DO WE NEED PHILOSOPHICAL ETHICS? THE CASE AGAINST UNIFIED ETHICAL METHODOLOGY

A Master's Thesis

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To Boris

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ABSTRACT

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Metaethics and normative ethics are often thought to be two independent enterprises. This view of ethics has been challenged in the recent past and the idea that normative ethics and metaethics should be unified is gaining traction. Against this trend, I argue that the most promising cases for methodological unification in ethics are not compelling. These cases are based on the epistemic implications of metaethical views, conceptual truths in metaethics, claims about the subject matter of morality, metaphysical identity claims in metaethics, and semantic claims about ethical terms. They either fail outright, fail to be of interest to the normative ethicists because they do not bring about methodological revision, or fail to establish unified methodology as an appropriate method for practicing normative ethicists because the costs of the method outweigh the benefits. When all is said and done, normative ethicists do not need to be too concerned with metaethics.

Keywords: Normative Ethics, Metaethics, Methodology, Philosophical Ethics, Unified Ethical Methodology

ÖZET

FELSEFİ ETİK'E İHTİYACIMIZ VAR MI? BİRLEŞİK ETİK METODOLOJİNİN ELEŞTİRİSİ

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Metaetik ve normatif etik genellikle iki bağımsız girişim olarak düşünülür. Etikle ilgili bu görüşe yakın geçmişte meydan okunmuştur ve normatif etik ile metaetiğin birleştirilmesi gerektiği fikri ivme kazanmaktadır. Bu eğilime karşı, birleşik etik metodolojiyi savunan en umut verici argümanların ikna edici olmadıklarını savunuyorum. Bu argümanlar, metaetik görüşlerin epistemik içerimlerine, metaetikteki kavramsal doğrulara, ahlakın konusuna ilişkin iddialara, metaetikteki metafizik özdeşlik iddialarına ve etik terimlerle ilgili semantik iddialara dayanmaktadırlar. Bu argümanlar ya doğrudan başarısız oluyorlar ya metodolojik revizyon getirmedikleri için normatif etikçileri ilgilendirmiyorlar ya da metodolojinin maliyetleri faydalarından daha ağır bastığı için normatif etikçiler için birleşik metodolojinin uygun bir yaklaşım olduğunu göstermekte başarısız oluyorlar. Sonuç olarak normatif etikçilerin metaetik ile ilgili fazla endişelenmelerine gerek yok.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Normatif Etik, Metaetik, Metodoloji, Felsefi Etik, Birleşik Etik Metodoloji

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INTRODUCTION

A division of labor prevails in contemporary ethics. This was not always the case but since G. E. Moore's *Principia Ethica*, the division is entrenched in the way ethics is taught and practiced. The division I have in mind is that between metaethics and normative ethics. Even when the same philosopher works in both of these fields, it is as if he puts on his metaethicist's hat when working on the second-order questions and replaces it with his normative ethicist's hat when working on first-order questions. The two personas rarely meet.

In recent years, this division of labor has come into question. Most commonly, philosophers argued for metaethical conclusions from normative premises. Arguments in the other direction, however, are still scant. This is so despite the fact that one would think, for example, answers to questions about the nature of value would have serious implications for the question of what has value. In this thesis, I aim to find out whether the initial intuitiveness of integrating normative ethics and metaethics can withstand critical scrutiny. I will argue that, despite its initial appeal, the cases for integration are not compelling.

Ethics is commonly divided into three general subfields: metaethics, normative ethics and practical ethics. Normative ethics is the ethical inquiry concerned with substantive ethical questions such as what actions are right and wrong, what actions are prudent or imprudent, what political systems are just or unjust and what principles, if there are any such principles, determine these things. Practical ethics can be seen as an extension of normative ethics that differs from it as a consequence of its concern with more specific ethical questions. Philosophers working in the field of practical ethics aim to answer questions like: Should we eat non-human animals? What are the codes of conduct that we should follow when we are at war? Is abortion morally permissible? Metaethics, on the other hand, contrasts with both these subfields by taking an outside stance from which it tries to understand the nature of

these subfields and how they "fit into reality" (McPherson & Plunkett 2018: 1). It is concerned with the metaphysics, semantics, and epistemology of moral discourse. It aims to find out whether moral judgments are truth-apt, whether moral truths are mind-independent, whether moral properties are identical with some other kind of properties and so on. The difference between metaethics, on the one hand, and normative ethics and practical ethics, on the other, is sometimes cashed out in terms of first-order and second-order inquiry. To take an example from mathematics, the question "What is the sum of 5 and 7?" is a first-order question while the question "What exactly is it that we are talking about when we say '5+7=12'?" is second-order. According to this picture, metaethics stands roughly in the same relationship to normative ethics and practical ethics as philosophy of mathematics stands to mathematics.

The beginnings of metaethics as a separate subfield of ethical inquiry is usually traced back to G. E. Moore's *Principia Ethica* where one of Moore's primary concerns is not only which states of affairs are good but rather what kind of property goodness is. Shortly after, a certain view of the relationship between normative ethics and metaethics became dominant, so much so that we can aptly call it the *traditional view.* According to the traditional view the two subfields are not only distinct but also completely independent. As J. L. Mackie says in another landmark work of metaethics: "… first order and second order views are not merely distinct but completely independent: one could be a second order moral skeptic without being a first order one, or again the other way around" (1977: 16). Another way to put the idea behind the traditional view is in terms of neutrality theses. It is logically possible to identify two different neutrality theses in this region, however they almost always go together. The first is the substantive neutrality of metaethics that holds that metaethical theses are neutral regarding substantive normative questions, by being compatible with different normative ethical views (even opposing views). A. J. Ayer, for instance, clearly endorses this kind of neutrality thesis; He writes, "A strictly philosophical treatise on ethics should therefore make no ethical pronouncements" (1936/2001: 105). The second neutrality thesis goes in the opposite direction. It holds that normative theses are neutral regarding different metaethical views, by being compatible with different metaethical views (even opposing views). Both kinds of neutrality theses are accepted by the traditional view. Proponents of the traditional

view include A. J. Ayer (1936), R. M. Hare (1952), C. L. Stevenson (1944), J. L. Mackie (1997) and L. W. Sumner (1967).[1] I believe that many other philosophers, past and present[2], who do not say it in writing also endorse the traditional view.

The traditional view dominated ethics for a long time but it came into question in the 1960's. It has been argued that some formal conditions championed in metaethics in order to demarcate the moral and non-moral also have implications for the distinction between the moral and immoral, i.e., they carry first-order commitments (Gewirth, 1960). However, as Sumner (1967) observes, this does not mean that metaethics cannot be normatively neutral since it is possible to deny the designation "metaethical" to such claims while reserving it to claims that do not carry these commitments. William T. Blackstone (1961: 67-68) also realized that historically many metaethical theories are not completely normatively neutral, even though it is in principle possible for them to be neutral in this sense.

In the 1970's, however, the traditional view got its second wind with Rawls' "The Independence of Moral Theory". In this paper, Rawls argues that moral theorizing can proceed independently of theoretical philosophy thanks to the method of reflective equilibrium. The method advances in three steps: First, we identify our considered judgments, at all levels of generality, about ethics.[3] Our considered judgments about a subject matter are those that stably seem to be correct and purged of "irregularities and distortions" (1999: 42) such as self-interest. Next, we formulate general principles that account for these considered judgments. Finally, we adjust, revise or reject our considered judgments and principles that account for them in order to reach equilibrium. This methodology, according to Rawls, insulates ethical theorizing in a way that allows it to progress without relying on developments in other parts of philosophy.

[1] Sumner's view is somewhat more nuanced. He thinks that on a certain definition of metaethics, metaethical views can have substantive implications.

[2] Daniel McDermott (2008) is a contemporary example who says in writing that normative theory should proceed without being too concerned with metaethical questions. He writes, "…focusing on [metaethical questions], rather than on our normative problem, would almost certainly be a waste of time. There is no need to get distracted by metaethical worries to figure out the rules of chess, in other words, as should be clear from the fact that many people do learn how to play the game without ever studying chess" (2008: 16).

[3] Earlier formulations of the method begin with considered judgments about particular cases. However, as T. M. Scanlon (2014: 77) also observes, in the later formulation, the method begins with considered judgments at any level of generality (Rawls, 1974: 8).

About twenty years after Rawls' defense, the traditional view met what was perhaps the most influential challenge with Dworkin's infamous "Objectivity and Truth: You'd Better Believe It" (1996). Dworkin argues that metaethical claims are nothing but first-order normative claims that are worded more "philosophically". For example, consider the claim "Torturing babies for fun is objectively wrong". Dworkin thinks despite the second-order appearance, due to the wording with the quintessential philosophical jargon of objectivity, this claim is actually a first-order normative claim in disguise. We can, Dworkin claims, say the same thing with a first-order counterfactual claim such as "Torturing babies for fun is wrong and it would still be wrong if we had different attitudes towards torturing babies" without any loss in content.[4] Moreover, he thinks a similar strategy can be applied to all allegedly metaethical claims. In order to make his case, Dworkin argues for two claims: (a) All allegedly non-normative metaethical claims can be plausibly interpreted as substantive normative claims and (b) there are no other plausible interpretations of these claims as anything other than substantive normative claims. Combining these two claims, he concludes that there is no real distinction between metaethics and normative ethics.[5] Nevertheless, Dworkin's view remains highly controversial.[6]

However, the debate on neutrality does not completely answer the question I am asking. My primary aim is to investigate whether the normative ethical project should be integrated with metaethical research. If the neutrality thesis is true, then of course

[4] Dreier (2002) argues, *contra* Dworkin, that there are some metaethical claims that are not counterfactually variable and, therefore, immune to Dworkin's charge that they carry first-order commitments.

[5] More recently, Matthew Kramer argued that while most metaethical claims are neutral among many substantive normative claims, "none of them (or virtually none of them) is logically neutral" across all substantive normative claims (Kramer, 2009: 5). Combining this claim with *Hume's law* (the thesis that there is no logically valid argument with only non-ethical premises and an ethical conclusion), he concludes that most "metaethical" theses are actually substantive normative claims that are on a higher level of abstractness. Kramer declares, "As a result, there is no fundamental divide between the meta-ethical and the ethical" (2009: 5).

[6] Other opponents of neutrality include Jeremy Fantl (2006) who argues that there are in fact no metaethical propositions (or any proposition of any kind) that are morally neutral and Mark Schroeder (2018) who argues that there are deep connections between metaethics and normative ethics. Selim Berker (2017) also argues that all first-order ethical claims are also metaethical because they are metaphysical grounding claims. However, the significance of Berker's conclusion for challenging the traditional view has been disputed (Akhlaghi, 2021). Finally, Pekka Väyrynen (2019) argues that certain metanormative claims, those about modality, vagueness, and reference determination, have first-order implications and offers a general recipe that explains how these first-order implications are generated.

the answer will be negative. On the other hand, the falsity of neutrality does not guarantee that normative ethicists should care about metaethics. It might still be the case that normative commitments of metaethical views do not actually help settle normative disputes. For example, the normative commitments of all metaethical ethical views on offer may be shared by all reasonable normative theories. Or if metaethics entails that all ethical propositions are, strictly speaking, false, then again this normative commitment does not settle any disputes. Finally, it might be the case that metaethical theories bear on the plausibility of normative views but their impact is so minor that it is simply not worth the time and effort for normative ethicists to engage in metaethical theorizing.

Consequently, what I am interested in is whether there are metaethical views, general or particular, that have significant first-order implications. I understand significant first-order implications as those that require us to substantially revise our credences in competing normative theories. If there are such metaethical views, then this means that the current way of normative theorizing, pursing the project independently of metaethical theorizing, is in need of revision. We may need to somehow integrate metaethics and normative ethics.

This last claim is in need of qualification. My particular interest is the methodology of normative ethics. I choose to remain agnostic about whether the best methodology for metaethics is to integrate it with normative ethics. In the last decade, philosophers have developed many interesting arguments for metaethical conclusions that relied on one or more first-order ethical premises.[7] Thus, there seems to be some sympathy in the philosophical community towards this idea. Yet, arguments in the other direction, metaethical to normative, are considerably rarer. These are the kinds of argument I am interested in.

Stephen Darwall and Tristram McPherson are two philosophers who think that normative ethics should be pursued in tandem with metaethics.[8] Surveying the works

[7] For example, see Matthew H. Kramer (2009), David Enoch (2011), Melis Erdur (2016) and Max Hayward (2019). Dworkin (1996) is an earlier example and there is a remark that shows support for this kind of argumentative strategy in David O. Brink (1992: 7).

[8] In an earlier paper, Stelios Virvidakis (1994) also points out that there are affinities between certain ethical theories and metaethical views, like the affinities between metaethical naturalism and

of great ethicists before G. E. Moore, Darwall observes that in the past philosophers did not perceive metaethics and normative ethics to be separate and independent subfields of ethics. Instead, he suggests that in their works we see a "dynamic interaction between their normative and metaethical theories" (1998: 82). Based on these works and some cases where metaethics seems relevant for settling, and correctly identifying, normative disputes, he argues that, "Both metaethics and normative ethics thrive when they are pursed interdependently, as complementary aspects of a comprehensive *philosophical ethics* [emphasis added]" (2006: 33).

McPherson (2012), on the other hand, gives a more schematic argument for integrating metaethics and normative ethics. He argues that metaethical theories have implications for live methodological debates and that normative ethical research is suboptimal unless it integrates metaethics into its own project. Thus, he concludes, "The best way to pursue normative theorizing involves integrating that theorizing with metaethical theorizing" (2012: 530).

In what follows, I evaluate five cases in favor of unified methodology in ethics. While the first case is an actual argument by McPherson, the rest are arguments constructed out of remarks and examples in the literature, especially those by Darwall. Darwall mostly relies on examples where metaethics seems relevant for resolving first-order disagreement to motivate his case for unification and does not discuss how the mechanisms behind the interaction of metaethics and normative ethics work. The cases I construct aim to give a clear account of how these mechanisms work and at the same time, I believe, reveal their weaknesses.

The first chapter discusses McPherson's argument for unified methodology. I argue that even if McPherson's argument is successful and unified methodology is the best way of doing normative ethics, it may not be the most appropriate methodology for

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consequentialism and between metaethical intuitionism and traditional Kantianism. Consequently, he suggests that we might need to pick a package of a normative ethical view and an associated metaethical view. Nevertheless, even though the paper is unique in dealing with this subject at that time, Virvidakis' discussion is somewhat cursory and he does not explore the source of affinities between first-order and second-order views nor the philosophical mechanisms behind these relations. Thus, it is possible, for all he says, that these affinities are merely due to the personal biographies of the originators of these views. It is not, therefore, clear whether they constitute arguments for certain normative ethical views or not.

actual normative ethicists. The costs of unification do not seem worth the marginal benefits the methodology yields. I offer an alternative method that might mitigate some of the worries, a sort of division of labor between metaethicists and normative ethics. This method unifies the two subfields to an extent but does not greatly change the way we do normative ethics.

In the second chapter, I discuss the conceptual case for unification, according to which there are certain conceptual truths in metaethics that can help resolve first-order disputes. The possibility of alternative ethical concepts and worries about the normative relevance of relations between concepts, I argue, suggest that the conceptual case is not likely to succeed.

In the third chapter, I discuss three more cases. The third case is based on arguments from the subject matter of morality. It has been suggested that claims about the subject matter of morality are metaethical claims. If this is so, then these claims, which have very significant first-order implications, constitute a strong case for unification. However, it is controversial whether these claims are really metaethical. And, more importantly, even if they are metaethical, this case does not imply a methodology that is different from the way normative ethics is ordinarily done.

The fourth case is based on metaphysical identity claims in metaethics. Claims about normative-natural identities have clear implications for first-order ethical theory. Unfortunately, these identities are most likely to be only discovered through first-order theorizing. Moreover, according to one interpretation of these claims, which says that they are hybrid theses built from a combination of an ethical thesis and a metaphysical thesis, the first-order implications follow solely from the ethical component, implying that these claims do not provide additional resources to settle first-order disputes.

The fifth and final case is based on semantic claims about the meanings of ethical terms. While these claims are clearly metaethical, they lack the normative force and they are implausible because they imply that the proponents of rival first-order views are misusing moral terms.

In the end, despite its initial appeal, philosophical ethics cannot withstand critical scrutiny.

CHAPTER 1

THE EPISTEMIC CASE FOR UNIFICATION

1.1 McPherson's Case for Unification

In recent years, some philosophers have suggested that metaethics may be relevant for theorizing in normative ethics. However, explicit arguments for this conclusion are scarce. And, in fact, it is even rarer for a philosopher to schematically lay out the philosophical mechanism behind how an interaction between the two branches of ethical inquiry could happen. A noteworthy exception is Tristram McPherson's "Unifying Moral Methodology" (2012). In his paper, McPherson argues on epistemic grounds that the best methodology for doing normative ethics is to integrate that theorizing with metaethical theorizing.

McPherson's argument goes as follows: First, he states that there are "live methodological questions about the justification of normative theories" (2012: 530). He supports this premise by pointing out the widespread disagreement regarding the role of intuitions in normative theorizing. While appeals to intuitions are quite common in normative ethics, there is, as McPherson claims, significant controversy about their precise role. For example, are our intuitions about highly unrealistic thought-experiments reliable guides to finding the correct principles of normative ethics? Or should we consider only relatively realistic cases? What about the experimental approach to normative theorizing? Should those empirical findings replace appeals to intuitions from the armchair? What about considerations like simplicity and explanatory power that usually play a role in theory choice? Should we weigh them against intuitions regarding particular cases? Such questions constitute a genuine controversy regarding the methodology of normative ethics.

Second, he suggests that metaethics can help settle some of these controversies. For example, Richard Boyd's (1997) brand of metaethical naturalism implies a methodology for normative theory that is approximately like other empirical sciences, presumably undermining appeals to our intuitions about highly unrealistic cases. Non-naturalist realism, on the other hand, commonly goes together with a non-empirical methodology, one that aims to find out *a priori* moral principles through a rationalist epistemology. These epistemic implications of metaethical theories certainly seem relevant to settling methodological controversies in normative ethics.

Finally, he argues that the best way of doing normative ethics integrates research that could help resolve methodological controversies about the justification of normative theories.[9] Since metaethical research satisfies this condition, McPherson concludes, "The best way to pursue normative theorizing involves integrating that theorizing with metaethical theorizing" (2012: 530).

1.2 Against Unification for Non-Ideal Philosophers

I find McPherson's argument convincing and agree that the best way of doing normative ethics involves also doing metaethics. What I want to do in this chapter is to focus on what this argument implies for our actual normative theorizing.[10] The

[9] To be precise, this claim is conditional on whether the research in question is epistemically well-supported relative to normative inquiry. McPherson argues that metaethical research satisfies this condition. However, for sake of simplicity and brevity, I put this issue aside. For McPherson's treatment of this subject see McPherson (2012: 536-539).

[10] McPherson says his argument is intended for the "generic philosophical enquirers", which he understands as enquirers who are purged of "biographical quirks" (2012: 525). For example, someone who has bad memories about doing metaethics which makes him unable to do so without serious discomfort is not someone who will necessarily benefit from integrating metaethical and normative ethical theorizing. However, beyond this qualification McPherson does not really specify what kind philosophical enquirer he has in mind. Most importantly, he does not specify the time and cognitive resources available to the enquirer he has in mind. This matters because if the enquirer has unlimited (or very generous) time and resources available to him, then he should take into account every relevant consideration in his theorizing no matter how small. In other words, he should strive to follow the best methodology for doing normative ethics. If, on the other hand, he has limited time and resources, then the best method might not be appropriate for him. Therefore, if McPherson's argument is intended for the enquirer with unlimited time and cognitive resources, then my arguments do not challenge his conclusion directly but rather they investigate what his conclusion implies for enquirers more like philosophers in the real world. But if it is intended for enquirers with limited means, then my arguments should be understood as directly challenging his conclusion.

main problem is this: It is not always the case that a non-ideal agent should adopt the best method of pursuing a goal. While this is certainly not a new insight, we can see that it has great plausibility with an example.

Imagine that we study the game of chess in order to find the best way of playing it. Presumably this involves learning all the popular openings, calculating many moves ahead, recalling hundreds of well-known games that were played between grandmasters, mastering various endgame strategies and so on. In a nutshell, imagine that it turns out the best way of playing the game is approximately the way Garry Kasparov plays it. Yet, it is clear that trying to emulate the way Kasparov plays chess is not the best way for a beginner to play the game. A beginner does not know many, or possibly any, openings and endgame strategies, certainly does not have Kasparov's capacity for calculating many moves ahead and has not memorized important games that grandmasters have played in the past. It would be much better for him to focus on simpler strategies, like trying not to leave any pieces hanging, given his limited skills. Even for an intermediate player many of the strategies employed by the likes of Kasparov would be too difficult and too time consuming to yield better results than following some simpler strategy. This can all be the case even though Kasparov's way of playing chess approximates the best possible way of playing the game to a much greater extent. Sometimes it is better to accept our limitations, do a cost-benefit analysis and find some simpler and more appropriate methodology for pursuing the task at hand. There is, I think, a legitimate concern that this might also apply to McPherson's conclusion. More precisely, I think the costs of unifying ethical methodology may outweigh the benefits.

Finding out the correct normative theory is a matter of overall plausibility.[11] There are no magic arguments that conclusively prove or refute normative theories. Instead, we weigh the considerations that count in favor and against various normative theories and try to figure out which theory is the most plausible in their light. Under ideal conditions it is reasonable to suggest that we should take every relevant consideration into calculation while trying to determine which normative ethical theory is the best one available. Ignoring a piece of potential evidence relevant to the justification of

[11] See Kagan (1998: 11-17).

normative theories certainly is bad epistemic practice in the absence of good reasons for doing so. The same goes for sound arguments for a normative conclusion that utilizes metaethical premises. However, it is also possible that the benefits of some arguments in finding out the true normative theory are not worth the effort it takes to generate these arguments. Moreover, moral philosophers have limited time and cognitive resources. We cannot consider every possible argument that might have even the slightest bearing on the plausibility of competing normative theories, even though that would have been the best approach if we had the means. Therefore, if a piece of evidence has little bearing on the evaluation of normative views and is extremely difficult to acquire, then we may reasonably choose to focus on other bodies of evidence that are easier to acquire and potentially have greater impact on the overall plausibility of different normative theories.

A number of considerations may suggest that this applies to the epistemic case for unification. It should be noted at the outset that these considerations are mostly conservative and not schematic, they are based on the current state of metaethical and methodological debates. Perhaps, in the future as these debates progress, some of these considerations will no longer apply (and others may emerge). Nevertheless, I want to suggest that in the current state of ethics there are compelling reasons to think that the costs of unification outweigh the potential benefits.

First, metaethics and normative ethics require very different kinds of expertise. Given that it is a second-order inquiry into the nature of ethical thought and discourse, metaethics requires substantial expertise in theoretical philosophy. Such expertise includes knowledge of various metasemantic, metaphysical and epistemological theories in contemporary philosophy. Many great examples of metaethical theorizing is informed by and draw on developments in these branches of theoretical philosophy. In this regard, metaethics is closer to philosophy of mathematics and philosophy of science than normative ethics—a fact that is corroborated by the biographies of many metaethicists. Normative ethicists, on the other hand, usually do not rely on such developments in theoretical philosophy when constructing their arguments. Instead, they construct various theories that systematize and explain our considered moral judgments and think rigorously about the implications of these theories. Many normative theorists, especially those working in more practical subjects such as

political theory and practical ethics, do not possess the expertise in theoretical philosophy that is often possessed by metaethicists. We should ask them to take the time to acquire this kind of expertise only if we expect the payoff to be worth it.

Another consideration suggests that the benefits of integrating metaethical research into normative theorizing may not be great (that is if the only benefits are due to the methodological implications of metaethical views). There is widespread agreement regarding the methodology of normative ethics among various metaethical views. Many metaethical views imply a methodology that is not too different from Rawlsian reflective equilibrium. For example, Sharon Street's (2008: 238-239) Humean constructivism, T. M. Scanlon's (2014: 69-104) metaethical quietism, Derek Parfit's (2011: 367) non-metaphysical non-naturalism, Frank Jackson and Philip Pettit's (1995: 26) moral functionalism and J. L. Mackie's (1977: 105) normative theorizing after error-theory[12] all explicitly adopt the reflective equilibrium method.[13] It is also likely that many other metaethical views that do not explicitly say it eventually lead to a methodology in the near vicinity of reflective equilibrium.

To be certain, I agree with McPherson that not all metaethical views entail, or have an affinity with, the same methodology. Boyd's naturalism, for instance, is an exception. However, Boyd's metaethical view is not exceedingly more plausible than any of these other views. When considering the methodological and normative implications of metaethical theories, we should take into consideration the plausibility of the metaethical views in question. For example, our confidence in an argument in normative ethics should not be shaken substantially if its underlying methodology is deemed unreliable by a wildly implausible metaethical view. We should discount the changes to our confidence in our normative beliefs in proportion to the plausibility of the metaethical view that demands these changes.

[12] It has been suggested that Mackie is not actually an error-theorist but rather some kind of non-objectivist (see Berker (2020)). If this is right, what we have is yet another example of a non-objectivist view, akin to Street's Humean constructivism, endorsing reflective equilibrium.

[13] McPherson might object that these philosophers are just paying lip service or that their versions of reflective equilibrium boil down to a mere commitment to consistency and, therefore, do not answer our many methodological questions (see his (2012: 530-532) and (2020: 62-64)). But we may instead think that these views just do not take a stance on many important methodological disputes. Moreover, as I will argue shortly, there is ample room for these disputes to arise *within* these metaethical views.

So, imagine that we have adjusted our credences in different normative theories by relying on the reflective equilibrium method of doing normative ethics. Also, imagine that the vast majority of metaethical views will deem this way of doing normative ethics appropriate. Say eight out of ten metaethical views approve of reflective equilibrium while the other two imply some incompatible method. Moreover, assume that all ten metaethical theories are equally plausible. Finally, assume that if we adopted one of the alternative methods prescribed by the minority metaethical views, some of the normative theories that did well according to the reflective equilibrium method would do slightly worse. In this scenario, even though this piece of metaethical information requires us to revise our initial credences in these views, the fact that reflective equilibrium is deemed appropriate by the vast majority of equally plausible views implies that this revision will be minor.

A related point is that it is very likely that accounting for the way we ordinarily do normative ethics is a desideratum for metaethical views. If a metaethical view prescribes a wildly different way of doing normative ethics, then this will possibly count against such a view. Howard Nye (2015: 623), for example, suggests that: "Each metaethical theory will have its own explanation of why this is the case, but almost all would agree that [the reasonableness of trying to resolve our basic ethical uncertainties and disagreements by determining what ethical views can best withstand critical scrutiny] operates as a constraint on metaethical theorizing". There may still be disagreement on some more particular methodological questions, such as the role of our intuitions regarding highly unrealistic cases in normative theorizing. But if we accept a desideratum like this, then at least we can be fairly confident that it will not be a complete disaster if we do not integrate metaethical theorizing and normative theorizing.

Finally, some of the most significant methodological controversies, ones that underlie most persistent normative disagreements, are not rooted in general metaethical theories but rather they turn on considerations that can play roughly the same role in most (if not all) metaethical views. McPherson argues that there is significant methodological controversy in normative ethics and that metaethical views have implications that are not merely "easily-avoidable idiosyncrasies" (2012: 534). However, he does not show that the way to resolving the most significant

controversies is through the methodological implications of metaethical views. For all he says, it is possible that the methodological implications of metaethical views are not relevant to the controversies that we have most reason to care about.

Consider the methodological differences that we see in the debate between consequentialist and deontologists. Consequentialists often discount the theoretical significance of intuitions about particular cases (hereafter "case-intuitions" for brevity), many examples of which seem to count against their theories (with the exception of rule consequentialism)[14]. They think that case-intuitions are not reliable and we should rather focus on general principles that have high degrees of plausibility (so much so that sometimes they are referred to as *self-evident* principles). Deontologists, on the other hand, often motivate their views by appealing to our case-intuitions and the counterintuitive verdicts that consequentialist views yield about these cases. They seem much more willing to reject general principles like hedonism and various forms of consequentialism on the basis of these intuitions. Thus, indeed some of the disagreement between consequentialists and deontologists can be traced back to methodological differences. If this disagreement were due to metaethical differences, then metaethical research would have a great impact on the plausibility of these general normative theories and there would be a strong reason in favor of the unified approach to normative ethics.

Yet, when we look into the source of the methodological disagreement between consequentialists and deontologists, we see that the reasons offered are not rooted in general metaethical views but can be, so to speak, translated across different metaethical views. Peter Singer (1974), for example, criticizes Rawls' methodology for giving excessive weight to our case-intuitions and argues for a Sidgwickian[15] approach to moral philosophy that starts with self-evident axioms and uses case-intuitions as supporting evidence. He argues that our case-intuitions are distorted by influences that are not morally relevant, deriving from "discarded religious systems, from warped views of sex and bodily functions, or from customs necessary for the survival of the group in social and economic circumstances that now lie in the distant

[14] For more on case-intuitions and rule consequentialism, see Hooker (2000).
[15] For Sidgwick's views on ethical methodology, see his (1879) and (1907: 373, 421-422).

past" (1974: 516).[16] More recently, Nye (2015) argued on similar grounds that case-intuitions should not push us to choose principles that are less directly plausible than the alternatives. Shelly Kagan (2001: 58), on the other hand, argues that not all case-intuitions can be undermined in this way since some cases we consider in ethics, like the (in)famous trolley examples, seem detached enough from real life that our intuitions regarding such cases cannot be produced by distorting influences like religion, culture and so on.

Strictly speaking, how we formulate the arguments in favor or against methodological alternatives in this debate depends on which metaethical view we accept. For instance, if we are Humean constructivists (Street: 2008), we might say that we need to achieve coherence between our judgments about particular cases and our judgment that these intuitions are likely to be produced by morally irrelevant sources.[17] Or if we are Railtonian (1986a, 1986b) naturalists we might say that in order to approximate the idealized conditions of reflection that play a heuristic role for figuring out which ordinary natural properties normative properties reduce to, we should eliminate potential errors due to false beliefs and biases. Or we can put the point in terms of intuitions and say that these generic defeaters undermine the reliability of our intuitions. At any rate, the main idea stays the same: This methodological disagreement is not rooted in metaethics. If it were, the potential benefits that we would get from resolving this methodological dispute would be so great (it would go a significant way in resolving one of the biggest debates in normative ethics) that it would provide substantial support for unification. Unfortunately, metaethics does not seem to hold the key for resolving this methodological problem so a potentially big plus for unification in the cost-benefit analysis goes unwritten.

[16] It might be suggested that Singer's objection is also metaethical. This is probably true. However, I do not think anyone would say that epistemic defeaters or, similarly, results in moral psychology are not relevant to first-order theorizing. When people ask whether metaethics is relevant for normative theorizing, I assume that they are usually wondering whether *general metaethical theories* like different brands of naturalistic realism, non-naturalism, anti-realism and so on are relevant to normative theorizing. Moreover, they might be wondering whether certain kinds of claims in metaethics like conceptual claims, semantic claims or claims about subject matter are relevant for normative theorizing. But I doubt that anyone is questioning whether claims like Singer's are relevant.

[17] I assume most of us judge false beliefs, psychological biases and so on to be morally distorting sources. Of course, it is logically possible for someone to see even the most seemingly irrelevant source of a judgment as morally relevant and, at the same time, achieve coherence in her evaluative attitudes. Such a character may perhaps be another "ideally coherent eccentric" (Street, 2009). A constructivist must simply live with such eccentrics. For the rest of us, these epistemic defeaters can still play a significant role in normative discussion.

The problem seems to be due to a missing step in McPherson's argument, if we want to argue that unification is the best approach for actual philosophers. It is not enough to show that there is significant methodological controversy in normative ethics and that general metaethical views have some methodological implications. If these implications are, in most cases, not relevant to resolving the disputes that we care about the most, then the case for unification is not very strong. The aforementioned example shows that one of the biggest methodological controversies in normative ethics is not resolved by the unified method. I suspect that more methodological controversies, like the reliability of our intuitions about cases where there are very large numbers involved (see Norcross (1997)), persist through different general metaethical theories. As long as this is the case, the benefits of the unified method will be substantially less than what we might have initially hoped for.

1.3 The Division of Labor Alternative

A way of mitigating the potential problems about the appropriateness of unified methodology as applied to non-ideal agents is to understand it as a methodological prescription for the philosophical community as a whole. Understood this way, the unification argument will not require normative ethicists to master the expertise needed to successfully do metaethics and to do metaethical theorizing themselves. Instead, there can be a division of cognitive labor where normative ethicists let metaethicists pursue the second-order inquiry while they focus on doing their regular ethical theorizing, only to be occasionally informed by the developments in metaethics. We can revise the artificial procedure for unified methodology that McPherson offers in his paper (2012: 526) to sketch how a division of labor in ethics might look like: First, the normative ethicist figures out all the available normative theories and the significant arguments that count for or against them. In light of these arguments, she determines her credences[18] in competing views. Then, she looks at the current status of metaethics and estimates the plausibility of alternative metaethical theories. Crucially, at this step she need not do metaethics herself. Instead she can rely on second-hand evidence such as the presence of a consensus among experts, a

[18] Those who do not prefer the term "credence" may replace it with the epistemic term of their choosing.

certain view falling out of favor with most professional metaethicists, any serious objections to a view that is acknowledged to be of importance by proponents and the opponents of the view alike and so on. Subsequently, she listens to metaethicists about the epistemic implications of competing metaethical views. Usually the metaethicists who formulate their theories already draw out these implications and they are in an especially advantageous position to do so. Finally, the normative ethicist adjusts her initial credences in various normative theories by taking into account the epistemic implications and the prospects of various metaethical views.[19]

One thing to note about the division of labor method is that it still integrates normative ethics and metaethics to a greater extent than the traditional view of ethics espoused by the proponents of metaethical neutrality. According to this view, the two subfields of inquiry are completely independent of each other. Metaethical theories, the traditional view claims, carry no normative commitments and thus normative ethicists need not be informed of the work in metaethics in doing normative ethics. The division of labor approach rejects this view of ethics.

At the same time, the division of labor does not vindicate the demand for more substantial integration of metaethics and normative ethics. Stephen Darwall's call to do philosophical ethics, for example, is not vindicated by division of labor. In the subsequent chapters, I will evaluate various cases that can be made in favor of this way of doing ethics. However, for now, it seems to me that the epistemic case is not sufficient to vindicate philosophical ethics. Most benefits that can be obtained by integrating metaethics and normative ethics according to the epistemic case can be obtained by a division of labor between the experts in these fields without the immense increase in difficulty that would follow from an individual philosopher attempting to navigate both areas. Perhaps, pre-Moore philosophical ethics would have been a less taxing method of doing ethics. However, the developments in both fields over the last century and the general trend of specialization in philosophy certainly have increased the difficulty of doing cutting-edge work in both subfields.

[19] Some people might worry that there is no way for the normative ethicist to adequately evaluate metaethical views without doing metaethics. In this case, the division of labor method will not be a feasible way of mitigating the worries about unified methodology —so much the worse for the epistemic case for unification. If this alternative is not available, then the costs and the doubts about the benefits provide good reason for maintaining our standard first-order theorizing.

Therefore, insofar the division of labor is sufficient to accommodate the epistemic reasons for unification, the methodological prescription falls short of Darwall's suggestion that individual philosophers do metaethics along with normative ethics.

To summarize, I argued that even if McPherson's basic unification argument is sound and the best way of doing normative ethics is to do it in tandem with metaethics, this does not mean that this methodology is the best *for us*. Some of the worries about the appropriateness of this methodology for actual philosophers are mitigated if we understand this prescription as one that applies to the philosophical community rather than the individual philosopher. Understood in this way, we can devise a cognitive division of labor where normative ethicists do not engage in metaethics themselves but, instead, are informed by the developments in metaethics. The indirect mechanism through which metaethics is relevant to normative theorizing according to the epistemic argument allows this kind of division. While the division of labor method integrates the two fields to some extent but does not greatly change the way normative ethics is commonly pursued. Therefore, if philosophical ethics is to be vindicated, we should look into other cases to be made in favor of it.

CHAPTER 2

THE CONCEPTUAL CASE FOR UNIFICATION

2.1 Metaethical Conceptual Truths and Normative Ethics

The second serious case to be made in favor of unification is due to the implications of conceptual truths in metaethics. There are a number of proposed conceptual truths in metaethics that seem to have implications for normative ethics, implications that may have great significance for settling some of the most persistent debates in the field.[20] While it is impossible to list every such claim, I shall give a few examples to show how thinking about these truths can possibly have great significance for normative ethics.

First two examples are due to the work of Stephen Darwall, one of the philosophers who made the greatest contribution to the literature on the interaction between metaethics and normative ethics. He observes that some of the deepest disagreements between consequentialist and deontologists can be traced back to their different views on the conceptual connections between fundamental normative concepts.

One such connection is the alleged conceptual connection between *moral wrongness* and *blameworthiness*. It is very common for consequentialists to reject this alleged conceptual connection.[21] This rejection seems to give them the resources to handle some influential objections to their position like the *self-defeatingness* and

[20] Some philosophers hint at this possibility without going into detail about how the philosophical mechanisms behind the interaction work. Kevin Toh, for example, writes, "A metaethicist could show, based purely on conceptual considerations… that our first-order thinking imposes conceptual constraints that are strong enough to be determinative of certain first-order positions" (2013: 464).
[21] See, for example, Sidgwick (1907: 428), Smart (1961), Parfit (1984: 31-35) and Norcross (2006: 226).

demandingness objections. Consider the latter objection. Some versions of consequentialism are maximizing views: They hold that any act that fails to maximize the good is morally wrong. Surely there are cases (and even if there were not we could imagine such cases) where this kind of view will make very serious demands on agents capable of responding to moral reasons. For example, if a wealthy philanthropist decides to donate a million dollars to alleviate global poverty when he could have donated another ten dollars and could have produced even better consequences, then he acted wrongly when he donated the million dollars. Moreover, if there is a necessary connection between moral wrongness and blameworthiness, then he deserves to be blamed for the way he acted. This seems to be an implication that the consequentialist may want to avoid.[22] One way of avoiding it is to severe the alleged conceptual connection between moral wrongness and blameworthiness. The consequentialist may claim that we should blame people not if they have acted wrongly necessarily but rather if the consequences of blaming them will produce better outcomes. It is quite likely that not blaming people who donated millions to charity (even though they could have donated more) produces better outcomes than blaming them. Therefore, the consequentialist can say that the person has acted wrongly but he should not be blamed and, perhaps, even be praised instead.

Another related issue is the internalism/externalism debate in metaethics. While there are many different claims in the region (which are often not distinguished), the one relevant here is what Darwall (1997: 306-307) calls *morality/reasons internalism*. This is the thesis that "If S morally ought to do A, then necessarily there is reason for S to do A consisting either in the fact that S morally ought so to act, or in considerations that ground that fact". *Morality/reasons externalism*, on the other hand, rejects this necessary connection. Darwall thinks a consequentialist's position on this metaethical issue eventually affects how well he can respond to the self-defeatingness challenge. Critics of act consequentialism argue that the public believing in act consequentialism will lead to outcomes that are worse than the outcomes that would result if they believed in some other moral system, implying that act consequentialism demands that we do not publicize it or even privately believe in it. Consequentialists, on the other hand, are usually unmoved by this objection: They accept that the correct

[22] Note that some consequentialist might adopt a methodology that does not require them to eliminate such seemingly counterintuitive implications (see pp. 15-16).

moral theory might tell us not to believe it or be directly guided by it. Darwall thinks for a morality/reasons internalist this is hard to accept. He writes, "To feel the force of the [self-defeatingness] objection, one must accept that morality is normative for action or feeling, that morality purports to be action-or feeling-guiding" and that for someone who accepts this "it is simply incoherent to think both that what one is doing is wrong on certain grounds and that these wrong-making grounds might provide no reason to decide against so acting" (1999: 22). Thus, the charge of self-defeatingness seems more threatening for the morality/reasons internalist than it is for the externalist.

The third kind of metaethical conceptual truths that may have great significance for normative debates are the moral fixed points. According to Terence Cuneo and Russ Shafer-Landau (2014), there is a set of substantive moral propositions that are also non-naturalistic conceptual truths. They call these propositions *moral fixed points*. They give a number of examples such as the propositions that "It is pro tanto wrong to engage in the recreational slaughter of a fellow person" and "It is pro tanto wrong to humiliate others simply for pleasure" that they deem to be conceptual truths. They think these propositions are true in virtue of the concepts that they employ and do not require truth-makers in the world to make them true. Roughly, they suggest that it belongs to the essence of the concept *moral wrongness* that it applies, for example, to the act of recreational slaughter of a fellow person. A number of influential challenges to non-naturalism, they claim, can be avoided in this way since they do not posit "queer" non-natural properties in virtue of which these propositions are true.

If there really are moral fixed points of the kind Cuneo and Shafer-Landau propose, then these will have perhaps the most significant direct implications for normative ethics. Any view that does not incorporate these truths will not only be false but they will also be *conceptually deficient*. Of course this last charge is commonly taken to be a big weakness of views like Cuneo and Shafer-Landau's since it seems quite uncharitable to attribute conceptual deficiency to highly intelligent and rigorous philosophers, like error-theorists, who reject these truths.[23] Nevertheless, if the

[23] Cuneo and Shafer-Landau (2014: 412-5, 438-9) devote considerable space to dispelling this charge while some still do not find their solution compelling, see Ingram (2015).

problems associated with these proposed truths can be solved, then this would bring metaethical and normative theorizing much closer.

Fourth, it is possible that some formal constraints on moral terms can be plausibly construed as conceptual truths.[24] For example, the condition that the true moral system must be one that can be made public can be argued to be a conceptual truth. We can say that it belongs to the essence of the concept of morality that the true moral system cannot be one that we must keep secret. Famously, Sidgwick (1907: 489-90) rejected this and argued that morality can be *esoteric*: It may be the case that morally we ought to let the public believe in a false moral system while only a select few knows the correct moral system. Others, like Rawls, think that publicity condition "hold for the choice of all ethical principles and not only for those of justice" (1999: 112).[25] Once again there are significant first-order stakes in this debate. If the publicity condition is a conceptual truth, then act consequentialism's plausibility will be reduced greatly. Presumably, contractualist views like Rawls' (1999) account of justice and Scanlon's (1998) account of morality and Kantian views will fare much better with this conception of morality. If, on the other hand, there is no such conceptual truth, then many arguments leveled against act consequentialism are groundless.

So, the conceptual case for unification is this: There are a number of proposed conceptual truths in metaethics that have significant normative implications. These implications are significant in the sense that they seem crucial for settling some of the deepest normative disagreements in normative ethics. Moreover, it is possible that these truths dictate a different methodology for normative ethicists. Cuneo and Shafer-Landau argue that the correct method for discovering moral fixed points is to proceed down a chain of essences. Using the distinction between *immediate conceptual truths*, "which are true in virtue of the immediate essence of their constituent concepts", and *mediate conceptual truths*, "which are true in virtue of the

[24] However, not all parties in the debate on formal conditions accept that the debate turns on the analysis of ethical concepts. Rawls, for example, denies this (1999: 112). What I am suggesting is that these conditions can plausibly be understood as conceptual truths, in which case, they would support the conceptual case for unification.

[25] Other influential opponents of esoteric morality include Bernard Williams (1979: 139) and Bernard Gert (1998: 8–11). In addition, we may think that it is naturally ruled out by certain conceptions of morality that take justifiability to others as the foundation of morality, see Scanlon (1998).

mediate essence of their constituent concepts", they argue that we can form chains made out of immediate conceptual truths to discover substantive mediate conceptual truths (2014: 433-435). If this is the correct methodology for finding conceptual truths, then normative ethicists must get into the business of finding chains of essences. This kind of methodology is considerably different than the current way we do normative ethics, showing that the conceptual case, if it is sound, is something that normative ethicists must take seriously.

2.2 Problems for the Conceptual Case for Unification

The conceptual case for unification has a lot of potential, especially considering the possibility that metaethical conceptual truths may help resolve some of our deepest ethical disagreements. Yet, there are two serious problems that it faces.

2.2.1 Alternative Ethical Concepts

The first problem with the conceptual case for unification is the possibility of alternative ethical concepts. Consider the alleged conceptual connection between moral wrongness and blameworthiness. We can grant for the sake of argument that it really belongs to the essence of our concept of moral wrongness, say *moral wrongness*$_1$, that necessarily an agent who acts wrongly, in the absence of an adequate excuse, is blameworthy. Yet, it seems possible that there is another concept of moral wrongness, say *moral wrongness*$_2$, that can play the same (or a sufficiently similar) normative role in our practical deliberations but differs from the other concept of moral wrongness only in that its essence does not contain a necessary connection with blameworthiness. We may reasonably ask why moral wrongness$_1$ merits our allegiance while moral wrongness$_2$ does not. The problem cannot be simply solved by suggesting that moral wrongness$_1$ is the actual concept that we employ in our practical deliberations. After all, it might be the case that we ought to revise our ethical concepts. Unless some ethical concepts are "somehow privileged from the point of view of reality itself" (Eklund, 2017: vii), it seems arbitrary to favor one concept over the others.

In his recent book, *Choosing Normative Concepts,* Matti Eklund discusses the possibility of alternative normative concepts at length and discusses some possible ways out of the problem it generates for a certain kind of normative realist. Eklund worries that even if we grant all the standard assumptions of normative realists, such as the truth-aptness of normative claims, the existence of mind-independent normative facts and us having adequate epistemic access to these facts, this might still not be enough to satisfy a certain kind of realist. To see this suppose there is an alternative linguistic community that is very similar to ours but uses different normative concepts. For example, their concept of moral wrongness plays the same normative role with our concept of moral wrongness but the two are not coextensional. When a certain action falls under the extension of our concept of moral wrongness but not theirs, we will think that the action must be avoided but they will not. When they go about acting this way, we will object and say "You should not do this, this is wrong". And they will reply, "Yes, we see how it can be wrong but it is not wrong*". And the converse will be the case for actions that fall under the extension of their concept of moral wrongness but not ours. Unless one concept is privileged in some appropriate sense, this kind of symmetrical situation falls short of what a moral realist might have hoped for, which is that "some ways of valuing or acting were somehow privileged from the point of view of reality itself" (Eklund, 2017: vii).

One potential solution that draws on the metaphysical literature is to say that we should choose concepts that are "joint-carving" or more metaphysically *elite* (Eklund, 2017: 28).[26] There are a number of different ways in which we can understand this idea of eliteness. For example, one conception, which Eklund calls *Lewisian* eliteness, holds that "the perfectly elite properties are the fundamental physical properties, and something is more elite than something else the closer to this ideal it is" (Eklund, 2017: 30). However, Eklund does not think that this conception of eliteness can help with the problem of alternatives since this kind of metaphysical eliteness seems normatively irrelevant (2017: 30). Eklund's preferred account of eliteness, which understands eliteness in terms of *objective explanatoriness,* faces the same problem too. Therefore, we cannot just choose the concept of moral wrongness that is more elite and follow the normative implications of that concept.

[26] The idea of eliteness commonly goes together with the idea of *reference magnetism*, according to which some entities are intrinsically more eligible to be meant.

A different way out is to reject the idea that there can be alternative normative concepts. This is Eklund's preferred solution. He suggests that if the references of normative terms are determined by their normative roles, then it will be impossible for two concepts to have the same normative role while differing in extension. This is what Eklund refers to as being *referentially normative*. So if moral wrongness$_1$ and moral wrongness$_2$ have the same normative role and are referentially normative, then they will be coextensional. However, there are still problems for the realist even if the concepts in question are referentially normative. Even if normative terms are referentially normative, it is still possible that there are other normative concepts with slightly different normative roles that are not coextensional. Again we may ask why we should not adopt the concepts with slightly different normative roles and slightly different extensions. Moreover, it is not clear whether normative concepts are in fact referentially normative or not. Eklund's claim is conditional: He suggests that if normative terms are referentially normative, then we *may* have a way out of the problem of alternatives. But it is not clear if the antecedent is true. Finally, it has been questioned whether referential normativity provides a genuine way out of the problem of alternatives. A metasemantic thesis like referential normativity, McPherson thinks, does not seem to have any bearing on the question of whether *reality* favors certain ways of acting (2019: 7-8).

2.2.2 Normative Irrelevance of Conceptual Truths

The second problem with the conceptual case for unification is the potential normative irrelevance of conceptual truths. In his "Why Care About Moral Fixed Points?", David Killoren (2016) raises a serious challenge against Cuneo and Shafer-Landau's account of moral fixed points that can be generalized to all metaethical conceptual truths. He writes,

> …mere facts about relations between different concepts rarely, if ever, provide reasons to do or not to do anything. If we have reasons at all in a given case, those reasons are provided, not by concepts, but by other sorts of entities—properties, facts, states of affairs, individuals, causal connections, counterfactual dependencies, and so on. (Killoren, 2016: 170)

He supports this claim with an example. Imagine that you have a friend, Tim, who is a bachelor. Killoren thinks this fact (with the help of other facts) might give you certain reasons for action, for example, he thinks it might give you a reason to "offer him a studio apartment rather than a house" (2016: 170). Yet, he thinks this reason is not provided by the fact that Tim falls under a certain concept. The same goes for moral fixed points, "while it seems clear that we have reasons to avoid performing wrong actions such as recreational slaughter of innocent people, the relation between those actions and a certain concept does not seem to be among those reasons" (Killoren, 2016: 170).

Moreover, if a moral proposition is true in virtue of such conceptual relations, then, Killoren suggests, the normative irrelevance of the relations between concepts is transmitted to that moral proposition. He illustrates this with an example based on moral relativism: Consider two propositions, "Recreational slaughter of a fellow person is (pro tanto) wrong" and "Our society is such that recreational slaughter of a fellow person is condemned by our society's generally accepted moral standards". Now assume, as it is sometimes suggested, that the latter proposition is normatively irrelevant. Surely this is easy to imagine since many societies were seriously mistaken in what they deemed worthy of condemnation, after all many societies possessed moral standards that condemned homosexual relationships. Accordingly, if the first proposition is true in virtue of the second normatively irrelevant proposition, then, by the transmission of normative irrelevance, it is also normatively irrelevant. In similar fashion, if the same moral proposition is suggested to be correct in virtue of a conceptual fact such as the proposition "The concepts *recreational*, *slaughter*, *person*, *wrong*, etc., are such that *recreational slaughter of a fellow person necessarily* falls under the concept *wrong*", then Killoren thinks the normative irrelevance of the conceptual fact is transmitted to the moral proposition that is made true by it (2016: 170).

While Killoren's specific target is Cuneo and Schafer-Landau's moral fixed points proposal, there is no reason to limit the scope of the objection to those particular metaethical conceptual truths. The same argument can be directed, for example, against the claim that the moral proposition "The agent who acts wrongly in the absence of an adequate excuse is blameworthy" is true in virtue of the conceptual

proposition "The concepts *wrongness*, *blameworthiness*, *excuse* and *agent*, etc., are such that agents acting wrongly in the absence of an adequate excuse necessarily fall under the concept blameworthy". The latter proposition does not seem different from the conceptual proposition in Killoren's example in a way that would justify its normative relevance. And the two propositions stand in the same relationship, whether it is some sort of grounding relation or something else, that the propositions in Killoren's recreational slaughter example. Therefore, unless the proponent of the conceptual case for unification can argue against either the transmission of normative irrelevance or the normative irrelevance of conceptual truths, then his position is seriously undermined.

2.3 Potential Solutions

The conceptual case for unification looks unsalvageable if these two problems cannot be eliminated. In this section, I consider two potential solutions and argue that neither is successful in saving the conceptual case.

2.3.1 Authoritatively Normative Properties

One of the proposed solutions to the problem generated by alternative normative concepts is to say that we should be concerned with concepts that pick out *authoritatively normative properties* (McPherson, 2019). These properties, such as the property of ought-to-be-doneness *simpliciter*, are contrasted with generically normative properties such as being a legal chess move where the former requires a kind of uniqueness that the latter does not. McPherson writes, "if I am playing chess, it seems possible that I $\text{ought}_{\text{chess}}$ make a certain move, but I $\text{ought}_{\text{etiquette}}$ not make that move, because it would unduly embarrass my opponent" (2019: 11). This kind of freedom, however, does not make sense with authoritatively normative properties. If I ought_1 to φ but ought_2 to not φ, then ought_1 and ought_2 cannot both be authoritatively normative. McPherson thinks if there are authoritatively normative properties, then the concepts that pick out such properties will be privileged from the point of view of reality in the relevant sense.

This solution would also help with the normative irrelevance problem discussed in 2.2.2. While Killoren thinks that relations between concepts are not the right kind of things to provide agents with reasons, properties are among the entities that he lists as appropriate candidates for providing reasons. Clearly, authoritatively normative properties, if they exist, will be the prime examples of reason providing entities.

However, there is a catch. At the beginning of this chapter we hoped to have another argument for integrating metaethical and normative ethical research. Metaethical conceptual truths seemed to provide good reasons for this kind of unification since some of them seemed to have very significant normative implications. But taking a closer look at how this connection between metaethics and normative ethics revealed significant problems: the problem of alternatives and the problem of normative relevance. Focusing on authoritatively normative properties can potentially solve both these problems. The bearers of these properties can be privileged in the relevant sense so that we can discard the alternative concepts if they do not pick out these properties. Also, such properties seem to be entities that can provide reasons, unlike conceptual relations. Nevertheless, finding out which actions, attitudes, motivations, states of affairs etc. have authoritatively normative properties, is precisely what we do in first-order ethical inquiry. If the solution to these problems is through authoritatively normative properties, then metaethics is not providing additional resources to settle normative disputes.

2.3.2 Alternative Concepts and Anti-Realism

There is also a very significant qualification for the first problem facing the conceptual case, the problem of alternatives. The alternatives are a problem for the kind of realist that wants to claim that certain ways of acting, believing etc. are privileged from the perspective of reality. Our concern with a certain moral concept is, therefore, justified only if there is something in reality that favors that concept. However, an anti-realist does not make such a claim. She holds that there is nothing in reality that favors one concept over the other. But she can still offer reasons for adopting one concept over the other. And these reasons can be ones that the realist would find unsatisfying, such as theoretical fruitfulness, conceptual improvement,

eliteness, and so on. After she argues for adopting a particular moral concept in this way, she can then cash out the normative implications of these concepts. For example, if it turns out that the best, by anti-realist lights, concept of moral wrongness happens to have a necessary connection to blameworthiness, then this result might have great importance for doing normative ethics. As long as this approach can be justified, the widespread idea that realism/anti-realism debate in metaethics is irrelevant to first-order normative theorizing is false.

On the other hand, the grounds for concept choice may look unconvincing as reasons for action even to the anti-realist. Imagine trying to decide between two courses of action. Assume that both courses of action are equally well supported by the reasons for action, anti-realistically conceived, that you have and the only tie-breaker that you have is an argument from a metaethical conceptual truth. So, someone tells you that you need to choose the course of action A rather than B because the concept of moral rightness that is more fruitful lends support to the moral theory that prescribes A-ing under these circumstances. Here, I think there is a legitimate complaint that what is theoretically more fruitful is not relevant to what you ought to do. Of course, some brands of anti-realism will allow you to take any consideration to be a reason for action as long as it does not conflict with your other evaluative attitudes. However, I think many people will resist taking anti-realist grounds of concept choice as reasons for action.

In addition, there still is the second problem, the normative irrelevance of conceptual truths. It seemed as though relations between concepts do not provide reasons for action. Once again, anti-realism is usually quite liberal with what can be a reason for action. So, for example, if someone possesses the right desires, or if there is a sound deliberative route from his current motivational set to this conclusion, then relations between concepts can provide reasons for actions on some anti-realist accounts. Although, again I suspect that many people do not have this kind of desire. Thus, even for the anti-realist the conceptual case for unification does not seem very promising.

Overall, the conceptual case for unification is thoroughly undermined by the problem of alternatives and the worry about the normative relevance of conceptual truths. The

case looks a bit more promising if one accepts metaethical anti-realism. But even then there are legitimate worries about the reasons for action provided by relations between concepts and the grounds for concept choice. At the end, the conceptual case for unification is far from compelling.[27]

[27] Another interesting upshot is that the problems with the conceptual case for unification also cast doubt on the relevance of certain debates in metaethics. For example, the morality/reasons internalism vs. externalism debate is sometimes discussed as a matter of conceptual truth. Consider Shaun Nichols' (2004) argument against morality/reasons internalism. Conducting a small study among "philosophically unsophisticated undergraduates", Nichols shows that non-philosophers do not actually think that an amoralist, someone who accepts that an act is wrong but does not see any reason for not doing it, is conceptually deficient (2004: 74). Moreover, he says that they think the amoralist really understands that the act in question is wrong and he is not merely saying that it is wrong in an inverted-commas sense. Nichols takes this to constitute evidence against morality/reasons internalism as a conceptual claim espoused by the likes of Michael Smith (2004: 64-66).

Yet, we saw that morality/reasons internalism vs. externalism debate is not without its moral implications. If this metaethical conceptual claim is justified by reference to the common conceptions of the amoralist, this undermines the moral implications of this claim. After all, we can ask why we should be morally concerned with what people's conceptions are. Moreover, the problem of alternative ethical concepts is also relevant here. Even if our actual concept of morality is such that it involves no necessary connection to reasons for action, we can still ask whether this particular concept is privileged in any satisfying sense.

CHAPTER 3

THREE MORE CASES FOR UNIFICATION

3.1 Arguments from the Subject Matter of Morality

In trying to reach general principles that separate right from wrong, philosophers sometimes begin their search by thinking about the subject matter of morality. One might, for example, think that morality is essentially about the wellbeing of sentient creatures, human and non-human alike. If this is our starting point, then we might be naturally drawn to some version of consequentialism. Thinking that actions are right to the extent that they lead to the production of more welfare, whether we conceive of this this in a act-, rule- or scalar-consequentialist way or in some other way, appears to be a natural inference from this view of the subject matter of morality. Contrarily, we might think that morality is about justifiability of our actions to others rather than being a matter of wellbeing. This thought is what led some philosophers to contractualism instead of consequentialism.

We see this argumentative strategy in the works of a number of prominent moral theorists. Brad Hooker argues that his rule-consequentialism "taps into and develops familiar and intuitively plausible ideas about morality" (Hooker, 2013: 250). Rule-consequentialisms concern with codes of behavior, Hooker thinks, is justified because "morality is to be understood as a social code, a collective enterprise, something people are to pursue together" (2013: 250.). Yet, he also concedes that rival positions like act-consequentialism and deontology also "emerge from attractive general ideas about morality" (Hooker, 2013: 250.).

Likewise, T. M. Scanlon thinks that the appeal of utilitarianism is due to the plausibility of a certain philosophical characterization of the subject matter of

morality. This characterization, which Scanlon refers to as *philosophical utilitarianism*, is the view that "the only fundamental moral facts are facts about individual well-being" (1982: 108). According to Scanlon, the attractiveness of this view accounts for the widespread influence of utilitarian principles. If we start thinking about morality with philosophical utilitarianism, "some form of normative utilitarianism seems to be forced on us as the correct first-order moral theory" (1982: 109). Although, the exact form of utilitarianism, act-, rule- motivation- or scalar-utilitarianism, seems to be undecided by philosophical utilitarianism.

Scanlon's contractualism, on the other hand, is a rival characterization of the subject matter of morality. According to his account, which focuses on moral wrongness; "An act is wrong if its performance under the circumstances would be disallowed by any system of rules for the general regulation of behavior which no one could reasonably reject as a basis for informed, unforced general agreement" (1982: 110). This is intended as a "characterization of the kind of property which moral wrongness is" (Scanlon, 1982: 110.). Interestingly, Scanlon thinks that this characterization is more permissive in the sense that it might, in principle, still lead to first-order utilitarianism, even though he argues that it does not.

This kind of argument is also found in the works of great ethicists of the past. For instance, Darwall thinks that Locke's characterization of morality, as a set of rules that God prescribed for us, leads to a kind of rule-consequentialism (1998: 13). The circumstances in which God has placed humans, most being endowed with egoistic motivations and competing for limited resources, are likely to lead to conflict. However, thankfully God has also commanded us to follow certain rules, which would mitigate the sources of conflict and be beneficial for humanity as a whole. Locke identifies these rules as the source of morality. Thus, his views on the subject matter of morality lead to a certain first-order moral theory, which is rule-consequentialist.

Finally, Mill, as Darwall argues, can be understood as arguing for utilitarianism using a seemingly metaethical premise about the subject matter of morality. He reconstructs Mill's argument in the following way:

(1) Morality, by its very nature, is concerned with what is good from the perspective of the moral community.
(2) What is good from the perspective of the moral community is the greatest amount of what is good to the individuals comprising it.
(3) What is good to any individual is that person's pleasure or happiness.

(Darwall, 1998: 113)

And from these premises we get the following conclusion:

(C) Morality is essentially concerned with maximizing overall happiness.

According to Darwall, (1) functions as a metaethical premise about what morality is. The second premise connects moral good and non-moral good. And the third premise is a hedonistic view of wellbeing. From these premises we get utilitarianism. Therefore, we have yet another example of an argument from the subject matter of morality.

Nevertheless, not everyone agrees that claims about the subject matter of morality are metaethical. Scanlon, for example, thinks that these claims are substantive claims about morality.[28] Making an analogy with the domain of mathematics, he writes, "An overall account [of the subject matter]… of the normative or mathematical domain will itself be a very general normative or mathematical claims" (Scanlon, 2014: 71). To be certain, whether these claims are genuinely metaethical or not depends on the taxonomy of ethics that we accept. However, I deliberately avoid getting into these taxonomical issues since I think there is a more important problem with the case in favor of unification based on arguments from the subject matter of morality, which is that this particular case does not bring about *methodological revision*.

The two previous cases for unification, despite their shortcomings, promised to bring about methodological revision. The normative implications that the epistemic case relied on followed from relatively central components of general metaethical theories.

[28] Interestingly, Scanlon also says that philosophical characterizations of the subject matter of morality are a different kind of claim from first-order moral judgments even though they are substantive.

These general metaethical theories are produced as a result of theoretical philosophy, especially metaphysics, semantics and epistemology. So the epistemic case for unification, if it were successful, would mean that the best methodology of normative ethics also incorporates the methodology that is appropriate for these domains theoretical philosophy, which are presumably different from the methodology of normative ethics. The conceptual case, on the other hand, required that normative ethicists use, along with their standard methodology, the methodology appropriate for discovering conceptual truths. One possible way of doing this is to build chains of essences in order to discover mediate conceptual truths, which, Cuneo and Shafer-Landau (2014: 433-435) suggest, is how we can discover moral fixed points. Alternatively, if it is immediate conceptual truths that we think are most relevant for normative ethics, then we will simply think about whether certain propositions are true in virtue of their constituent concepts. Incorporation of any of these methods would lead to a revision in the methodology of normative ethics. Therefore, the two previous cases for unification have methodological bite.

However, this is not true of the case at hand. The way to evaluating claims about the subject matter of morality seems to be the same as the way we commonly evaluate general substantive moral principles. In both cases, we think about whether the characterization of the subject matter or the principle is directly plausible and see if it leads to intuitive consequences.

A possible way to see how arguments for the subject matter do not lead to methodological revision is to observe that the proponents of the traditional view of metaethics can still employ these arguments if they think of claims about the subject matter as very general first-order claims. Consider Darwall's reconstruction of Mill's argument. Darwall claimed the first premise, that morality, by its very nature, is concerned with what is good from the perspective of the moral community, is a metaethical claim. Imagine that a proponent of the traditional view disagrees and thinks that the first premise is in fact a first-order ethical claim. In this scenario, she can still use the same argument and, also, use the same methods to evaluate the first premise. She will think about whether it is directly plausible and also see if it leads to intuitive consequences. Thus, there will be no methodological difference between her and her opponent who endorses the unification of ethics.

Moreover, claims about the subject matter of morality do not follow from general metaethical theories like different brands of naturalism, non-naturalism, constructivism and so on. Neither does there seem to be unavoidable or natural affinities between different general metaethical theories and characterization of the subject matter of morality. Naturalists often emphasize that the first-order theories they use to illustrate how the naturalization of the ethical can take place are replaceable with other first-order ethical theories. If the very general ethical principles that make up those first-order theories are not unavoidable components of different naturalist theories, I do not see why certain characterizations of the subject matter of morality would be indispensable to any of these views. Similarly, non-naturalist forms of realism or different brands of anti-realism also do not appear to be inescapably linked to particular characterizations of the subject matter of morality. For this reason, we do not have the same kind of methodological revision that was required by the epistemic case required by the case from claims about the subject matter.

As a result, depending on the taxonomic choices we make in delineating different subfields of ethics, arguments from the subject matter of morality may or may not be arguments for normative conclusions from metaethical premises. However, even if these arguments turn out to be hybrid arguments, they do not *change* the way we do normative ethics. Without any methodological bite, the issue just seems to be one about labels. Consequently, if this is the only promising case to be made in favor of unification in ethics, then we do not need to be too concerned with unification since it will not make a difference in the way we pursue the normative ethical project but merely change how we label certain arguments and claims.

3.2 Arguments from Metaphysical Identity Claims

Metaphysical identity claims are another kind of metaethical claim that have manifest normative implications. Such claims are most commonly found in formulations of naturalistic moral realism where it is argued that normative facts are identical with ordinary natural properties. For instance, it might be claimed that the property of rightness is identical with the property of maximizing utility. The first-order upshot of

this claim is clearly a form of utilitarianism. Thus, this kind of reductive naturalist position wears its first-order commitments on its sleeve. However, the important question is whether these claims can be used to settle first-order disagreements.

It has been long contended that the way to discover normative-natural identities is through first-order inquiry. Brink (1989: 177-178), for instance, suggests that "Determination of just which natural facts and properties constitute which moral facts and properties is a matter of substantive moral theory, just as which natural facts and properties constitute which economic facts and properties is a matter of substantive economic theory". Similarly, Street argues that a second-order version of her Darwinian Dilemma applies to naturalistic value realism precisely because "in trying to figure out what those identities are, we will have to rely very heavily on our existing evaluative judgements" (2006: 140). If this is the case, then these identity claims do not provide an external way of settling normative dispute but rather they will be the subjects of the same debates.

Nevertheless, the fact that philosophers usually arrive at these identity claims through substantive ethical theorizing does not guarantee that this is the only way of doing so. We can have further assurance if we think about how to interpret metaphysical identity claims in metaethics. A good proposal on how to understand such claims is Barry Maguire's suggestion that they are hybrid claims. Consider a thesis like *metaphysical utilitarianism*:

Metaphysical Utilitarianism: To be the right thing to do is to be the thing that would maximize expected utility.

(Maguire, 2018: 436)

Maguire thinks this kind of claim is best understood as "complex, obtaining in virtue of an ethical thesis and an otherwise ethically neutral metaphysical thesis (which may well be non-ethical)" (2018: 439). Thus, he suggests metaphysical utilitarianism is a "hybrid of UTILITARIANISM – the thesis that, necessarily an action is right if and only if it is utility maximizing – and some metaphysical thesis, perhaps IDENTITY, the thesis that necessarily coextensive properties are identical, or perhaps some

asymmetric explanatory relationship" (Maguire, 2018: 439). Moreover, Maguire holds that the evidence for metaphysical utilitarianism can be divided into distinct two sets corresponding to the two distinct theses constituting the hybrid thesis. So the set of evidence for the ethical component will be ethical, while the set of evidence for the metaphysical component will be philosophical or metaethical. Lastly, he thinks that the metaphysical component is ethically neutral and the ethical component is neutral regarding metaphysical matters such as whether rightness is identical with right-making properties or whether it supervenes on them.

This account has the advantage of explaining why it is commonly thought that discovering normative-natural identities requires first-order theorizing.[29] The ethical component of the hybrid thesis makes it necessary to do so. Yet, Maguire's account also casts doubt on the case to be made for unification from metaphysical identity claims. Since the metaphysical components of these hybrid claims are ethically neutral, the ethical implications follow solely from the ethical components. Hence, even though metaphysical utilitarianism entails first-order utilitarianism, this is merely because the latter is a part of the former claim. Therefore, metaphysical utilitarianism does not provide external support for first-order utilitarianism. Rather first-order evidence supports identity claims like metaphysical utilitarianism. So, according to this account of metaethical identity claims, such claims cannot be used to settle first-order disputes.

Thus, according to the widespread view that normative-natural identities can only be discovered through first-order inquiry and Maguire's interpretation of these claims, metaphysical identity claims do not help with resolving first-order disputes. Admittedly, Maguire's account is only one interpretation of claims about normative-natural identities. However, it is quite plausible and there are other accounts that hold that these identity claims are ethical.[30] Hence, there is little prospect of a successful case in favor of unification based on normative-natural identity claims.

[29] While Street appeals to cases where naturalists rely on ordinary ethical thinking for discovering normative-natural identities and makes an inference to the conclusion that there is no other way of doing so, Maguire's insight can show that the first-order Darwinian Dilemma directly undermines the ethical component of these hybrid claims. This guarantees that naturalists face the dilemma.

[30] Chris Heathwood (2012: 11) also provides a number of reasons for thinking that reductionist identity claims, including constructivist claims, are ethical claims: "(i) It immediately and obviously entails (together with some empirical facts) all sorts of claims that are uncontroversially evaluative (such as

3.3 The Semantic Case for Unification

The final case that I want to consider is based on metaethical claims about the meanings of ethical terms.[31] Analytical utilitarianism, which is sometimes attributed to Jeremy Bentham, is one such claim. It states that the word "right" just means "conducive to general happiness". It is about the semantics of an ethical term and, thus, would be considered a metaethical claim according almost all characterizations of metaethics.[32] Furthermore, it seems to imply first-order utilitarianism. Thus, this metaethical claim looks like it has significant first-order implications.

Nevertheless, there is one well-known problem with these claims. Facts about meaning are essentially about what people say and do. If people say and do certain things, then it might be the case that the word "right", in their mouths, means "conducive to general happiness". But why should this matter for what we *ought* to do? The normative force that we associate with ethical claims is lacking. Perhaps, upon reflection we will come to think that utilitarianism is an unacceptable moral theory and demand that people change the way they talk. If someone objects to our moral views by urging us to pay attention to how people use ethical words, we will shrug and ask why we should care.[33]

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that honesty is a value). (ii) It can play the same sort of role that the uncontroversially moral Rossian principle above can play in explaining which particular things have which moral features. (iii) Anyone who asserts that what it is to be valuable is to be something we would desire to desire would surely seem to be taking an evaluative stand; we would not take such a claim to be morally neutral. (iv) This identity claim about the property of being a value is not the sort of claim that a moral nihilist could accept. (v) We have an intuitive grasp of when statements fall on the ought side (or value side) or Hume's is-ought (or fact-value) divide, and we would surely put the claim that to be valuable just is to be something we would desire to desire on the value side. Finally, (vi) compare it to the identity claim that to be a sensation of pain is to be a c- fiber firing, which we would classify as a claim about the mind, a mental claim. All of this suggests that the identity claim that to be valuable is to be something we would desire to desire is itself a claim about value, an evaluative claim". These reasons support the idea that these identities are discovered through ordinary ethical thinking.

[31] The problems with this kind of views are well known at this point but they are still one of the first things that come to mind when people think about metaethical positions with normative implications. Therefore, I discuss these claims for sake of completeness, even though I do not add anything new to the existing complaints.

[32] McPherson writes, "Analytical utilitarianism is an account of the semantics of a central piece of moral vocabulary, and hence a paradigmatic metaethical theory" (2008: 3).

[33] The same can also be said about implications of metasematic views. For example, imagine that we are trying to find out what falls under the extension of the term "right". Suppose there are two properties, P1 and P2, that are equally fit to be meant by the word according to how people use it. However, suppose that P1 is reference magnetic, it is intrinsically more eligible to be meant. This can be the case, perhaps, because P1 is metaphysically more fundamental. Therefore, even though both P1

Furthermore, such claims imply that people who adhere to rival ethical views are misusing central ethical terms like rightness. For example, consider a contractualist who thinks that a particular action that is conducive to general happiness is still wrong because it would be disallowed by principles that could not be reasonably rejected. An analytical utilitarian must say that the contractualist is misusing the word "wrong" because it means "not conducive to general happiness" and the action in question is conducive to general happiness. Yet, it seems extremely uncharitable to suggest that the contractualist is misusing the word "wrong". It might be the case that he is mistaken ethically but to suggest that he does not know how to use the word is too uncharitable to be acceptable to most.

For these reasons, semantic views about the meanings of ethical terms and their supposed normative implications also fail to provide reasons for unification. They lack the normative force that we expect from ethical claims and they are implausible in the first place.

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and P2 fit general usage equally well, the referent of "right" is P1. Consequently, if an action is P2 but not P1, then we will not say that it is right. Yet, metaphysical fundamentality does not appear to be morally relevant. Therefore, we might resist accepting that an action that is P2 but not P1 is not right. There appears to be two alternatives for resolving this problem (see Väyrynen (2019: 203-204)). First, we can say that what falls under the extension of the term right is not relevant for the question of what we ought to do. Alternatively, we can have a normative relevance requirement for metasematic views for ethical terms, which states that a factor determines what falls under the extension of an ethical terms iff that factor is normatively relevant. If we accept the first option, then metasemantics is not relevant for answering first-order ethical questions. If, on the other hand, we accept the second option, then metasemantic views that apply to ethical terms are in need of help from first-order ethical theorizing.

CONCLUSION

In doing normative ethics, one occasionally gets the feeling that some questions would be easier to answer if we first get a better grasp of the nature of ethics. This is so despite the fact that it is usually taught that metaethics and normative ethics are independent enterprises. This feeling is what got me interested in this project in the first place. I hoped that metaethics would provide resources to settle at least some of the long-standing disagreements in normative ethics. This hope proved to be mostly in vain.

I argued that the five cases in favor of unifying ethical methodology that looked the most promising are far from compelling. To some philosophers this will be good news. When discussing the project with people working in normative ethics, telling them I was interested in whether normative ethicists should be concerned with metaethics, I often received the reaction, “I hope not!” Maybe this thesis will provide some comfort to these people and others who adopt the traditional approach to normative ethics.

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