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Charles Taylor is a key figure in a number of philosophical debates. The breadth of his work is unique, ranging as it does from reflections on human nature and moral experience to analyses of the ontological commitments of contemporary secular societies. There seems little doubt that the concept of "strong evaluation" is vital to understanding several of Taylor's major positions, as a preoccupation with this concept is active throughout his oeuvre. The term "strong evaluation" first appears in "Responsibility for Self" (Taylor 1976), a paper that was revised and republished in *Philosophical Papers* as "What is Human Agency?" (1985d). This is the first and only text that is exclusively about strong evaluation. However, Taylor has constant recourse to the term in his key articles and books, and takes it up most recently in *The Language Animal* (2016, 63, 192, 199).[1]

Taylor's continuous and haphazard use of strong evaluation seems to suggest that the issue has never really been settled in a definitive way.[2] Although strong evaluation is introduced in *Philosophical Papers*, it occurs most frequently in Part I of *Sources of the Self,* a section that, as Taylor explains, "tries to make the case very briefly for a picture of the relation between self and morals" by having recourse to "moral phenomenology", and sets out to explore the "moral ontology" behind our moral and spiritual intuitions (1989, x, 8-10, 68, 74, 81). In Taylor's most basic definition, "strong evaluation" depicts an ethical kind of reflection that involves "distinctions of worth" (1985a, 3). Yet because he introduces the concept in discussions of philosophical anthropology, ethics, phenomenology, and ontology all in one, it has been both understood and misunderstood in a variety of ways.

Taylor recently explained his doctrine of strong evaluation as an attempt to develop "interwoven" arguments, that is, to make explicit connections between different fields of philosophical inquiry to substantiate his views.[3] In line with this, his arguments not only combine ethics with philosophical anthropology, but also have a way of interweaving phenomenological and ontological reflections with ethical inquiries. Given these points, one of the most striking features of Taylor's employment of strong evaluation is that this concept seems to straddle his different approaches, that is, his picture of the human agent, his account of morality, and his views on ontology. More importantly, Taylor uses this concept to *connect* his philosophical-anthropological, ethical, and ontological views. In trying to obtain clarity on his unusual "interwoven" mode of argumentation, the focus could therefore not but be on strong evaluation as a binding theme, because Taylor typically employs this term to push the boundaries that separate his philosophical anthropology, his moral philosophy, and

his ontological view. Moreover, because strong evaluation generates a variety of methods, a close examination of this concept in its different contexts is bound to clarify how Taylor's interwoven yet different arguments fit together. Against this background, I aim to unravel his hybrid position in between philosophical anthropology, ethics, and ontology in crucial reference to both his concept of strong evaluation and his interwoven strategy.

The essay is divided in six sections. The first section examines the different themes that revolve around strong evaluation. The second and third sections discuss the genesis of strong evaluation in *Philosophical Papers* and *Sources of the Self* and the modifications in the original explanation of strong evaluation as Taylor employs it in more recent writings. I continue to discuss some misunderstandings and critiques of strong evaluation in the fourth and fifth sections. The sixth section concludes with an evaluation of the question as to whether our current argumentative situation demands either the rejection or the encouragement of Taylor's interwoven mode of argumentation.

The terrain of strong evaluation

Thematically, the following subjects revolve around strong evaluation: Taylor's overall critique of reductionist modes of thinking, his philosophical anthropology, his moral phenomenology, and his views on ontology. The first component is an ongoing critique of (moral, social, epistemological, ontological) theories that, on Taylor's reading, reduce, deny, suppress or repudiate altogether the phenomenon of strong evaluation. It is not just that he is not satisfied with reductive approaches to human action and experience. Rather, Taylor is not even sure that his opponents see the issue that he is trying to delineate about strong evaluation. He has, therefore, invested a great deal of effort in developing two distinct – yet closely related – arguments against the reductionist outlook that he believes is thriving: a philosophical anthropology and a moral phenomenology.

Although Taylor's philosophical anthropology and his phenomenological account of morality lay separate claims, they are entangled in such a fundamental way that the two can hardly be separated. He believes that selfhood and morality are "inextricably intertwined themes", because "our notion of the self is inextricably connected with our understanding of our moral predicament and moral agency" (1989, 3; 1988, 298). From an argumentative viewpoint, the fusion of philosophical anthropology and ethics provides Taylor with an argument that poses a double challenge to reductionism. Reductionist theories have been wrong on both counts, Taylor maintains, arguing that they make sense neither of the ways in which human beings live their lives nor of moral experience. As a philosophical anthropologist, he argues that "the complete Utilitarian would be an impossibly shallow character" and "the imagined agent of naturalist theory […] a monster", whereas "what we need to *explain* is people living their lives" (1985d, 26; 1989, 32, 58, original emphasis). As a moral philosopher, he chides much modern and contemporary moral philosophy for having a "cramped and truncated view of morality" (1989, 3), unable to come to grips with "the whole way in which we think, reason, argue, and question ourselves about morality" (1989, 7).

More particularly, Taylor makes it clear that his target is the commitment to "naturalism" that in his view is shared by all reductive theories (1985a, 2). He recently

described naturalism as "the view that arises among thinkers for whom seeing humans as part of nature means seeing their behavior and life form as ultimately explicable in terms that are consonant with modern natural science" (2003, 306). Refuting this approach, Taylor's main concern is that crucial features of human life just disappear by adopting a scientific stance. Yet he sees a broader "naturalist temper" not just in the outlooks of "many students of the sciences of human behaviour" but in our Western culture as such, "stopping short frequently of explicit espousal of full-blooded naturalism, but tending to be suspicious of the things that naturalism cannot accommodate" (1964, 3; 1995b, 137). This observation – that most people are reluctant to fully embrace naturalism and yet remain highly skeptical of all things that do not fit the naturalist model – I want to argue, is *the* underlying theme of Taylor's doctrine of strong evaluation.

Taylor's distinctive brand of morality can be considered as the entry point through which his thinking moves from philosophical anthropology to ethics. Yet it also provides access to another branch of his thoughts on strong evaluation: ontology. Moving beyond mere philosophical-anthropological and moral-phenomenological claims, Taylor has been developing a third counter-argument to naturalism. Compared with his philosophical anthropology and moral phenomenology, what is striking about Taylor's ontological perspective is that it challenges his opponents, as it were, from the opposite direction. That is, rather than argue (both anthropologically and phenomenologically) that naturalist theories paint a false picture of human *subjectivity* in general and moral experience in particular, he now criticizes them for neglecting the *objectivity* of the good. In this respect, Taylor warns us that moral thinking can easily slide into "a celebration of our creative powers", whereas "at its best, in full integrity, the enterprise is an attempt to surmount subjectivism" (1989, 510). The explicit non-anthropocentric nature of Taylor's ontological thought seems to indicate a different line of argumentation, allowing it to be discussed on top of his philosophical-anthropological and moral-phenomenological arguments.

At this early stage, however, all this remains to be argued out by examining in more detail the specific ways in which Taylor connects strong evaluation with issues of philosophical anthropology, ethics, and ontology. For now, it suffices to note that (1) strong evaluation is rooted in a critique of naturalist approaches to human agency; (2) it informs both Taylor's philosophical-anthropological counter-thesis about the self and (3) his phenomenological account of morality; and (4) the issue further raises questions of ontology that reach beyond philosophical anthropology and moral phenomenology.

The original account of strong evaluation

Against the naturalist trend in contemporary philosophy, Taylor has been proposing a philosophical-anthropological outlook that stresses the difference between human nature and mere physical nature. He develops this view in the paper "What is Human Agency?" (1985d) by invoking Harry Frankfurt's concept of "second-order" desires, that is, a desire to "want to have (or not to have) certain desires and motives" (Frankfurt 1971, 5). For example, when I am asked how I will act when faced with a drowning child while I am eating a tasty ice cream at the beach, I will most likely reply that I would be inclined to save the child rather than to

continue to enjoy my ice cream. The preference for having a desire to save the child rather than to identify with the desire for ice cream is a desire of the second order. Obviously, I do not care about having a desire for ice cream or not, but I do care about my desire to save a human life if the occasion arises. In the case of arbitrating between different desires, I am concerned with what my will *should* be. According to both Frankfurt and Taylor, this reflective act of caring about my will refers to something distinctively human, namely, "the capacity for reflective self-evaluation" or, in Taylor's terms, "the power to *evaluate* our desires, to regard some as desirable and others as undesirable" (Frankfurt 1971, 11; Taylor 1985d, 16, original emphasis).

Yet Taylor also believes that the nature of human agency allows for "a further distinction, between two broad kinds of evaluation of desire", that is, between "weak" and "strong" evaluation (1985d, 16). To be engaged in weak evaluation means that the worth of my desires is left outside my reflection on them. In this way, I could weigh desired actions simply to "determine the more convenient" or to "make different desires compossible" (1985d, 16). For example, during my stay at the beach, I might be hesitating between buying a vanilla or a strawberry ice cream. If I ultimately opt for vanilla, I do so not because there is something more worthy about eating vanilla ice cream, but just because I feel like it. By contrast, the central feature of strong evaluations is that they involve distinctions of worth. Instead of the simple weighing of alternatives, I now *class* desires in such terms as "higher and lower, virtuous and vicious, more and less fulfilling, more and less refined, profound and superficial, noble and base" (1985d, 16). In the case of the drowning child, it is because I see saving a human life as more worthy than enjoying ice cream that I ultimately decide to ignore the ice cream's appeal. Again, I would rather be someone who wants to save a human life than someone who prefers enjoying ice cream to saving a drowning child.

Taylor's most significant modification of Frankfurt's theory is that he speaks of the worthiness of desires rather than their desirability. Furthermore, strong evaluation has a much wider focus than just desires. Its objects can also be values, actions, motives, emotions, characters, goals, or styles of life. Basically, "evaluation" covers anything that could be picked out as an object of reflection in terms of worthiness. Taylor's leading notion is that being a human agent not only involves a basic understanding of oneself as the locus of one's desires and choices, but also seeing oneself against a background of "distinctions of worth" (1985a, 3). He puts it like this in the introduction to *Philosophical Papers*:

> [...] our self-understanding essentially incorporates our seeing ourselves against a background of what I have called "strong evaluation". I mean by that a background of distinctions between things which are recognized as of categoric or unconditioned or higher importance or worth, and things which lack this or are of lesser value. [...] In other terms, to be a full human agent, to be a person or a self in the ordinary meaning, is to exist in a space defined by distinctions of worth. [...] My claim is that this is not just a contingent fact about human agents, but is essential to what we would understand and recognize as full, normal human agency (1985a, 3).

The paper "What is Human Agency?" has set the basis of the doctrine of strong evaluation. Most of the other essays in *Philosophical Papers* in which the notion of strong evaluation is

brought up are alternative formulations of earlier points, apart from some minor additions.[4] After setting the stage in *Philosophical Papers*, the doctrine of strong evaluation is continued in *Sources of the Self*, most centrally in the first part of this book (1989, 3-107). Taylor opens with the claim that "much contemporary moral philosophy" has accredited "a cramped and truncated view of morality in a narrow sense", because it has "tended to focus on what it is right to do rather than on what it is good to be, on defining the content of obligation rather than the nature of the good life" (1989, 3). Against this background, he announces to consider "a gamut of views a bit broader than what is normally described as the 'moral'" in order to retrieve "the richer background languages" behind our everyday moral practice (1989, 3-4). For this project, Taylor thus needs a wider concept than what is usually labeled with the term "moral". This is where the notion of strong evaluation comes in, as he uses it to cover both moral issues in a narrow sense and other questions beyond the moral. What these "non-moral" questions have in common with moral issues (in a narrow sense) is that they all involve distinctions of worth. That is,

> […] they all involve what I have called elsewhere "strong evaluation", that is, they involve discriminations of right or wrong, better or worse, higher or lower, which are not rendered valid by our own desires, inclinations, or choices, but rather stand independent of these and offer standards by which they can be judged (1989, 4).

On the one hand, this comprehensive definition can be seen as a summary of the prior investigations of strong evaluation in *Philosophical Papers*. On the other hand, the opening pages of *Sources of the Self* are also different from the initial philosophical-anthropological context of the distinctively human. Strong evaluation now emerges as a moral-phenomenological concept to capture the nature of moral experience in critical opposition to rivaling theories. In Part I of *Sources of the Self*, Taylor mainly uses strong evaluation to endorse his broad conception of morality. In this respect, he acknowledges that he is following Bernard Williams' distinction between morality and ethics, by which "morality" is used for the narrower domain of obligatory action as a sub-category of the ethical, and "ethics" for the wider domain of strong evaluation, including issues of dignity and what is a good or worthwhile life (1989, 53). However, in the larger, historical part of the book (Parts II-V) Taylor starts employing the concept of strong evaluation in a more critical way. A great deal of effort is invested into showing how and why modern and contemporary moral theories cannot find a conceptual place for strong evaluation. The main target is the naturalist ethics of classical utilitarianism, which he criticizes for excluding strong evaluation altogether by constructing ethics exclusively out of simple *de facto* desires, thereby leaving no room for our commonsense recognition of higher and lower value (1989, 249).

Taylor then argues that utilitarian theory does not really abandon strong evaluation, despite its rejection of qualitative contrasts. On the one hand, he explains, the reduction of human motivation to mere pleasure seems to eliminate all strong evaluative motivations; that is, it eliminates the commonsense recognition that "certain goals or ends make a claim on us, are incommensurable with our other desires and purposes" (1989, 332). Yet on the other hand, the utilitarian himself engages in strong evaluation by stressing the moral importance of ordinary human happiness and universal benevolence (1989, 336). In other words,

utilitarianism would not be an ethical theory without adhering to a moral ideal, that is, without an object of strong evaluation, something higher that commands our allegiance. This is why, as Taylor explains, "sympathy is treated not just as a *de facto* motivation but as a strongly valued one: something you ought to feel, an impulse whose unrestricted force in us is part of a higher way of being" (1989, 337). The problem with a utilitarian, naturalist ethics of this kind thus is that it is incomprehensible as an *ethical* theory. As a *naturalist* ethics, it makes a point of rejecting the distinction between higher and lower goods, whereas as a naturalist *ethics,* it endorses this distinction itself.

Since the publication of *Sources of the Self,* Taylor seems to have dropped the philosophical-anthropological terminology of the original context of strong evaluation in "What is Human Agency?" (1985d). Instead, he uses strong evaluation increasingly to endorse his moral philosophy, which he calls exploring "moral phenomenology" (1989, 68, 74, 81). The emphasis in the doctrine of strong evaluation thus shifts from an initial philosophical-anthropological concern for the distinctively human towards a phenomenological account of moral experience that centers on strong evaluation in subsequent writings. What is involved in this particular type of phenomenology is explained in the paper "Explanation and Practical Reason" (1995a), the only text of *Philosophical Arguments* that takes note of the concept of strong evaluation. In this paper, Taylor seeks to undermine the naturalist conception of morality as a human projection on a neutral world by defending our commonsense moral reactions. He explains:

> The attempt is to show, in one way or another, that the vocabularies we need to explain human thought, action, feeling, or to explicate, analyze, justify ourselves or each other, or to deliberate on what to do, all inescapably rely on strong evaluation. […] It tries to show us that in all lucidity we cannot understand ourselves, or each other, cannot make sense of our lives or determine what to do, without accepting a richer ontology than naturalism allows, without thinking in terms of strong evaluation (1995a, 38-39).

He calls the appeal to moral common sense the "*ad hominem* mode of practical reasoning", a logic that in Taylor's view is "central to the whole enterprise of moral clarification" (1995a, 37). However, he continues, it is precisely the inclination of "the naturalist temper, with its hostility to the very notion of strong evaluation […] to make the *ad hominem* argument seem irrelevant to ethical dispute" (1995a, 59). Here we see Taylor expressing his central concern from yet another angle: while most people remain quite unattracted by the naturalist attempt to invalidate basic moral responses, because on the contrary their moral reactions strike them as being right in a fundamental way, they can anxiously doubt whether, say, a strong sense of disgust with killing innocent people can really be justified. The naturalist, then, typically encourages this sense of doubt by arguing that merely the *experience* of moral demands proves nothing about what we *ought* to do. To put it in classical philosophical terms, to invoke our moral experience to decide issues of practical reason is to commit the notorious "naturalistic fallacy", falsely deriving an "ought" from an "is".

In Taylor's view, however, this charge is flawed, because it is based on a crucial misunderstanding about the nature of moral goals. Obviously, the fact that I have a strong

desire, for example, for vanilla ice cream, does by itself nothing to show that I ought to desire it. But in Taylor's view this is-ought objection is simply beside the point, as it applies only to our weakly evaluated goals, not the ones we recognize as moral.

The crucial point of strong evaluation is that we experience some of our desires and goals as more significant than others. It is these goods that really "matter" to us as agents, that is, they determine the degree of fulfillment in our lives. Because of this, we identify with these strong commitments in such a fundamental way – and this is the main thrust of the argument – that we cannot really reject them entirely. If, for some strange reason, I suddenly stopped caring about people drowning, I cannot just shrug my shoulders and say that I do not "feel like" caring about drowning victims today. To do so would seem both terribly strange and terribly frightening. In contrast, I do not think of my desire for vanilla ice cream in these terms. If, for example, I feel more like strawberry ice cream today, yesterday's preference for vanilla ice cream would simply no longer have a claim on me. In the case of strong evaluations, however, the fact that I identify with a diversity of strong goods does nothing to reduce their respective claims. In fact, as Taylor puts it, "*we* would be shown up as insensitive or brutish or morally perverse" if we no longer felt the demand that strongly valued goods such as respect and benevolence make on us (1995a, 37, original emphasis).

In Taylor's view, this gives us an anchor for practical reason without committing the naturalistic fallacy because it shows that "we can't be lucid about ourselves without acknowledging that we value this end" (1995a, 37). In other words, in the case of strongly valued goals our deep commitments indeed show that we *ought* to desire these goods because without them we would lose the very possibility of being agents in the full sense. It comes as no surprise, however, that this cannot be made intelligible from within a naturalist perspective that takes only our weaker, *de facto* desires as the ultimate justification for our actions.

Taylor's argument here against naturalism strongly resembles his *ad hominem* critique of utilitarianism, in that both critiques are directed against the imagined *agent* behind the "official" theory. These arguments are "interwoven" in the sense that they show, first, at the ethical level, that utilitarianism and naturalism paint a false picture of moral experience, and, second, at the philosophical-anthropological level, that "the complete Utilitarian would be an impossibly shallow character" and "the imagined agent of naturalist theory […] a monster" (1985d, 26; 1989, 32). In this way, Taylor counters the objection of the naturalistic fallacy by convincing us that the charge can be made only on a highly distorted picture of a human being, one that insists that human agents cannot be motivated by anything stronger than mere impulse. By contrast, in the light of Taylor's rivaling portrait of a strong evaluator, it is not a fallacious but an essential feature of human beings that they are able to derive "oughts" from their experience. From this perspective, a life that lacks such oughts will be lacking in humanness.

Recent uses of strong evaluation

In the remaining writings about strong evaluation in this period, Taylor mostly rearticulates one or more of the above philosophical-anthropological or moral-phenomenological issues.

After the 1980s, Taylor uses the concept of strong evaluation far less often, and almost all occurrences are repetitions of points made earlier. In fact, when reading *A Secular Age* (2007), one easily gets the impression that he has settled the issue of strong evaluation. In this book – Taylor's most voluminous work – he abandons the term almost completely, as he refers to strong evaluation only twice, on both occasions in relatively insignificant ways (2007, 544, 595). Considered against this background, it seems rather unlikely that the writings after *A Secular Age* will re-raise the issue of strong evaluation. Surprisingly, though, Taylor does just that in the paper "Disenchantment-Reenchantment" (2011). Furthermore, it is not just that this text simply refers to strong evaluation, but rather embarks on a dimension that remained unexplored in Taylor's previous uses of the concept.

In "Disenchantment-Reenchantment" Taylor examines the contrast between what he calls the premodern "enchanted world", that is, "one filled with spirits and moral forces, and one moreover in which these forces impinged on human beings" and the modern "disenchanted" or "mind-centered" world in which (Taylor thinks) we live today: "a world in which the only locus of thoughts, feelings, and spiritual élan is what we call minds" (2011, 287, 288). More particularly, he wants to discuss the different status these contrasting worldviews give to typically human responses, and the perceptions, beliefs, and propositions humans have about the world that surrounds them. Labeling this cluster of thoughts and feelings with the term "human meaning", he then argues that it is peculiarly characteristic of the disenchanted view to locate human meanings exclusively "in" the mind, that is, that we are "explaining the meaning of things by *our* responses, and these responses are 'within' us, in the sense that they depend on the way we have been 'programmed' or 'wired up' inside" (2011, 289, 292, italics mine). On this account, it is only because human beings are capable of such responses that things have the meaning they do. Therefore, within a disenchanted perspective, meaning appears as a function of how we as minds operate, and is projected on the outside world from our minds. This inner-outer dichotomy is particularly explicit in the perspective of the scientist: the physical world, outside the mind, must be explained in terms that in no way turn on the meanings things have for us. Yet if we look at the enchanted world, Taylor continues, we see a perplexing absence of the inner-outer boundary that seems to us so basic and commonsensical. This is mainly because, as he explains, the enchanted view placed meaning "within the cosmos," that is, the cosmos reflected a "Great Chain of Being," in which "meaning is already there in the object/agent; it is there quite independently of us; it would be there if we didn't exist" (2011, 291). What has all this got to do with strong evaluation? As it turns out in the rest of the text, Taylor uses the comparison enchantment-disenchantment to argue once more against the naturalist view that sees human meanings as arbitrary projections. His central concern comes down to this:

> When we have left the "enchanted" world of spirits, and no longer believe in the Great Chain, what sense can we make of the notion that nature or the universe which surrounds us is the locus of human meanings which are "objective", in the sense that they are not just arbitrarily projected through choice or contingent desire? (2011, 294)

Taylor's next step is to show that there is something wrong with the idea of total disenchantment; or, at any rate, he wants to make clear how distortive it is of our experience.

However, he does so only to launch his (more controversial) claim that it does not follow from the collapse of the enchanted worldview that we only arbitrarily confer human meanings today. To make this point, Taylor notes that "the attribution of these meanings counts for us as strong evaluations" (2011, 294). At first, he seems only to rearticulate earlier points. But he adds a new claim when he argues that "underlying strong evaluations there is supposed to be *a truth of the matter*" (2011, 297, italics mine). In fact, Taylor is now trying to bring out an issue that was only implicit in his former account of strong evaluation:

> The understanding behind strong evaluations is that they track some reality. […] Put simply, our moral reactions suppose that they are responses to some reality, and can be criticized for misapprehension of this reality. […] We can't just say that explanations of why we experience these meanings are irrelevant to their validity; that they stand on their own, because we *feel* them strongly. Our attributing these meanings makes a stronger claim. It lies in their nature as strong evaluations to claim truth, reality, or objective rightness (2011, 297-298, original emphasis).

To be sure, these points closely resemble Taylor's reply to the naturalistic fallacy: the charge of falsely deriving normative claims from our experience is off the mark, because moral reactions make a claim beyond our *de facto* desires and instinctive reactions. As strong evaluations, they make assertions about the worthiness of goods rather than their desirability. Following the terminology of "Disenchantment-Reenchantment", we can now look into this by reflecting on the different types of human meaning involved in strong and weak evaluation. In weak evaluations, something is experienced as meaningful simply because we desire it, whereas in strong evaluation there is a use of "meaning" for which being desired is not sufficient. Indeed, some desires can be judged as unworthy or base. Therefore, the meaning that is manifested in our strongly evaluated motivations *must* in some way be different from the appeal coming from our desires. This is what Taylor is gesturing at in the above quotation when he says that our attributing meanings as strong evaluations makes a "stronger" claim. This raises a crucial question: if our experience shows that such strong claims cannot be traced back to contingent desire, then how do we account for the moral meanings things have for us? Where does *that* appeal "come from"? The crux of the matter is that the issue of worthiness can arise only when our desires are related to some external standard that enables us to judge them. As we have seen in the preceding sections, this is the whole point of Taylor's doctrine of strong evaluation: to convince us that human agency cannot be understood without recognizing goods that are *independent* of our behaviors, wants, and needs.

In Taylor's view, in other words, "disenchantment" does not in any way undermine the way we are motivated by such independent goods, yet he sees a strong tendency to reductive explanations of human life that aim to rule these out. More importantly, his claim that strong evaluations appeal to objective truths rather than subjective preferences shows the issue of strong evaluation in a rather different light. Thematically speaking, the new portrait of strong evaluations as crucial responses or perceptions of some independent reality enables him to explore the *ontological* implications of strong evaluation.

Taylor makes this issue more explicit in the paper "Ethics and Ontology" by arguing that there is a lack of fit between our commonsense experience of strong evaluation, on the one hand, and "the ontology we allow ourselves as post-Galilean naturalists", on the other (2003, 319). A central element in this critique is Taylor's image of morality as necessarily involving "incommensurably higher" values. He insists that "ethics involves a range of 'values' that are essentially understood to be on a different level, to be in some way special, higher, or incommensurable with our other goals and desires", and that "we would not have a category like the ethical or the moral, unless this were so" (2003, 308). As he puts it most recently: "This normative dimension incorporates in human life a sense of strong evaluation; what is right is intrinsically right, and not just because it is very much desired" (2016, 63). This moral phenomenology feeds into a full-out attack on scientistic moral theories, which he criticizes for being naturalist in general and for making the fact-value distinction a criterion of ethics in particular. He argues:

> Returning to the issue of naturalism, it is clear that this qualitative status of the ethical is a deep source of trouble. […] it cannot see how values of an incommensurably higher range can have a place in post-Galilean nature. […] the higher in this sense is one of the things expunged from the cosmos by post-Galilean science. It had its place in the great "chain of being", but not in the "mechanized" world picture (2003, 309).

This raises a crucial question: if our strong evaluations cannot be made transparent to post-Galilean science, then how – if at all – can a disenchanted model, defining ontology in naturalistic terms, allow for our actual moral deliberation as strong evaluators? Taylor continues this discussion in his latest defense of "robust realism" by re-raising the broader question of whether an account of "physical nature as meaningless" can be reconciled with an account of the cosmos as "having a meaning and human beings having a privileged place in it," while concluding that this seems an "unpromising strategy" since the basis of our science is to invoke "a universe whose causal laws take no account of us and our human meanings" (2015, 158–159). Regrettably, Taylor does not remark on how this metaphysical perspective relates to his earlier views, but I want to venture that his explicit rejection of "post-Galilean ontology" is an important change of emphasis as it deviates from the philosophical-anthropological analysis in *Philosophical Papers* and the moral-phenomenological investigations in *Sources of the Self*.

We find Taylor's final articulation of strong evaluation in *The Language Animal* (2016). In this book, he only briefly mentions strong evaluation in developing his Romanticist "constitutive" theory of language, which states that language enables us (among other things) to be "responsive to issues of strong value" (2016, 37). In elaborating on this, Taylor explains that "certain crucial metabiological meanings" incorporate in human life a sense of "strong evaluation," here explained as arising in cases "where what is valued comes across to us as not depending on our desires or decisions" (2016, 192).

Taking the above points together, we can identify the following six features of Taylor's doctrine of strong evaluation:

(1) The concept finds its roots in Frankfurt's theory of second-order desires, and is

introduced by Taylor to describe a structural feature of human agency.

(2) Strong evaluation depicts a type of essentially human reflection based on qualitative distinctions concerning the worth of goods, and is contrasted with weak evaluation, in which a desire-based concept of evaluation is presupposed.

(3) Strong evaluation informs both Taylor's philosophical-anthropological definition of human agency and his moral-phenomenological conception of moral experience.

(4) As an ethical term, Taylor employs the concept of strong evaluation not only to elaborate his broad account of morality, but also to defend his understanding of ethics as involving higher goods and to criticize ethical theories that leave no room for strong evaluation.

(5) Furthermore, strong evaluation is at the heart of Taylor's *ad hominem* account of practical reason, defending his moral phenomenology against naturalist views that tend to discredit our commonsense moral reactions for practical reason.

(6) Finally, Taylor takes the concept of strong evaluation to a whole new level in more recent writings by throwing a spotlight on the issues of truth, reality, and ontology that revolve around it.

Against this background, it seems a truism to say that such a comprehensive notion has evoked a wide variety of interpretations and critiques. I will consider some of these in the next sections.

How not to read Taylor

As we have seen, the concept of strong evaluation is mostly fleshed out in the 1980s. Yet in a reply to his commentators five years after the publication of *Sources of the Self*, Taylor admits that he is still struggling to find the right term. In fact, he suggests that the whole concept of strong evaluation was a mistake: "My mistake was in using the word 'evaluation' […] I should really find another term" (1994a, 249). Intriguingly, Taylor seems to be showing a similar doubt in his introduction of strong evaluation in "What is Human Agency?" As he explains,

> […] the word "evaluation" […] belongs to the modern, one might almost say post-Nietzschean, vocabulary of moral life. For it relates to the verb "evaluate", and the verb here implies that this is something we do, that our evaluations emerge from our activity of evaluation […] The Nietzschean term "value", suggested by our "evaluation", carries this idea that our "values" are our creations, that they ultimately repose on our espousing them. But to say that they ultimately repose on our espousing them is to say that they issue ultimately from a radical choice, that is, a choice which is not grounded in any reasons (1985d, 28-29).

We sense immediately how far this is from Taylor's own conception of evaluation. His assertion that strong evaluations invoke objective rightness makes a more compelling claim than that we just want some things very strongly. Quite to the contrary, he defends the view that our strong responses involve truth claims rather than basic dispositions. This explains why Taylor keeps on hesitating over the word "evaluation" to make this very point: while he wants to show that some of our evaluations are not rendered valid by our own desires or choices, he is acutely aware of how our modern vocabulary easily allows for a misinterpretation of the concept of strong evaluation as something that emerges exclusively from us, as a function of our activity as "minds". I would like to look at some of these misinterpretations to bring out Taylor's rather paradoxical predicament, namely, that some critiques of strong evaluation are symptomatic of the disenchanted, mind-centered view that Taylor seeks to undermine with this very concept.

To understand strong evaluation from within a disenchanted perspective is to understand it as a human-internal capacity, that is, to relate it to the functioning of the mind and the way that this affects one's behavior. This is the starting point of Owen Flanagan's discussion of the concept of strong evaluation: "Charles Taylor argues that the capacity for what he calls strong evaluation is a necessary feature of persons" (Flanagan 1996, 142). Flanagan then reconstructs Taylor's distinction between strong and weak evaluation as one between two ideal types of actual, living persons. I want to highlight how distortive this way of representing the doctrine of strong evaluation is.

Because, as Flanagan argues, Taylor "wants there to be a distinction between weak and strong evaluators" (1996, 146), we cannot be both: persons are *either* strong evaluators, who overrule their own desires "on the basis of some sort of ethical assessment", *or* they are weak evaluators, who do so "on the basis of other kinds of assessment" (1996, 144). Against this background, Flanagan seeks to show that "the distinction between weak and strong evaluators will be hard to draw in any unequivocal terms" (1996, 146). In so doing, he notes that Taylor has "no characterization of weak evaluation" because of his belief that "there are no persons who fit the description (Flanagan 1996, 167, note 11). Moreover, when we observe that "there simply is no such thing as a pure strong evaluator" either, then it should be clear, Flanagan thinks, that the whole contrast between strong and weak evaluation is rather useless:

> Normal persons sometimes behave wantonly; for example, we scratch where it itches. And even when we assess and evaluate our motives, we often do so in nonethical terms. Persons who go in for strong ethical evaluation often make vacation plans on the same basis as savvy weak evaluators. It would be unrealistic as well as excessively moralistic to think that they should do otherwise (1996, 146).

Three points can be made here. First, Taylor gives a rather compelling description of a weak evaluator in his characterization of the "impossibly shallow character" of the classical utilitarian agent (1985d, 26). Put simply, this shows that the picture of a weak evaluator is not meant as a psychological profile, as Flanagan's reading suggests, but has a distinctively metaphoric function. That is, in order to show what human agency would be like without

strong evaluation, Taylor argues that a "complete" utilitarian would no longer be recognized as human. Ruth Abbey makes the second point. As she clarifies, "Taylor is not suggesting that each and every choice an individual makes is the subject of strong evaluation. Some choices do not imply or invoke any sense of higher or lower value" (2000, 18). This explains that people might behave "wantonly" and "nonethical" in some cases (to use Flanagan's terms), while in other cases making qualitative distinctions by adopting a second-order stance. The third point concerns Taylor's broad conception of morality, and it is made by Nicholas Smith when he explains that Flanagan's objection rests on "a too narrow construal of a moral concern" because "moral principles are only one way of characterizing one of the dimensions of strong value" (2002, 95). Taylor himself makes this explicit by emphasizing that languages of strong evaluation can also be "aesthetic and of other kinds as well" (1985d, 24, note 27).

All of the above points fly in the face of Flanagan's characterization of strong evaluation. But there is more. It is not just that Flanagan's critique is based on an overly moralistic reading of Taylor's claims. More importantly, his psychologized understanding of a strong evaluator as "one who has well-developed capacities for specifically ethical evaluation" (Flanagan 1996, 154) blocks out Taylor's crucial distinction between higher and lower goods. We can illustrate this by looking at another of Flanagan's doubts: "If we understand the ethical so broadly that anyone who evaluates her desires in terms of 'better' and 'worse' is a strong evaluator, then the person convinced of the superiority of her style, fashion, or social class will turn out to be a strong evaluator" (1996, 147).

Ironically, this is Taylor's point indeed, but he endorses it in a way that cannot be made intelligible on Flanagan's account. This is because Flanagan's criticism seems to gloss over what Taylor calls "the very basis for strong evaluation, for there being desires or goals which are intrinsically *worth* fulfilling" (1989, 383, original emphasis). Surely the point that qualitative distinctions are central to strong evaluation does not mean that "anything goes", in the sense that a strong evaluator arbitrarily chooses any good he or she likes. As the present analysis makes clear, strong evaluation involves goods that are seen as having incommensurably higher worth, goods that we ought to desire, even if we do not. Yet on Flanagan's characterization of the ethical as "notoriously observer-relative", all goals are weakly evaluated.[5] In this way, his critique betrays an understanding of the moral life that echoes the "disenchanted" utilitarian approach Taylor opposes. In fact, the whole point of the distinction between strong and weak evaluation is precisely to contest a truncated view of morality as Flanagan's. The irony is that the challenge is not felt at all. In this respect, Flanagan's critique is a good example of how a reductive reading of strong evaluation hinders understanding.

Ultimately, it would seem that this is mainly due to his reduction of strong evaluation to "the ability to condemn and override some of [one's] own desires as unworthy" (Flanagan 1996, 144). To see why this distorts the doctrine of strong evaluation is to understand Taylor's reservations about using the term "evaluation". To understand strong evaluation as an internal capacity or ability implies that we can choose either to use or not to use this capability. This is particularly explicit when Flanagan remarks that persons who "don't *go in for* strong evaluation" simply do not act out of strong evaluation (1996, 154, italics mine). This way of putting the matter suggests that strong evaluation is ultimately our doing and

thus optional. Yet this picture fails to take notice of the embeddedness of strong evaluations in what Taylor calls "a social understanding of great temporal depth, in fact, in a 'tradition'" (1989, 39). As Mark Redhead aptly puts it, "given our dependence on language of qualitative contrast, we cannot simply choose to be an atheist one day and a Catholic the next" (2002, 162).

We can see, though, how the image of strong evaluations as simply our creations fits in with Flanagan's characterization of strong evaluation as a psychological feature of human beings: we are free to develop this particular capacity for ethical assessment or not. This picture brings us back to Taylor's suspicion that the term "evaluation" might easily encourage the idea that our strongly valued goods ultimately repose on our *de facto* commitment to them. Flanagan's reading of strong evaluation as an optional, non-essential feature of human beings shows this to be a reasonable suspicion indeed.

Again, this interpretation cannot accommodate Taylor's point that some goods are seen as norms that exist independently of one's capacity or ability to recognize such goods. Against this background, the image of a weak evaluator is of very little use as a psychological profile because it is purely hypothetical, meant to support the imperative claim that strong evaluation is essential to full, normal human agency (1985a, 3). In other words, Taylor makes all these caricatures of human selves – the simple weigher of alternatives, the impossibly shallow utilitarian, the monster of naturalist theory – simply to show what would happen if strong evaluation were to be left out (simple weigher), disrupted (utilitarianism), or eliminated altogether (naturalism). If anything, he hopes to make one thing crystal clear: that we are not in any of these cases imagining a class of human beings.

More confusion

A large body of literature about Taylor has tended to ignore or reject his interwoven mode of argumentation, and reduces the doctrine of strong evaluation to one of its components (either philosophical-anthropological or phenomenological or ethical or ontological).[6] In recent years, however, some counter-interpretations have emerged in reply to the drawbacks of these analyses. These accounts want to restore the wider focus by providing a more holistic reading of Taylor's claims.[7] Two points can be made here. On the one hand, reductionist readings of strong evaluation are partly right to criticize Taylor for not separating the different levels of strong evaluation as sharply as a clear grasp of his interwoven tactic would require. On the other hand, since the difficulty emerges from a deliberate strategy to *connect* different arguments, it becomes compelling to those who criticize Taylor for blurring basic distinctions to do more than just observe that he uses unconventional methods. Instead, they should address Taylor's underlying assumption that there is much to be gained from exploring the relationships between the different levels of strong evaluation by pushing the boundaries of distinct philosophical domains. Yet this seems to be an aspect that some of Taylor's critics have missed.

The determination to drive a wedge between the very issues that Taylor seeks to bring together is perhaps most strongly expressed in Paul Johnston's discussion of *Sources of the Self,* for his main goal is to make clear how Taylor's substantive positions are mixed up with

conceptual confusions. The conceptual approach is evident right at the start of Johnston's account, for he begins by noting that Taylor "blurs the distinction between evaluation and strong evaluation" and continues by laying out how Taylor also fails to distinguish between "having an understanding of the world and having an ethical understanding of the world" (1999, 101, 106). I want to consider both criticisms, because these clearly illustrate the limitations of understanding the issue of strong evaluation simply in terms of conceptual analysis.

Johnston takes his cue from the concept of strong evaluation as defined in the opening pages of *Sources of the Self*: "What exactly does Taylor mean by discriminations that are not rendered valid by our own desires but stand independently of them and offer standards by which they can be judged?" (Johnston 1999, 101) He then argues that a goal like becoming famous does provide a standard for other desires (as they can either promote or obstruct becoming famous) without being "independent" of them. That is, it depends on the person's preferences whether he or she sees the goal of becoming famous as an independent standard or as "simply the expression of dispositions that happened to have been inculcated into her" (Johnston 1999, 101). Taylor, however, "blurs the distinction between evaluation and strong evaluation and this enables him to argue that anyone who evaluates must believe in ethics" (Johnston 1999, 101).

In Johnston's view, what Taylor fails to recognize is that although "most people want to make moral judgments", the individual may also hold that "commitment to any goal is simply an expression of an individual's preferences or dispositions" (1999, 101). Furthermore, strong evaluation is not essential either, because "someone who rejects ethics still has preferences and so can have intentions and make choices" (Johnston 1999, 102). Then, without any further ado – without looking at the diverse ways in which Taylor uses the concept of strong evaluation to characterize moral experience[8] and without asking how he understands ethics – Johnston concludes that "strong evaluation is avoidable and anyone who rejects the idea that there are correct judgments on human action is committed to avoiding it" (1999, 101).

This understanding of strong evaluation is defective in at least three respects. First, it fails to take into account the basic distinction between strong and weak evaluation and the different types of articulation involved in them. As we have seen, although weak evaluators can be articulate about their preferences to the extent that they can express their basic needs, they lack the richer vocabulary of worth that is distinctive of strong evaluations. Johnston seems to lose sight of this point, though, because from the beginning he understands human goals as weakly evaluated ends. It is not just that his discussion overlooks that strong evaluation involves goods that are experienced as having incommensurably higher worth. More importantly, Johnston misses the point that Taylor seeks to undercut his very understanding of evaluation and morality. On Taylor's definition of ethics as involving higher goods, individual preferences or dispositions are simply irrelevant for moral argument. Yet because Johnston does not elaborate on this and simply posits that "it is quite possible to deny that there is a correct way of assessing actions" and that we may hold that "all evaluations are on a par" (1999, 101), the issue of how to define morality cannot even be raised. Like Flanagan, who states that the domain of the ethical just *is* "observer-relative"

(1996, 146), Johnston explains right at the outset that "the most appropriate starting point for our discussion is not a definition of ethics but the fundamental logical point that any judgment about human actions will inevitably be from one perspective among the countless number that are logically possible" (1999, 3). As a result, the aim of discussing strong evaluation while explicitly avoiding a definition of ethics both obscures Johnston's own moral commitments and tends to stifle the debate of what morality consists in.

Second, because Johnston implicitly relies on a subjectivist understanding of human evaluation,[9] his account of strong evaluation can address neither Taylor's claim that we experience some of our goals as intrinsically more significant than others nor that the issue of worthiness can only arise independently of our preferences. In this regard, Johnston argues that the possibility of an alternative characterization of evaluation shows Taylor's concept of strong evaluation to be "avoidable", but this does not prove his point. It may be true that most people tend to favor subjectivist models of evaluation, but this merely shows the omnipresence of reductionist thinking, not that strong evaluative self-interpretations are avoidable.

Third, Johnston's critique would have been far more interesting if he had considered the way in which Taylor uses the concept of strong evaluation as an *ad hominem* argument against subjectivist notions of evaluation, that is, to illustrate that we understand ourselves in terms of *strong* evaluations that generally refuse to be treated as relative. As Taylor puts it: "In the case that the preference is for ice cream you may not care about losing it, but what if it is for caring about people being tortured? Would you want to degenerate that point?" (in: Rosa and Laitinen 2002, 188) Instead of discussing this argument, Johnston simply insists that "*pace* Taylor, it is a logically possible position [to] hold that all evaluations are relative to a goal" (1999, 101). The only kind of answer that Johnston can conceive of offering with regard to Taylor's question above is one in strictly analytical terms. He wants to show that it is *conceptually* possible to reduce moral claims to the status of preferences. Within this reductionist account, the *ad hominem* point articulated by Taylor cannot be addressed at all.

Johnston's second point of critique concerns Taylor's distinction between instinctive and moral reactions. He first notes that for Taylor "there is no path from a scientific description of the world to ethics" (Johnston 1999, 106). He then argues that Taylor "confuses the real issues by trying to assimilate moral judgments and empirical claims" (Johnston 1999, 106) by highlighting Taylor's claim that we should treat our moral instincts as "our mode of access to a world in which ontological claims are discernible" (Taylor 1989, 8; quoted in Johnston 1999, 106). In Johnston's view, this last point is particularly revealing, because it shows the crucial misunderstanding that morality provides access to the world like sensory experience. At one stroke, Taylor thus "leaves empirical and moral claims looking misleadingly similar" and "confuses our need to make sense of the world with the possibility of making sense of it in moral terms" (Johnston 1999, 107, 102-103).

However, if we consider more closely the context in which Taylor speaks about gaining "access" to the world via our moral intuitions, we can see that he does not so much argue that "claims of science cannot disprove ethics" (Johnston 1999, 107), but, rather, that taking the neutral stance of science cuts us off from the very background that constitutes our moral reactions. That is, whereas natural science requires that we neutralize our responses,

moral reasoning is possible only within a world that is "shaped by our deepest moral responses" (1989, 8). This point is crucial because it enables us to see what Taylor is actually doing here: to lose the boundary between ethics and ontology by making explicit the ontological claims underlying our moral reactions.

In other words, his view is that a clear distinction must be drawn between scientific explorations, on the one hand, and investigations of moral ontology, on the other, since these are radically different approaches to reality. Regrettably, Johnston sees no need to discuss Taylor's concept of moral ontology, because it is here, I think, that he should focus his critique of "blurring the distinction between having an understanding of the world and having an ethical understanding of the world" (Johnston 1999, 106). In this respect, it is worth noting that Johnston not simply eschews an elaboration of his rather one-dimensional picture of ethics,[10] but that it lies in the very nature of his rigorous conceptual approach to keep its most basic assumptions inarticulate. When he asserts that "ethics is not a mode of access to anything nor is there evidence for moral claims" (Johnston 1999, 107), his critique turns out to depend on a strict division of ethics and ontology. But because this separation remains completely unarticulated, Johnston cannot make sense of Taylor's attempt to connect these two domains, that is, to make clear that ethics and ontology are intrinsically related via the ontological claims behind our moral reactions.

Johnston's case is particularly interesting because this type of inarticulateness exemplifies one of the central issues Taylor is fighting against. So much of Johnston's effort goes into showing how conceptual confusions seductively prevent us from seeing Taylor's failure to understand "ethics", that he completely misses the ontological concern that the concept of moral ontology is all about. This is partly due to the fact that Johnston sees himself in a strictly conceptual role, narrowly concerning himself with the use of moral concepts rather than substantive moral claims. This perspective leaves no room for Taylor's idea that moral thought should concern itself with the claims behind the demands we acknowledge, with ontological views. We can see, though, how Johnston's method fits his recommendation to replace "the lofty ambition of resolving the great questions of life" with "the humbler, but achievable goal of conceptual clarification" (1999, xii). On this view, awareness of the moral space that our strong evaluations seek to define has been so deeply suppressed that Taylor's very attempt to bring it to the fore goes completely unnoticed.

On the whole, the accounts of Johnston and Flanagan are archetypes of the paradox encountered earlier, that some critiques of strong evaluation indicate the reductionist mode of thought that Taylor's doctrine of strong evaluation seeks to attack head on. It would seem, therefore (in the above two cases at least), that Taylor is not just unsuccessful in convincing his readers of his claims, but that he even fails to pass on his most basic insights. However, this acknowledgement should not make his views seem any less significant; unless, that is, we are prisoners of the reductionist mindset ourselves, which takes only those ideas to be clear and convincing which can be argued in the formulations of mainstream philosophy. Reductionism, then, proves to be quite a tenacious (and in the cases of Flanagan and Johnston mostly implicit) feature of contemporary thought, so that it creeps back in even where it is attacked head on. In this respect, it is telling that Taylor says to be "fighting uphill" in *Sources of the Self* (1989, 90), while announcing in *Retrieving Realism* to be proposing a

position that is "going to be difficult to defend", that is, "in the context of today's culture" (2015, 154).

Conclusion

This paper has given an overview of Taylor's use of strong evaluation as it is developed from his earliest writings up to his most recent publications. Ultimately, strong evaluation originates from a three-layered attack on reductive explanations of human life. As the central concept of all three axes of this critique, strong evaluation at once informs Taylor's philosophical anthropology, his moral phenomenology, and his views on ontology. Although the above reconstruction does not provide an answer to the important question of whether Taylor's "interwoven" type of argument successfully *connects* arguments in philosophical anthropology, ethics, and ontology, it does demonstrate the unconventional way in which he operates by using the concept of strong evaluation in a variety of ways (descriptive, normative, diagnostic, critical), moving from one domain to another (philosophical anthropology, ethics, phenomenology, ontology).

However, a plausible counter-thesis is that the concept of ontology by itself adds nothing plausible to the project of a philosophical anthropology, nor does it enhance the credibility of a moral phenomenology. Given this objection, it would seem that Taylor's aim to connect the different levels of strong evaluation is especially worth examining more closely with regard to the hard problem of "how to *align* our best moral phenomenology with an adequate ontology" (2007, 609, italics mine). One way of starting this interwoven type of inquiry is via Taylor's latest question of what we are "committed to ontologically by our ethical views and commitments" (2003, 305). Yet since his views on this topic are highly tentative, we have still to find out how to explore the ontological implications of strong evaluation in an illuminating fashion.

If anything, this paper has demonstrated that far too little attention has been paid to Taylor's attempt to develop interwoven arguments. Although this method might indeed provide a strong base for criticizing scientistic approaches to human agency, we should also acknowledge that Taylor's effort of establishing the connections between the different levels of strong evaluation is rather undeveloped, especially with regard to ontology. For the most part, this is due to his own uncertainties. In this respect, Taylor's suggestion that we might be in need of a stronger ontological foundation for our evaluations than naturalist ontology can provide is a question rather than a statement. At any rate, it is not a formula for suppressing our dilemmas and hesitations, but an argument in favor of articulation. The ontology of strong evaluation, then, however full of gaps, certainly deserves further investigation.

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Notes

[1] See Taylor (1985b, 265; 1985c, 65-68, 73-74; 1985e, 220-222, 226; 1989, 4, 14, 20, 29-30, 42, 60, 63, 122, 249, 332-333, 336, 337, 383, 514; 1991, 242; 1994a, 249; 1994b, 209; 1995a, 37-39, 59; 1995b, 134; 2003, 312; 2007, 544, 595; 2011, 294-295, 297-302; 2016, 63, 192, 199).

[2] A point like this has been made by Owen Flanagan, who already observed "a number of significant modifications in the original picture of strong evaluation as it is used and described in *Sources of the Self*" (1996, 143).

[3] Taylor used this expression to characterize his arguments about strong evaluation during a seminar at the University of Leuven, Belgium (2 June 2015).

[4] See, for example, the papers "Self-Interpreting Animals" (1985c, 66-67) and "What's Wrong With Negative Liberty" (1985e, 220).

[5] As he argues: "The domain of the ethical and thus what counts as ethical assessment is notoriously observer-relative. What looks like non-ethical assessment from an outsider's perspective may be ethical from an insider's perspective" (Flanagan 1996, 146).

[6] Flanagan (1996) and Johnston (1999) are good examples of this approach.

[7] Most notably, Abbey (2000), Smith (2002), and Laitinen (2008).

[8] As we have seen, these include: to explain morality in terms of higher goods, to discredit naturalist views that rule out commonsense moral reactions for practical reason, to endorse a phenomenological account of morality (broadly conceived) in critical opposition to rivaling ethical theories that focus exclusively on duty and obligation, and to show the inadequacy of reductive anthropologies that leave no room for qualitative distinctions.

[9] Throughout his discussion, Johnston consistently has recourse to the view that evaluations simply reflect how "people are disposed rather than some intrinsic merit of the evaluations themselves" (1999, 101).

[10] As he says: "The important point is that ethics is not about the individual finding a way of understanding the world with which she can live; rather it is about trying to understand the world correctly. Similarly, it is not about finding the most appropriate terms to define one's self-identity, but about reaching a conclusion on what is right and wrong. […] Holding moral views involves claiming that anyone who understands the world correctly will accept that certain standards of behaviour are correct and should be followed by everyone" (Johnston 1999, 105).