VIRTUE ETHICS IN THE CONDUCT AND GOVERNANCE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

ADVANCES IN RESEARCH ETHICS AND INTEGRITY

Series Editor: Dr Ron Iphofen *FAcSS, Independent Consultant, France*

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VIRTUE ETHICS IN THE CONDUCT AND GOVERNANCE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

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SERIES PREFACE

This book series, *Advances in Research Ethics and Integrity*, grew out of foundational work with a group of Fellows of the UK Academy of Social Sciences (AcSS) who were all concerned to ensure that lessons learned from previous work were built upon and improved in the interests of the production of robust research practices of high quality. Duplication or unnecessary repetitions of earlier research and ignorance of existing work were seen as hindrances to research progress. Individual researchers, research professions and society all suffer in having to pay the costs in time, energy and money of delayed progress and superfluous repetitions. There is little excuse for failure to build on existing knowledge and practice given modern search technologies unless selfish 'domain protectionism' leads researchers to ignore existing work and seek credit for innovations already accomplished. Our concern was to aid well-motivated researchers to quickly discover existing progress made in ethical research in terms of topic, method and/or discipline and to move on with their own work more productively and to discover the best, most effective means to disseminate their own findings so that other researchers could, in turn, contribute to research progress.

It is true that there is a plethora of ethics codes and guidelines with researchers left to themselves to judge those more appropriate to their proposed activity. The same questions are repeatedly asked on discussion forums about how to proceed when similar longstanding problems in the field are being confronted afresh by novice researchers. Researchers and members of ethics review boards alike are faced with selecting the most appropriate codes or guidelines for their current purpose, eliding differences and similarities in a labyrinth of uncertainty. It is no wonder that novice researchers can despair in their search for guidance and experienced researchers may be tempted by the 'checklist mentality' that appears to characterise a meeting of formalized ethics 'requirements' and permit their conscience-free pursuit of a cherished programme of research.

If risks of harm to the public and to researchers are to be kept to a minimum and if professional standards in the conduct of scientific research are to be maintained, the more that fundamental understandings of ethical

behaviour in research are shared the better. If progress is made in one sphere all gain from it being generally acknowledged and understood. If foundational work is conducted all gain from being able to build on and develop further that work.

Nor can it be assumed that formal ethics review committees are able to resolve the dilemmas or meet the challenges involved. Enough has been written about such review bodies to make their limitations clear. Crucially they cannot follow researchers into the field to monitor their every action, they cannot anticipate all of the emergent ethical dilemmas nor, even, follow through to the publication of findings. There is no adequate penalty for neglect through incompetence, nor worse, for conscious omissions of evidence. We have to rely upon the 'virtues' of the individual researcher alongside the skills of journal and grant reviewers. We need constantly to monitor scientific integrity at the corporate and at the individual level. These are issues of 'quality' as well as morality.

Within the research ethics field new problems, issues and concerns and new ways of collecting data continue to emerge regularly. This should not be surprising as social, economic and technological change necessitate constant re-evaluation of research conduct. Standard approaches to research ethics such as valid informed consent, inclusion/exclusion criteria, vulnerable subjects, and covert studies need to be reconsidered as developing social contexts and methodological innovation, interdisciplinary research and economic pressures pose new challenges to convention. Innovations in technology and method challenge our understanding of 'the public' and 'the private'. Researchers need to think even more clearly about the balance of harm and benefit to their subjects, to themselves and to society. This series proposes to address such new and continuing challenges for both ethics committees and researchers in the field as they emerge. The concerns and interests are global and well recognised by researchers and commissioners alike around the world but with varying commitments at both the 'procedural' and the 'practical' levels. This series is designed to suggest realistic solutions to these challenges – this 'practical' angle is the USP for the series. Each volume will raise and address the key issues in the debates, but also strive to suggest ways forward that maintain the key ethical concerns of respect for human rights and dignity, while sustaining pragmatic guidance for future research developments. A series such as this aims to offer practical help and guidance in actual research engagements as well as meeting the often varied and challenging demands of research ethics review. The approach will not be one of abstract moral philosophy; instead it will seek to help researchers think through the potential harms and benefits of their work in the proposal stage and assist

their reflection of the big ethical moments that they face in the field often when there may be no one to advise them in terms of their societal impact and acceptance.

While the research community can be highly imaginative both in the fields of study and methodological innovation, the structures of management and funding, and the pressure to publish to fulfil league table quotas can pressure researchers into errors of judgment that have personal and professional consequences. The series aims to adopt an approach that promotes good practice and sets principles, values and standards that serve as models to aid successful research outcomes. There is clear international appeal as commissioners and researchers alike share a vested interest in the global promotion of professional virtues that lead to the public acceptability of good research. In an increasingly global world in research terms, there is little point in applying too localized a morality, nor one that implies a solely Western hegemony of values. If standards 'matter', it seems evident that they should 'matter' to and for all. Only then can the growth of interdisciplinary and multi-national projects be accomplished effectively and with a shared concern for potential harms and benefits. While a diversity of experience and local interests is acknowledged, there are existing, proven models of good practice which can help research practitioners in emergent nations build their policies and processes to suit their own circumstances. We need to see that consensus positions effectively guide the work of scientists across the globe and secure minimal participant harm and maximum societal benefit – and, additionally, that instances of fraudulence, corruption and dishonesty in science decrease as a consequence.

Perhaps some forms of truly independent formal ethics scrutiny can help maintain the integrity of research professions in an era of enhanced concerns over data security, privacy and human rights legislation. But it is essential to guard against rigid conformity to what can become administrative procedures. The consistency we seek to assist researchers in understanding what constitutes 'proper behaviour' does not imply uniformity. Having principles does not lead inexorably to an adherence to principlism. Indeed, sincerely held principles can be in conflict in differing contexts. No one practice is necessarily the best approach in all circumstances. But if researchers are aware of the range of possible ways in which their work can be accomplished ethically and with integrity, they can be free to apply the approach that works or is necessary in their setting. Guides to 'good' ways of doing things should not be taken as the 'only' way of proceeding. A rigidity in outlook does no favours to methodological innovation, nor to the research subjects or participants that they are supposed to 'protect'. If there were to be any principles

that should be rigidly adhered to they should include flexibility, open-mindedness, the recognition of the range of challenging situations to be met in the field – principles that in essence amount to a sense of proportionality. And these principles should apply equally to researchers and ethics reviewers alike. To accomplish that requires ethics reviewers to think afresh about each new research proposal, to detach from pre-formed opinions and prejudices, while still learning from and applying the lessons of the past. Principles such as these must also apply to funding and commissioning agencies, to research institutions, and to professional associations and their learned societies. Our integrity as researchers demands that we recognise that the rights of our funders and research participants and/or 'subjects' are to be valued alongside our cherished research goals and seek to embody such principles in the research process from the outset. This series will strive to seek just how that might be accomplished in the best interests of all.

Ron Iphofen (Series Editor)

INTRODUCTION: VIRTUE AND THE ETHICS OF SOCIAL RESEARCH

Nathan Emmerich

INTRODUCTION

Many of the papers collected in this volume have their origins in an event that took place in London in May 2015. It was organised by the UK Academy of Social Science's Working Group on Research Ethics with the support of the British Sociological Association (BSA). Largely to accommodate the additional papers that were commissioned, and appear in Section 3, the title of the event – Virtue Ethics in the Practice and Review of Social Science Research – slightly differs from the one chosen for this volume. The event followed on from the main activities that the Academy Working Group on Research Ethics had been pursuing for a number of years. This was the creation of set of common principles or shared basis for thinking about the ethics of social science research.[1] The call to further investigate the relevance of virtue for the practice and review of social scientific research had been a consistent feature of discussions that took place at events convened by the working group in the pursuit of its primary activities. As such, the event, and the essays collected here, are an organic development of these prior efforts.

As it had previously proved successful at promoting a relatively focused form of dialogue, the event was designed around the presentation of two

stimulus papers, with morning and afternoon sessions. The two primary papers were to be accompanied by responses from discussants. In the morning the focus was on virtue and the conduct of social research/social researchers, whilst the afternoon concerned the relevance of virtue for ethical review. Not least due to the concern that ethical review was increasingly perceived as a source of difficulties for social research, this latter topic – the ethics of ethical review – had been a feature of previous discussions. The idea seems to have been that if it was to be properly understood, the ethics of social science ought to be considered in the fullest sense possible. Predicated on a model inherited from the biomedical sciences, the focus tended to be on the empirical data collection or fieldwork phase of social research. Furthermore, criticism of the existing approach to ethical review could in itself be understood as having ethical significance. In this context it is easy to see how the notion of virtue ethics, a moral philosophy that is not currently obviously taken up or influential in existing or mainstream discourses of research ethics, might appeal.

Furthermore, the limitations placed on social research in the name of ethics are arguable having distinctly problematic and unethical consequences (van den Hoonaard, 2011). A particular issue is the way in which research ethics may be compromising our, or society's, collective ability to understand ourselves in a manner that is organised and structured by disciplinary norms. Whilst it may not be the best political climate in which to lay claim to some form of expertise, the 'post-fact era' makes it increasingly vital that we nevertheless do so (Collins, Evans, & Weinel, 2017). The idea that some form of ethical analysis could itself provide some remedy to the situation has a certain appeal. Thus, bringing the alternate perspective of virtue ethics to bear on the question of social science research ethics and the ethics of ethical review provided the starting point for thinking about an event on the topic and, therefore, this volume.

Another facet of the discussions that had been taking place under the aegis of the Academy Working Group on Research Ethics was the idea that social researchers should be understood as professionals.[2] Given the extensive role virtue ethics has played and continues to play in debates about professional ethics across a great variety of domains (cf. Clegg, 2011), this clearly resonates with the view that virtue could be fruitfully explored in relation to the ethics of social research. It also resonates with sociological conceptions of professional practice as, say, something that involves the dispositions of a profession-specific habitus. With this in mind, Professor Sarah Banks – who has published an extensive body of work that examines the idea of virtue in relation to matters of professional ethics – was asked to explore the topic, and responses were sought from those that had been involved in previous events convened by the

Academy Working Group. Whilst the initial organisational focus for the event was on virtue ethics, the matter of integrity – both in relation to research and to researchers – rapidly came to the fore. As many of the essays that follow show that the discourse of virtue ethics clearly resonates with contemporary ideas regarding integrity in relation to both research and researchers.

VIRTUE ETHICS AND ITS APPEAL

The origins of virtue ethics lie with those of (western) philosophy itself. It is the moral philosophy of the Ancient Greeks and, in particular, of Aristotle. Whilst a range of substantive ethical perspectives can be found in Ancient Greek thought, Stoicism being one such example, the notion that virtue lays at the heart of morality was shared by virtually all philosophers of that era. Indeed, the idea that morality was a matter of virtue (and vice) remained central to moral philosophy and theology until after Descartes inaugurated modern philosophical thinking. Subsequently, two, or perhaps three, other 'high level' ethical theories have joined the moral philosophy of virtue ethics. These are the universal rationalism of Immanuel Kant, Jeremy Bentham's and John Stuart Mills' utilitarianism – or, more generally, consequentialist theories – and the social contract theories of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau.[3] Taken together these form what Anscombe (1958) famously termed 'modern moral philosophy'[4] Unsurprisingly, in the modern era, such thinking is highly influential. Whilst it is certainly the case that historical accounts of research ethics show it developed in a particular context that was largely devoid of direct philosophical influences (Schrag, 2010; Stark, 2011), it is subsequently the case that philosophers and philosophical thinking have been influential in shaping the field of research ethics as it is today. Without wishing to deny that, since its inception, there has always been bioethicists for whom virtue ethics has been central – Edmund Pellegrino is an example – it is nevertheless the case that, coupled with a certain sort of ethical rationality, modern moral philosophy has been seen as underpinning the vast majority of thinking in research ethics. Almost by definition, the questions raised in this field are matters for analysis by applied ethics.

However, recent revisions to Beauchamp and Childress' (2009) *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, perhaps *the* defining text of the field, have included a chapter on moral character that clearly draws on the perspective of virtue ethics. One reason for this is the fact that, whilst the ethical thought they present is clearly consistent with Anscombe's (1958) notion of modern moral philosophy, their account eschews any formal commitment to an overarching

moral philosophy, whether that be Kantian, Consequentialist or Social Contractarian. The four principles – respect for autonomy; beneficence; non-maleficence; and justice – offered by Beauchamp and Childress (2009) can be understood as a mid-range theory. It is a conceptual framework, the value of which lies in it being useful for both analytic reflection (on practice) and practical deliberation (in practice). There are various ways to think about this proposition. One might say that, insofar as analytic reflection can inform practical deliberation (and action), and insofar as practical deliberation can draw on the insights of more analytic forms of reflection, then Beauchamp and Childress' (2009) framework can be considered useful and valuable in both practical and (applied) philosophical domains. One might also say that such a view challenges the distinction between ethical analysis and practical deliberation.

Consistent with the insights of Schön (1984), something that has been vital to current thinking about professional practice, reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, should not be dichotomised but understood as being on a continuum. As Schön (1990, p. 1) points out, properly understood reflection-on-action is actually reflection-on-reflection-in-action. Thus, there is – or, at least, there *should be* – a continuum between the practical deliberation of professionals (those conducting research) and the more analytic reflections of '(bio)ethicists' or moral philosophers. If this is the case, then there is no room for thinking that there is any sharp distinction between the cognitive processes that attend 'practice' and 'analysis'. In short, the process of analytic thought must be understood as a practice, one that involves intellectual or cognitive dispositions of thought, phenomena that are comparable to the dispositions involved in other practices, including those that demand a high degree of cognitive expertise, such as most professional practices, including medicine as well as biomedical and social research.

A further reason for the advent of virtue theory or moral character in Beauchamp and Childress' (2009) thinking about their four principles of biomedical ethics is that, in the absence of an overarching commitment to a specific moral philosophy, they need some way of adjudicating between the principles in particular cases. In saying this I do not mean to imply that particular cases are a matter of one principle or another; that it is a case of selecting the correct one. Rather, I mean to suggest that when using this, and similar, conceptual frameworks to examine the ethics of particular cases one has to find the correct balance between each principle, the degree to which each is relevant, and the strength of the competing claims that such relevance makes. In this context there is a need to acknowledge that the perspectives of individual decision makers are being relied upon; mid-range theories

cannot guarantee an ethically correct outcome. They are not – and cannot be[5] – considered as fully determinative of the correct ethical course of action. Mid-range theory can only take us so far. In the final analysis, some form of personal or individual moral disposition is required if a specific judgement is to be formulated and made.[6] Furthermore, such dispositions underlie the way in which each principle is itself understood and 'applied'. Such thinking can be understood in terms of the (collective) moral structure as well as that of (individual) agency. The moral dispositions of individual professionals (imperfectly[7]) reflect the moral structures of the profession they belong to. And the moral structures of a profession (or any other social field) do not determine the outcome of all the moral questions that arise within it.

Whilst this is a far too brief account of why it might be that Beauchamp and Childress (2009) have, in later editions of their book, found reason to offer a chapter on moral character and virtue ethics, it is, I think, enough to show something of the limitations of modern moral philosophy and applied ethics. The issue is remarkably similar to the one Anscombe (1958) diagnosed; modern moral philosophy is in need of an adequate moral psychology and, we might add, an adequate grasp of the social reality of moral agents. Not only does the rationality of contemporary moral philosophy and applied (bio)ethics fail to grasp the way in which morality and ethics are accomplished in everyday life (by everyday people), the same can be said when it comes to professional practice and professionals. Whether explicitly realised or not, it is against this background that the appeal of virtue ethics for social researchers should be understood.

As suggested, virtue ethics has its roots in Ancient Greek thought and, since that time, has been co-opted by various theological discourses, particularly Christian theology, throughout the middle ages and beyond. Whilst the star of virtue ethics waned as philosophical (and scientific) modernity took hold, the middle of the 20th century saw a number of philosophers (such as the aforementioned Anscombe, but also Phillipa Foot and Iris Murdoch) arguing for a renewed recognition of its relevance and significance. Subsequently, virtue ethics has been taken up in a number of ways and, in some instances, developed in directions that go beyond what can be found in Aristotle. For example, in an innovative and fascinating book, Nancy Snow (2009) considers virtue as social intelligence, and does so by building on a range of insights from contemporary psychological research. Whilst Anscombe (1958) felt that, unlike virtue ethics, modern moral philosophy lacked an adequate moral psychology, it is nevertheless the case that the moral psychology embedded in much of contemporary virtue theory marks a significant development in the tradition. In this light, whilst those who lay claim to virtue ethics can be

understood as drawing on the implicit authority of a moral philosophy that has contributed to 2,500 years of human history, one should bear in mind that it has undergone significant development, particularly in recent years.[8]

Aristotelian virtue ethics is, one might say, a moral philosophy that centers on agents rather than actions. The universalism of modern moral philosophy is based on the presumption that human beings are all moral agents. As such, we are all equal, and each of us has the same moral significance as any one else.[9] Furthermore, whether or not something is the morally correct course of action cannot be related to whomsoever that agent might be. If killing is wrong, then it is equally wrong for all moral agents, regardless of who happen to be. Such thinking allows for moral or ethical issues to be objectified in 'cases' and thought experiments in which the individual identity of the participants is considered irrelevant. It also allows for the structure of the case to be foregrounded, and for the concerns they represent to be universalised.[10] In contrast, virtue ethics places the question of who we are or, perhaps better, *who we want to be* at the centre of moral philosophy. This makes ethics a matter of moral character, their virtues, or moral dispositions. The question is, therefore, what the right and wrong moral dispositions might be; or how can we distinguish between the virtues and vices of moral character.

There are two distinct facets of Aristotle's discussion that are important to note. The first is his suggestion that virtues are not independent of vices. Rather, they are related to one another. However, a particular virtue is not simply the antonym or opposite of some vice. Instead, a virtue is to be found at the (golden) mean, at a point that lies between two different vices. Thus, classical notions of virtue include such things as courage, generosity, and humility, each of which lies between the respective extremes of recklessness and cowardice, wastefulness and stinginess, and vanity and servility. For the most part, virtues should be understood in this way as representing a balance between two different vices, one of deficiency and another of excess. However, Aristotle also accepts the existence of complex virtues. The primary example of which is phrónēsis, practical wisdom, or prudence. This is the virtue of good judgement and involves correctly balancing the relevant virtues when acting in a particular situation or set of circumstances. In what follows the notion of integrity can be understood as a complex virtue.

The second aspect of Aristotle's accent of virtue ethics we should note is the view that 'the good' is directly informed by a particular, and teleological, conception of human beings, and what he calls *eudaimonia* or human flourishing. This is used by Aristotle to inform the question of who we (should) want to be and how we (should) want to live, something that is predicated on what, given our nature or teleology, is good for us, or our flourishing. Thus, virtue becomes

a matter of human flourishing and acting in accordance with the teleology of our nature or being. Of course, it is not only difficult to determine what human flourishing might consist in but also what this might cannot lead us to think that all human beings ought to pursue some sort singular ideal; being surrounded by people the same as ourselves is, certainly, inimical to human flourishing. Thus, Aristotle distinguishes between three differing levels, kinds, or types of eudaimonia. These are the life of pleasure, the life of political activity and the life of contemplation or philosophical reflection.[11]

Of course, Aristotle's moral and political philosophy reflects certain sociopolitical presumptions and the way in which society was organised in Ancient Greece. In order to properly situate virtue ethics in relation to contemporary social life it is necessary to reconceptualise eudaimonia and human flourishing. Modernity is marked by a high degree of social differentiation and change. In this context a notion of human flourishing that is primarily expressed in terms of human biology is distinctly unhelpful. Rather, what is required is a conception of eudaimonia that is tied to particular social endeavours. Thus, we might ask, what is it to flourish as a doctor, a parent or a social scientist in the contemporary era. Whilst there are ongoing efforts to apply virtue ethics to particular moral problems (cf. Austin, 2013), there is a certain degree of circularity to the theory. This can most clearly be seen in the notion of *phronimos*, an individual who possesses the highest degree of phrónēsis or practical wisdom, particularly in the domain of ethics, or right and wrong. In modern terms we might think of them as individuals who have or embody moral expertise, or as moral experts (Khan, 2005). Such individuals are those who can be relied upon to embody practical wisdom and pursue the ethical course of action. However, consider the problem of how to identify the *phronimos*. On the one hand, these are be identified through their actions. However, on the other, those who can offer such identifications must, themselves, embody a high degree of practical wisdom. How else can it be reliably recognised in others? When it comes to highly stratified societies, such as the one we inhabit, such thinking also indicates that being able to understand what counts as human flourishing in a particular context – for a particular activity or practice – requires one to inhabit that particular social context; to be a member and, in all probability, a practicing member, of a particular group or tradition.

Putting such considerations to one side, at least for the moment, we might acknowledge that whilst the literature on virtue ethics has undergone serious development in recent years, perhaps the single most important late 20th century contribution is Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* (1981). This is particularly true in the context of understanding the ethics of social science research as MacIntyre's (1981) account is not merely a critical and philosophical

enterprise but one that also stands as a rebuke to the more deterministic, behavioural and simplistically causal approaches to research ethics. If, as seems to be the case, part of the concerns social scientists have about a model of research ethics inherited from the biomedical sciences is to do with the way scientific enquiries into the natural world and the social world differ, then MacIntyre's (1981) account would seem to be a good place from which to start rethinking our ethical understanding.

One significant point of difference between Aristotelian virtue ethics and MacIntyre's (1981) account is the latter's conception of a tradition. As Lutz (2012, p. 9, FN. 34) points out, in *After Virtue* the notion of tradition can be understood as having a number of distinct senses. Nevertheless, there is an important sense in which a tradition can be considered as historically durable conceptual schemes that inform the ethical judgements that take place at particular times and places. Whilst something like 'the four principles of biomedical ethics' can be understood as a tradition in this sense, it would be a mistake to compare the MacIntyrian perspective with the notion that the four principles are a conceptual framework, a way of discussing ethical problems that pre-exist in some way. Thus Lutz (2012, p. 7) suggests that rather than thinking of MacIntyre's (1981) traditions as paradigms (in the Kuhnian sense) they can be thought of as research programmes (in Lakatos' sense).[12] Traditions are not, therefore, incommensurable with one another in any strict sense. Rather, different conceptual programmes stand in some historically defined relationship with one another. This can be understood in two ways: First, in the normal sense that one might find in the history of ideas, i.e., the notion that there can be genealogical relationships between different theoretical perspectives. More interesting is, however, the second sense: the notion that histories of particular individuals entail them having their own specific histories and mutually informative encounters with traditions.[13] An individual will, therefore, have their own particular ethical understanding, their own ethical perspectives. Whilst such perspectives may, to greater or lesser degrees, be shared with others – as may be the case for individuals with similar histories (such as those who were educated at a particular set of private boarding schools), or for individuals who now occupy the same social space (such as members of the medical profession) – it is, nevertheless, dependant on their own unique moral history or biography. In relation to ethics, then, one might concur with Lutz (2012, p. 9, FN. 34) who calls traditions 'the inherited circumstances of life that constitute one's moral starting point'.

Of course, consistent with the above, while the circumstances we inherit will vary, our differing starting points do not mean that our ethical outlooks are morally incommensurable with each other. We can and do engage with

each other on issues of normative significance. However, we should be aware of the potential for the differing sides of our moral conversations to talk past one another. Furthermore, given that, at differing times and places, we may occupy a variety of social locations, it may be that not only do we have differing moral starting points but we also have a number of different moral starting points, depending on the particular role, location or situation we are in. Thus, the moral perspectives of researchers, research participants, and research ethics committee (REC) members can all be considered as inhabiting differing moral standpoints.

For social scientists this is a compelling picture, one that acknowledges the moral complexities of social world – the object of their study. Furthermore, as Higgins (2010) has it, MacIntryre's vision is one that entails various 'worlds of practice' and presents a direct challenge to applied ethics, at least as it is commonly understood. At least in part, to good of practices (traditions) can only be fully realised from within. As such, practitioners occupy a privileged position in debates about the ethics of whatever it is that they do. Whilst it would be wrong to conclude that any professional ethics ought to be turned over to practitioners alone, such thinking does provide a basis for reconsidering the ethical and procedural formalism of a research ethics developed in the context of biomedical research – a natural rather than social science. Taken further, it suggests a more dialogical approach to the ethical governance of social research. Whether implicitly or explicitly, this is something that many of the following contributions advocate.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

The first section, entitled 'Virtue and Integrity in Social Science Research', opens with an essay that reflects and develops the talk given by Professor Sarah Banks in May 2015. In it she argues that the recent focus on integrity needs to be concerned with the integrity of researchers as well as that of research. In making this point she identifies an ethical space within research that, properly understood, can only be addressed by a moral philosophy such as virtue ethics. As a result her contention is that the way integrity is currently conceptualised is too 'thin' to do the work required. Drawing on virtue ethics, Banks develops a 'thicker' account. However, rather than arguing that we should embrace this thicker account of researcher integrity, she shows how the third way, or happy medium, can be found between thick and thin.

Adopting a self-avowedly polemical stance, Richard Kwiatkowski takes issue with the recent turn to integrity and virtue in social scientific research ethics.

He deploys the hermeneutics of suspicion and casts a critical gaze onto the social sciences and current thinking around the ethics of social research. Perhaps, consistent with his polemical stance, the essay seems to pull us in a number of directions, and no clear conclusion of way forward is on offer. However, at the heart of his essay is, one might suggest, a point that is relatively commonplace, at least in the sociology of professions. His claim is that self-interest may be what underlies many of the ethical claims made by established social groups. He suggests that, collectively, the social sciences are a powerful interest group and, like many professions, whilst it may be true to say that they act in the interests of others, it is also possible for them to act in ways that are less than selfless. Such claims are not easy to make or act upon. As Kwiatkowski points out, doing so involves examining ones own position and presumptions. Nevertheless, one cannot do so from outside of those same positions and presumptions. The same can be said for those reading his essay; we all occupy standpoints of our own. Kwiatkowski offers a timely reminder regarding the rhetorical value and power of ethical claims, particularly when it comes to terms such as 'integrity' and 'virtue'.

The following essay 'Just tell me how to get through the REC' does not respond to Banks directly. However, its first author, Nicole Palmer, was present at the event and responded to an invitation to write a chapter for this volume. The account offered by Palmer and her coauthor, Forrester-Jones, draws on Palmer's experience as a research governance officer at the University of Kent. The chapter also reflects the doctoral research she is currently undertaking. The essay sets out a virtue ethics approach to the training and support given to social researchers, particularly with regard to the development of integrity. As such, it directly complements the chapter written by Banks and shows how ideas about research integrity and virtue ethics can be incorporated into training activities that, all too often, can devolve into little more than familiarising researchers with the administrative procedures that govern ethical review at a particular institution.

The final chapter in this section was also commissioned following the May 2015 event. In it Kath Melia considers the idea of professional integrity for social researchers and the way in which virtue ethics can be used to inform and develop such notions. Melia is evidently not referring to 'the social sciences' in general but only those more specifically involved in health and social care. At the same time researchers in these fields are often at more pains than most to evidence their reflexive, caring – indeed virtuous – concerns for their fields of interest, their 'subjects' – both topic and participants. While in some senses Melia attempts to 'help' the social sciences steer towards a form of integrity based upon virtues, one could question the latent assumption that the social sciences do in fact need some `assistance' in this regard.

David Carpenter, a protagonist in the previous debates held by the Academy Working Group (see Carpenter, 2017), was invited to consider the question of virtue ethics and the ethics of ethical review in more detail – not least because, during previous events, he had voiced support for the idea that virtue ethics had something to offer social research ethics as well as the notion that ethics review was itself a practice in need of ethical analysis. Drawing on the contacts that the Academy Working Group had made during the course of its activities, suitable interlocutors were again invited to provide commentaries. Building on his contribution to the first volume in this series, Carpenter makes extensive use of Macfarlane's (2008) work to taking forward his analysis of the virtues required for social research and reorientate his thinking towards RECs and their members. Having determined that a particular set of virtues is of specific relevance to the ethical review of social research, he provides some interpretation of their meaning in this context.

This first of Carpenters' interlocutors, Helen Brown Coverdale, argues for the value of introducing the ethics of care and feminist perspectives into the debate. Her suggestion is that, whilst the virtues Carpenter identifies involve some degree of care, the relationality of the ethics of care remains an implicit, and thereby neglected, facet of his account. Building on the ethical importance of the relationship between the researcher and the researched, Coverdale suggests that the relationship between researchers and reviewers has a similar sort of significance. Her account, or so she claims, further 'responsibilises' all those involved in the process of social research. One might add that part of this further responsiblisation might entail a degree of mutual engagement. Arguable, part of the problem with ethical review is a lack of dialogue between researchers and reviewers, leading to misunderstanding and confusion. Modulated by an ethics of care, the virtues Carpenter advocates should lead to a greater degree of interaction on matters of research ethics.

In his focus on participatory action research, the second commentator on Carpenter's paper, John Elliott, also highlights the relationship between researchers and reviewers. He suggests that, collectively, we ought to transcend the boundaries of review as a bureaucratic exercise and aim at a more participatory and democratic exercise. Elliott constructs his argument on his experiences of conducting participatory action research where the principles that guide the project are the subject of mutual agreement, and emerge from a process of engagement between researchers and those they hope to research. This provides a model for a process of ethical review that could better serve the need of researchers and, one might add, ethical research.

The final comment on Carpenter's paper is by Morris and Morris. They were invited to comment as a result of their article 'The importance of virtue

ethics in the IRB' (Morris & Morris, 2016) in the journal *Research Ethics*. In that paper they are concerned with the review of biomedical research. They assign virtue ethics a role in balancing between the dual imperatives that motivate their work, namely, the protection of subjects and the facilitation of research. However, they question Carpenter's dismissive treatment of the value and role of principles, codes, and regulations. Indeed, their point can be understood as suggesting that the problems Carpenter perceives to exist with principles can be resolved if one properly understands the relevance of the virtues and, in particular, phrónēsis when applying them to particular cases or in particular contexts and situations.

Phrónēsis is the topic of the third and final section of this collection. In her contribution Anna Traianou explores the notion of phrónēsis and how it might contribute to our understanding of the situated judgements that researchers must make during the course of their work. She argues that the term, which might be translated as 'wise judgement', accords with claims about the nature of social research and the fact that it is inimical to prospective ethical evaluation. In her view, both methodological and ethical dimensions of research not only overlap but are also intertwined. While some degree of planning can be undertaken, the actual conduct of research can take on a life of its own. This means that researchers, and not review board members, are those that are best placed to decide how to proceed. Furthermore, Traianou takes issue with the assumption that it is desirable or legitimate to aim for the highest ethical standards in the conduct of research. She argues that the conduct of research is such that there must be a trade-off between ethical and methodological imperatives. Thus, a more pragmatic approach is required. Provocatively, she draws on Machiavellian notions of virtue and argues for an 'ethic of responsibility'. Whilst both Aristotle and Machiavelli conceive of phrónēsis as the skill required to negotiate the contingencies of social life, the latter more clearly grasped the degree to which 'pragmatic' ethical compromises might have to be made in the pursuit of higher order goals. Thus, the ethic of responsibility is one in which researchers are empowered to decide whether or not the ends justify the means, not least because they are the only individuals in a position to do so.

Hammersley's contribution also adopts a critical perspective on the notion of phrónēsis. He questions whether a moral philosophy generated in the social, cultural and political context of Ancient Greece can be considered of any direct or significant relevance to present day activities such as social science research. Whilst such questions are not absent from the philosophical discourse on virtue ethics, Hammersley poses them as a social scientist, where they take on a more pointed meaning. Philosophically speaking, question

regarding a moral theory's social, cultural and political influences are largely concerned with identifying a theory's potential biases or blindspots and, subsequently, their elimination. Whilst such thinking may result in a constant philosophical reworking, there is some implication that the end or purpose being pursued is a correct or universal moral theory. However, if philosophical analysis takes this a possibility, it is far from clear that the same can be said of critical theory or sociology. Even as his theoretical perspective gained (and continues to gain) broad, cross-cultural acceptance, Bourdieu (2000) (and most Bourdieuans) refuse or reject any claim to universality. Nevertheless, it seems Hammersley sees little choice but to embrace the notion of phrónēsis and, one assumes, virtue ethics more generally, concluding that we are in need of the term or, at least, something that is very much like it.

The final essay in the collection is my own. Here I explore the notion of phrónēsis and question if the normativity conveyed by the concept is appropriate for guiding social research or, for that matter, the ethics of any contemporary practice. I argue that much of the work virtue ethics is being asked to do in the context of the ethics of social research can be better accomplished by developing a Bourdieuan account of the practice coupled with the notion of synderesis, the moral sensibility associated with habitus.

FINAL REMARKS

The chapters in this volume can be considered as the beginnings of a conversation about the relationship between virtue ethics and social research. There remains a great deal further to be said. In the first instance, this conversation will continue as the notion of integrity becomes developed further in relation to research. However, there is another strand of thought that, in my view at least, has remained untapped and deserves to be brought into this dialogue. This the studies of ethics and morality that have been a particular feature of contemporary research in both anthropology (Fassin, 2012; Zigon, 2008) and sociology (Hitlin & Vaisey, 2010). Particularly in anthropology, a good deal of attention has been paid to virtue ethics as a theoretical basis for understanding the normative dimension of our sociocultural worlds. Some of those working in this area can be thought of as having an Aristotelian orientation (Laidlaw, 2013), whilst others take a more Foucaultian approach (Faubion, 2011). In both cases, there is an attempt to understand ordinary ethics (Lambek, 2010). If, as a matter of the ethics of research, social research ought to be concerned with the moral and ethical perspectives of those they study, then such work would seem to offer a certain degree of illumination.

Furthermore, if social researchers seek to engage research participants on moral and ethical issues, then an understanding of how morality and ethics form part of everyday life would seem to have an additional contribution to make: such work can also contribute to research ethics in a reflexive mode. Part of the problem that social researchers have with research ethics as it currently exists is the way in which the discourse of applied ethics, coupled with the bureaucracies of research ethics governance, has produced something that feels overly external to the modes of social life of both the researcher and the researched (Emmerich, 2013; Sleeboom-Faulkner, Simpson, Burgos-Martinez, & McMurray, 2017). Adopting an anthropological perspective can offer researchers a greater understanding of their own position vis-à-vis the ethics of research and contribute to the reformation of ethical governance. This is, I think, the hope of many of the chapters presented here.

NOTES

1. For more insight into the activities of the Academy Working Group on Research Ethics, see the first volume of this series (Iphofen, 2017), especially Chapter 10 (Dingwall, Iphofen, Lewis, Oates, & Emmerich, 2017).

2. For a fuller exploration of this point, and an argument to the effect that social research ethics are, simply, the professional ethics of social researchers, see Emmerich (2016).

3. Social contract theory, or something like it, can be traced back to Socrates. Arguably, the manner of his death reflects his commitment to such thinking, or something very close to it.

4. Anscombe's moral philosophy is best understood as entailing a commitment to virtue ethics. However, any consideration of her views should not neglect the influence of Catholicism on the moral perspectives that she advanced. Equally, neither should one neglect the unique influence of Wittgenstein (2009). Both of these factors render her distinct from others, including Phillipa Foot and Iris Murdoch, who engaged with virtue ethics at a similar time.

5. As has been clear since the publication of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (2009), no set of rules contains the complete set of rules required for their own application (Taylor, 1993).

6. The problem is akin to that of Buridian's Ass, where a donkey positioned equidistant from two bales of hay of exactly equal size cannot decide which of the two to eat, as consuming either one represent an equally rational course of action. As a result of being unable to make a choice, the donkey starves to death. In the case of research ethics, the difficulty is with curtailing increasingly detailed rational deliberation in accordance with each of the relevant principles and deciding which principle should take priority in some particular case. At some point, one simply has to decide, and pursue one course of action over another. Beauchamp and Childress (2009) introduce

the notion of moral character to normatively explain and guide how, as a matter of practical necessity, this happens.

7. Of course, the idea that the moral dispositions of individual professionals can or should perfectly reflect the moral structures of the profession as a whole is deeply problematic and, as such, far from perfect. It would imply a deterministic picture, one in which moral agency and, therefore, morality per se would no longer be present. However, it is relatively easy to respond to such criticism. One simply has to point out that the (moral) structure of a particular field results from, is maintained by, the (moral) agency of those within it. In any process of social reproduction, particularly ongoing or continual processes, there are a great variety of indeterminate points, gaps into which (moral) changes can occur.

8. Such development has, at least in part, been prompted by virtue ethics being in receipt of relatively acute criticisms, such as the questions posed by the situationist challenge (Doris, 2002; Harman, 1999). For response to this challenge see Annas, Narvaez, and Snow (2016), Kristjánsson (2015) and Miller (2013, 2017).

9. Of course, what the moral significance might be predicated upon is the source of might debate. For some moral philosophers it is the capacity for rationality and the fact that we are ends in ourselves. For others it is personhood, something that can itself be defined in a variety of ways. For others it is the capacity to experience pleasure or pain and, therefore, to be accounted for within consequentialist and utilitarian calculations.

10. Perhaps the clearest example of this is the thought experiments of trolleyology. But one might also consider Rachels' bathtub case, Judith Jarvis Thompson's violinist, and various lifeboat cases.

11. The fact that all three of these lives depend upon the labour of others, and the particular socio-political conditions that Aristotle saw as natural should be seen as a problematic aspect of his virtue ethics. Furthermore, it is not clear that these problems can easily be surmounted.

12. In his discussion of MacIntyre's response to Winch, Blakely (2013) makes a similar point.

13. A similar point is made by Bourdieu (2000, p. 151), who considers social fields to be 'history objectified in the form of structures', whilst the habitus is 'history incarnated in bodies'. Bourdieu offers a social theory that clearly intersects with Aristotelian thinking, but cannot realistically be positioned as his genealogical heir. See, for example, Crossley (2013) on the history of habitus.

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