ORIGINAL PAPER

Psychology and Business Ethics: A Multi-level Research Agenda

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Abstract

Arguing that psychology and business ethics are best brought together through a multi-level, broad-based agenda, this essay articulates a vision of psychology and business ethics to frame a future research agenda. The essay draws upon work published in JBE, but also identifies gaps where published research is needed, to build upon psychological conceptions of business ethics. Psychological concepts, notably, are not restricted to phenomena "in the head", but are discussed at the intra-psychic, relational, and contextual levels of analysis. On the basis of this presentation, I discuss future directions for development in psychology and business ethics, including but not limited to studies of personality, emotion, decision making, motivation, and the biological bases of psychology and business ethics. An inclusive approach to these and related areas, it is argued, will both bring about depth of understanding on the psychological bases of business ethics, and allow dialogue across disciplinary areas within JBE.

Keywords Psychology · Business ethics · Research agenda

Business! Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business…The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business! –Ghost of Marley, Charles Dickens, A Christmas Carol

Business is fundamentally a collective endeavor, a creation by people for organizing the material and social dimensions of their common life (Maak and Pless 2009; Frederick 2000). Identifying business as a source of collectivity may seem naïve in a world repeatedly presented with news of corporate malfeasance (Soltani 2014), worker mistreatment (Lucas et al. 2013), and ideological masking of social and environmental manipulation (Haase and Raufflet 2017). Yet, as the editors of the *Journal of Business Ethics* have recently noted (Greenwood and Freeman 2018, 2017), and as the Dickens quote above suggests, an expanded view of business beyond restrictive profit-centered models may allow novel theorizing around business' ethical potentials.

Understanding the social and ethical stakes of business in this new way requires structural explanations at the social, political, and economic levels (Georgallis 2017; Haase and Raufflet 2017). However, such explanations often come down to how people perceive their worlds, make decisions, interact with each other. To say that business is a collective endeavor is to say that, although humans act within larger fields of forces and see only darkly the conditions that surround them, business is ultimately something people do to themselves, that they make for themselves. Psychology as applied to business ethics explores the human experiences that lie at the center of business processes and practices.

As in any interdisciplinary endeavor (e.g., Strathern 2004), crossing academic boundaries must take care not to obscure internal debates within each constituent field, but also brings possibilities to unsettle orthodoxies, stirring up paradigmatic debates that have been put to rest. My hope is that psychology's dialogue with business ethics will do the latter, challenging thinking across disciplinary boundaries. Psychology is replete with epistemological and methodological diversity, its purview spanning cognitive, affective, behavioral, biological, and social aspects of human functioning (e.g., Teo 2015; McDonald and Bubna-Litic 2012; Dweck and Leggett 1988). Each of these aspects contains insights for business ethics, but these insights are heterogeneous, better characterized as loosely-connected fields of

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discourse rather than as a unitary body of knowledge (Parker 2015). What they hold in common is an emphasis on human experience, in its myriad manifestations, at the center of ethical life. While ethics involves codes and laws, social structures, and economic costs and benefits, these are channeled through psychological processes and these processes shape how the latter are expressed in ethical choices and behavior.

This essay, which revisits a collection of papers previously published at the *Journal of Business Ethics* (JBE), frames a broad and inclusive agenda for the study of psychological processes within business ethics. To signal the openness of this agenda to multiple conceptual, epistemological, and methodological approaches, it includes contributions from across the spectrum. Yet, each contribution returns to core issues of human psychology in its internal, interpersonal, and social contexts. The overarching goal of this collection, referred to as a *virtual special issue*, is to renew interest in the richness and diversity of psychological phenomena, and to highlight potentials for building business ethics concepts by drawing on psychology.

For this reason, work is emphasized that represents multiple traditions, under the premise that cross-fertilization of insights is served by reading different traditions together. A goal of this exercise is to highlight diverse sources of psychological thinking within JBE, both from within the psychology discipline as traditionally construed, and from disciplinary areas outside of psychology. To organize the contributions around coherent themes, this essay introduces a broad framework within which to conceptualize psychology's role in business ethics. Although not exhaustive, this framework is meant to stimulate new imaginaries (Taylor 2004) around the role of psychology within JBE.

The rest of this essay proceeds as follows. First, I describe psychological processes within business ethics from the vantage points of three analytical levels—intra-psychic, relational, and contextual. I then showcase research published in JBE that illustrates each level. Thinking of these different levels within an integrative framework, I broaden the discussion towards a research agenda in psychology and business ethics. Across a sampling of traditional psychology topics, I focus on the role of psychological theorizing and empirics for understanding ethical questions in organizations.

Psychology in Business Ethics: Contexts and Controversies

Studying business ethics psychologically is a cross-level endeavor (cf. Johnson and Buckley 2015; Palanski 2012); business as a collective phenomenon involves group norms and legal regulation, embedded in economic processes. Yet, the efforts, ideas and projects of people form the micro-constitution of business organizations and institutions (Felin et al. 2015). While psychologists acknowledge that intra-individual processes are embedded in social contexts (e.g., O'Mahoney 2007), maintaining the productive tension between individuals and their contexts is particularly pressing in business ethics (e.g., Schminke and Priesemuth 2012). How to acknowledge the critical role of psychological processes in business ethics without reducing business to individual decisions and motives? Rather than distracting from structural and collective explanations of business's role in society, psychology is most powerful where it explores the subjective underpinnings of these explanations and grounds them in the lived experiences of actors.

At its most "micro" levels, business ethics involves human needs, motivations, and capabilities, what I call "intra-psychic" processes. To the extent that ethics addresses the "good life" in a grounded, human sense (i.e., as opposed to a transcendental, impersonal good), understanding ethics requires studying peoples' experiences, desires, and aspirations. Whether the "good life" is considered a life of pleasure, duty, or self-realization, it requires understanding ethics as something felt, thought, and enacted from within a horizon of experience. Studying "macro" phenomena like social structure, legal code, or philosophical argumentation is relevant to the extent such phenomena are realized within the everyday worlds of actors to constitute forms of ethical life.

Examining intra-psychic phenomena also allows us to understand the limits of ethical thinking and acting. As Nussbaum (2006) notes, ethical judgments assume peoples' ability to "do the right thing"; actors cannot be held responsible for what is impossible to enact. In complex social systems, humans quickly reach the limits of their cognitive, emotional, and physical capacities to resolve problems (Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe 2008). Psychology should examine how actors work within the spaces available to them and attempt to construct new spaces of action, balancing competing motivations to live within imperfect worlds, while shaping those worlds when moments of opportunity arise.

At a second level, relational processes describe how individuals recognize and are recognized, interact, and organize with others (Islam 2012; Baldwin 1992). Relationality is fundamental to individual psychology, best thought of as a condition for, rather than a limit to, intra-psychic development (Chen et al. 2006; Brewer and Gardner 1996; Parker and Shotter 1990). While studies of relational process are often discussed as "microsociology" (e.g., Emirbayer 1997), these processes are foundational to psychological development and to the constitution of persons as psychological entities. Thus, in the field of ethics, a dialogue between psychology and microsociology is fundamental for establishing the bridge between internal and external worlds (Islam 2015).

Studies examining ethical processes from a relational perspective often focus on ethical identities or subjectivities, as they relate to interpersonal comparison and negotiated meanings (Cornelissen 2012), as well as affective and power-laden dynamics (Pullen and Rhodes 2015). The relational level is a key interface of psychology and business ethics because it is the point at which intra-psychic processes are translated into, and are shaped by, contextual factors, including other people (Baldwin 1992). Nascent social structures are born out of these interactions, and new forms of subjectivity result from social comparison and discourse (Dey and Lehner 2017; Parker and Shotter 1990). Because ethics involves considering what is good for individuals in its relation to what is good for society, these processes are foundational to constructing an ethics of business based on knowledge of psychology.

Third, while ethics emerges out of individuals' interactions and everyday practices, the latter depend on wider social, political, and economic horizons for their meaning and effects (Nafstad and Blakar 2012; Turner et al. 1994). It is not psychology's job to understand social, political and economic structures per se; however, understanding individual and interpersonal life is impossible without some notion of the background conditions which make these lives possible (Staw 2016; Banaji and Prentice 1994).

For example, much of the psychology of ethics relies on measuring virtue or other ethics variables through standardized ethics scales (e.g., Dawson 2018) geared toward predicting behaviors or traits that seem intuitively ethical (e.g., helping a colleague in need) or unethical (e.g., stealing from the organization). Yet ethical decisions, values, and agency are often activated by particular contexts (Watson et al. 2008), and are often most interesting where what is ethically right is underdetermined and different value systems are positioned agonistically within organizations (Rhodes and Harvey 2012). Contemporary organizations provide clear examples of where ethical antagonisms challenge actors' ethical positions. For instance, workplace values involving meritocracy and performance measurement sit uneasily against the realities systematic discrimination and injustice in the economy (McCoy and Major 2007). Histories of geopolitical domination shape the professional subjectivities of workers in a global economy (Thomson and Jones 2017). Relations of respect, recognition, and care, even as they promise to humanize the workplace, simultaneously reproduce underlying class and gender expectations and may have implications for diversity issues in organizations (Islam 2013). All of these issues are deeply psychological, but all of them make sense only against the background of wider narratives about macro contexts. The personal remains political, although that doesn't make it less personal.

In short, building a research agenda around psychological perspectives on business ethics requires being able to see psychology from different vantage points. Individuals can be considered as cognitive-affective-behavioral systems that have their own internal dynamics. Interpersonal systems can be considered as grounding relational identities and social schema, where self and other are mutually constituted. Finally, social systems can be considered insofar as they are internalized, negotiated, and resisted by on-the-ground actors who build their own selves in relation to wider forces, tacit yet powerful, in their environments.

Multi-level Contributions to Psychology and Business Ethics

To frame a research agenda in psychology and business ethics, this virtual special issue highlights exemplary contributions from JBE that demonstrate a concern with each level. Not all of the articles or their authors come from the disciplinary field of psychology; all of them, however, involve concepts that can usefully be employed to build theory around psychology and business ethics, working across analytical levels, approaches and methodologies. The contributions are not meant as a selection of the "best" or the "typical" work published at JBE, although each makes an important contribution and gestures toward an emerging area of inquiry. Although not exhaustive of the possibilities for the field, they are meant to showcase a range of approaches and to preview directions for the future.

Intra-psychic Processes and the Psychology of Ethics

The intra-psychic level pertains to work focusing on empirical and theoretical treatments of individual cognitive, affective and behavioral aspects. Its contribution to ethics lies in its ability to question or dislodge accepted theoretical ideas about how ethical processes operate, or mediate between competing theories to illuminate a core ethical phenomenon.

For example, Dedeke's (2015) article, "A Cognitive–Intuitionist Model of Moral Judgment", develops an integrative framework to understand conscious and non-conscious influences on moral judgment. It contrasts traditional cognitive models, which focus on moral awareness and recognition, with intuitionist models focusing on issue-framing. In the combined model, moral cognition arises out of moral awareness, while awareness is activated primarily where moral intuitions are unsettled or come into conflict. Synthesizing these different perspective into an integrative framework, Dedeke extends understanding of the intra-psychic processes underlying moral decisions. The scope of the paper is ambitious, yet clear; while specific applications of this framework could be applied to other sections, such as organizational behavior or human resources, the generalist frame of the

study makes it particularly appropriate for the psychology section.

While Dedeke's (2015) theoretical article focuses on integrating diverse theoretical strands, Cojuharenco and Sguera's (2015) article, entitled "When Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking Matter for Ethical Judgment: The Role of Time Hurriedness", opens new empirical ground in the field of ethical judgment. Beginning from the empirical issue of how to explain empathy variations in ethical judgment, the authors theorize that time hurriedness moderates how perspective-taking and empathic concern affect the acceptability of unethical behaviors. Although the sample draws from U.S. workers, the theoretical dynamics described were more general in scope, and could be applied more generally to an understanding of psychological processes of ethical decisions.

Finally, Ellertson et al.'s (2016) "Behavioral Ethics: A Critique and a Proposal" revisits traditional behavioral ethics literature from a philosophical and critical perspective, to examine visions of the human underlying past literature and propose a revised vision of moral personhood, based on holistic perspectives going beyond cognitive processes. They note the "is/ought" gap as a central problem in moral psychology, problematizing the ability of moral cognition perspectives to explain moral actorhood. They argue against mechanistic and reductionistic visions of personhood, which risk reducing the moral to an epiphenomenon of cognitive processes. Although deeply philosophical, Ellertson et al.'s paper is relevant to the psychology section because it articulates these conceptions together with psychological theory, searching for the appropriate place for psychological processes within the larger story of ethics. It also is sheds light on the internal tension within the psychology and business ethics section between descriptive research of psychological processes and the normative goals of ethical knowledge, maintaining this tension and not reducing one to the other.

The three studies showcased above are diverse in their approaches, background literatures, and implications for understanding the intra-psychic aspects of psychology in the context of business ethics. Yet they all demonstrate contributions at the intra-psychic level. Theoretical work comparing, integrating, and evaluating existing psychological models of business ethics can move theory forward by establishing improved intra-psychic models (empirical work can also serve this function through falsifying, extending, or contextualizing existing theory). Empirical avenues can also be opened in which research lines are developed or new phenomena are explored. Finally, theoretical reflexivity around the philosophical implications of psychological processes can allow deeper understandings of the human. Psychology is at once a descriptive science, and yet is deeply relevant to ethical issues because of its focus on human needs, actions, and beliefs. This position, poised between descriptive science and normative visions of the human, means that work in psychology of ethics must remain constantly aware of where it stands, and use this position to produce novel theorizing without falling into logical is/ought fallacies or forgetting its normative grounds.

Relational Processes and the Interpersonal Achievement of Ethics

Relational psychologies of ethics highlight the dual nature of psychological process, as both internal systems of cognition and affect, on the one hand, and social processes of comparison, categorization, and mutual regard, on the other (Secchi and Bui 2018; Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe 2008; Brewer and Gardner 1996). Psychology may study internal processes of motivations, attitudes and beliefs, but the content of these is derived from contexts external to individuals (Islam 2015), who participate in constructing the micro-environments within which psychological processes operate. Psychological perspectives emphasizing interactionist (e.g., Stryker and Statham 1985), discursive (e.g., Parker 2002), or constructionist (e.g., Nightingale and Cromby 1999) approaches are most likely to focus on the interface of internal and external aspects. Not surprisingly, such approaches often center on concepts such as the "social self", or related concepts involving both individual and group elements. Moral identities, self-concepts, and subjectivities are particularly poised to mediate intra-psychic processes and social dynamics, as are concepts of agency, exchange, and social cognition.

For instance, Garrety's (2008) article, entitled "Organisational Control and the Self: Critiques and Normative Expectations", examines different concepts of the "core self" and their implications for theorizing the multiplicity of identities that individuals take up in their organizations. Discussing classical conceptions of the self, from James' "I" versus "me", to Goffmanian dramaturgical selves, Garrety focuses on Harré's threefold view of the self. In this view, the "self 1" describes a subjective core self, where "selves 2 and 3" progressively describe empirically variable and pluralistic self-conceptions. Normative expectations regarding selves, further, are keyed toward a particular level of the self. Moral theorizing about integrity, for example, or consistency, might look different as it pertained to one's pluralistic and multiform empirical self, as opposed to the core aspect of one's being. By elaborating the normative implications of the multi-layered conception of the self, Garrety contributes both to understanding psychological identity processes and to placing these within their normatively-charged social contexts.

Similarly focusing on social selves, Dale's (2012) study, "The Employee as 'Dish of the Day': The Ethics of the Consuming/ Consumed Self in Human Resource Management"

examines consumption logics in producing certain kinds of selves. Noting that consumption involves ethical values such as freedom and choice, Dale argues that the diffusion of consumption values into work life occludes important aspects of ethical relating, such as openness to others. Consumption stimulates forms of self-reflection that privilege indifference to others, undermining the ethical self though consumerist self-absorption and "privatized freedom". Illustrating this through a case study of the insurance company Aviva, Dale notes that the rhetoric of recognition and individuality contrasts with the reality of work precarity and inward-focused self-control exerted through this solipsistic self-vision. Ultimately, Dale argues, the consumer self becomes "consumed" by the organization and is unable to develop authentic ethical ties with others.

Building on the importance of the "Other" to relational perspectives, Loacker and Muhr's (2009) "How Can I Become a Responsible Subject? Towards a Practice-Based Ethics of Responsiveness" locates the ethical subject within an ongoing process of power relations going beyond "code-based" ethics. Contrasting "code-oriented" and "subjectification-oriented" approaches, Loacker and Muhr describe how subjects create themselves through their ethically adopted standpoints. While code-oriented ethics focus on rule and obligations, based on moral expertise or formalized convention, subjectification recognizes the interplay between subjects-in-becoming and their co-constituted moral worlds. An implication is that developing ethical subjectivities is closely linked with the ability to establish mutually constitutive ethical relations, through practices such as accounting for oneself. A consequence of their perspective is the impossibility of establishing uncontestable ethical codes. Rather, ethics derives precisely from the demand to acknowledge the other in the absence of external standards around the forms that such acknowledgement must take.

Each of the above studies shares a basically "interactionist" tendency to see psychology and environment as interweaving, rather than as distinct spheres. While each focuses in some way on the "self", such perspectives can also be fruitfully applied to other elements of social psychology, such as social perception, stereotyping, and intergroup relations. In the business realm, these topics can relate to issues in human resources, consumption, leadership, and other management topics. What makes them particularly interesting for the psychology section of JBE is that, while they are applied to these management areas, they gesture to human experience as a lived understanding of external reality, situated within business but relevant to psychological theory more generally. Because the relational level is almost always related to questions of *organizing*, it is poised in between the atomized world of individual subjects and the structural dimension of social and political governance mechanisms. In other words, business is always both public and private,

pulled between the social and the individual. To the extent that this is true, relational processes are fundamental to understanding the ethics of business.

Psychology in Context: Structures and Cultures of Ethics

As noted, individual and relational processes take place against wider social, political and economic backgrounds that are expressed through, and shaped by, psychological processes (Teo 2015; Parker and Shotter 1990). While intrapsychic approaches tend to examine cognitive and affective correlates of individual moral-judgment and behavior, how cognitive and affective experiences are produced and distributed across populations depends on dynamics beyond the individual level. How sweatshop workers or CEOs make moral decisions ultimately depends on their intra-psychic processes, but because each faces radically different socio-economic coordinates to process, navigate, and act upon, those processes are only the last mile in a much longer moral trajectory.

Thomson and Jones (2017) "Precarious Professionals: (in)Secure Identities and Moral Agency in Neocolonial Context" demonstrates this idea though an examination of migrant accountants in Canada, where the construction of moral agency depends on recognition by professional and state actors. Accountants' understandings of right and wrong action are guided by professional norms that regulate not only their moral activity, but their standings as members of a professional field. As Thompson and Jones explain, however, these fields are themselves embedded within geopolitical inequality contexts and histories of domination that result in unequal recognition of moral agency for migrants from the global South. As the migrant accountants struggle to re-establish, post-migration, their professional identities, their desire for recognition co-exists with a desire to establish themselves as moral agents. Read from this angle, moral thinking and action are not only intrinsic aspects of human functioning but are also social achievements that cannot be taken for granted, and moral psychology should be understood as emerging though social struggles. The processes by which social agents are recognized and the psychological structures thereby reinforced are two aspects of this more general process.

Elaborating on the idea that moral "encounters" are dependent on larger State and historical processes, Jagannathan and Rai (2017) examine moments of contact between police officers and citizens in the Indian context. Their paper, "Organizational Wrongs, Moral Anger and the Temporality of Crisis", examines the phenomena of moral anger as it relates to the temporality of terrorist investigations. Police officers' sometimes lethal encounters with citizens constitute preventative moral retribution for crimes often not

committed. This inverted temporality of moral anger, in Jagannathan and Rai's account, arises from fantasies of nationalism that create feelings of moral injustice, directed against suspected targets, and towards organizational members who question or resist expressions of officially sanctioned anger. Through a narrative analysis of a police encounter with a terrorist suspect, comparing narratives around the police's ethical dilemmas reveals different temporalities of moral anger. Temporality plays into the institutional possibilities of ethical action because of the drawn-out process of a trial, the instantaneous moment of an extrajudicial killing, and State actors' attempts to navigate their own moral standpoints between these different temporalities. Moral anger is revealed to be an institutional, as well as a psychological force, and moral decision-making is framed against the institutional possibilities and forms of justice available. As the officially sanctioned State ideologies shift (in this case, to right-wing nationalism), these possibilities also shift, affecting moral judgment on the ground, and ultimately, promoting State-sanctioned killing.

Both of these examples place psychological processes against the background of wider economic and political processes. In a third example, however, psychological concepts are themselves discussed as features of entities larger than individuals. Weaver's (1998) "Corporations as Intentional Systems" examines notions of "moral personhood" and "intentionality" at the level of the corporation. Drawing on classical treatments of the status of corporations as moral persons, as well as contemporary philosophy of consciousness, Weaver examines concepts underlying moral status, such as intentionality and consciousness, to assess the "person-like" aspects of corporations. One might question whether such a study is "psychology" in the traditional sense, and Weaver does not himself claim to be doing psychology. I include it here, however, to show the versatility of psychological concepts to treat business ethics issues outside of the scope of individual persons. Indeed, one of the tasks of psychology in its ethical context is to determine the scope of the "person" as a moral, experiential, and agentic being (Sugerman 2005). While it is likely that most contributions to psychological thinking will consider the individual human being as the vehicle for the psychological processes of interest, Weaver's (1998) paper is a reminder that this is not necessarily the case. In a business discourse where companies "decide", "act", are "learn", and in a legal context where they are considered as having "speech", interrogating the psychology *of* organization along with psychology *within* organizations may be more than metaphorical.

Although each of these studies has a very different object, setting, and position with regards to the psychological, they are all psychological in the sense that they rely on concepts such as identity, emotion, consciousness, intentionality, and the like. It is important to stress the psychological anchor in each, since none of these studies would be what is "traditionally" found in psychology journals, and each discusses psychology concepts in their entwinement with larger processes. Rather than a weakness, I see this entwinement as a welcome point of contact across analytical levels. Echoing Putnam's (1975) point about meaning not being exclusively "in the head", the psychology of business ethics should not restrict itself to what is "in the head", examining how experience itself depends on interpersonal and contextual supports (cf. Jay 2005). Yet, it is important to also note that the "internal" experience of meanings is also deeply relevant, and to discuss these broader levels without reference to the psychological is to misconstrue the nature of both social and psychological phenomena.

Contributing Across Levels: An Integrative Approach

Given the breath of the examples brought together in this collection of papers, it is worth imagining these three levels together in an integrative framework of psychology within the business ethics discipline. This framework must be broader than any given theory within its purview but should encompass key aspects of each level of interest; this is depicted in visual form in Fig. 1. The framework shows how different kinds of research can fit within the psychology and business ethics rubric, and also how these different types have a common thread in their concern with psychological experience or processes. Because of the importance placed on relationality and context, this point may need emphasizing and elaborating.

Specifically, psychology can fruitfully take account of relationality and context while not neglecting individual and intra-psychic phenomena. Doing this may mean exploring how individuals, relations and contexts are dynamically co-constructed. Alternatively, psychological perspectives can be discussed as intra-psychic processes while remaining clear about how these processes relate to business practices and/or processes. In each case, the challenge lies at the interface of the two terms (psychology/business ethics): For the more "micro" research, the challenge may be to demonstrate relevance to business ethics, whereas for the more "macro" research, the challenge may often be to show its contribution to understandings of psychology.

Figure 1 depicts an approximation of how these levels could be conceptualized together. At the level of intra-psychic processes, the focus remains on the intersections of cognition, affect, and behavior. Topics such as moral judgment, values, moral affect, and decision making are key constructs, as are dynamic processes of moral development and "physical" processes such as the neuropsychology or biological bases of moral thought and behavior. These phenomena
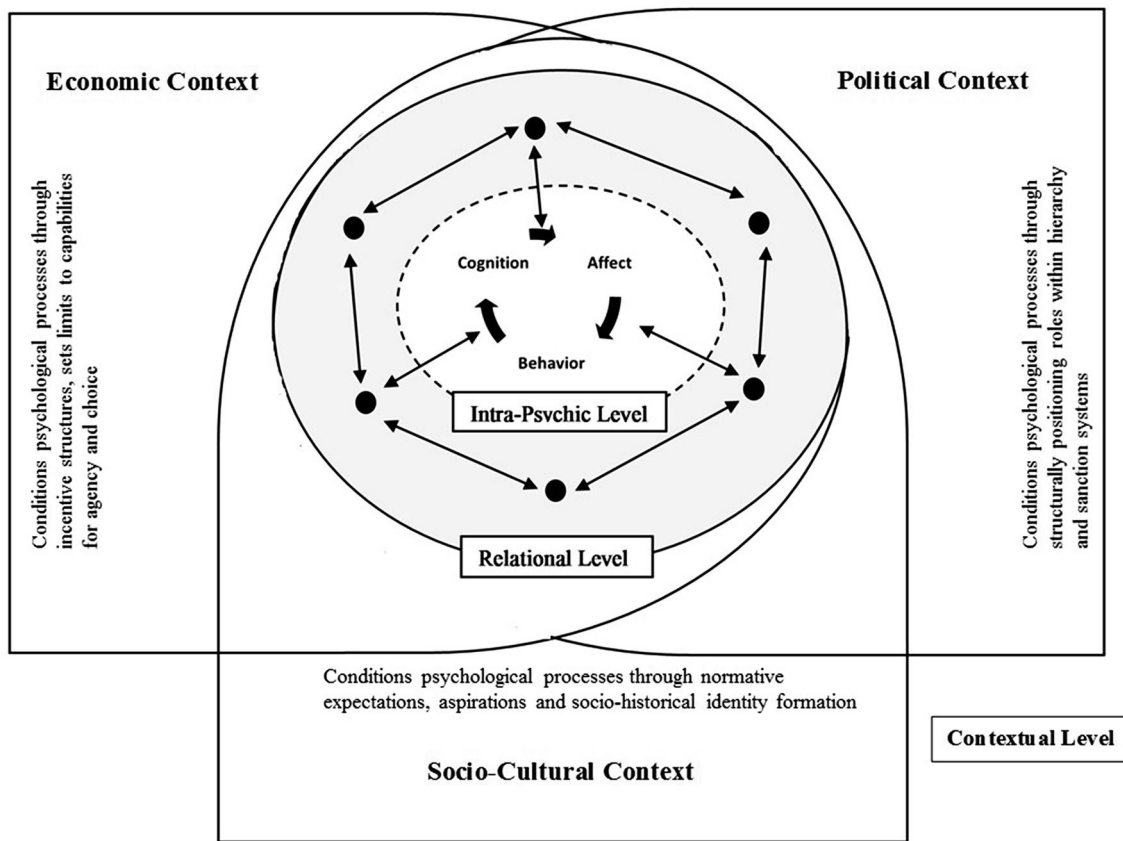
Fig. 1 Psychology and business ethics levels illustration

are certainly impacted by "external" factors, but as intra-psychic constructs are not reducible to context. Studies at this level generally draw upon classical themes from the psychology literature and show their relevance to business ethics through the content or objects of cognition, affect, or behavior. For instance, classical theories such as cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger 1957) show ethical ramifications when cognitive dissonance is resolved through system justification (Martin et al. 2015; Jost et al. 2003), out-group asymmetry (Galperin et al. 2011; Brewer 1999), or moral disengagement (Johnson and Buckley 2015; Bandura 1990). Thus, psychological processes become relevant to business ethics by their implications for ethically relevant decisions, judgments, or behaviors.

The relational level is depicted as intersections between the "intra-psychic" and its immediate context, as well as the proximal network of relations within which a person thinks, feels and acts. These can include mutually constitutive relations between a person and other people, such as situations of social identification, comparison, or competition (Brewer 1999), or group-level phenomena that impinge on individual psychological processes like collective moral disengagement (Johnson and Buckley 2015) or connected agency (Watson et al, 2008). They can also pertain to

relational ethics themes, such as relations of care (Simola 2015; Gilligan 1982) or generosity (Hancock 2008). At this level, the individual is embedded in an immediate context, and it is impossible to understand intra-psychic processes without taking this context into account. Some relational constructs are easily read as ethically relevant (e.g., recognition), or are even by defined as intrinsically normative (e.g., fairness). Others may be descriptive by nature (e.g., affective contagion), yet be easily integrated into ethical theorizing or frameworks because of their relevance to socially important processes or outcomes. As depicted in Fig. 1, some of these connections are direct, but indirect connections also constitute the immediate context within information, affect, and relationships are formed (Dubini and Aldrich 1991).

Finally, Fig. 1 depicts the context of psychology as a series of overlapping domains labeled generally as "economic", "political", and "socio-cultural". Rather than imagining these as wholly independent spheres, they should be considered as analytically separated for illustrative purposes, with their relative differentiation itself historically specific and subject to change across historical epochs (cf. Fraser and Honneth 2003). Each domain becomes relevant for psychology by framing cognition, promoting affect, and affecting behaviors, on the one hand, and shaping the relational

context of the latter, on the other hand. At the same time, intra-psychic and relational processes shape, maintain, or resist, taking the form of "micro-processes" that become the foundation of "macro-domains". For studies at this level to be relevant to the domain of psychology and business ethics, they should not remain at this macro-level only, but must somehow feed-back into the lived worlds of the micro-domain.

Integrative Research and the Diversity of Psychological Concepts

The generality of the above framework is meant to promote a research agenda that engages with classical psychological themes but enriches these themes though social and ethical concerns. Applied to specific sub-themes in psychology, however, authors may ask, "how would such a framework apply to X or Y topics specifically?" It would be impossible to give an exhaustive list of such possibilities here; however, heuristically it is useful to list some of the key constructs discussed by psychologists, as a sampling of how these could productively articulate with ethics in an integrative way. Beginning from some of the main psychological constructs found in JBE, I field some initial possibilities, while emphasizing the partial and heuristic nature of these themes.

Personality

Personality psychology has long been a core source of ethical psychological research (Kalshoven et al. 2011). General taxonomies such as the Big 5 (Costa and McCrae 1992), or more specifically tailored lists such as the "dark triad" (Paulhus and Williams 2002) are applied to ethical judgment and behavior. Trait-like depictions of human behavior can be useful as descriptors; in their most fruitful use as intra-psychic concepts, they are linked to affective or cognitive processes that would explain their operation and remove the danger of treating such traits in a "black box" fashion (cf. Greenwood 2002). Ethics is a process, and traits have the most explanatory utility when they are conceptualized in a processual way. Such studies might examine how certain traits operate to promote moral awareness, judgment processes or affect, or conversely, examine the role of persistent or stabilized values in constructing personality-like traits that persist over time.

In their relational context, personality pertains to ethics in the exploration of how different personalities lead individuals to interact, conflict, or negotiate in interpersonal relations. Perspectives dealing with personality as a relationally-emergent phenomenon (Burkitt 1991) can couch personality processes within ethical dynamics while avoiding the reification of personality traits as

"black boxes". Finally, personality types might become potentiated, enabled, or inhibited in given socio-cultural contexts, such that the ethical implications of personality may require placing personality against a wider background. For instance, discussion of executive psychopathy (Padilla et al. 2007) or the kinds of personalities attuned ideologically to particular social, political, or economic regimes (Huddy and Khatib 2007) place personality as a piece of a wider social phenomenon and thus allow a more systemically integrated view of personality processes in business ethics.

Emotion

The move from a moral-judgment literature focused on cognition to a turn toward emotion and affect (e.g., Haidt 2001) opened a major agenda for psychological understandings of ethics (e.g., Egorov et al. 2017; Tangney et al. 2007). Indeed, one of the main advantages that psychological perspectives bring to traditional philosophical treatments of ethics is their focus on affect and the experience of ethics and an emotion-filled phenomenon (Petit and Knobe 2009). Much of the work deriving from the rapidly-growing tradition of affect and emotion in ethics is well-aligned to understanding the individual experiences underlying moral intuitions and judgment (Haidt 2001).

Yet, organizational scholars have increasingly noted that emotion is not only an experienced, *felt* phenomenon, but also something *performed*, a deeply relational and communicative phenomenon (e.g., Jarvis 2017; Fineman 2008). Emotional displays structure moral orders and send tacit signals about appropriate collective practices. Emotional work in service industries feeds back into individual work experience and creates an affective layer within market exchanges (Hochschild 2011). Put simply, the relational aspect of emotional life is deeply connected to its intra-psychic elements, which are inseparably bound up in social meanings and codes.

Given their centrality in linking personal passion with interpersonal norms, it is not surprising that emotions are central in wider contextual understandings of ethics. Emotions are important as micro-practices that found larger social and institutional orders (Voronov and Vince 2012). As foundational drivers of social movements, understanding emotions is necessary to understanding how principles of justice, social improvement, and ethical progress can be put into practice (Jasper 2011). While psychological perspectives on emotion and ethics often focus on the intra-psychic determinants of judgment and experience, their effects on macro-systems, as well as how they are affected by these systems, is a rich area for future research.

Biological Bases of Psychology

Increasing scholarship has been focusing on how the biological bases of psychological phenomena weigh on their ethical implications (e.g., Lindebaum and Raftopoulu 2017; Robertson et al. 2017). Issues around about neuropsychology and freedom of agency (Malabou 2008), for example, and about biologically-based individual differences in ethical foundation (e.g., Smith et al. 2017; Greene and Paxton 2009) have become important questions to address in our field, both for theorizing and practice. Theoretically, for instance, neuroscience gives models of human functioning that may be difficult to reconcile with morally free and agentic selves, while practically, uses of neuroscience may be questionable on both utilitarian and deontological grounds (Lindenbaum and Raftopoulu 2017). Most questions around the biological bases of psychology focus on the intra-psychic level, given the intuitive centering of biological processes within individual bodies. At this level, questions about the social and ethical implications of neural plasticity (cf. Malabou 2008) may be unpacked for their ethical implications, as can questions of how to most ethically organize around biological constraints, and how to use organizational forms to reinforce, adapt to, or overcome such constraints.

The entwinement of individual well-being with social interaction, however, suggests that the ethical implications of biological processes are fruitfully studied at the relational level. How, for example, stress and burnout are shaped by interpersonal processes at work are ethically relevant questions involving relations and not only individuals. Similarly, questions about the role of individual differences in ethical judgments grounded in universal values, recognition, or human dignity pertain to how the universalistic nature of ethical institutions deals with particularistic ethical standards of merit or capability (Honneth 1995).

At the level of macro-structure, however, the role of biological processes as political, ideological, or governance tools has been well established (Martin 2007; Rose 1998). For instance, Foucaultian approaches characterized the construction of the individual subject as a governable body, whose desires, experiences, and motivations are part of a bio-political strategy of governance with deep ethical ramifications (e.g., Rose and Abi-Rached 2013). Empirically, scholars have examined how monitoring and reporting the psychological in medical fashion supports forms of social control (e.g., Martin 2007). Understanding the biological bases of psychology in its organismic, relational, and political-ideological dimensions would provide a rich agenda relevant for JBE.

Decision Making

Perhaps the principle source for theoretical and empirical work in psychology and ethics, decision-making perspectives focus on the cognitive, attitudinal, and intentional aspects of ethical decisions (Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe 2008). How individuals become aware of moral problems, form moral intentions, and act on decisions has been a mainstay of psychological perspectives on ethics (Rest 1986). Beyond organizational factors, these subjective elements shape ethical decision-making (Yu 2015). As one of the more successful research lines in the ethics field, it is expected that research on moral decision-making will continue to flourish at the intra-psychic level.

Importantly for business ethics, however, ethical decisions are not only taken by individuals, but also by groups, and where decisions are individual, the decision-maker is often embedded in interpersonal contexts. While consumer choices may be largely individual, organizational decisions, including leadership, strategic decisions, and team contexts, are thoroughly interactive in nature (Balogun et al. 2014). Group and team interaction during the decision-making process is an appropriate object for ethics and psychology research, given the often conflict-laden nature of such processes, on the one hand, and the dangers of group conformity, obedience, and groupthink, on the other. The ethical implications of decision making are increased to the extent that collective decisions have important organizational social impacts, where abuses within the group can translate to socially harmful impacts externally.

At the macro-level, research is needed as to how top-decision makers understand and make ethically relevant decisions where information is complex, and where interests and ethical values may be conflicting (Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe 2008). Beyond individual cognition, such research should take into account the structural positions of decision makers within fields of power and articulate psychological explanations of cognition together with structural and power dynamics which frame psychological processes.

Identity

As evidenced by the articles showcased in this collection (e.g., Dale 2012; Garrety 2008), self and identity issues are central to thinking about ethics at multiple levels. Ethics perspectives integrating identity concerns have proliferated in recent years (e.g., van Gils et al. 2017; Stets and Carter 2012). The moral identity perspective (Shao et al. 2008; Aquino and Reed 2002), for example, is a clear demonstration of how self-related processes and ethics have been integrated to create new constructs in this area.

As also seen above, however, identity is largely a relational phenomenon, constructed through interpersonal

ethical interactions (Loacker and Muhr 2009). Given that identity construction is related to the consolidation of ethical subjectivity (e.g., Ibarra-Colado et al. 2006), studying identity from a moral perspective requires considering the interface between self and other, moving beyond the intra-psychic level.

Finally, psychological identity processes take place in the context of wider social and political identifications (Thomas et al. 2005; Rose 1999). Given contemporary questions of group affiliation and "identity politics" in establishing, maintaining and problematizing standards of ethics and justice at work (Thomas et al. 2005), separating identity from broader questions of politics and society is problematic. As identity concerns continue to shape the social and political landscape of our age (Fraser 2000), understanding identity's role in moral processes at the social level is a pressing task. Psychologists have an important role in explaining this role, and to do so means moving outside of the head to view identity in its social-structuration possibilities.

The above are merely examples of themes that could be usefully built into fruitful research programs in psychology and business ethics, which will inevitably be broader than what can be portrayed here. Yet, the larger goal of this presentation is to illustrate that each theme takes on different aspects at each different level, to yield heterogeneous forms of knowledge. Rather than consider personality as essentially individual, identity as social, and so on, the levels are analytical lenses from which to gain new vantage points on ethics and psychology. These new lenses are tools to integrate psychological thinking about ethics with the micro- and macro- social contexts in which people think and act.

Final Considerations

I would like to conclude the discussion with some final points around the opportunities and difficulties of psychological research within business ethics. As noted above, psychology enriches business ethics theorizing by acknowledging the centrality of subjective experience—through affects, perceptions, practices—in the construction and maintenance of ethical relations in business and society. The psychology and business ethics section at JBE was established on the premise that psychology's diverse discourses have and will continue to form an important source of business ethics theorizing (e.g., DeCremer and Tenbrunsel 2012). At the same time, while not the primary goal of JBE, it hoped that such theorizing will also be able to bring fresh ideas into the psychology literature itself, to recognize the normative, social and political ramifications of psychological thinking (e.g., Parker 2005), and to unearth the too-often obscured normative foundations of psychological theorizing (Islam and Zyphur 2009; Fox 1985).

Relatedly, while the psychology section sits alongside various other sections of JBE, their common inclusion in the journal's pages suggests that this division is not based on a principle of dividing territory, but of promoting interdisciplinary interchange within the larger discursive space of the journal. Business ethics' breadth as an interdisciplinary space (Greenwood and Freeman 2017) provides a unique opportunity for dialogue, and each section operates with the others on its horizon, even as it shapes its own discussion within its editorial scope. Papers that move forward psychological theorizing while also exposing moments for such discussion are particularly important to this vision.

That said, interdisciplinarity is fraught with difficulties (cf. Jacobs 2013) and should proceed with caution. Psychology brings its own history of struggles across therapeutic, scientific, and philosophical lines (Teo 2015), and bringing psychological theories into business ethics adds a further disciplinary logic to an already contested disciplinary history. Further, if business ethics acts as a normatively-charged holding space for interdisciplinary dialogue, within the business literature and often housed in business schools, what is psychology's position in this new ecosystem of thought, as compared with its more traditional space within the liberal arts and sciences? As Fish (1989, p. 15) notes, "being interdisciplinary is so very hard to do", and thus cross-disciplinary dialogue makes the most sense when it is reflexive about its strategic positioning with the larger field (Li and Parker 2013).

Within the psychology section, the multi-level framework promoted here poses its own challenges. Treating psychologically relevant phenomena across levels invites potential confusion and can lead to faulty thinking (Klein and Kozlowski 2000; Falter 1978). Attempting to make inferences across levels can risk committing the ecological fallacy, in which macro-level attributes are incorrectly attributed at the micro level, or the atomistic fallacy, in which micro-level relationship are incorrectly imputed to macro-phenomena (Klein and Kozlowski 2000; Alker 1969). Psychological perspectives in business ethics should situate ethical phenomena within the complex and multi-level environments that characterize ethical lifeworlds, without reducing one of these levels to any other. Ethical life requires individuals to act within the horizons of their own experience, even as they persist within relational, collective and social realities and are oriented by regulatory ideals claiming universal validity (Bordum 2005). This embeddedness means that levels of analysis should be kept analytically distinct, even as the overlaps between levels provide sources for theorizing.

The vision that results for the psychology and business ethics section thus touches on one of the core aspects of ethical life that psychologists are particularly positioned to address- that of subjective experience and agency (Rose 1998). Subjects are, at the same time, positioned within

fields of force that define organizational and business life (e.g., Wilcox 2012). Neglecting such embeddedness gives rise to two related shortcomings. In a kind of theoretical fundamental attribution error (cf. Pfeffer 1981), psychologists can attribute ethical outcomes to individual decisions and practices, creating "great man" theories of action that ultimately function ideologically to obscure the material and systemic constraints on bringing about ethical organizations. Conversely, they can reduce human agency to inner and outer determinisms that so overly contextualize agency that they make ethical action hopeless and lead ethical projects to "run out of steam" (Latour 2004).

To sum up, this essay, written to introduce a virtual special issue, provides an occasion to reflect collectively upon the role of psychology in the wider business ethics literature. The psychology section in JBE both stakes out a certain sphere of autonomous theorizing and remains fundamentally aligned with the larger objectives of the journal. In a similar way, psychologists of business ethics should consider their own endeavors as theoretically and empirically specific yet couched within a larger academic project. That project involves developing ethical understandings applicable to the wider good, ethical understandings involving the lived experiences of people, within their immediate spheres of common relations, and against a social horizon that frames the individuals and relationships within it.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest The author hereby certifies that there are no potential conflicts of interest involved with this study, no research is conducted using participants and/or animals and no issues regarding informed consent are relevant to the current study.

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