

## Statement of Research

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How do we come to see ourselves as accountable to others? And, given our accountability to others, how should we regard ourselves? Call these the *accountability question* and the *practical attitude question*. My research primarily investigates these questions as they arise in early modern philosophy. Although my research is dedicated to figures who lived and wrote in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, I also work to apply their insights to discussions in contemporary moral psychology.

The accountability question and the practical attitude question have their roots in post-Lockean debates about the status of ethics in a science of human nature. There is a tension in Locke's moral theory between his empiricist account of moral norms and his rationalist moral epistemology. This tension gave birth to two camps of Lockeans. Rationalists, like Samuel Clarke, followed Locke in holding that we can have demonstrative knowledge of moral truths on the level of mathematics. Empiricists, like John Gay, Catharine Trotter Cockburn, and Damaris Masham, claimed that we gain access to correct moral norms by studying human beings in the manner proposed by Locke's science of human nature. The challenge for these empiricists was ensuring that ethics does not collapse into moral anthropology. Moral philosophy should not only give us a *descriptive* account of the norms that we accept but also explain why we are *obligated* to act in accordance with them.

My first articles, "John Gay and the Birth of Utilitarianism" (*Utilitas*, 2018) and "Catharine Trotter Cockburn's Democratization of Moral Virtue" (*Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 2020), aimed to show how a Lockean ethics can make room for moral obligation. I argued that these post-Lockean philosophers conceived of obligation in terms of *accountability*. For them, to be obligated to act in accordance with a moral norm is to be considered accountable to others in one's conduct. The relevant question for Gay and Cockburn is then, "how do we come to see ourselves as accountable to others?" Each figure gives a slightly different answer to this question, though they both rely on a *subjective* feature of our moral psychology – either our disposition to associate the happiness of others with our own, in the case of Gay, or our propensity to feel shame, for Cockburn.

In turn, Damaris Masham appeals to an *intersubjective* feature of our moral psychology to answer the accountability question. According to Masham, we come to view ourselves as accountable to others in virtue of our capacity to *love* them. It is by loving someone that we come to understand what it means to be accountable to another person. She argues that this lesson is generalizable, making love a form of moral education. I explore her views on love in "How are we to Love Others?" (in draft) and apply her insights to contemporary discussions about the relationship between love and autonomy in "A Minimalist Account of Love" (*Love, Justice, Autonomy*; Routledge, forthcoming).

Once we come to see ourselves as accountable to others, our self-conception changes – the *practical attitude* question aims to understand what is involved in that change. Part of this change means developing the capacity to experience remorse in proper circumstances. I explore this view in my article, “Sophie de Grouchy on the Value of Remorse” (under review). Given that we are fallible beings, apt to do wrong to others and to ourselves, it is proper to experience remorse in a litany of circumstances. It seems unlikely that we should ever have reason to be proud, much less to love ourselves. I consider the possibility that we can love ourselves under these conditions in an article in-progress, “Can We Love Ourselves?” (with Joel Von Fossen). We argue that one *should* love oneself, but that proper self-love requires that we revise many of our beliefs about the self.

My proximate future research will be dedicated to the practical attitude question. In “Is Hume’s Ideal Moral Judge a Woman?” (*Hume Studies*, 2020), I explored Hume’s conception of the moral judge as someone who is modest and skeptical of their own fleeting judgments of others. I also examined Smith’s related defense of modesty in my article, “Adam Smith and the Stoic Principle of Suicide” (*European Journal of Philosophy*, 2020). “In Defense of Idle Gossip” (under review) brings these ideas to bear on discussions about the moral value of gossip. In future work, I will explore ideas of modesty further, in an attempt to understand the proper relation between modesty and confidence in moral judgment. In so doing, I plan to examine the nature of self-deception, which will lead me to consider Joseph Butler, Madeline de Scudéry, and contemporary virtue theory.

Much of my research is dedicated to amplifying the voices of women and other non-canonical philosophers in early modern philosophy. By working on these figures, I hope to reshape the early modern canon, to ensure that it reflects a complete picture of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century philosophical thought. Our understanding of key philosophical questions – of which the accountability question and the practical attitude question are only two – are impoverished in virtue of our not having fully appreciated the work of many of these innovative thinkers. My dedication to the work of non-canonical figures in early modern philosophy has guided my research and will continue to do so.