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"Reason begins when discourses organized with the goal of being right cease, begins where equality is recognized; not an equality decreed by law or force, not a passively recognized equality, but an equality in act, verified, at each step by marchers who, in their constant attention to themselves and in their endless revolving around the truth, find the right sentences to make themselves understood by others."

Jacques Ranciere

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

As undergraduate students, we have the opportunity to explore subjects we are passionate about alongside our learned professors and inquisitive colleagues. And while we may interact with one another inside and outside the classroom, we do not often have the opportunity to view the work of our fellow philosophy students, to witness just how much our peers have grown through their engagement with philosophy.

Students are typically so preoccupied with deadlines and juggling various responsibilities that we often only get the chance to reflect on what we have learned once the dust of a hectic semester has settled. Yet it is in such acts of reflection that we are able to appreciate how studying philosophy provides us with the tools to tease out the nuances of our experiences and make subtle connections between ideas and events.

The impressive papers featured in this journal illustrate the high quality of work undergraduate students of philosophy are able to achieve. I think what makes *The Oracle* such a rewarding project is that it offers us a rare glimpse, a moment suspended in print, of the journeys a handful of our peers have undertaken in their philosophical endeavours. Such journeys truly illustrate the meaning of York University's motto, *tentanda via*[1], and I hope that in reading this journal you enjoy yourself as you travel alongside the students who ventured to leave their own footprints upon challenging paths of thought.

Sincerely,

Sarah Tauriello
Editor-in-Chief, *The Oracle*
York University, 2015.

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[1] The way must be tried.

Interpretive Pluralism & Morality in Art

CALEB DEWEY

In this essay, I propose a revision to the ongoing debate about whether moral disvalue can contribute to aesthetic value in artworks. To do so, I begin by formalizing the arguments provided by the leading opponents in the debate, Noël Carroll and A. W. Eaton. I find that both Carroll and Eaton share a common, flawed premise - that there is a single internal perspective of an artwork. I then argue that this interpretive monism cannot be true by creating a schematic method to reverse or eliminate the moral value of the alleged internal perspective of an artwork. To show that this does not render the debate fruitless, I revise a weakening of Carroll and Eaton's arguments via interpretive pluralism. I conclude by investigating the consequences of interpretive pluralism on aesthetic warrant, another shared (and suspect) feature of Eaton and Carroll's arguments.

1. Introduction

Since *Robust Immoralism* was first published in 2012, only a few have challenged A. W. Eaton's compelling argument for immoralism. Noël Carroll tried and failed in 2013: all his criticisms arose from misunderstandings about robust immoralism (Eaton 2013). In Section 2, I formalize both Eaton and Carroll's arguments, revealing that both commit to interpretive monism. In Section 3, I schematically defeat this position and replace it with interpretive pluralism. In Section 4, I demonstrate that interpretive pluralism actually implies aesthetic amoralism, using examples from *The Triumph of the Will*, *The Dark Knight*, and *Mad Men*. In Section 5, I revise Carroll and Eaton's arguments, transforming a debate about aesthetic immoralism into a weaker yet nonetheless

interesting debate about interpretive immoralism. Finally, in Section 6, I conclude by speculating about the consequences of aesthetic amoralism and interpretive pluralism on the ambiguous notion of aesthetic warrant.

2. Summary

The debate between aesthetic moralism and aesthetic immoralism is an ancient one that has long favored the former. In *The Ethical Criticism of Art* (1998), Berys Gaut presented one of the first modern moderate arguments for aesthetic moralism, which he called "ethicism". Rather than arguing that an artwork is totally defective if some part of it is immoral, as Leo Tolstoy infamously argued, Gaut argued that only the part of the artwork that is immoral is aesthetically defective. Using the terminology of Eaton (2012), we can distill Gaut's argument into the following form:

1. An artwork is aesthetically defective in virtue of **R** iff it prescribes a response to **R** that is unwarranted;
2. A sympathetic response to or endorsement of an immoral perspective is unwarranted;
3. An artwork is aesthetically defective in virtue of prescribing a sympathetic response to or endorsement of a perspective if the perspective is immoral (from 1 and 2).

Eaton (2012) agrees with the first premise but takes issue with the second. She argues that Gaut has committed what she calls "the moralistic fallacy". That is, she argues that there are two kinds of warrants: aesthetic (which are reasons related to the object itself) and moral/prudential (which are reasons unrelated to the object itself). According to Eaton, Gaut equivocates them, thus invalidating his argument. Eaton argues instead that:

1. An artwork is aesthetically defective in virtue of **R** iff it prescribes a response to **R** that is unwarranted;

2. A sympathetic response to or endorsement of an immoral perspective may be aesthetically warranted;
3. An artwork may not be aesthetically defective in virtue of prescribing a sympathetic response to or endorsement of a perspective if the perspective is immoral (from 1 and 2).

Interestingly, according to Eaton (2012), Carroll (1996), her primary opponent and the leading proponent of aesthetic moralism, should agree with this argument. After all, moderate moralism only implies "that a moral defect in an artwork can *sometimes* [but not always] count as an aesthetic defect" (Eaton 2012; italics and bracketed exposition added). In other words, moderate moralism is subject to the valence constraint (Harold 2008). We can formalize the second component of Carroll's argument as follows:

1. An artwork is aesthetically valuable in virtue of **R** iff it prescribes a response to **R** that is warranted;
2. A sympathetic response to or endorsement of an immoral perspective is not aesthetically warranted;
3. An artwork is not aesthetically valuable in virtue of prescribing a sympathetic response to or endorsement of a perspective if the perspective is immoral (from 1 and 2).

Notice that not being aesthetically valuable does not imply being aesthetically defective; it may be either neutral or defective in accordance with the valence constraint. Eaton (2012) follows Justin D'Arms and Daniel Jacobson (2000) in suggesting a justification for the second premise. They suggest that emotions may have "moral shape", that an affective state can only respond to objects with certain moral qualities. For example, admiration has a "moral shape" such that one can admire someone as long as that person is honest, respectful, responsible, etc. Eaton herself does not hold that emotions have a moral shape and so she

diverges from Carroll on the second premise in favor of the following:

1. An artwork is aesthetically valuable in virtue of **R** iff it prescribes a response to **R** that is warranted;
2. A sympathetic response to or endorsement of an immoral perspective may be aesthetically warranted;
3. An artwork may be aesthetically valuable in virtue of prescribing a sympathetic response to or endorsement of a perspective if the perspective is immoral (from 1 and 2).

Eaton (2012) justifies her second premise on an empirical basis by adducing the rough hero, a kind of protagonist who does not simply suffer from a deficiency of heroic qualities, as in the antihero, but rather has an abundance of villainous, morally unacceptable qualities. The viewer empathizes with the rough hero to the extent that his or her non-moral approval influences his or her moral approval causing a contamination or tension that makes rough hero works (RHWs) so aesthetically valuable. Thus, she not only concludes that immoral art can be good art, but that immoral art can be good in virtue of its very immorality.

In Humean fashion, Eaton creates an argument for immoralism from observation, particularly relying on her experience with *The Sopranos*. The result is sufficiently compelling to allow for Eaton (2013) to soundly rebut Carroll (2013). However, throughout this debate between the moralists and the immoralists neither side has questioned the legitimacy of the first premise, which appears invariantly in each of their arguments. Thus, although Eaton makes a compelling argument for the second premise, her conclusion is weakened by deficiencies in the first, which I will criticize in the next section.

3. Interpretive Pluralism

In Eaton (2013) and Carroll (2013), Eaton and Carroll debate back and forth whether *The Sopranos* is immoral. Both accuse each other of the so-called "narrative fallacy" when the other tries to support his or her interpretation by selecting scenes and episodes from the series as evidence. In doing so, they dance around the frailties of the first premise without addressing them.

The first premise holds that artworks can prescribe responses. Carroll (1996), Gaut (1998), and Eaton (2012) all justify this by positing that an artwork can have a perspective, which is a normative attitude towards its diegetic elements. It is at this point that all three authors become confused. While it is widely held that there are multiple ways of interpreting the descriptive elements of an artwork (Stecker 1995), the authors fail to recognize that there are multiple ways of interpreting the normative elements of an artwork as well. Eaton and Carroll disagreeing about the perspective of *The Sopranos* is an example of interpretive pluralism rather than of "narrative fallacy".

Attempts to rescue their implicit perspectival monism[2] suffer all of the problems of efforts to assert interpretive monism. Authorial intention as a means of fixing the interpretation would commit the Intentional Fallacy, according to the New Criticism. Even if it did not, authorial intention is often inaccessible because the artist may not be alive, known, or otherwise accessible. Lastly, even the author himself or herself may have multiple interpretations of the perspective of his or her artwork (e.g. *The Dark Knight* by Christopher Nolan). Reader-response as a means of fixing the interpretation would fail to support perspectival monism for obvious reasons. That is, because there are multiple readers it is almost inevitable that there

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[2] Note that perspectival monism is monism about the perspective of an artwork itself, not about the perspective of authors or readers.

are multiple interpretations of the perspective of an artwork.

Lastly, we could try to defend perspectival monism on the basis of goodness-of-fit: the coherence, correspondence, and completeness of an interpretation of an artwork's perspective (Hirsch 1967, Eaton 1988). As I will expound upon in Section 6, under this definition, goodness-of-fit bears many similarities to aesthetic warrant. Goodness-of-fit is an important standard for establishing many aspects regarding interpretations but works against any argument for perspectival monism.

Consider *The Dark Knight*. The first perspective advocates the dedicated protagonist, Bruce Wayne as the Batman. The Batman foils one of the Joker's climactic plans, leading to the incarceration and momentary disappointment of the antagonist. Furthermore, the Batman is portrayed as heroic for sacrificing himself on behalf of the people of Gotham. Nevertheless, there is an equally (at least approximately) well-fitting second perspective, which advocates the dedicated antagonist, the Joker. The Joker achieves all but one of his goals and ultimately succeeds in corrupting Lucius Fox, Harvey Dent, James Gordon, and even the Batman. Furthermore, he is portrayed as much more philosophically competent than any other character in the film, to the point that none of the other characters seem to understand him. Most importantly, the Joker's psyche is so well structured (intentionally, it would seem) that he transcends failure, disappointment, and fear. Many fans and even some critics have suggested that *The Dark Knight* paints the Joker as a glorifying portrait of Nietzsche's übermensch.

In this case, there are two interpretations of the perspective of *The Dark Knight* and both seem to fit just as well as the other. In fact, ever since the Joker became prominent in the Batman mythology, a multi-layered theme of dualism has emerged. *The Dark Knight* extends the signature dualism of this mythology to its normative elements. Thus, knowing the aesthetic reputation of *The*

Dark Knight, it should not be surprising that it readily supports a perspectival dualism.

Since there is no way to entirely dispel of perspectival pluralism from all or any artworks, the first premise must be revised to say that interpretations of artworks, rather than artworks themselves, can prescribe responses. Thus, interpretive pluralism leads to perspectival pluralism, which complicates the (im)moralism debate. We will study its implications in the next section.

4. Moral Valence of Artworks

Since for any artwork there are multiple interpretations of its perspective, one must first quantify over the set of interpretations before making any claim about the diegetic or normative elements of an artwork. An unquantified judgment of an artwork is meaningless. Thus, when Carroll (2013) argues that his interpretation of *The Sopranos* is moral and Eaton (2013) argues that her interpretation of *The Sopranos* is immoral, there is no genuine disagreement. They can argue about the goodness-of-fit of each interpretation but, as with most if not all RHWs, this will probably not result in a better fit for either interpretation[3].

This leads to the rather difficult question: can an artwork itself be immoral? Is there a way of settling, at least in an approximate sense, the perspective of an artwork such that the remaining interpretations are either all moral or all immoral? As we found in the previous section, the best way of settling would be to evaluate on goodness-of-fit (coherence, correspondence, completeness). So we can refine our question to ask: are there only moral or immoral well-fitting interpretations of some artworks?

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[3] In fact, the perspectival pluralism of RHWs is largely, or at least partly, responsible for the tension or contamination of the genre that Eaton so dearly enjoys.

From *The Sopranos* and *The Dark Knight*, it is obvious that not all artworks have only moral or immoral well-fitting interpretations. Ignoring authorial intent, we can extend this result to all artworks. Consider any artwork that has a popular (often guided by authorial-intent) interpretation with a certain moral valence. In other words, it is widely held that the normative elements of the artwork constitute a certain perspective. An excellent example of this is *The Triumph of the Will* during WWII. Mostly because it was made for Nazi propaganda, the film is widely held to have fascist normative elements, a Nazi perspective.

In many ways, though, to the thoughtful modern viewer, *The Triumph of the Will* appears to be a caricature of a fearsome Nazi Germany as a gullible nation motivated by the vacuous rhetoric of a self-obsessed megalomaniac. Consider, for example, Rudolf Hess's facetiously empty line in the conclusion of the film: "Die Partei ist Hitler! Hitler aber ist Deutschland wie Deutschland Hitler ist!"[4] The response from the crowd is a cultish cacophony of cheering and hailing. Thus, ignoring authorial intent[5], we can interpret *The Triumph of the Will* as having an anti-Nazi perspective because, to us, it highlights the weakness of Nazism. What enables us to reverse the moral valence of the intended perspective of *The Triumph of the Will* is how unconvincing it is.

A more modern example demonstrates this concisely: *Mad Men*. The sexism, racism, and homophobia that was portrayed and even recommended in *Mad Men* invoked virtually no controversy. Even though the characters would discriminate and then continue about their lives without consequence, modern viewers considered its perspective to be a critical caricature of the discriminatory thought of the time because their moral reasoning was so weak (and because of authorial intent). Had *Mad Men* been released

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[4] Translated: ``The Party is Hitler! But Hitler is Germany just as Germany is Hitler!''

[5] This may be true even if we consider authorial intent.

in 1950s or 1960s, however, it seems likely that few, if anyone, would have considered its perspective to be a caricature at all. The reasons the characters give for their discrimination are the reasons people of the time gave and so satire would not at all be expected by the anachronistic viewer of *Mad Men*. Thus, it is quite apparent that we can interpret any artwork to have the opposite valence of the authorial intent and/or common interpretation(s) by simply considering it to be a caricature, provided the normative reasoning of its diegetic elements is not sufficiently convincing.

This is why the Joker of *The Dark Knight* is not a caricature of moral nihilism. His subtly compelling arguments, übermensch nature, and self-control are highly compelling, at least to viewers in the present. When our interpretation of the perspective of the artwork is convincing in its endorsement of an alternative moral stance, we should be wary of calling it immoral[6]. After all, would we call the input of a moral nihilist in a philosophical discourse immoral? In a discourse about normative ethics, is it the case that all but at most one philosopher is behaving immorally for suggesting an incorrect ethical system? This seems bizarre since, if it were true, ethical discourse would be morally reprehensible when it is almost universally considered to be essential to moral and philosophical progress. Similarly, there is no good reason for excluding a convincing interpretation of a perspective of some artwork, such as *The Dark Knight*, from the dialectical method[7]. Thus, we ought to withhold

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[6] Note that Eaton (2012) would agree. She argues that an artwork is immoral if the perspective of an artwork causes nonmoral approval to contaminate moral approval, as opposed to simply persuading one to adopt a new moral stance.

[7] One could even argue that fiction constitutes an important part the public dialectic.

moral judgment of a convincing interpretation[8] of a certain artwork's perspective.

To summarize, if there is an interpretation of the perspective of an artwork that is morally unconvincing, we can reverse the moral valence of the perspective by interpreting it to be a caricature. If, on the other hand, the interpretation of the perspective of an artwork is morally convincing, then we ought to withhold judgment and engage it via the dialectical method[9]. This algorithmically demonstrates that an artwork itself does not have a moral valence, regardless of whether it appears convincing or unconvincing.

5. Revising Carroll & Eaton

So much for art being neither moral nor immoral. We have drifted quite far from the center of the debate between Carroll and Eaton. No longer can the debate be about the morality or immorality of artworks; it must be about the morality or immorality of various interpretations of artworks[10]. This weakens the debate but allows it to remain interesting. Eaton's objective was to show that nonmoral approval can contaminate moral approval[11], thereby constituting an aesthetic achievement. This can remain true *but only within* a given interpretation. The same (negated, of course) is true of Carroll's objectives.

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[8] When I say that an interpretation is convincing, I do not mean that the interpretation is convincing in the sense of being a good fit but rather that what is interpreted of the artwork's perspective is convincing.

[9] Much more could be said about this latter point, but I avoid doing so at the pain of digressing.

[10] Note that Tolstoy's extremist moralism is actually spared by these arguments since he considers an artwork to be immoral iff an immoral action is depicted therein. For many good reasons, we do not consider this position.

[11] Note that such interpretations are unconvincing with respect to moral reason (contamination is irrational). Thus, the valence of contaminating artworks, such as RHWs, can be reversed by caricaturization.

Thus, we need only shift this notion of contamination from the perspective of an artwork onto the perspective-interpretations of an artwork. The revision of Eaton's argument is formalized as follows:

1. An artwork is aesthetically valuable to an interpreter **I** in virtue of **R** iff **I** interprets that the artwork prescribes a response to **R** that is warranted;
2. A sympathetic response to or (contaminated [12]) endorsement of an immoral perspective may be aesthetically warranted;
3. An artwork may be aesthetically valuable to an interpreter **I** in virtue of prescribing a sympathetic response to or (contaminated) endorsement of a perspective if the perspective as interpreted by **I** is immoral (from 1 and 2).

The second premise is identical to Eaton's; to produce Carroll's argument, we need only negate this. On the other hand, the first premise is altered to convert both authors' indefensible commitments against aesthetic amoralism and to interpretive monism into more acceptable commitments to aesthetic amoralism and interpretive pluralism. Respectively, interpretive immoralism and moralism refines Eaton's and Carroll's argument in a way that preserves the spirit of robust immoralism and moderate moralism even though it has qualitatively vanquished both.

It is important to note that the notion of aesthetic warrant has changed in this definition to be part of the interpretation, not of the artwork. After all, monism about aesthetic warrant is as problematic as interpretive monism for the same reasons [13]. However, the viewer or reader interpreting an artwork as prescribing a warranted

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[12] We explicitly distinguish a contaminated endorsement from a philosophical endorsement to avoid conflating with the convincing interpreted perspectives I mentioned in the previous section.

[13] I would like to thank Ian Jarvie for pressing me on this point.

response is much weaker than the artwork itself prescribing a warranted response. That is, in the former, one relativistically judges (based on their relativistic interpretation) that his or her own response is warranted whereas, in the latter, one absolutely judges whether anyone's response is warranted. Thus, aesthetic warrant in this sense cannot be used to evaluate the responses of others, due to the relativism of interpretation. There may be ways to rescue a stronger sense of aesthetic warrant[14] but that would be beyond the scope of this paper.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the debate about the aesthetics of immoral artworks has changed into a debate about the aesthetics of immoral interpretations of amoral artworks. The most important consequence of this development is that Carroll and Eaton must make significant revisions to the kinds of arguments that they produce (e.g. references to "the narrative fallacy" must cease). Eaton and Carroll's core ideas remain but the presentations and arguments thereof must be altered significantly. Carroll suffers most because the majority of his arguments rely on denying the validity of Eaton's interpretations, which we have found to be a fool's errand. Perhaps most important is that we have arrived at a point as far from Tolstoy's extremist moralism as possible: that artworks are intrinsically amoral and interpretively pluralist and those interpretations themselves can be aesthetically valuable even if there are immoral prescriptions (according to Carroll) and sometimes because there are immoral prescriptions (according to Eaton).

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[14] One possible way to rescue some fragment of aesthetic warrant may be to weight it with goodness-of-fit.

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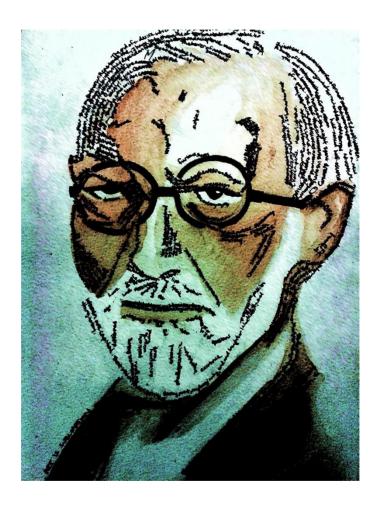
Commentary

JESSICA ELLIS

Caleb Dewey's distillation of the debate between aesthetic moralism and aesthetic immoralism introduced by Gaut's moderate "ethicism" provides the reader with a well-framed beginning to an intriguing aesthetic investigation. Highlights of the paper include Dewey's interest in the "moral shape" of emotions or "that an affective state can only respond to objects with certain moral qualities." Eaton does not hold true to this idea, yet she believes one can have empathy for an antihero who is immoral. This admission means that being emotionally affected by such a character is indeed tied to our morality. Put differently, there is a certain amount of morality in an antihero which allows us to approve of his or her immoral actions enough to be empathetic. It would seem that Eaton is in the wrong by denying "moral shape" but she rescues her point by showing that such an account is not robust enough to account for the tensions between conflicting emotions present in immoral works. Moreover, interpretations of artworks, rather than artwork objects themselves, can prescribe responses.

Dewey provides examples such as *Mad Men* and *Triumph of the Will* in his paper, which yield different interpretations. There seems to be a difference in perspectives often because the notion of time underpins the relevance of certain normative features of a work of art. *Mad Men* is seen as more sexist today because education has progressed beyond that time period in which the show takes place. It would be interesting to explore how time features into interpretive pluralism, though it is not necessary for Dewey's case. I believe he is correct in advocating for a change in the first premise because only interpretations, not objects themselves can warrant aesthetic claims. Further, art cannot have static internal perspective because this would negate the transformative

potential art to be viewed by different perspectives, which empirically does occur.

Supervenience and Non-Reductive Moral Realism

ERIC WILKINSON

Ethical supervenience concerns the relationship between descriptive and moral properties. Non-reductive moral realism posits moral supervenience to uphold independently existent moral properties. Consequently, supervenience has been the basis of attempts to undermine non-reductive moral realism. Reductive ethical naturalists argue that distinctions between descriptive and moral properties are mistaken. They suggest that descriptive and moral terms designate the same properties, justifying ethical reductionism. Alternatively, anti-realist arguments contest the logical/conceptual necessity of supervenience. The multiply realizable nature of moral properties is said to contradict supervenience.

Despite reductionist claims, the necessarily coextensive nature of properties does not require that they be collapsed into a single entity; supervenience may be explained through the content of normative properties. As for the conceptual challenge, the necessity of supervenience is not logical, but ethical. Furthermore, that some non-moral features of situations are to be discounted during moral evaluations as a matter of logical necessity cannot be accounted for. Ultimately the metaphysical and logical/conceptual supervenience challenges pose no threat to non-reductive moral realism.

Supervenience refers to a particular relationship between sets of properties wherein something cannot differ in terms of the supervening properties without also differing with respect to the properties they supervene upon. That is to say, when a set of properties X supervenes on another set of properties Y, two things cannot have a

different set of X-properties without also differing with respect to their Y-properties. In areas of philosophy such as aesthetics, philosophy of mind, and moral philosophy, supervenience is used to describe the relationship between the objective, "natural" properties of something and "non-natural" properties such as aesthetic or moral properties. In aesthetics, the issue of forgery arises from questions regarding the relationship between the natural properties of an artwork and said artwork's aesthetic properties (Meiland 115). If a forgery exactly replicates an existing artwork so that the copy possesses all of the same natural properties as the original, can the two artworks differ in terms of their aesthetic properties? If aesthetic properties supervene on the natural properties of an artwork, the aesthetic value of the identical artworks should be equivalent.

Moral philosophy faces a similar challenge in explaining the relationship between the moral and non-moral properties of a given action or situation. Suppose we have two cases of homicide that are identical with respect to their non-moral properties. Just as it would be inconsistent to render different aesthetic verdicts when considering two artworks with identical natural properties, so too would it be spurious to produce two different moral verdicts when considering cases that are alike in all relevant non-moral respects. Furthermore, for there to be moral progress or change with regard to a situation or person there must be a corresponding change in non-moral properties. A change in the moral status of the homicides under consideration would require a change in the non-moral circumstances of the acts. If it comes to light that one or both of the homicides were committed in self-defence, this difference in non-moral facts may alter the moral facts of the situation. Similarly, to try and describe a moral change in the character of an individual or institution without indicating a change in the non-moral world would not make sense. Encapsulated in this concept of moral supervenience is the need for moral philosophy to explain

the nature of the connection between moral and non-moral properties.

Attempts to describe the relation between moral and non-moral properties have been made by moral philosophers of different persuasions. Reductive ethical naturalists such as Frank Jackson argue that the distinction between moral and natural properties is a mistake, and that "moral and natural terms designate the same features of the world" (434). Alternatively, expressivists like Simon Blackburn reject the existence of real moral properties by suggesting that morality is a human construct designed with the function "to choose, commend, rank, approve, or forbid things on the basis on their natural properties" (*Essays in Quasi-Realism* 137). Supervenience provides the basis for two separate challenges to non-reductive moral realism, which each roughly correspond to either reductive ethical naturalism or expressivism. These two challenges, classified by David Enoch as relating to "specific supervenience" and "general supervenience" respectively (142-143), are distinguishable on the basis of their modality. The "specific supervenience" challenge, associated with reductive ethical naturalists like Jackson, argues that it is metaphysically preferable to explain supervenience by taking a reductive approach. The "general supervenience" challenge articulated by Blackburn instead contends that the logical/conceptual necessity of supervenience precludes any but an expressivist explanation. Nonetheless, in further examining the nature of these challenges to non-reductive moral realism, it becomes clear that a non-reductive, realist account of moral supervenience is not only plausible, but is in some ways superior to the solutions offered by both reductive ethical naturalism and expressivism.

Metaphysical Supervenience Challenge

Jackson presents the supervenience relation between moral and natural properties, the latter of which he refers to as "descriptive properties," through the following formulation (449):

(S) For all w and w*, if w and w* are exactly alike descriptively then they are exactly alike ethically.

As a reductionist, Jackson hopes to demonstrate that ethical properties are descriptive properties. He asserts that "ethical nature without descriptive nature is impossible (an evil act, for example, must involve death, or pain or . . .). And, for each such world, there will be a sentence containing only descriptive terms that gives that nature in full" (451). For an ethical sentence (E) that is true in some world there is a corresponding descriptive sentence (D) that expresses its full nature. As Jackson notes: "E entails and is entailed by D . . . for any ethical predicate there is a purely descriptive one that is necessarily coextensive with it" (Ibid.). It follows from the necessarily coextensive nature of ethical and descriptive predicates that ethical properties are in fact descriptive properties. Jackson thus derives from supervenience a basis for reductive ethical naturalism.

The crucial problem with this argument for reductionism lies in how it deals with the identity of coextensive properties. It does not follow from the fact that two properties are necessarily coextensive that they must be collapsed into a single property. Something may possess the property of being the number two and the property of being an even prime; although these properties are necessarily coextensive they are in fact distinct (Enoch 137). Even if a reductionist is content in biting the bullet and arguing that the properties of being the number two and being an even prime are the same, they must provide a further reason for accepting the solitary identity of necessarily coextensive properties for their objection to remain significant.

At its core, the reductionist's objection is a matter of "ontological parsimony" (139). The methodological procedure of not unnecessarily multiplying entities results in the rejection of the existence of independent moral properties. To fully parry Occam's razor, the non-reductive moral realist ought to provide an argument for the indispensability of independent moral properties. Enoch's

answer is to suggest that normative properties are indispensable for deliberation. Deliberation is here understood as "an attempt to eliminate arbitrariness by discovering (normative) reasons, and it is impossible in a believed absence of such reasons to be discovered" (74). This line of argument depends on Enoch's assertion that human beings are essentially deliberative creatures, a point he galvanizes through the suggestion that rejecting the deliberative indispensability that allows for our belief in moral properties is akin to rejecting the explanatory indispensability that permits our belief in such things as electrons (71). Deliberation is thus an essential attribute of human beings, and in deliberating people commit themselves implicitly to the existence of normative reasons relevant to their deliberation. This account provides the non-reductive realist with grounds from which to argue for the existence of independent moral properties regardless of whether those properties are coextensive with descriptive properties.

With a case made for the existence of moral properties, what explanation might the non-reductive realist offer for metaphysical supervenience itself? Russ Shafer-Landau argues that, in the metaphysical modality, ethical supervenience requires no explanation, and may be accepted as a brute fact. Comparing moral supervenience to the supervenience of mental properties on the physical, Shafer-Landau argues that "We might want to see evidence that pain and pleasure result from brain-states rather than some other sorts of phenomena. But that is not an explanation of [the supervenience relation]" (148). Establishing the existence of a supervenience relation is something apart from explaining why said relation exists. Ethical supervenience may be viewed as an extension of the law of identity of indiscernibles, which states that there cannot be two separate entities that share all of the same properties. Like this law, which is knowable a priori, Shafer-Landau suggests that supervenience may be "a brute metaphysical fact" (147). However, appealing to a principle

which cannot be explained in a non-circular way cannot provide a non-circular explanation of supervenience.

Should his argument for the brute existence of moral supervenience fail, Shafer-Landau suggests moral realists resort to an entailment thesis (149), although this would enable a reductive account, and is likely unnecessary. Consider the relationship between legal drinking status and age in some jurisdictions (Enoch 143). One might say that drinking-status supervenes on age within this jurisdiction, in that there cannot be a difference in drinking-status without a difference in age. Despite the supervenience relation, it would be ludicrous to contend that drinking-status properties are reducible to age properties. This supervenience relation wherein reduction is unnecessary may be explained easily through reference to the relevant legal norm. Moral supervenience without reduction may be understood similarly: the supervenience of some moral property on a set of natural properties is explained by the content of moral principles themselves. The analogy is best appreciated if one supposes a world with a moral legislator, a God perhaps. This God creates moral principles with maximal metaphysical jurisdiction, the content of which may then be referenced to explain the supervenience of the normative on the natural. For the purposes of this argument it matters not what the content of the moral norms are, only that they are of a metaphysical modality "so that there is no metaphysically possible world where the basic norms are different" (146). The non-reductive moral realist thus has a plausible explanation for metaphysical supervenience without reduction, and the reductionist must find another avenue to through which to question the existence of independent moral properties in order to sustain their view.

Logical/Conceptual Supervenience Challenge

For ethical non-naturalists and non-reductive ethical naturalists, collectively termed "moral antireductionists" ("Moral Supervenience: Introduction" 434), the independent existence of moral properties, and their

supervenience on natural properties, is explained through their being multiply realizable. According to this argument, although moral properties supervene on natural properties and thus require that some related natural property be present for a given moral property to also be present, different combinations of natural properties may be supervened upon by the same moral property. The idea of non-natural properties being multiply realizable is easily illustrated through reference to aesthetics, which is again analogous to the moral case. That an artwork produces a certain aesthetic, such as being discordant or humorous, does not require it to possess any particular set of natural properties. Aesthetic properties like humorousness may be produced by many given combinations of non-aesthetic properties on which they supervene. Although to be humorous requires that there be some corresponding natural property the aesthetic property supervenes upon, there is no one set of natural properties that exclusively produces humour. Similarly, two actions may possess a moral property, such as "wrongness," without sharing any of the same natural properties that this moral property supervenes upon.

Although supervenience and the multiply realizable nature of moral properties offers an alternative to the reductionist account, Blackburn argues that it creates further problems for the moral realist. Blackburn suggests it causes one to "be left with a possible form of doctrine which accepts both (S) and (P)," ("Supervenience Revisited" 441). For Blackburn, (S) and (P) are defined as follows (439):

(S) $N((\exists x \,(Fx \,\&\, G^*x \,\&\, (G^*xUFx)) \supset (y) \,(G^*y \supset Fy)$

(P) $P(\exists x) \,(G^*x \,\&\, \neg Fx)$

Here (S) represents the supervenience relation described above that recognizes moral properties as being multiply realizable. The proposition (P) contends that there is some case where the same set of non-moral properties a particular moral property supervenes upon is present, but the moral property is not. In summary, "even if some [non-moral property] set-up in our own world is the very state

upon which some [moral property] supervenes, nevertheless, it might not have been that [moral property] which supervened upon it," (Ibid.).

As Shafer-Landau explains, the challenge to the moral realist is explaining how supervenience is compatible with having no entailment thesis (146). An entailment thesis of the sort proposed by Jackson and other reductionists holds that the full specification of the configurations of natural properties necessarily entail certain moral evaluations (Balog 646). In the absence of entailment, supervenience becomes "mysterious" as, if natural descriptions do not entail any particular moral evaluation, the same set of natural properties could sometimes be "bad" and at others times "good." These "mixed worlds," in which the same set of natural properties may possess differing moral properties, are prohibited by supervenience. The question Blackburn poses to moral realists is: why is this the case? Without an entailment thesis, it would appear that supervenience fails to hold. Blackburn's solution to this problem is to endorse an anti-realist, or more specifically, an expressivist view, that can account for moral judgements without the need to refer to real, existing moral properties.

Blackburn's true challenge sidesteps metaphysical explanations of supervenience by shifting the modality of the challenge from the metaphysical to the logical/conceptual. Although one may explain how supervenience is metaphysically necessary—or argue that the metaphysical necessity is a priori and requires no explanation—this does not make supervenience logically or conceptually necessary. The challenge, as articulated by Shafer-Landau, is now that: "competent speakers of a language can conceive of a world in which the base properties that actually underlie particular moral ones fail to do so" (149). Nonetheless, Shafer-Landau does not consider this to be a real challenge to supervenience. That people may conceive of things that are metaphysically impossible has no more bearing on the metaphysical realities of supervenience than the conceivability of the

physically impossible has on physical reality. This argument is *ignoratio elenchi* however, as Shafer-Landau is here explaining the generative relationship, which Blackburn expresses as (P), rather than addressing the combination of (S) and (P) that constitutes Blackburn's actual supervenience challenge (Kramer 355).

Shafer-Landau further argues that in order to apply the conceptual challenge to ethical supervenience, it must be applied to other varieties of supervenience (152). To subscribe to anti-realism in the ethical domain would require that one commit themselves to anti-realism in other domains, such as those concerning mental or aesthetic properties. Anti-realism in these other domains is unappealing to Blackburn, so Shafer-Landau attempts to turn his challenge in on itself by suggesting that "unless one is prepared to accept a global anti-realism, Blackburn's argument from supervenience against moral realism is unpersuasive" (Ibid.). The problem with this rebuttal is that Blackburn does not believe that supervenience claims in domains outside of ethics are conceptually true. In discussing colour, for instance, Blackburn states that "we can notice how there cannot be a strong, analytic, version of the doctrine that colours supervene upon primary properties, precisely because it is so obvious that the only conceptual constraint upon using the colour vocabulary is that you react to perceived colour the right way" ("Supervenience Revisited" 445). Blackburn provides similar reasons regarding other domains, defusing the rebuttal by suggesting that the conceptual challenge uniquely applies to moral supervenience.

Despite Blackburn's success in countering Shafer-Landau, there are other grounds on which to question whether expressivism addresses the supervenience challenge better than some form of moral realism. At the core of Blackburn's challenge is his insistence that supervenience is logically/conceptually necessary and that this conceptual necessity is the basis of the difficulties faced by moral realists. In arguing against Blackburn, Shafer-Landau makes the mistake of accepting Blackburn's

logical/conceptual account of supervenience and arguing that it poses no threat to moral realism. To more effectively diffuse Blackburn's supervenience challenge, his suggestion that the necessity in supervenience is logical/conceptual should be called into question. If the reasons as to why the existence of a given set of non-moral properties necessitates the presence of a supervenient set of moral properties are not of a conceptual modality, then Blackburn's challenge loses much of its force. As Matthew Kramer argues, the optimal response to Blackburn on the behalf of a moral realist is that the necessity is not logical/conceptual, but rather "ethical" in nature (338).

In his *Essays in Quasi-Realism*, Blackburn notes that "it is not possible to hold an attitude to a thing because of its possessing certain properties and, at the same time, not hold that attitude to another thing that is believed to have the same properties" (122). For Blackburn, if a set of properties is genuinely the complete basis for a person's ethical judgement, then the attitude of the person making the judgement will be the same toward anything else possessing the same properties. Adopting a different attitude in two cases that are alike in all of the supposedly relevant ways is impossible because to do so indicates that the specified properties were not the complete basis for ethical judgement. The unsoundness of this argument becomes apparent when considering Blackburn's statement that it "seems conceptually impossible to suppose that if two things are identical in every other respect, one is better than the other" (Spreading the Word 186). To say two things are identical in "every other respect" is to indicate that they are in fact the same object. Although it is logical to state that two different sets of moral properties cannot supervene on the same situation as it exists in terms of all of its non-moral particulars, to say that the same situation cannot be both A and ~A in this way is tautological.

Blackburn recognizes this when he states that "we do not want the supervenience thesis to be made vacuously true through its being impossible that any two distinct

things should be G*" (*Essays in Quasi-Realism* 133). Consequently, Kramer insists on substituting the phrase "every other respect" with "every other [germane] respect," so as to indicate that the set of non-moral properties G* that is supervened upon will be accompanied by other non-moral features that are peripheral to moral judgements (340). However, that these additional non-moral properties, such as the spatial or temporal placement of a situation, are not proper grounds for moral assessment is not a matter of logical necessity as Blackburn supposes, it is a matter of moral necessity. If one lived in a strictly utilitarian universe and failed to use utility alone as the benchmark for one's moral considerations, this is foremost a moral failure, not necessarily a logical one. Capricious moral judgements may derive from logical mistakes, although they more often result from "morally objectionable arbitrariness" (341). An individual may, without logical inconsistency, provide two different moral judgements for two situations that are qualitatively identical in terms of their morally relevant non-moral properties. This is because, in at least one of the two cases, some non-moral property that is not among the set of morally relevant non-moral properties G*, is taken into consideration during the moral evaluation. Someone may decide a second situation is less reprehensible because it occurs in a different locale, and their arbitrariness in moral judgement would be a moral failing rather than a logical one.

The distinction here is between something being either logically incoherent or morally preposterous. Although in both cases a moral judgement would be rejected, the reason for the rejection would differ. Logical inconsistency arises from affirming both a proposition and its negation, whereas a moral error occurs when irrelevant properties of something are used in moral evaluation. If someone were to hold that homicide is morally permissible when committed against those wearing blue hats, their moral thesis would not be self-contradictory, just asinine in terms of its moral considerations. A proper formulation of the

supervenience relationship therefore places no restrictions on what can be morally relevant. Kramer suggests the following: "If two situations x and y differ in their moral properties, then they differ in their morally relevant physical and/or mental properties" (344). As a caveat, Kramer's reference to "relevant physical and/or mental properties" may be adjusted to simply read "relevant non-moral properties" so as not to exclude those basing their moral judgements on properties of ambiguous status, such as aesthetic properties. Any moral doctrine is compatible with this formulation of supervenience, including a morality that differentiates between acts on the basis of place and time (Ibid.). This means that if one wishes to reject a moral doctrine, they must offer a substantive moral proposition regarding what is morally relevant, rather than deferring to a supposed logical inconsistency containing presupposed notions about what is morally relevant.

Conclusion

In sum, the non-reductive moral realist may adequately answer both the metaphysical and conceptual supervenience challenges posed by reductionists and expressivists, respectively. Despite what reductionists may claim, the necessarily coextensive nature of properties does not require that they be collapsed into a single entity. Furthermore, at the metaphysical level, supervenience may be explained through reference to the content of normative properties. As for the conceptual challenge, moral realists should respond that the necessity of supervenience is not logical, but rather ethical in nature. This undercuts Blackburn's argument by denying him the shift into a logical/conceptual modality, since Blackburn cannot account for how some non-moral features of situations are to be discounted during moral evaluations as a matter of logical necessity. For these reasons supervenience poses no threat to non-reductive moral realism. Indeed, the challenge is to the reductionists and expressivists to find some other means by which to question non-reductive moral realism.

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Commentary

NICOLE D'SOUZA

A central notion in analytic philosophy, supervenience comprehends the world as a hierarchical structure in which foundational properties are said to subsume peripheral properties. Simply put, if x 'supervenes' on y, then x is said to be determined by y. In his paper, Eric Wilkinson admirably defends non-reductive moral realism from the reductionist claim that the nature of moral properties is incompatible with supervenience. Addressing both the metaphysical and logical challenges brought to light by his disputants, Wilkinson highlights the key areas of contention where reductionists fail to undermine non-reductive moral realism. In his elucidation of the 'necessarily coextensive' nature reductionists ascribe moral properties, we note that even if an ethical set cannot exist without a descriptive component, this does not make the former reducible to the latter.

A particular argument presented in this discourse I wish to highlight for the reader is contra the assertion that there cannot be a difference in the properties of one set without a direct correlative difference in the properties of the other. Here I commend Wilkinson for drawing attention to the fact that the quality of being coextensive does not necessarily entail reducibility. To this I would add that his opponents have not accounted for varying degrees of difference between two types of properties - a miniscule difference in x could lead to a major difference in y (or vice versa). Those who point to a coextensive relationship between two sets cannot claim conformity of correlation: that a change has occurred consequentially does not mean that the change is equivalent. If reductionists wish to claim that the moral supervenes on the non-moral, then the burden of proof is on them to explain why this is so. The subject of supervenience has had a significant impact in ethical areas of inquiry, and Eric Wilkinson has done well

in safeguarding non-reductive moral realism from its metaphysical and logical implications.

Price and Rorty on the Role of Truth

Jeremy Rodgers

The metaphysical status of truth has direct bearing upon the status of philosophy as a discipline. Both Richard Rorty and Huw Price adopt deflationist views of the ontological status of truth: Rorty argues that the prevailing notions of truth's metaphysical basis are incorrect, and Price argues that truth is a useful fictive norm (Rorty 1995: 298; Price 169-170). Price offers subjective assertibility, personal warranted assertibility, and truth as assertoric norms (in ascending order of strength) (Price 173-175). Rorty identifies truth with ethnocentric 'warranted assertibility' (Rorty 1993: 450). Price offers a thought experiment to illustrate life without a truth-norm, but I argue that Price's example is weak and vulnerable to opposing objections. In the following, I argue for the thesis that Rorty's view is superior to Price's, due to major flaws in Price's view, as well as the ability of Rorty's view to resist Price's objection (Rorty 1995: 298; Price 180).

Huw Price and Richard Rorty disagree about the role of truth. Price thinks that 'truth' plays a vital role in assertoric discourse, while Rorty thinks that we might do just as well without it (Price 170; Rorty 1995: 281). I will argue that Price's account of the truth-norm is fatally problematic, and that Rorty's position can resist Price's central objection; as such, Rorty's view is more persuasive.

For Rorty, truth is not a goal of inquiry because he is an anti-realist about truth, which he thinks merely sounds like the name of a goal if explicated by reference to a dubious metaphysical picture — namely, correspondence theory (Rorty 1995: 298). Furthermore, Rorty thinks that much can be said about justification, but comparatively little can be said about truth (281). His rationale for this position on truth is as follows:

Pr1 If there is no practical difference, there should be no philosophical difference (Ibid.)

Pr2 Distinguishing between justification and truth makes no practical difference to my decisions about what to do, nor what to believe now (Ibid.)

∴ The distinction between truth and justification is fruitless (Ibid.)

It is important to note (In Pr2) that Rorty focuses on truth making no difference to his own decisions about what to do — not about what difference truth makes to a group. Following William James' suggestion that truth is understood upon fully understanding justification, Rorty argues the following:

Pr1 Truth is either reducible to justification or explained exhaustively by minimalism (Rorty 1995: 282)

Pr2 Justification — understood as warranted, ideal, or Peircean assertibility—is vulnerable to the argument that a given belief may satisfy specified conditions, yet still be untrue (Ibid.)

∴ Minimalism — such as Alfred Tarski's disquotationalism — may be a preferable view (Ibid.)

Rorty describes three minimalist uses of 'true': the disquotational, where 'snow is white' simply means that snow is in fact white; the approbative, used to commend; and the 'cautionary', meaning fully justified but perhaps not true (283). This is intended to show firstly that truth has limited philosophical cash value, and also that the cautionary use illustrates that justification is audience-relative (Ibid.).

Price's view is that truth is a fictive norm of inquiry that we cannot do without (Price 170). He does not purport to answer what truth is like, but rather what life would be like without 'truth' as a norm. When Rorty argues that distinguishing between "truth or justification makes no difference to my actions," Price disagrees, and argues the other side of the pragmatist coin: that distinguishing truth from justification does make a difference to one's actions

(Rorty 1995: 281). To elucidate this, Price conceives of a hypothetical community for whom a truth-norm has disappeared — the "Mo'ans" (a name inspired by the phrase "merely opinionated assertion") — whose utterances of opinion are as uncriticizable as preferences are (Price 177-179). For Price, the Mo'an example shows that we could not get rid of a truth norm without also losing assertoric dialogue (170). Price thinks such a norm functions passively to create a conceptual space for progress, and functions actively to drive speakers toward agreement (180).

It is my view that Rorty's position is more persuasive: not only does he take a stand regarding truth — either in minimalist form, or reduced to justification—his argument suffers none of the fatal flaws that Price's conception does. Price first advances three norms of assertion: sincerity; justification; and truth (169). He later fleshes this out, listing these norms by increasing order of strength: subjective assertibility; personal warranted assertibility; and truth (173-175). It seems natural to contrast this with what Rorty's equivalent norms might look like, similarly configured. Perhaps: (R1) subjective assertibility; (R2) personal warranted assertibility, and; (R3) communal warranted assertibility — 'warranted' for us at "our best" (Rorty 1993: 451-452). For purposes of illustration, I will add my own fourth norm, (C1) absolute certainty: an unassailable correspondence to the way things "actually are". Rorty tends to stop at (R3) as a benchmark of adequate justification. Price briefly mentions communal warranted assertibility, then skips straight to Peircean ideal assertibility, which is more like (C1), arguing that identification of truth with ideal warranted assertibility does not motivate anyone to agree, for what future idealized inquirers believe is insignificant to present individuals (Price 185). Rorty might respond to this by connecting 'warranted assertibility' not to future inquirers, as Price does, but with us "at our best" (Rorty 1993: 451-452). This is what Rorty calls his "ethnocentric position" (450). From it, he identifies the notion of 'warrant' with agreeableness to the most intelligent among us — a

category in which he might include experts in the relevant subjects (Ibid.). Indeed, we often look to experts to settle matters of opinion, so it would seem natural to think of 'warrant' in these terms. Rorty's view is that something like (R3) is the closest we might get to (C1), given that (C1) rests on an erroneous representationalist picture of reality (Rorty 1995: 292).

Price gives us an 'empirically testable' scenario, involving the comparison of a truth-realist society to a pragmatist one — a scenario he quickly yanks away on ethical grounds (Price 168). One wonders why Price could not simply have canvassed a group of pragmatists, or anti-realists about truth, to see if they had indeed lost their motivation for discourse. One has good reason to doubt that they would have:

> Pr1 Rorty and Price (in some sense) are both anti-realists about truth
> Pr2 Rorty and Price are engaged in assertoric discourse
> ∴ For at least two philosophers, ontological belief in truth is unnecessary to sustain assertoric discourse

Price must either: (a) place himself and Rorty in a category of extraordinary persons who do not need this third norm to undertake assertoric practice; (b) respond that Rorty is wrong about truth's role in his own actions; or (c) admit that they both exist as living counter-examples to his conception of the fictionalist truth norm. If Price concedes that Rorty's individual decisions and beliefs are unaffected by distinguishing truth from justification, then Price has to be arguing (somewhat implausibly) that the disappearance of a truth norm must hit some tipping point when encountered by groups—that the truth-belief, inconsequential on an individual level, would nonetheless have a sociological impact.

Price argues that unlike a similar disappearance of religion, the disappearance of 'truth' would have devastating consequences (170). But if ethical behavior supervened to some extent on religious beliefs, and the advent of atheism did not plunge the world into unethical

chaos, Price's contention — that the disappearance of the truth norm would have devastating consequences — seems unconvincing, if not contrary to his purposes (Ibid.).

Price's Mo'an argument is incoherent: he allows disquotational statements into the Mo'an scheme, yet maintains that disquotational truth does not import the third and strongest norm (truth) (Ibid.). It is reasonable to think that a Mo'an's statement like "that is a cat," when uttered in reference to a frog, would garner disapproval. The Mo'an would likely be censured or thought ridiculous by other Mo'ans, who might fault incorrect 'factual' statements of a class that does not reduce to matters of opinion. If Price replies that disagreements about this class of statements would be tolerated, then it is hard to see how the Mo'ans could sustain a language without agreement about linguistic reference. But if such censure does occur, this conflicts with diquotationalism's failure to import the third norm, given Price's assertion that disposition to censure is the mark of the third norm (181).

Price's argument does not do the work he intends. If Price allows that objects of Mo'an language reference require broad consensus to sustain meaningful speech-acts, then his opponent can argue that statements of the class of 'disquotational facts' are merely disguised versions of justification of the type (R3) — specifically, that they are warrantedly assertible by all visually healthy, rational Mo'ans. Thus, not only does Price's example fail to do its intended work, it also provides ammunition for his opponent.

Price attempts to show that warranted assertibility cannot do the same work as the truth norm:

Pr1 Assertoric dialogue requires discomfort with disagreement (186)
Pr2 I fail to be an assertion-maker at all unless I am playing to win, in terms of the third norm (Ibid.)
Pr3 Winning is characterized in terms of truth (Ibid.)
∴ The idea of a debate with some alternate goal is incoherent (Ibid.)

Price begs the question in Pr3 by assuming 'truth' to be something other than 'warranted assertibility,' which is something he is not entitled to argue, and certainly something the pragmatist would disagree with. In fact, if the pragmatist is correct, and 'warranted assertibility' is taken to be what 'truth' is, and 'winning' is characterized as 'that assertion which establishes itself as the most warranted of two competing assertions', or perhaps 'most coherent with the general beliefs of us at our best', then Price has actually argued against himself.

One might raise the following objection to my argument: though Price's argument has flaws, his conclusion is correct, and this alone is enough to devastate Rorty's argument. A pragmatist will see that a truth norm makes a significant difference in practice, therefore the basis of Rorty's argument is undermined. However, if a pragmatist can show that 'warranted assertibility' is robust enough to sustain assertoric practice, thereby precluding Price's concerns, then they have successfully replied to Price. Even if we concede to Price that disquotation is insufficient to give life to assertoric practice, or prompt censure over disagreement, warranted assertibility seems sufficient to sustain discourse, prompting doubt that a third norm — truth — is necessary.

One might think that a global reduction of truth to justification might have an effect on discourse similar to that which a shift from a correspondence view to a coherence view would have upon science. If so, then it does not follow that the conceptual space for improvement would blink out of existence in concert with 'truth' being identified as 'warranted assertibility'. Nor would the motivation to engage in debates disappear — by associating 'truth' with 'warranted assertibility' we have merely acknowledged a limitation of discourse.

Modern legal courts make serious judgments without complete certainty, instead basing decisions on which side argues most convincingly; nothing as strong as 'truth' is required to make these decisions, but rather cases are decided on adequate justification. Likewise, the physical

sciences do not require certainty to advance some claim to 'truth'; rather, there are well-established and less well-established scientific beliefs. It would be strange to think that modern scientists undertake their inquiry expecting to achieve a position of 'Peircean ideal assertibility' within their lifetimes. Yet they continue investigating, with the goal of justifying or rejecting certain hypotheses. Here too, 'truth' — of the type described in (C_1) — is not necessary to drive scientific practice; only adequate justification and coherence with previous scientific beliefs are required.

If Rorty and Price can undertake vigorous discourse without belief in truth, and ethical behavior sustains itself in the face of atheism, and science does not halt without the expectation of certainty, then it is hard to imagine that without a truth-norm, discourse would collapse into "disengaged monologues," as Price claims (170). We should therefore be suspicious of Price's claim that without the third norm, motivation for assertoric improvement would cease in dialogue.

Both Price's argument and conclusion are problematic. He sets out to prove that 'truth', however ontologically fictional, is nonetheless indispensable to speakers as a norm, but his efforts are ultimately unsuccessful. As I have argued, Rorty's pragmatist conception can not only withstand Price's objections, but can even borrow some of them in its own defense, and is therefore the more persuasive view.

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Commentary

VICTOR OLIVEIRA

The status of truth remains one of the most heavily debated notions within the branch of Epistemology. In this piece, the author Jeremy Rodgers addresses the contrasting differences between Huw Price's and Richard Rorty's deflationary views of truth. Rodgers argues that Rorty holds the more persuasive view, demonstrating this through a strong critique of Price's main argument.

For Rorty, truth should not be a goal of inquiry, that it would be unproductive to create a distinction between truth and justification. In giving truth a mechanism for justification, we limit inquiry for when we actively seek truth. Price's view argues truth as a fictive norm is necessary, illustrated in the "Mo'ans" example. If the concept of the truth-norm disappeared from a society, opinions would become immune to critique. Price's thought experiment suggests that a truth norm has a functionalistic role within the progress of a society.

Rodgers rejects Price's "Mo'ans" example as being incoherent for there would be no agreements in the linguistic reference within the language structure of that society, resulting in an improbable and dysfunctional language. Rodgers exposes how Price's view of warranted assertability cannot function as a replacement for a truth norm, which results in Price begging the question. Nevertheless, this does not mean Rorty remains immune to criticism, which Rodgers addresses by admitting the truth norm has an important difference in practice than in theory.

Despite both Rorty and Price ultimately having problematic conclusions, Rodgers successfully argues for Rorty having the stronger position on the Role of Truth. Overall, Rodgers' paper was clearly written and well argued. There are numerous and distinct ways of answering the questions posed by the topic of truth. Whether or not we

should be asking if truth can correspond to the true nature of reality or merely to the established norms within a community is still debated. It will be through the analysis of truth within both theory and practice that it will remain a substantive and contentious subject of Epistemology.

Triangularity

ABBAS SALEKI

I have always found troubling the notion of metaphysical entities known as universals. Realists such as Russell claim that the nature of universals is neither mental nor physical. I start this essay by explicating Russell's argument regarding universals, and I then present two different original examples to demonstrate that universals are either mental or physical entities. I will also consider reasonable objections to my arguments and explain why they would only disprove universals as metaphysical entities. I conclude that the notion of universals refers either to some physical aspect of objects or to a set of similar ideas, and as such there is no reason to believe in a mystical world that consists only of forms and universals.

In his paper "The World of Universals", Bertrand Russell argues that if we avoid acknowledging the universal property that causes certain concrete particulars to resemble one another, we are forced to admit that there are similarities between those particulars. However, similarity or resemblance, he argues, is itself another form of universal. In this way we must admit the existence of universals. According to Russell, "we may say, broadly, that only those universals which are named by adjectives or substantives have been much or often recognized, while those named by verbs and prepositions have been usually overlooked" (Russell 1971). I think what is overlooked, however, is not one kind of universal or another, but the apprehension of universals in general. I think in examining how we come to experience what are said to be universals, we must admit that they are either mental or physical entities rather than metaphysical entities, as Russell and others claim them to be. There is no reason to believe in a

world in which forms or universals exist independently from materiality.

There are two different kinds of universals—monadic and polyadic. Monadic or one-placed universals are those that are usually represented by adjectives and substantives. They are the properties or qualities of single concrete particulars that need no more than one concrete particular to be exemplified, i.e. redness, triangularity, wisdom, etc. Polyadic or many-placed universals are relations usually represented by verbs and prepositions. Polyadic universals require two or more things in order to be exemplified. For instance, A is to the left of B, exemplifies, using two things (A and B), the relation or the universal of being to the left of something. Russell writes "if anyone were anxious to deny altogether that there are such things as universals, we should find that we cannot strictly prove that there are such entities as qualities, i.e. the universals represented by adjectives and substantives, whereas we can prove that there must be relations, i.e. the sort of universals generally represented by verbs and prepositions" (Ibid.).

Russell explains that if one wants to avoid conceding to the existence of monadic universals, i.e. whiteness, one must choose a patch of a white thing and say that anything that resembles it is white. Resemblance, however, is itself another kind of universal, namely the polyadic kind. In this way one is forced to admit the existence of, at least, polyadic universals. "And having been forced to admit this universal," Russell argues, "we find that it is no longer worthwhile to invent difficult and unplausible theories to avoid the admission of such universals as whiteness and triangularity" (Ibid.). The next step, he explains, is to prove that universals are not just mental entities. He claims that their existence must be independent of them being thought of or being apprehended by minds. Russell explains that Ediburgh is north of London and in simply knowing this fact we add nothing to it. He argues that the relation or the universal between Ediburgh and London was true and a fact even before humans existed and it would remain true even if there were no minds in the world

at all. That is to say that the relationship between the two subsists independently of our knowledge of it. "But this fact involves the relation 'north of'," says Russell, "which is a universal; and it would be impossible for the whole fact to involve nothing mental if the relation 'north of', which is a constituent part of the fact, did involve anything mental. Hence we must admit that the relation, like the terms it relates, is not dependent upon thought, but belongs to the independent world which thought apprehends but does not create" (Ibid.).

I think one of the best ways to respond to Russell's argument and to eliminate the mysticism is to take the nominalist view and say that there is no such a thing as triangularity; there is only the set of triangular. But I am also going to argue that the members of the set of triangle are either mental or physical. Let us consider the following example. It is said that the photography filter 'Fisheye' that gives an image a circular or spherical effect resembles the vision of fish when they look at the world from a certain angle. For the sake of this example, let us suppose that there is a fish that always sees the world in this spherical way. Let us also accept triangularity as the universal property of all triangles. We know that a triangle has other properties such as having three straight sides, having a total of 180 degrees in angles, etc. These properties are logical facts, so if one understands logic in the same way we do, one can draw a triangle using these properties of it. Suppose we are told to draw a triangle using logic and these properties of the triangle. What we draw must match the image of the triangle in our head with all the properties we know of it. That is to say the line we draw must match straightness, the total angles must be 180 degrees, etc.

Now let us suppose there is a smart fish that understands logic, can draw and is not moving during this experiment. If we tell the fish to draw a triangle, the triangle it draws must also match the one it imagines in its head. Remember that the fish sees in a spherical way, so any line we see as straight the fish sees as a curve. For the fish to see a line as straight, it must look at a line with an

inward curve so when seen from its spherical vision, the line appears to it as straight. For the same reason, because the lines we drew are straight, our drawing of the triangle is going to look to the fish like a curvy three-sided object whose sum of angles is in total more than 180 degrees. If we tell the fish that this is a triangle, with the logical properties we explained to it earlier, the fish would not agree because the properties of the drawing would not match the logical properties we explained to it. The same thing would happen when we see the fish's drawing of a triangle. We would see a three-sided shape, which has inward curvy sides whose sum of angles is in total less than 180 degrees. Therefore what we see of the fish's drawing would not match the logical properties of triangles we have in our minds, and unless the fish has Picasso-ness, that is a problem.

If we were to ask what falls into the set of triangles, we would choose the object that appears to us as a triangle, and that would be different than what the fish would say would fall in the set of triangles. That is to say that because the universal triangularity is the same in any mind, and because we see differently than the fish, what resembles a triangle to us will not be the same as what would resemble a triangle to the fish. As a result, we will end up making two different sets of objects that are not equal. In this way, any object could possibly look like a triangle from some possible point of view. As a result, if the set of triangles contains physical objects, it must include every object, and the set will have an infinite number of physical objects that have nothing physical in common. Now we must look elsewhere for what they have in common.

If different objects can refer to the same or similar ideas in different minds, what is common among the objects is not physical but mental. Therefore the members of the set of triangles cannot be physical because the physical objects, as we saw, could have nothing in common and yet resemble a triangle from some possible point of view. The members of the set of triangles, therefore, are the ideas and experiences of the universal triangularity in different

minds, which makes both the members and the resemblance between them mental entities. That is to say that if universals exist, they exist not in the physical world but only in the mental world, because without minds the set, its members, and the relations between the members would disappear.

One possible objection to this example is that we must not start from the mind; the universal appears in the object and not in the mind. In this way the objection would, rightly, accuse the example of assuming that the universal and logical entities would mean the same thing in any mind. The objection would suggest that for the fish the triangle would have different properties, but these different properties, if translated into our logical understanding, would be the same properties that we would give to a triangle. In other words, for the fish, the straight line would be, for example, a curvy line, and degrees would be calculated differently, etc. Accordingly, the universal is not the same as the idea in the mind but, on the contrary, is in the object. Looking at the world in this way, the ideas of the same universals would be different in different minds because they are apprehended differently. Yet, however different, they would still be referring to the same universal properties of the object.

But even if the fish has different definitions for the triangle, or rather, if the definitions and properties of the triangle appear differently to the fish, it does not follow that it is impossible for the fish to experience straight lines, or the degrees of angles in the way we do. So even if the fish looks at the same object we do and conceives the same properties differently, it is still possible to explain our experience of the triangle to the fish. That is to say, it is true that one experience can be translated into another if we change the logical language of one mind into another, but it is also true that we can transfer our own experience into another mind, not by changing logical language, but by changing the object. In doing so we can keep the universal triangularity of one mind and transfer it into another's, but then we are going to end up, again, with a

set of similar ideas of triangles. Having said that, we must consider the possibility that the universal lies within the object and not the mind.

Any object would show up differently to different minds, or in other words, the properties of the objects would appear differently from different perspectives. For example, while a bee looks at the sun and sees three colors with its ultraviolet vision, we look at the sun and see only one color. If we and the bee, however, were to make a set of objects with similar colors to the sun, we would make the same set with the same objects as its members. The reason for this is that similar objects would resemble the same objects to the bee and the human. That is to say that though the properties would look different, the resemblance between objects would still stand. But note that the bee can experience single colors too and if we were to give an account of the property of the color of the sun, the bee would say that it is three-colored-ness and we would say that it is one-colored-ness. In this way we can conclude that there are an infinite number of universals or properties for any object from any possible point of view. What this means, however, is that we have no access to the true property of the object and when we try to point at it we do not really know what we are trying to point at. The other consequence of this is that it shows we can only access properties through our sensory system, which is why the properties look different when conceived by different sensory systems. There is, however, another kind of entity that can only be accessed through the sensory system: the physical entity. But if we do not know what we are pointing at when we point at the property, and if it can only be accessed through the sensory system, why should we believe that there is something other than the physical entity? What would happen if we eliminate the possibility of the existence of the property? If we give up on mysticism and stop believing there is something about the object other than its physicality, we are once again left with a set, but not a set of similar ideas like before but, on the contrary, a set of objects. In this way "there are no

properties; there are only concrete particulars – either macro-physical objects (e.g., brain) or micro-physical parts of macro-physical objects (e.g., protons, neutrons, electrons)." Thus "apparent references to properties or universals are eliminated in favor of concrete, spatio-temporal objects" (Davis). Therefore we are left without universals, and only with sets of objects.

The companionship problem objects to this conclusion in the following way. We are to imagine there is a world with only three blue books. In this world the set of blue has three members, the three blue books; the set of book and the set of rectangular would have the same three members as well. If there are only sets of things and nothing more, then being blue, being a book, and being rectangular would be equal in this world, and therefore there must be something else other than the sets—properties. I think the objection is invalid because it is fallacious.

By using the same logic, if we were to imagine a world that has only three numbers 6, 12 and 18, the set of coefficients of 2 would include the three numbers; the set of coefficients of 3 would also have the same members. Can we then conclude that coefficients of 2 and 3 are equal? The answer is no. The reason such conclusion would be incorrect is that the set {6, 12, 18} is a common set of the two sets of coefficients of 2 and 3. It is true that in this imagined world there are only these three numbers, but the rest of the set of coefficients of 2 is still a possibility, though it may not have been actualized in that world. That is to say that if the world consisting of 6, 12 and 18 were the real world, then the rest of the sets of coefficients of 2 and 3 could have been imagined as possible worlds. As such if we conclude something from a common subset of the two sets, coefficients of 2 and coefficients of 3, which would be the set {6, 12, 18}, and apply it to the whole two sets, we would be committing the fallacy of combination. However, in a closer look one can see that the right set in question is that of coefficients of 6, a combination of 2 and 3, and the set of coefficients of 6 would always be equal to itself. In the same way, the proper set of the three books is not being

blue or being rectangular or being a book separately; rather it is that of being a blue rectangular book as one thing. In other words, because the three books fall into the three sets of blue, rectangular and book, the proper set they would fall into is the common set of the three sets, which would be the set of blue rectangular books. For this reason I do not think the objection is valid.

From what has been said I conclude that either there are no universals and only sets of things or universals exist as mental entities and there are only sets of similar ideas. Russell, however, rejects the idea that properties like whiteness are just thoughts and mental entities. "If whiteness were the thought as opposed to its object," he explains, "no two different men could think of it, and no one man could think of it twice" (Russell 1971). Russell finds it absurd that two men will not be able to think of the same thing. What is absurd, however, is presenting the number seven to a mathematician, a philosopher and a superstitious man and expect them to think of the same thing. Nowhere is it written as a law or as a necessity that people can or must have the same experience of the same idea, and the thought that they should is, at best, a shaky proposition. It should also be no surprise if one person cannot have the same experience of the same idea twice. After all, if we have learned one thing about personal identity it is that there is change, and it should be no surprise if our experiences of the same thing would change as we do over time. Our experiences of ideas are just as similar to each other as our lives and our bodies are. It is also ironic that Russell points out this characteristic of reality himself. "The world of existence is fleeting, vague, (and) without sharp boundaries" (Russell 1971). And if there are no sharp boundaries, there can be no identical experiences; there are only similar experiences and similar ideas.

Works Cited

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Commentary

JOSHUA KOMAROVSKY

This paper begins by introducing Russell's argument for the existence of universals, which is based on the distinction between monadic and polyadic universals. Monadic universals refer to general qualities of particulars, such as 'whiteness', while polyadic universals are relations between particulars, like directional relationships (left, right, up, etc.). Russell points out that if one wants to deny the existence of universals, then one is forced to rely on polyadic concepts. One can avoid affirming the existence of a universal whiteness by picking an arbitrary white object to use as both a definition for whiteness and as a standard for determining other white objects. By invoking resemblance, however, one is implicitly affirming belief in polyadic universals. Russell concludes that if one is compelled to believe in polyadic universals, then there is no good reason to deny monadic universals.

Russell then argues polyadic universals cannot be purely mental because relations between objects are mind independent. It is not clear why this essay outlines his argument, which purports to demonstrate that polyadic universals are not purely mental, since the paper never attempts to directly refute this argument. The argumentative strategy of the essay is to instead dismiss the existence of polyadic universals all together.

The paper claims that universals are conceptually irrelevant, brushing away Russell's argument in the process. Specifically, it suggests that instead of believing in universals, we can define these universals by constructing sets. This argument however begs the question, as Russell's point is that these sets cannot be constructed without relying on universals. The paper fails to show that we can in fact construct sets without relying on polyadic concepts like resemblance or belonging. Even if we accept that sets can in theory be defined without banking on polyadic

concepts, it nevertheless seems unfeasible in practice. Since the quantity of sets one can create is incredibly large, one must have a determining principle to guide in choosing which sets are appropriate or useful. Usually we would resolve this problem by invoking relevance, but we cannot do so here as it is a polyadic concept. The author has unfortunately failed to provide us with a workable alternative. Yet without an alternative to relevance, the model advocated by this paper hardly seems plausible. While this essay does address an interesting and original topic, it could use a bit more rigour.

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