appearance of the capacity for self-evaluation signifies a major breakthrough in the moral development of a person. This specific capacity can be further seen as a precondition for any other aspect of moral performance and moral evaluation. On the most plausible accounts of the nature of morality as an emergent social phenomenon, it consists of a system of restrictive rules, limiting the natural freedom of an individual in light of a certain common good. Moreover, the system of restrictive rules does not become a system of *moral* rules unless its requirements are internalized, freely respected by the majority, and are not externally forced upon an individual.¹² Voluntary self-restraint in accordance with some recognized moral prohibition, especially when no threat of sanctions is present, is a distinctive mark of a mature moral agent. But such self-restraint requires that an individual first evaluates his actual or potential behaviour from the third-person perspective, i.e., it requires a well-developed capacity for self-regarding judgments. The impersonal, general moral rule becomes action-guiding only when an individual applies it to his own situation, and reformulates it, so to speak, with a first person singular pronoun at the start of the sentence. At this point his, for example, benevolent actions become qualitatively different from the actions of, say, an animal that was trained by punishments and rewards to be nice to strangers.

The capacity for self-regarding judgments is thus at the core of moral development. This capacity does not exhaust all that morality requires (various other cognitive and emotive capacities are perhaps equally indispensable), but it constitutes one of the necessary conditions for being a moral agent. Furthermore, as we noted, the presence of critical attitude aimed at oneself *eo ipso* implies the capacity for other-directed moral judgment.

On the other hand, a persistent nonjudgmentalist (where nonjudgmentalism is not explained by one’s fear to judge hastily) betrays his deficiency with respect to his capacity for self-directed judgments as well. If a person is not capable or willing to apply the stable evaluative criteria to others, he is likewise not capable or not willing to apply these behavioural standards to himself. We have seen above that the distinction between ‘unwillingness’ and ‘incapacity’ in this context corresponds to the distinction between amorality and moral incompetence or other non-blameworthy cognitive deficiency. A nonjudgmentalist of Lord Wotton’s type is a paradigm example of someone who is quite capable of viewing the world

from the point of view of moral values, but conscientiously refuses to do so. He lacks an *interest* that the world should be a certain way, i.e., he is in important sense content with the way the world is. As he puts it: “*whatever* mode of expression [charming] personality selects is absolutely delightful to me.” But since the world constantly changes, the value structure of a nonjudgmentalist must be flexible enough to fit the world every time it presents itself differently. Like many psychopathic characters described in literature (both fictional and descriptive psychiatric case studies), he lacks what a psychiatrist Richard Jenkins (1960) calls “the inner conflict”¹³ – something that most of us experience when our immediate desires are tested by our higher ideals or expectations of society. In Lord Wotton’s case the desire to enjoy the originality of expression of a ‘charming’ person finds no obstacles in any normative aspects of his worldview, and hence prompts no evaluative judgment about this expression, no matter what its content. This is what Fullinwider captures by the term “critical flabbiness”, and what characterizes an amoral individual more than his immoral actions, or any subjective beliefs about morality. Immorality as a form of outward behaviour is a consequence of refusal to apply evaluative categories to one’s own dispositions, or intentions, which, in turn, is reflected in one’s nonjudgmental attitude toward others.

It remains now to defend the claim that one’s willingness to pass normative judgments on others is a distinctive feature of a morally concerned agent against a certain attempt to downplay the significance and, indeed, the uniqueness of this tendency. I shall address this objection in the last section of this article.

3

It is a common empirical observation that we take interest in the behaviour of other members of the community, and are often inclined to evaluate their behaviour in normative terms, i.e., approving or disapproving of their actions, even when such behaviour doesn’t affect us directly. This social phenomenon, however familiar, still requires an explanation. Debra Lieberman (2008) takes an evolutionary perspective on the question of the origin of our concern with the behaviour of others. She tries to determine whether this peculiar concern can be explained as contributing to one’s own ‘inclusive fitness’, and thus ultimately reduced to considerations of self-interest (on the assumption that our concern with our own well-being requires no special explanation).

Indeed, in many cases we worry about what others do for one of these two reasons: (1) the behaviour of others may have foreseeable positive effects for our own well-being; and (2) the behaviour of others may have foreseeable negative effects for our well-being. In both cases, our concern with the behaviour of others hardly needs any further discussion. But there yet remains a puzzling third case when we care about what others do in our

social environment despite the fact that their actions carry no significant 'fitness consequences' for us (and we are also aware of this fact). We tend to evaluate the behaviour of, say, celebrities, and may sometimes be very passionate about our judgments, even though we may be reasonably sure that their misdeeds can have no possible effect on our lives. The same can be said about fictional characters, whose conduct we nonetheless take closely to heart. Moreover, judging the behaviour of others (regardless of their relative proximity to our own situation) from the point of view of moral normative system is at the centre of a specifically moral attitude toward the world. It is also noticed that diagnosed psychopaths are notorious in their utter indifference to actions of others if those actions have no direct bearing on their own well-being.¹⁴

Some have looked at this tendency to judge others as the evidence for the existence of special 'moral faculty' which enables us to evaluate our peers in an impartial manner, and which cannot be reduced to any selfish concern. But can this tendency be explained from the evolutionary perspective, Lieberman asks, and if so, what are the psychological mechanisms behind it?

According to Lieberman, there is no need to postulate a special 'moral sense' which prompts to evaluate the behaviour of others from a disinterested point of view. Rather, "the evaluation of some third-party behaviours may be performed by the same systems evaluating the costs and benefits of that act *on one's own* inclusive fitness."¹⁵ This thesis is then supported by conjectures based on quasi-historical data. Lieberman refers to scientists (e.g., Birdsell, 1968), who believe that throughout much of our evolutionary history we would have lived in relatively small groups, ranging from 25 to 500 members, where the actions of other members would in many cases directly affect the well-being of the rest of the group. If that was indeed the typical condition of the human race for thousands of years, it might account for our present preoccupation with evaluating the third-party behaviour: "[This preoccupation] may be a result of the fact that our mind is equipped to handle ancestral environments that consisted of small social groups where the behaviour of others had an increased probability of impacting one's inclusive fitness."¹⁶ Thus, what initially appeared to be an outcome of distinctly *moral* sentiments and values, Lieberman argues, is simply a *by-product* the earlier non-moral process of adaptations designed to deal with very different social environments. Common concern with others' actions, including the interest in regulating it even when nothing is at stake for the person thus concerned, turns out to be an epiphenomenal result of primarily self-interested evolutionary mechanisms after all. Passing moral judgments on distant others is nothing but a biologically entrenched *habit* of the mind, which might as well disappear in the foreseeable future.

Lieberman's explanation, if adopted, suggests a very interesting picture of the person suffering from 'promiscuous nonjudgmentalism,' that is, an amoralist. Presumably, an amoralist still cares about what others do when his own welfare is directly at stake. But he conspicuously lacks a disposition to worry about the actions of others when there is little chance of direct interaction. If Lieberman's account of the roots of the third-person concern is correct, the amoralist may be either (1) defective in some of the innate cognitive mechanisms that aim at maximizing his own evolutionary fitness or else (2) he may represent a higher stage on the scale of evolutionary development – he is a person who escaped the grip of the vestigial psychological systems which ceased to be fitness enhancing in contemporary social environment. If the former option is true, this cognitive deficiency should manifest itself in other aspects of his behaviour as well. An amoralist (e.g., a psychopath) would then (on average) be less capable to make outcome calculations, detect dangers, and choose the most efficient means for his goals. The available factual evidence, however, does not support this expectation. In fact, there exists overwhelming empirical data that a great number of individuals suffering¹⁷ from psychopathy exhibit high levels of general intelligence. Indeed, in some cases the level of intelligence exhibited by a psychopath is significantly higher than that of an average person of a comparable age and social status, and the image of a 'bright sociopath' is widely exploited in popular fiction and film.¹⁸ John Deigh's observation is especially relevant here:

Though amoral the psychopaths appear nevertheless to be capable of reasoning, weighting evidence, estimating future consequences, understanding the norms of their society, anticipating the blame and condemnation that result from violation of those norms, and using these cognitive skills to make and carry out their plans.¹⁹

I conclude that an innate or acquired deficiency in psychological mechanisms responsible for maximizing one's own inclusive fitness cannot be cited as an explanation of persistent nonjudgmentalism that some people clearly exhibit. It remains now to consider the second option.

The second explanatory option assumes the truth of Lieberman's account, namely that a tendency to judge others in the circumstances where the consequences of others' behaviour are neutral with respect to our own welfare is often *useless* from the evolutionary perspective, and yet this tendency can be explained as a vestige of an earlier and evolutionary *useful* tendency aimed at our benefit, which is simply carried over to a contemporary social environment where it ceased to fulfil the original function. A nonjudgmentalist, then, is a person who shed this evolutionary baggage, and adapted to modern social conditions *better* than an average person. He is disinclined to judge distant others because he sees no point in doing so, and he is quite right insofar as the evolutionary interests are

concerned. There is a short step from here to glorification of an amoralist as a higher kind of being. Nietzsche's exaltation of the *Übermensch* (who can be interpreted as amoralist) is one classic example. A book by Alan Harrington, *Psychopaths* (1972) is a relatively recent addition to this trend. In this most interesting presentation the author voices the following view: "Although originally founded upon an anti-social condition, it [psychopathy] offers exciting new alternatives to the way we have lived until now...What was formerly diagnosed mental illness has turned into the new spirit of the age...Conceivably the times are calling for an idealized version of the psychopath as saviour [...]"²⁰— there is hardly a need to extend the quote any further. I take it that any explanatory theory which implies the view of an amoralist as a higher kind of being, or a being on a higher stage of evolutionary development, is under plenty of pressure to substantiate these counterintuitive consequences by further evidence. Until then we would be justified in rejecting Lieberman's reductionist explanation of why we are often concerned with what other people do.

Our evaluative attitude toward oneself and others reflects a distinct class of values and interests, which are not necessarily connected with personal gain or personal well-being. These specific 'detached' interests which have social significance is what we properly capture by the term 'moral values', and the presence (as well as the absence) of these interests determine the status of a mature agent within the moral universe. The lack of disposition to judge others from moral perspective (with the proviso discussed) is a sure indication that we are dealing with a person who would not apply evaluative categories to his own behaviour as well, and thus a person who truly remains alien to the world of morality. Being 'outside' morality, however, does not yet spare a person from the demands of the moral law, nor does it compromise our practice of holding amoralists morally responsible for their actions. As Bernard Williams rightly observes, "the moral law is more exigent than the law of an actual liberal republic, because it allows no emigration."²¹ All we can say is that an amoral person refuses to participate in the world of shared values, which put the long-term interests of a society above the immediate interests of an individual.

I argued above that the most efficient way of recognizing an amoralist is by noting his indiscriminate tolerance of what distant others do. Since most of us are often guilty of remaining cold toward news of atrocities and crimes committed at a distant land towards foreign people, it is worth noticing that amoralism comes in degrees, and there is a fine line between being an immature member of a moral community and being a true outsider. It is dangerous to think of amoralists as a rare species, who are 'born that way.' Habit, emotional fatigue, rationalizations of observed sufferings and injustices, combined with intellectual laziness can lead to moral degradation faster than one suspects. Diagnosed psychopaths might be extremes on the

continuum, but the danger of gradual slipping in that direction is always present. Being sensitive, and, when need be, *judgmental* toward others, whether near or far away, is one of the ways of keeping one's 'moral fitness'.

Notes

¹ The label of *amoralist* is attached to a psychopath (or sociopath) by Norman Williams (*Introduction to Moral Education*. Baltimore, Penguin Books, 1967, p. 272), Derek Wright (*The Psychology of Moral Behavior*. Baltimore, Penguin Books, 1971, pp. 208ff), and David Brink ("External Moral Motivation" *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 1986, p. 29). For the contrary opinion see Milo, R. *Immorality*, 1984, pp. 60-62.

² E.g., Christopher Cherry talks, for example, of the amoral traditions of the Ik tribe ("Agreement, Objectivity and the Sentiment of Humanity." *Nature and Conduct*. R. S. Peters, (ed.). New York, St. Martin's Press, 1975, p. 85); Lever-Tracy and Holton refer to "amoral familism" as a stable (but reprehensible) social practice of some ethnic minorities ("Exchange, Reciprocity and Amoral Familism." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 27, 2001, pp. 81-99), and *The Jerusalem Post* has published not long time ago an editorial entitled "Paris the Amoral" (July 22, 2004, p. 15).

³ There are notable exceptions to this generalization. For instance, Cosmides and Tooby refer to natural selection as "amoral process" which can yet produce "moral intuitions" ("Can a General Deontic Logic Capture the Facts of Human Moral Reasoning?" *Moral Psychology*, Walter Sinnott-Armstrong (ed.), Cambridge, MIT Press, 2008, p. 54). In all those cases, apparently, the meaning of the term 'amoral' is closer to that of a purely descriptive 'non-moral', and does not bear any negative connotations with it. The same applies to Ronald Milo's denotation of little children as "amoral agents" (*Ibid.*, p. 59) which in that case refers to their *pre-moral* status.

⁴ Milo himself attributes this distinction to Frankena.

⁵ Milo, R. *Immorality*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, p. 179. Psychiatrist Hervey Cleckley supplies factual confirmation of this possibility in his case study of a young psychopath named Anna. Interestingly enough, Cleckley observes, during Anna's long and versatile criminal career, she, among other things, taught a Sunday school class, and according to observers, "her teachings were ethically admirable and she gave a strong impression of sincerity" (*The Mask of Sanity*. New York, The New American Library, 1982, p. 60).

⁶ Wilde, Oscar. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. New York, Dolphin Books, 1890/1960, p. 84.

⁷ Fullinwider, Robert. "On Moralism." *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, vol. 22, 2005, p. 113.

⁸ At the very least: we are *more* in control of our behaviour, than that of other people – even it may be granted that our own actions are not always *entirely* under our control.

⁹ Westermarck, Edward. *The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*. London, Macmillan, vol. 2, 1906/1932, p. 123.

¹⁰ It is important to keep the distinction between capacity and willingness to make a moral judgment in mind here. This difference becomes especially relevant in discussions of moral responsibility. If an amoralist (e.g., a psychopath) is truly incapable of controlling his behaviour in accordance with requirements of morality, then it makes little sense to hold him morally accountable. Elsewhere (2008) I argue that it is *not* the case with most cases of psychopathy.

¹¹ Darwin, Charles. *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*. London, Penguin Books, 1871/2004, p. 120.

¹² We might recall the classic terminology of social agreement, mutual contract or covenant, which connotes the voluntary acceptance of certain obligations. See also Wilson C. *Moral Animals: Ideals and Constraints in Moral Theory*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2004.

¹³ "I should like to propose that psychopaths differ from psychoneurotics and indeed contrast with them in their most important characteristics. The typical psychopath and the typical psychoneurotic are, in some important regards, on opposite sides of the normal. Where the psychoneurotic suffers from excessive inner conflict, the psychopath makes others suffer from his *lack* of inner conflict" (Jenkins 1960, p. 319).

¹⁴ Cleckley describes a certain psychopath named Max and observes that Max was "unfamiliar with the primary facts or data of what might be called personal values and is altogether incapable of understanding such matters. It was impossible for him to take even the slightest interest in the tragedy or joy in the striving of humanity as presented in serious literature or art. He was also indifferent to all these matters in life itself. Beauty and ugliness, except in a very superficial sense, goodness, evil, love, horror, and humor had no actual meaning, no power to move him" (Ibid., p. 26).

¹⁵ Lieberman, D. "Moral Sentiments Relating to Incest." *Moral Psychology*, Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, (ed.), Cambridge, MIT Press, vol. 1, 2008, p. 196.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ The use of the word 'suffering' in this context is idiomatic rather than literal. As Martha Stout rightly observes, "sociopathy stands alone as a

‘disease’ that causes no *dis-ease* for the person who has it, no subjective discomfort. Sociopaths are often quite satisfied with their lives” (*The Sociopath Next Door*. New York, Broadway Books, 2005, p. 12).

¹⁸ E.g., Stanley Kubrick’s film “A Clockwork Orange” (1971) based on Anthony Burgess’ novel.

¹⁹ Deigh, John. “Empathy and Universalizability.” *Ethics*, v. 105, 1995, p. 743.

²⁰ Harrington, Alan. *Psychopaths*. New York, Simon and Schuster, 1972, pp. 48-50.

²¹ Williams, Bernard. *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1985, p. 178.

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Zavaliy, Andrei. "Absent, Full and Partial Responsibility of the Psychopaths." *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior*, vol. 38, No. 1, 2008, pp. 87-104.

Andrei G. Zavaliy received his Ph.D. in philosophy from the City University of New York and is currently an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the American University of Kuwait. His central theoretical concern is with the issues surrounding the comprehensive theory of moral agency, both from philosophical and psychological perspectives. He explores the new field of experimental philosophy, and seeks to apply the findings of experimental studies to the conceptual issues in philosophical controversies, especially in ethical theory and moral psychology.