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Introduction

THE ISSUE

I have been thinking about moral skepticism for a long time. I have often been asked whether I am a moral skeptic. I do not know the answer to this question. Happily, for purposes of this book, I do not need to know. While I believe—indeed, there is widespread agreement—that the many cogent attempts that philosophers have made over the centuries at tackling this trenchant issue have failed, I think this does not commit us to skepticism. For it could very well be that the problem lies with how philosophers have been defining the skeptic, what we have taken his demands to be. Philosophers have identified two kinds of moral skeptics: one skeptic doubts whether there is one true moral code, or whether there are true moral statements or moral facts,[1] the other doubts whether we should follow morality, whatever its content—that is, he doubts the existence of moral reasons. Many moral philosophers have been concerned with the former skeptic about theoretical reason. My concern in this book is with the latter kind of moral skeptic about practical reason. More specifically, I want to examine how the traditional picture of the "practical" skeptic (hereafter "the skeptic") has limited the kind of response that philosophers can offer by way of defeating the skeptic. I argue that the traditional view of the skeptic is in some ways too broad yet in other ways too narrow. Each chapter defends a modification of the traditional view. My ultimate goal is to define the skeptic in such a way that a defeat of skepticism would leave remaining no further skeptical challenge about following the dictates of morality.

Why is defeating the moral skeptic so important? The reasons are twofold: theoretical and practical. Demonstrating the rationality of acting morally would strengthen morality by backing it with reason. Here, ethics bears similarity to all other areas of philosophy in which a skeptical challenge is posed to our widely held beliefs and attitudes. A significant part of the entire enterprise of philosophy is justification: if we give up the project of justification, we give up doing philosophy, or the heart of it, anyway. Thus jettisoning the project of defeating the moral skeptic, perhaps because it is too difficult to do so or even because we do not care about the challenge the skeptic poses, would not be a satisfactory response.

In addition, demonstrating the rationality of acting morally promises to make headway in achieving the desired effect of people's acting morally. Here, ethics is different from other areas of philosophy. For we do not worry that skeptics about the external world will walk off cliffs or really confuse themselves with brains in vats. We might worry, though, that skeptics about the existence of God will act badly, but then again, many students of philosophy have become such skeptics and have not changed their behavior. But we do worry that skeptics about acting morally will treat others badly, for if moral reasons do not override other reasons for action, then rational persons will do well not to act on them. Indeed, moral philosophers link the theoretical and practical goals: we want people to be moved by the arguments we offer for acting morally, and to act accordingly. It would be no more philosophically satisfying if people acted morally not for the reasons we offer, but out of fear of political sanction, punishment from God, or even just on a fluke, than if people came to hold their beliefs about the existence of the external world or other minds for these reasons and not for sound, philosophical justifications. My claim is not that the reasons for acting morally must necessarily motivate persons, but simply that we want them to do so. I have claimed that the skeptic, as traditionally conceived, has not yet been defeated. Thus these goals have not yet been achieved.

Recently, many philosophers have addressed the issue of the "normativity" of morality, and they divide into roughly two camps. We can characterize the view of those in the first camp to be, roughly speaking, that if there are any moral requirements, they are requirements of rationality. Those in the second camp take it that it is one thing to establish that there are moral requirements, and another thing to establish that moral requirements are normative, or, that the requirements of morality are rational requirements. I am in the second camp. If those in the former group are correct, the "Why be moral?" issue is not intelligible. But if rationality cannot be construed the way these philosophers suggest, then there might not be any moral requirements. So their project is in large part to defend a certain conception of rationality such that morality fits into it. So, for example, David Gauthier aims to develop a theory of morals as part of a theory of rational choice, and boldly asserts: "Indeed, if our defence [of compliance with agreements based on the principle of minimax relative concession] fails, then we must conclude that a rational morality is a chimera, so that there is no rational and impartial constraint on the pursuit of individual utility."[2] Gauthier works within a widely-accepted self-interest-based notion of rationality, and he claims that "if we should find that reason is no more than the handmaiden of interest, so that in overriding advantage a moral appeal must also contradict reason ... then we should conclude that the moral enterprise, as traditionally conceived, is impossible."[3] I agree and disagree with Gauthier here. I am going to take the traditional view of the skeptic as my starting point, and assume that there are conflict cases in which the requirements of morality

and the requirements of rationality point in different directions. I will try to stick as much as I can with the traditional picture of the skeptic, and modify it along the way to meet certain concerns related to our effecting a complete defeat of skepticism. But I am not suggesting that if we do not succeed in justifying moral requirements within the context of a certain view of rationality, then there are no moral requirements. Rather, we will need to work harder to develop a moral theory that does provide a complete defeat of skepticism. This is not my project here, nor is my project to defeat skepticism, but to show what it would take for a successful defeat.

Other philosophers have taken a different approach from Gauthier's, but they still fall into the camp of those who believe that if there are any moral requirements, they are requirements of rationality. Michael Smith recently defends the view that a person who asks the question "Why be moral?" does not understand what moral requirements consist in, just as a person who is blind from birth but uses color terms reliably does not understand the concept of "red."[4] At best, she uses the term "red" or "moral reason" in an "inverted commas" sense, figuring out how to apply the term as others do but not genuinely mastering the concept. Smith is trying to establish his view that motivation is built into a moral reason, and I will examine his argument in more detail later on, but I do not want to start my quest by assuming that reason has motivation built into it.

Nor do I want to provide an elaborate account, one set in the context of moral theory, of what it is to give someone a reason to act morally, as do Christine Korsgaard and Stephen Darwall, both of whom work within a Kantian framework. This is another way to approach the skeptical challenge. Korsgaard argues that egoism is a myth because it denies that reasons can be shared. She believes that it is the very nature of reasons that they can be shared.[5] If I ask you to consider how you would like it if someone acted a certain way toward you, Korsgaard says, I am forcing you to acknowledge the value of my own humanity, and impose on you an obligation to respect it. There turns out to be no gap between your reasons and my reasons, as the egoist or skeptic supposes, since if you listen to the argument at all, you have already admitted that each of us is someone, that is, someone who is deserving of a certain kind of treatment. The skeptic, in other words, must not understand what it is to have a reason. Darwall picks up on Korsgaard's point, and claims that when you attempt to give another a second-personal reason, you presuppose that another has second-personal authority, competence, and responsibility as a free and rational agent.[6] A second-personal reason is a reason we give from a second-person standpoint, or "the perspective you and I take up when we make and acknowledge claims on one another's conduct and will."[7] Indeed, according to Darwall, the very validity of a second-personal reason depends on the possibility of the reason's being addressed person-to-person. Moral requirements, then, are connected *conceptually* to an authority to demand compliance.[8] Moral reasons need

no independent defense, as they are part of the "circle of irreducibility" of second-personal concepts, which also includes the concepts of responsibility, accountability, second-personal authority, and valid claim or demand. In other words, the skeptic who asks why he should be moral already presupposes that others and himself are engaged in such a way that we see that we have mutual reasons for acting toward each other in ways respectful of our dignity.[9] The skeptic is already "in the game" if he understands what a second-personal reason is. Both Korsgaard's and Darwall's account of the skeptical challenge might turn out to be the best ones we can offer, but, again, I want to stick as much as possible to the traditional view of the skeptic and modify it in light of a complete defeat of skepticism. Further, I do not want to assume up front that moral requirements just *are* rational requirements. If we believe that it is possible that they are not, and that this is just as tenable a position as that they are, then we have to take the position of the skeptic seriously, and not beg the question against him by assuming that moral requirements are rational requirements.[10]

In the other camp are philosophers who separate establishing the existence of moral requirements from establishing the rational requiredness of moral requirements. David Copp, for instance, takes on the challenge of the skeptic who believes in conflict cases where the requirements of morality and rationality part company, that is, where there is a normative conflict between the verdicts of the standpoint of self-interest and the standpoint of morality.[11] Copp argues that neither standpoint overrides the other, and that there is never an overall verdict about which action is required from a standpoint of "Reason" in cases where moral reasons and self-interested reasons conflict. He does not believe that this discredits morality, since self-interest also fails to override morality. David Brink also believes that morality and self-interest part company, and thus that the skeptic's challenge is a real one.[12] He sees "an apparent conflict between living well and living right or morally," and examines some egoist attempts to justify acting morally. He rejects a subjective response, that conceives of the agent's good independently of the good of others, on the grounds that this is not likely to defeat the skeptic. He favors a neo-Aristotelian response that tries to justify the other-regarding aspect of morality in terms of psychological continuity, since this poses the most obvious problem for an egoist justification of morality. Whether Copp's or Brink's accounts are successful or satisfactory for the project of defeating skepticism, I share with each the goal that the skeptic's challenge is a real one for those of us working within the framework of the traditional view of the skeptic who believes that there are conflicts between the requirements of morality and of self-interest, rather than that moral requirements are essentially rational requirements due to the nature of rationality.

So what is the traditional picture of the skeptic? The skeptic adopts the widely accepted theory of practical reason according to which rationality dictates that the agent act in ways that maximize her expected utility, commonly identified with promoting one's own interest, or, satisfying one's desires or preferences. This theory, the expected utility theory of rational choice and action, or, EU, for short, is the received view of rational action. The skeptic challenges the moral philosopher to show that rationality dictates that persons act morally, even when doing so conflicts with their self-interest. That is, the skeptic demands that it be shown that acting in morally required ways, not self-interestedly, is rationally required. If this challenge goes unmet, the skeptic remains undefeated, meaning that rationality requires self-interested action. Yet the fact that the skeptic endorses EU does not mean that he is wedded to it: he will accept a better theory of practical reason, one that includes moral reasons, if one can be defended. This is the task facing the moral philosopher.

Further, on the traditional view, the skeptic believes that it is not rational to have moral desires: a rational person can have any desires but moral ones. Expected utility theory does not rationally assess desires themselves, so that whatever desires a person happens to have, she should maximize their satisfaction. Some philosophers have imposed constraints having to do with coherence, consistency, and transitivity, but otherwise any desires or preferences count. But for purposes of defeating skepticism, philosophers must assume that persons lack moral desires, ones that involve taking an intrinsic interest in the interests of others.

In addition, the skeptic demands a *justifying* reason, not merely a *motivating*, or explanatory, reason for acting morally. A justifying reason justifies the action typically on the grounds that it at least tends to bring about a good state of affairs, while a motivating reason explains why the agent acts the way she does. A justifying reason can motivate, but it need not. And a motivating reason may not be a justifying one, as in the case of the person who acts morally because she wants to look good in front of others, or who has overwhelming feelings of guilt about not acting morally that cause her to act morally. The skeptic seeks a justifying reason, whether or not it is a motivating reason as well.

Finally, the traditional skeptic requires that we show that every morally required action is rationally required, not just that being morally disposed is rationally required. The *action skeptic*, who represents the traditional skeptic, is a skeptic about whether every morally required act is rationally required; the *disposition skeptic* is a skeptic about the rational requiredness of adopting a moral disposition. Both Plato and David Gauthier shift their attempt to defeat skepticism on grounds of self-interest to the level of dispositions, but Gauthier tries to defeat action skepticism, as well, as I will show. On the traditional model, defeating action skepticism alone is sufficient for defeating skepticism fully, since, philosophers believe, no further skeptical challenge would remain once the action skeptic is defeated. As a point of clarification, the action skeptic need not take a stand on the rationality of acts that are merely morally

permissible, that is, neither obligatory nor wrong, such as the act of helping someone pick up papers she has dropped. For acts that are morally permissible, rationality might be indifferent between morality and self-interest, which would not threaten the action skeptic's view about rationally required action. The action skeptic is concerned that we demonstrate that when morality requires acting a certain way, rationality follows suit, backing it up with a requirement of rationality. Moreover, the action skeptic is concerned with whether the requirements of morality are rational *requirements*, rather than merely rationally permissible. He wants it to be shown that whenever a morally required act conflicts with a self-interested act, the latter of which he deems to be required by rationality, rationality requires that he perform the morally required act. I will speak at times of "what we have reason to do" or of "what it is rational to do," and here I mean what *Rationality* dictates. But when there is a need to disambiguate, I will clearly say "what rationality requires," or say that "it is rationally required to act in morally required ways."

The skeptic is defined this way for strategic reasons. If the argument against skepticism succeeds, it is supposed to succeed for anyone, regardless of her desires, character, beliefs about moral reasons, and so on. Thus it would not rest on any special contingencies such that it would reach only those in special circumstances. It would not beg the question in favor of morality by assuming that anyone had moral desires on any occasion. And it is supposed to leave open no further skeptical challenge. Finally, it is supposed to defeat the worst-case scenario in opposition to morally required action, which is taken to be self-interested action.

Moreover, we need not worry about extending the justification for acting morally to persons who are in special circumstances, such as when they have no interests at all, or have otherwise perverted interests, such as an interest in not satisfying any of their other interests, or lack sufficient time to dispose themselves to being moral so as to reap any of the benefits from being morally disposed. These cases pose a challenge to morality, but our main concern is to defeat skepticism for ordinary people in normal circumstances. Importantly, these circumstances include ones in which it is possible that morality demands great sacrifices relating to the pursuit of one's own interest.

Having to defeat action skepticism with these restrictions on the skeptic's position of course poses a huge challenge to moral philosophers. Since the skeptic accepts only self-interested reasons, we have to justify acting morally or, at least, being morally disposed, on self-interested grounds. Only self-interested reasons would reach such a skeptic. Indeed, whichever way we set up the skeptic, the setup constrains the kind of answer we can give, determining the range of acceptable answers to the skeptic. Since self-interest and morality are supposed to be paradigmatic opposites, maybe we have set up too big a challenge for ourselves.

Philosophers have made exactly this charge about Descartes's attempt to defeat the epistemological skeptic. Descartes famously digs himself into a very deep skeptical hole, subjecting to doubt everything he has learned from his senses, from his awake state, and even from his own thoughts, since his senses might deceive him, since he cannot tell for certain whether he is awake or dreaming his whole life, and since an evil genius might be deceiving him even about mathematical truths. There is much debate about whether philosophers can and have gotten us out of this skeptical abyss. Of course Descartes himself thought he could, by working out from the existence of his own mind to God's existence to the existence of the external world. But even his argument about the existence of his own mind is flawed, leaving many of us to believe that he dug too deep a skeptical hole. Descartes cast the net too wide by doubting everything. Thus, many philosophers believe that by setting up the skeptic in such a demanding way, the likelihood of success in defeating him is slim to none. A skeptic who doubts everything leaves us with no way to reach him, with nothing to build on.

We might think this is the case in ethics, too: the traditional picture of the skeptic requires too much in demanding that we reach the action skeptic with self-interested reasons. One response is to give up on the project of defeating skepticism. But this is unacceptable if we want to achieve the theoretical and practical goals cited earlier. Making a move parallel to Berkeley's in epistemology by showing that there is nothing to be skeptical about, because the physical world can be reduced to our or God's perceptions, would also not be satisfactory. This merely dodges defeating skepticism, since it does not address what we really want to know, namely, that the external world as we think it is does in fact exist. We want a response to any skeptic that addresses head on what we really want to know is justified. In order to have a complete and successful defeat of skepticism, the trick is then to determine what it is we really want to know.

Unlike those philosophers who believe that Descartes cast the net too wide in epistemology, I believe that philosophers have not cast the net wide enough in ethics. Traditionally, a defeat of action skepticism would be sufficient for a complete defeat of skepticism. Hobbes tried to defeat action skepticism by appealing to reasons of self-interest for each and every action. Gauthier reminds us that this would show too much, since it would make moral reasons otiose. What we really want, Gauthier ultimately argues, is for the skeptic to accept moral reasons on their own, even when they cannot be replaced by self-interested reasons. In response to Hobbes, Gauthier makes a dispositional move, aiming to show that adopting a moral disposition is rational in a self-interested sense. But then he needs to show how the rationality of the moral disposition carries over to the actions expressing it, and in what sense it does. That is, he needs to defeat both the disposition skeptic, who doubts the existence of reasons for being morally disposed, and the action skeptic, who doubts the

existence of reasons for acting morally. So Gauthier does not give up the project of defeating action skepticism, but needs a way of connecting the rationality of dispositions and actions. I propose a view according to which the rationality of dispositions is assessed interdependently of the rationality of actions. On this view, dispositions and actions are seen as two sides of a coin, rationally related through the same reasoning on the part of the agent.

Even if we do defeat action skepticism, and in a way better than Hobbes's, we will not have shown enough for a successful and complete defeat of skepticism. In addition, we need to speak to motives, and demonstrate that rationality requires that we have and act from certain motives deemed ideal by whatever moral theory we defend, rather than merely going through the motions. The *motive skeptic* endorses the view that going through the motions in acting in morally required ways is rationally permissible. It is important to show that it is rational to *be* moral, which amounts to being a person who both acts morally and acts from a certain motive that the moral theory at issue deems ideal.

There is an even deeper skeptical challenge raised about motives. The *amoralist* is not moved by moral reasons even though he recognizes their existence. That is, he sees that there are moral reasons, yet he does not see their force. Internalists about reasons and motives believe they can indirectly defeat the amoralist by showing that he is either inconceivable or irrational. I argue against some internalist arguments, and conclude that we should, indeed, address the amoralist and expand the skeptic's position to include a claim about the rationality of amoralism. Still, if the amoralist is not moved by moral reasons, I argue that this does not threaten a successful defeat of skepticism, because whether one is motivated by the reasons one has is a psychological, not a philosophical, issue. But we should still address the amoralist, in addition to the action skeptic, the disposition skeptic, and the motive skeptic.

It is not problematic that I reconstrue the skeptic's position in the way I do. It would be, if my aim were to define the skeptic in a way that would make it easy for me or anyone to easily refute. But my aim is to define the skeptic so as to anticipate further skeptical challenges. My strategy is similar to that of Descartes, who anticipates further skeptical challenges and defines the epistemological skeptic accordingly. I am introducing deeper kinds of skepticism, and corresponding ways of referring to The Skeptic (e.g., the action skeptic, disposition skeptic, and motive skeptic). This is so that were we to defeat skepticism, we would defeat it completely.

For the same reason, I believe that our setup of the skeptic's position needs to be more politically sensitive than the traditional one. Just as some disenfranchised social groups charge that so-called mainstream moral theories do not explicitly exclude as morally unjustified certain behavior directed against members of these groups, or worse, even permit such behaviors, these same groups might charge that a defeat of the traditional skeptic does not explicitly exclude the same behaviors as

rationally unjustified. The issue is more pressing than ever for women and minorities who in both blatant and subtle ways have had their status as full and equal persons discounted, ignored, or even set back. A complete defeat of skepticism needs to show that behavior that does this is irrational. Part of my project in this book is to address this concern in order to effect a more inclusive defeat of skepticism. I speak mostly in terms of women and feminist concerns since it is this perspective from which I write, but my arguments apply equally to other oppressed groups.

One way that feminists and others might respond to the project of skepticism is to challenge the view that self-interested action provides the biggest challenge to morality for the reason that it is most in opposition to moral action. There are immoral actions other than self-interested ones that, for all we have shown with a defeat of the traditional skeptic, we may be rationally required to perform. Some of these acts take sexist forms. They include doing evil for its own sake, moral indifference, moral negligence, conscientious wickedness, and weakness of will, as well as acts that are performed as part of harmful social practices that may not directly be in the agent's self-interest, but may instead only indirectly benefit the group of which he is a member. The latter include acts that sustain and perpetuate women's oppression, including a man's benefiting from the existence of rape and sexual harassment in virtue of being a member of the group men, even though he himself never rapes or harasses. Any of these immoral acts may be at least as much in opposition to morality as self-interested acts. Since they are not best characterized as self-interested, dichotomizing self-interest and morality runs the risk that they will be left out of the skeptic's challenge, and will leave open whether they are rationally required to perform. But we need to show, for a complete defeat of skepticism, that *no* immoral act has the backing of reason. To meet this charge, then, I argue that we should reconstrue the skeptic's position as one of *privilege* rather than self-interest; privilege includes self-interest, yet goes beyond it. That is, we should take the skeptic to adopt the view that reason requires acting in ways that privilege oneself. This more politically comprehensive picture of the skeptic reflects immoral acts directed against members of oppressed groups that heretofore have been ignored, and also gives us reason to jettison EU.

A related problem is that since EU does not scrutinize desires, it allows for deformed desires, that is, ones deformed by patriarchy. If we justify acting morally in the way contractarians like Gauthier does, by appealing to EU, and if EU allows for deformed desires, we risk recapitulating women's oppression in the resultant moral code. For it might turn out to be rationally and morally required to act in ways satisfying deformed desires. The problem affects any moral theory that aims to defeat skepticism by in some way invoking EU. At the very least, then, we should modify EU to exclude as rational acting on deformed desires. Many philosophers have proposed versions of informed desire tests to eliminate

desires based on ignorance of facts, false beliefs, psychological aberrations, and the like, but none of these address deformed desires. I propose a way of doing this, so at the least we should modify EU.

Deformed desires also plague the care ethicists' response to the skeptic. Some feminists endorse the ethic of care as an alternative to self-interest based contractarianism, or, for short, SIB contractarianism, which endorses an individualistic picture of the bargainers to the hypothetical contract from which the dictates of morality emerge. This contractarian model is similar to the traditional view of the skeptic. The ethic of care sees persons as embedded in particular social contexts and as having needs and particular identities. Care ethicists such as Nel Noddings offer an internalist reason for acting morally, whereby the reason is necessarily related to motives the agent has, including deformed desires. Women who come to develop deformed desires from patriarchal socialization and related to the kinds of caring they are expected to do will have reasons for acting on them, and women who lack desires that when satisfied contribute to freeing them from oppression will not have reason to act in these ways. But neither a feminist ethic nor a successful response to the skeptic should allow or perpetuate women's oppression. So this way of responding to the skeptic is problematic.

Suppose we jettison EU. The skeptic's position must be grounded in rationality, since otherwise the skeptical project does not get off the ground. A skeptic whose views are not grounded in a theory of rationality or something like it poses no threat to morality. In line with my view that we reconstrue the skeptic's position along the lines of privilege instead of self-interest, which calls for recognizing everyone's worth as a person, I rely on consistency as a measure of rationality. Specifically, there must be consistency between a person's disposition, actions, desires, maxims, and reasons for disposing herself to morality, as well as in the main tenets of the moral theory to which she subscribes, in that it must account for the intrinsic value of each person. The sense of consistency that I invoke is not that of logical consistency, but what we might call "practical consistency" or coherence. I develop the Interdependency Thesis, which assesses the rationality of moral dispositions and actions interdependently. This thesis allows us to fine-tune the demands of the action skeptic by not focusing just on acts and dispositions in themselves, but on their interconnection. Specifically, our moral assessments should reflect an agent's integrity, which is not just a matter of acting morally and being morally disposed, but of her resolve, her being open to revision, and the like. What is morally required is that an agent act in ways that foster integrity. Our rational assessments should assess the more complex connection between the agent's reasons for adopting a moral disposition, and for having and acting from it, and whether these cohere with her reasons for acting and for wanting to be a morally good person, and the justification for the moral theory or principles she endorses. The measure of rationality should be consistency between these features that reflect moral integrity.

Acts will come in degrees of rationality, as measured by how they contribute to the agent's consistent life plan. This account unites dispositions and actions in a way that provides a fuller, richer assessment of persons and their actions than do other accounts that take EU as a starting point.

In sum, my attack on the traditional picture of the skeptic is threefold. First, the traditional picture is misdirected since it is not sufficiently sensitive to the complexities of morality as just stated. It takes as its target the acts that the moral theory at issue deems to be required. Typically these are defined just in terms of the acts themselves, and whether they meet an independent standard (e.g., maximization of utility). But it needs to include acts that the agent performs yet that make her reflect on her character and firm up her resolve, as well as exclude acts that have no such effect or that are performed by an agent who does not exhibit moral reasoning of the right kind. The traditional picture of the skeptic is too weak because we need to defeat motive skepticism and address the amoralist, in addition to defeating disposition and action skepticism. Thus we need both to clarify and broaden the traditional skeptic's position accordingly. Second, the traditional view invokes EU, which is problematic for the project of defeating skepticism. On EU and the traditional view of the skeptic, for any desire the agent has but moral ones, acting on it is rational. But EU wedges us into a certain answer, forcing us to go the route Hobbes and Gauthier have taken. It does not exclude deformed desires, but takes their satisfaction to be rationally required. And it leaves out too many actions, ones not best characterized as self-interested, that fit better under the umbrella of privilege. Third, the traditional picture of the skeptic is not sufficiently sensitive to issues of gender and the like. Excluding deformed desires as irrational and starting from the position of privilege rather than self-interest will take us a long way toward remedying this. Also, the Interdependency Thesis's judgments are in line with a rich theory of morality and active moral agency, and it is more nuanced to context than the alternatives, all of which are feminist concerns. And the addition of motive skepticism aims to present a better picture of moral agency than one divorced from motives, since it links action and motivation, and assesses the rationality of both. This coherent picture of agency is important for feminism, for example, since if a person acts morally, this still leaves open the possibility of his going through the motions in doing so, and not really respecting the rational agency or humanity of women. Ideally, feminists want both that agents act in nonsexist ways, and that their motives display the same genuine respect for women as for all others.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The best place to start in tackling the problem of skepticism about moral action is, I believe, with the response to the skeptic offered by SIB contractarians, since their description of the hypothetical bargainers to

the contract from which morality is supposed to emerge resembles that of the traditional skeptic, and if their response works, it will have defeated a quite demanding action skeptic who wants it to be shown that every morally required act is rationally required. Gauthier rightly rejects Hobbes's attempt to show that every morally required act is rationally required because it is in the agent's self-interest to perform it. But since Gauthier must reach a skeptic who endorses EU and initially accepts only self-interested reasons for action, he must make the dispositional move, and show that it is rationally required because self-interested to adopt a moral disposition. In addition, if he is to defeat action skepticism, he must show that the rationality of the moral disposition carries over to the actions expressing it. But to do so, he must defend a controversial view—the Dependency Thesis—of the connection between the rationality of dispositions and actions. I take up this topic in chapter 2, where I challenge the skeptic's endorsement of EU on the grounds that it constrains in a problematic way the kind of answer we can give to the skeptic. Chapter 2 also raises the issue of whether we must defeat action skepticism for a successful defeat of skepticism, or whether it would be sufficient to defeat disposition skepticism. In addition, chapter 2 raises problems about moral integrity, specifically that agents are not linked to their reasons in the right way on the Dependency Thesis.

Some feminists have rejected traditional moral theories, in particular SIB contractarianism, in part because of its abstract individualism. According to SIB contractarianism, the true moral code emerges from a hypothetical agreement among self-interested persons who come to the bargain from their current social, economic, and political positions, and who put forward claims to each other and make concessions on the basis of whether doing so best satisfies their desires or preferences. The feminist objection to this view of the bargainers, which is similar to the traditional view of the skeptic, is that (1) it may not be neutral and, if it is not sufficiently reflective of gender, may recapitulate women's oppression; (2) it captures only typically male-male interactions between strangers in a paid workforce situation; and (3) it yields a moral code that is likely to be minimalist in nature. To avoid these and other problems with traditional moral theories, some feminists have proposed and are developing the ethic of care. In chapter 3, I examine the kind of responses to the skeptic that the ethic of care might offer. The most promising one invokes a Humean internalist reason for acting morally that necessarily connects a reason for acting in a caring way with acting from the motive of care. But this motive cashes out in the context of a patriarchal society in ways that recapitulate women's oppression, since the desires associated with women's caring are often deformed by patriarchy. It turns out that the ethic of care is no better off in its aim to defeat skepticism than is SIB contractarianism. If I am right that the ethic of care commits us to internalism in a way that invokes deformed desires and recapitulates women's oppression, it does not meet the aim of feminists and will not successfully defeat

skepticism. Chapter 3 raises additional questions about the traditional skeptic, namely, whether we need to defeat motive skepticism in addition to action skepticism because of concerns about motives brought to the fore by care ethicists, and whether we need a fuller account of justification than EU allows that squares with a richer account of morality than SIB contractarianism, one more in line with the ethic of care. In the end, we are left with the traditional picture of the skeptic who endorses EU. In the next couple of chapters, I proceed to chip away at the plausibility of EU.

The topic of chapter 4 is deformed desires and the role they should play in rational and moral theories. Chapter 8 shows that these desires are problematic for successfully defeating skepticism, so we should want to exclude them from a rational choice theory that grounds the skeptic's position. Thus we need to modify the desires we take the skeptic to believe it is rational to have. The traditional picture excludes only moral desires so as not to beg the question in favor of morality. Chapter 4 examines standard informed desire tests that hold promise of showing that deformed desires are irrational. I argue that as they are traditionally construed, they unfortunately fail to do so. I propose an additional condition of rationality according to which the agent recognizes herself as having worth in a Kantian sense. This condition will exclude deformed desires from the skeptic's position, whichever theory of rational choice we take the skeptic to adopt. The fact that EU does not exclude these desires, though, is another factor that counts against it. At the least, then, we should modify EU accordingly, and consequently, the skeptic's position. The upshot for feminism is that since deformed desires will be excluded from the outset as ones it is rational to have and act on, any moral theory that is derived from the theory of rational action with which we begin is one that will not require or deem as morally permissible action that satisfies deformed desires. Neither the moral theory grounded in such a theory of practical reason, nor the theory of practical reason itself, will perpetuate women's oppression for reasons related to women's having deformed desires.

Chapter 5 argues for a further reason to jettison EU, namely, that it is not sufficiently inclusive, particularly when it comes to feminist concerns. It would follow from a successful defeat of skepticism, according to which rationality requires acting in morally required ways, that all immoral acts are irrational. To satisfy feminist concerns about the skeptical project, a defeat of skepticism must show that it is not rational to act in ways covering all sexist behavior, not just sexist behavior grounded in self-interest. The traditional picture of the skeptic, which covers just self-interest, is too narrow in this regard. I argue that all forms of immorality have in common that the agent fails to respect the equal humanity of another person. Privilege covers all these acts, including self-interest. Thus we should expand the skeptic's position to be that rationality requires that one privilege oneself. To defeat the skeptic on this alternative model to EU, we need to show that rationality requires, on grounds of

consistency, that we respect the humanity of others: it is inconsistent or contradictory to favor one's own humanity over others' humanity. We can appeal to reasons of consistency rather than self-interested reasons in aiming to defeat skepticism. I develop the consistency model of rational choice and action in chapter 8, though, again, my aim is not actually to defeat skepticism.

Chapter 6 raises a further question about motivation, and develops the objections raised against internalism in chapter 3. Chapter 6 presents the challenge of the amoralist who sees that there are moral reasons, yet denies their force. Internalists of different kinds argue that such a skeptic is either inconceivable or irrational, or just lacks a reason to act morally. I examine and reject several internalist arguments in favor of weak externalism, the view that a reason to act morally may, but need not necessarily, motivate the agent to act. The failure of internalist arguments leaves open the possibility of a rational amoralist. And if a rational amoralist is possible, we must defeat him in order to defeat skepticism fully. This means that we need to broaden the skeptic's position accordingly. I argue that although we need to do so, our failure to defeat the skeptic who believes that amoralism is a tenable position would not count against a successful defeat of skepticism, since being motivated by the reasons one has is a psychological, but not a philosophical, issue.

Still, motives are important to the project of skepticism because most of us believe that the ideal moral person is not one who merely acts morally but one who does so from the right motives. Feminists, for instance, want it to be the case that a person acts morally and does not go through the motions in doing so, but really respects women. The motive skeptic believes that it is rationally permissible for a person to act morally but merely go through the motions in doing so, without acting from the motive the moral theory in question deems ideal. Chapter 7 aims to show that such an agent has reasons and motives that are not in harmony, which is a mark of irrationality. This serves as an indirect defeat of the motive skeptic.

Chapter 8 returns to the theme of chapter 2, the relation between the rationality of a moral disposition and the rationality of actions expressing it. I argue for the Interdependency Thesis, according to which we need to assess the rationality of an agent's actions as ones performed by a certain kind of agent. Here I mean that we should assess the rationality of actions not independently of the agent who performs them, nor should we assess the rationality of actions as ones caused by the agent's having a moral disposition. I defend an alternative model of rationality that invokes various levels of practical consistency, or coherence, existing between an agent's reasons for adopting a moral disposition, the argument for the moral theory or set of principles that the agent adopts that should not be contradictory about the equal worth of persons, and the agent's desires, disposition, and choice to be a moral person as reflected in the maxim the agent adopts. Having a moral disposition entails at least having

a commitment to act in ways the moral theory at issue requires, which is to endorse reasons to act in these ways, and to use these reasons in deliberation about acting morally. We are not simply random actors: we act from characters and for reasons. The commitment to morality, then, provides the link between dispositions and actions. I argue that consistency in the sense of coherence in one's disposition and actions partly defines moral integrity. Moral integrity presupposes personal integrity, defined partly by consistency in one's desires to be a certain kind of person, and the disposition one forms and acts from. Moral evaluations of persons and their actions will be a measure of integrity: what is morally required is not just acting in order to meet some standard, but fostering integrity. Interdependent moral evaluations of acts and dispositions measure this best. Rational evaluations of dispositions and acts, too, should be interdependent, and will reflect whether the agent's reasoning is consistently applied. Significantly, the arguments of chapter 8 show that when we defeat action skepticism, we at once defeat disposition skepticism. We should fine-tune the requirements of morality, and thus what needs to be shown to be rationally required, as well as invoke the practical consistency model of rationality, for a complete defeat of skepticism. Doing so holds more promise of defeating action skepticism, and defeating it in a way that speaks to the moral complexity of persons.

To summarize, we need to *broaden* the traditional picture of the skeptic to include motive skepticism and amoralism, and to take privilege rather than self-interest to define the opposition to morality. We need to *narrow* the traditional picture of the skeptic to exclude deformed desires as irrational. And we need to fine-tune the requirements of morality, and consequently, the requirements of rationality, to reflect the complex interplay between dispositions, desires, reasons, and actions. In modifying the traditional picture of the skeptic, the hope is to position ourselves best to defeat fully the skeptic in a way that leaves no further skeptical challenge remaining. Only if we have this revised picture before us will we be confidently poised to put forward a moral theory that has as one of its aims defeating such a skeptic, and only then will each one of us know in the end whether she or he is a moral skeptic.